



Pre-1909

Tall grasses sway in the breeze. A coyote rests beneath a thick layer of underbrush. And in the distance, a red-tailed hawk rides a thermal wave, its sharp eyes watchful for small prey.

Such was the scene greeting early settlers to Grand Prairie. One just as easily seen by today's residents.

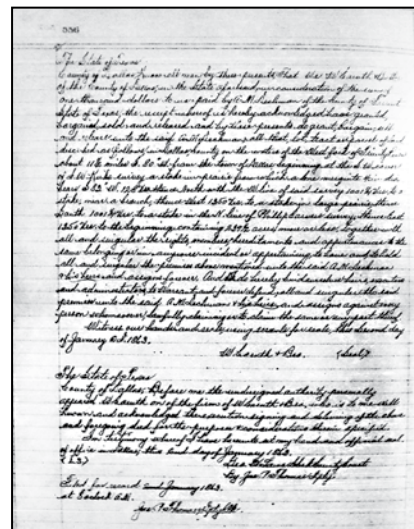
Early settlers were enticed to the Grand Prairie area by Peters Colony, a series of Republic of Texas land grants offered by investors in 1841. In February 1846, the Goodwins, Micajah, wife Elizabeth and their nine children, arrived. Elizabeth's life in Texas was short-lived. She had just turned 44 when she died on Oct. 24, 1846, becoming the first known white woman to be buried in Tarrant County. She was laid to rest in what is today Watson Cemetery near Interstate 30 and State Highway 360.

About the same time, David Jordan and his sons arrived from Tennessee bringing with them the area's first slaves, among them Mose Jordan, whose descendants still live in Grand Prairie. David Jordan settled just south of the Trinity River near present-day MacArthur Boulevard and Northeast 31st Street, establishing a stage coach stop, merchandise store and the area's first school. The

Jordan home, now called the Jordan-Bowles Home, still stands in Bowles Park.

In 1859, brothers Marion and James Loyd from Dallas moved south in search of more room to graze cattle and horses, settling on Walnut Creek, now Lake Joe Pool. Like the Jordans, the Loyds eventually established a school on their land that served the community for four decades and their ancestral home still exists in Loyd Park.

In 1861, Alexander MacRae Dechman was living in Birdville, later renamed Haltom City, with his wife and children, when he learned he could trade his wagon and oxen for land in Dallas County. Dechman bought 239.5 acres in what is now downtown Grand Prairie, but was unable to build a home here before joining the Texas Calvary in 1862.



Dechman filed title on his prairie land with the county on Jan. 2, 1863, establishing what would become Grand Prairie. He eventually abandoned the idea of living on the land and instead granted right-of-way through the property to the railroad. The depression of 1873 halted construction of the railroad, but it didn't stop people from settling in Dechman. A post office opened in 1874 and two years later Dechman filed a town plat, giving every other lot to the Texas and Pacific Railroad in exchange for operating a depot there.

The tracks were finally extended through Dechman to Fort Worth and service began on July 19, 1876. In 1877, the railroad renamed Dechman Grand Prairie because of its location on the eastern edge of the vast grand prairie that stretched into West Texas.

A trip to Dallas from the three-block Grand Prairie was one day by horseback.

1900-1920

The trip became easier in July 1902 when Interurban trolley service began between Fort Worth and Dallas. The trolleys ran on the hour from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. on a single track at a rate of 2 cents per mile. The entire trip between the two big cities took one hour and 35 minutes.

Another big happening in 1902 was the establishment of the Grand Prairie Independent School District. The first school bonds were issued on July 1, 1905, and totaled \$8,000. The money was used to build a two-story brick school at 214 W. College St.

As the village of Grand Prairie grew, burgeoning neighborhoods brought problems, including fire hazards wrought by houses built too close together, a need for a public water system and regulations to force residents to keep their property and outhouses clean. Recognizing those needs, a growing number of residents pushed for the community to incorporate as a city.

The first vote for incorporation was on March 14, 1908, and failed by 57 against and 51 for.

But the incorporationists brought the measure back to the ballot a year later. This time 110 of the town's 1,000 citizens turned out to vote on March 20, 1909, with 69 voting for and 41 against.

