

Jessie Tannehill's Montopolis

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I. CONTEXT

Why a historical marker for Jessie Tannehill's Montopolis? Travis County has had two locations named Montopolis that significantly differ in their formation and geographic location. The first was a planned settlement in 1838 with a systematic design of building lots, farm lots, out lots and streets on a grid much like Edwin Waller's design of Austin. The plat for the town was filed with the Bastrop Clerk's office in July 1839.¹ The second location is a community that began to take shape in the early 20th century evolving over several decades ultimately becoming the neighborhood most Austinites recognize today as *the* Montopolis. In reality, the only thing they have in common is their name.

As the 20th century Montopolis community grew and the memory of the former Town of Montopolis faded, the emerging community assimilated the history of its predecessor culminating in publications inaccurately reporting the history of both the Town of Montopolis and the community of Montopolis.

A historical marker for Jessie Tannehill's Montopolis will stimulate interest in the historical significance of the East Austin area by documenting the true location of one of the oldest settlements in the county and its founder.

¹ Bastrop County Clerk's Office, Deed Book Vol C, p499-504.

II. OVERVIEW – Jessie Tannehill and his Montopolis

Montopolis is today known as a neighborhood inside Austin city limits, and south of the Colorado River. Google Maps represents the Montopolis neighborhood as an area bounded roughly by Texas State Highways 71 and 183 on the south and east, Grove Blvd on the west and the Colorado River on the north, but this is not the original location of the Town of Montopolis. Archival materials not previously researched have produced new information to complete biographical information about the Tannehill family and details of the Montopolis Town Tract never before examined in detail. Facts from these sources clarify the timing and location of the establishment of Montopolis and the life of Jesse Cornelius Tannehill.

Jessie Cornelius Tannehill was born in Kentucky on December 30, 1797². By 1823 Jesse was living in Henry County, Tennessee and on December 3, 1823 was appointed as Constable for Henry County in Capt. Dalton's militia company, for the term of two years.³ In the courtroom with Tannehill the day he was appointed Constable another man was appointed sheriff of Henry County, Edward H. Tarrant⁴. Tarrant would later move to Texas and leave his imprint on Texas History. Tarrant County, Texas is named for him.⁵

A year later Jesse would purchase his first farm in Henry County from James Greer on December 9, 1824. It was 24 acres of land southeast of Paris, Tennessee on West Sandy Creek.⁶ The following month in January 1825 Jesse and Tarrant would join the newly formed masonic lodge, Paris Lodge 55 to receive their Entered Apprenticeship.⁷ With a farm ready for a new bride, Jesse married Jane Richardson on

² Handbook of Texas Online, Jack O. Miller, "Tannehill, Jessie Cornelius," accessed November 21, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fta08>.

³ Henry County, TN Archive & Library, Will Book A, Pg. 46.

⁴ Handbook of Texas Online, "Tarrant, Edward H.," accessed May 16, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fta11>.

⁵ Henry County, TN Archive & Library, Will Book A, Pg. 39.

⁶ Henry County, TN Archive & Library, Deed Book 1, Pg. 297.

⁷ Grand Lodge of Tennessee Archives, Paris Lodge No. 55, Paris, TN. - 1825 Annual Return.

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March 31, 1825.⁸ Jesse continued to be actively involved with the Paris Masonic Lodge and received his Fellow Craft in May 1825 and Master Mason in June 1825.

When Jesse and Jane's first child was born in 1825 they named him in memory of her father, Francis Richardson who had died on October 28, 1824⁹, the fall before they were married. By the end of 1825 their household grew by two more after Jesse was appointed guardianship of Jane's minor orphan siblings, Elizabeth and Henry Richardson.¹⁰ Their last child to be born in Henry County was Cynthia Blythe Tannehill in 1826. In 1827 just before moving to Texas, Jesse sold his 24 acre tract back to James Greer that he'd purchased in 1824.¹¹

When the Tannehill's came to Texas with their two children in 1828¹² they settled near Caney in Matagorda County. In the latter part of 1828 or early in 1829 they moved to Bastrop County, locating near the Old San Antonio Road at the river crossing. As a member of Stephen F. Austin's "little colony," they lived with other pioneer families for a time in tent structures of pine poles and buffalo skins. After the town of Bastrop was laid out, Jessie Tannehill purchased five acres of land and built one of the first houses. In Bastrop, Tannehill acquired the title of "judge" and records show that on November 7, 1831, he was defeated by one vote for the office of "síndico procurador," a city attorney in Spanish or Mexican municipalities.¹³

⁸ Henry County, TN Archive & Library, Court Book A – Fall Term 1827, Appointment of Guardianship of Richardson Minors – (Records marriage date of Jesse and Jane March 31, 1825).

⁹ Family Findings - Vol. 4, No. 3 (Jul 1972) by Mid-West Tennessee Genealogical Society citing the Jackson Gazette, No. 23, Vol. 1, Nov. 6, 1824.

¹⁰ Henry County, TN Archive & Library, Will Book A, Pg. 116.

¹¹ Henry County, TN Archive & Library, Deed Book C, Pg. 33.

¹² Jessie Tannehill's Request for Admission in Austin's Colony states "moved from Tennessee and arrived in this colony April 1828" [Austin's Little Colony] –See Texas General Land Office (GLO) file number SC 000028:41 and 3.7, Austin's Register of Families.
http://www.glo.texas.gov/ncu/SCANDOCS/archives_webfiles/arcmaps/webfiles/landgrants/PDFs/1/0/2/9/1029495.pdf.

¹³ Handbook of Texas Online, Jack O. Miller, "Tannehill, Jessie Cornelius," accessed November 21, 2017, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fta08>.

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In 1832, Tannehill had secured a headright league (4,428 acres) on the Colorado River above Bastrop¹⁴ in what is now Travis County. Long before Tannehill moved his family to his headright, he sold roughly half of the headright league to Nathaniel Townsend¹⁵. The deed is dated April 25, 1835 and includes a survey sketch showing a line that splits the league in half and runs parallel with the north/ south survey lines from the river to the east or back line.¹⁶

In 1836, Capt. Robert M. Coleman built a stockade outpost, or fort, on the northern part of the Tannehill's headright. The fort has been described in publications and reports under different names such as Fort Colorado, Coleman's Fort, and Fort Coleman; in the late 19th century a settlement at the location became known as Fort Prairie. It was a Texas Ranger outpost vital to the protection of the westward expansion of settlement leading up to the establishment of Austin as the Capital of Texas.¹⁷

In 1836, when invading Mexican forces threatened the settlements along the Colorado, the Tannehills