The town's first official election was April 28. A total of 107 votes were cast electing the first mayor, Stephen P. Lively, and five aldermen. The newly elected aldermen wasted no time enacting Grand Prairie's first 10 ordinances on June 9. The laws defined the government's duties, prohibited transporting someone with a contagious disease into town, forbade ball playing in a public street, made it illegal to shoot firearms in town and regulated privies and public houses. The ordinances also set speed limits, forbade the sale of alcohol to minors and set punishment for the cruel treatment of animals.

The newly incorporated Grand Prairie's downtown was growing in leaps and bounds. The town boasted a cotton gin, dry goods and grocery stores, two blacksmiths, a barbershop and laundry, drugstore, millinery shop, hotel, a post office, lumberyard, hardware store, a carriage maker, and a short-order stand offered cold

drinks, meats and barbecue. One proprietor put down a cement sidewalk in front of his Main Street home, so impressing the Commercial Club that they passed a resolution commending the



improvement. Other citizens were quick to join the ensuing sidewalk campaign to fight the ever-present mud.

What the town really needed, but would not get until 1917, was an organized fire department. Bucket brigades were used to fight most fires, including a 1903 blaze that destroyed a grocery store, saddle shop and doctor's office. A bucket brigade was of little use on March 26, 1909, when a fire started in the train depot and destroyed an entire business block. A Sept. 23, 1909, fire destroyed six businesses and prompted residents to call for a community water system, which was finally approved in 1911.

For much of the 1910s through 1920s, town business consisted mostly of water line and street paving projects, bringing water to buildings and pavement to dirt roads.

In 1910, Dr. Horace V. Copeland, who helped deliver more than 4,000 babies in his 60-year career, bought the first automobile in Dallas County. In 1911, Grand Prairie High School graduated its first senior class, which consisted of only four students. This year, GPISD will graduate more than 1,300 seniors.

Just west, Dalworth Park was emerging as a utopian town with modern conveniences like water, gas, sidewalks, telephones and granitoid streets. The Spikes Brothers Broom Factory moved there from Dallas in 1912 and the Dalworth Business College opened in what is now the historic Anderson Building. Soon another community was established just south of the railroad tracks. The area, called South Dalworth Park, was home to the

African-Americans who worked for Dalworth Park businesses and residents. Dalworth Park existed as a separate city until its incorporation into Grand Prairie in 1942.

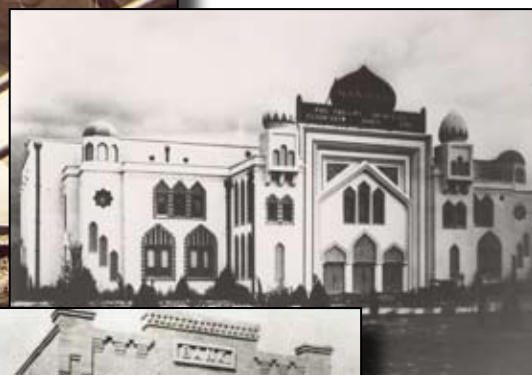
Grand Prairie installed its first water system in 1918.

1920-1940

In 1920, the newly formed Fire Department bought its first automobile fire engine, all previous engines having been drawn by horse. In 1923, G.H. Turner was elected mayor (and remained in office until 1949) and the citizens of Grand Prairie celebrated the completion of decorative mercury vapor lights on ornamental poles along Main Street. At the time, Grand Prairie was one of only two cities in the United States with this type of lighting.

On Aug. 31, 1926, Grand Prairie celebrated the completion of one of the most extensive paving programs ever taken on by a city its size. Approximately 16,000 feet of Main and Center streets were paved with solid concrete.

Dewey Millar opened Millar Drug Store, now Main Street Café, in 1927 at 106 W. Main St., selling ice cream and sodas at the fountain and medications at the counter. In 1928, the famous Bagdad Supper Club was built in east Grand Prairie. The exotic palace offered entertainment, dining, dancing and music and was featured in the 1947 comedy *Juke Joint*, starring Spencer Williams.



In 1929, the Curtiss-Wright Flying Service opened near Dalworth, marking the beginning of what would become Grand Prairie's rich history of aviation. In 1930, work began on building Mountain Creek Lake, but would not be completed until 1938.

During the Depression, on Dec. 21, 1931, City Council voted to allocate funds to purchase shoes, clothes, fruit, food and candy for the needy children in town to have gifts to open on Christmas morning.

In 1931, Ray Hamilton and Clyde Barrow robbed the Interurban ticket office in downtown Grand Prairie. Then on March 19, 1934, the Grand Prairie State Bank was robbed by Ray Hamilton, his brother Floyd and John Basden getting away with \$1,543.

1940-1960

World War II began in 1939, but came to Grand Prairie in 1940 when the War Department granted permission to the Navy to use Hensley Field, from thence known as the Naval Reserve Aviation Base. On April 7, 1941, North American Aviation was dedicated next to the Naval Base. North American was the first windowless, fully air conditioned and artificially lit aircraft production facility in the nation.

To house the workers who flooded Grand Prairie to work at North American, the government built Avion Village in record time. One home was actually completed in 59 minutes.

In the 1940s, the town grew from 1,000 to 15,000.

The City Council spent most of its time annexing neighborhoods into town, improving and extending water and wastewater systems and paving streets. In

1942, Dalworth Park dissolved its incorporation and was annexed into the city of Grand Prairie. In 1944, the city built a new one-story city hall designed by architect E. Carlyle Smith. The building was completed in April 1945. In 1945, the city appointed J.C. Swadley its first paid fireman at a salary of \$175 per month. When he retired in 1949, G.H. Turner had been mayor for 13 terms, 24 years, a record still unbroken. In 1949, the city opened its first fire station at 321 W. Main St., where it still operates today.

In 1950, the Uptown Theater opened in downtown Grand Prairie with 1,100 seats. It opened as an unsegregated theater, years before other theaters followed suit. In the mid-1950s, the Great Southwest Corporation began building the Great Southwest Industrial Park, the nation's largest planned industrial park at 5,000 acres.

In 1953, the Bagdad Club burned to the ground, in what was called "the most spectacular fire in western Dallas County." In 1954, the city's first library opened its doors. In 1957, the Dallas-Fort Worth turnpike opened, streamlining traffic from Dallas to Fort Worth and detouring traffic away from downtown Grand Prairie. By 1959, traffic on Main Street had dropped by 8,000 vehicles a day. In 1959, the Florence Hill School District consolidated into the Grand Prairie Independent School District, adding 600 pupils and 25 square miles of land into the GPISD.

In the late 1950s, Grand Prairie's incorporated area was about 13 square miles. About 68 additional square miles

were under first reading for annexation, but a lack of funds for infrastructure kept those areas on hold. But when the state legislature



threatened to limit annexations, the City Council acted quickly to annex land increasing Grand Prairie's area from 16 to 57 square miles.

1960-1980

Annexation resulted in growth, for 1962 marked Grand Prairie's greatest single year record in construction growth in its history, with almost \$12 million in building permits issued.

In 1966, the Dalworth school system became part of GPISD. In 1967, Grand Prairie was named one of the top seven cleanest cities by Time Magazine. South Grand Prairie High School was built in 1969 with an enrollment of 448 students versus today's 3,381.

Grand Prairie's population surpassed 50,000 in 1970 making it the same size as its neighbor, Arlington.

In 1972, City Hall received its first computer, which was purchased to handle the city's water bill accounts and cost \$2,000 a month. Traders Village opened in 1973 and GPISD introduced middle schools in 1974. In March 1979, the Grand Prairie Police Department became one of only three departments in the nation to receive a new computer system. And the Mountain Creek Bridge opened in 1979, 23 years after the lake was built.

1980-2010

In 1984, Grand Prairie's own Charley Taylor was inducted into the National Football Hall of Fame. A Dalworth High School graduate, Taylor was a wide receiver for the Washington Redskins.

The Westchester neighborhood

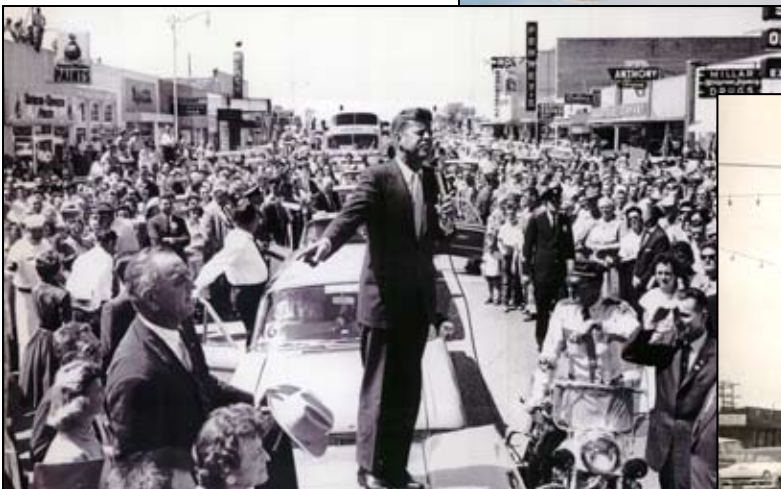
celebrated its grand opening in 1985, heralded as one of the finest residential developments in southwest Dallas County.

In 1987, the Grand Prairie Parks Department opened the Charley Taylor Recreation Center and in 1989 opened the Senior Center. That year also saw the Corps of Engineers complete Lake Joe Pool. In March 1990, the Palace of Wax and Ripley's Believe It Or Not re-opened in its current building after a fire destroyed the Wax Museum in 1988.

In 1992, citizens passed a half cent sales tax to be used to build Lone Star Park, a class one horse racetrack. The Post Time Pavilion opened in 1996, with the Grandstand following in 1997. The city's premier golf course Tangle Ridge, opened in 1995, said to "forever change the face of public golf" in DFW by golf writer Matt McKay.

The year 1997 was big for economic development with 23 new companies opening, including the first major retail in 10 years with Towne Crossing Center, featuring Home Depot and Target.

In 1999, Grand Prairie was named Fastest Growing City for economic development in the Metroplex and citizens passed a quarter cent sales tax to fund parks and recreation projects, ultimately creating a parks system that would earn the "best in the nation" title in 2008 by the National Recreation and Parks Association.



In 2000, the first housing development broke ground on the Estes Peninsula and the city acquired the lake parks on Lake Joe Pool. In 2001, voters approved a 1/4 cent sales tax for street improvements, and the city opened Fire Station No. 9, the Warmack Branch Library and Nokia Theatre.

In 2002, the city opened the Ruthe Jackson Center and a plethora of new parks financed by the 1/4 cent sales tax for parks: Splash Factory, Mountain Creek Soccer center, Charley Taylor baseball fields, McFalls softball fields and Parkhill Park football fields. The same year brought major retail growth with the opening of the Sam's, PetSmart and Office Depot shopping center.

In 2003, the city successfully got a Cedar Hill ZIP code changed on the Peninsula to a Grand Prairie ZIP code.

In 2004, Lone Star Park hosted the 21st running of the Breeders Cup World Thoroughbred Championship and the city opened the Grand Prairie Memorial Gardens. The city completed the Veteran's Memorial in 2005, opened the largest putting green in Texas at Prairie Lakes and built a new home every 4 hours, which led to being named a fastest growing city in the nation.

In 2006, the Bowles Life Center and Bear Creek South Park opened; the city purchased the Uptown Theater to renovate the former movie house into a performing arts venue; and landed the Lake Prairie Towne Crossing with Super Target and Home Depot on Camp Wisdom.

In 2007 the city paid off Lone Star Park 18 years early and voters approved continuing the half cent sales tax to build a new public safety headquarters, active adult center and minor league baseball stadium.

The AirHogs minor league baseball team played their inaugural season in 2008, winning the American Association Southern Division Championship. The year 2008 also marked the opening of the restored Uptown Theater to rave reviews, and the city was named a "Best Place to Live" by Money Magazine, a Playful City USA by Kaboom, and won the National Recreation and Parks Association Gold Medal Award for best parks in the nation.

A city of promise, a city of growth, a city of location, Grand Prairie continues into the future on its path of success as we enter our next 100 years....

*Dream Big,
Play Hard,
Grand Prairie.*

Population

1910	1,107
1920	1,203
1930	1,529
1940	1,595
1950	14,594
1960	30,386
1970	50,905
1980	71,462
1990	99,616
2000	127,427
2009	166,654

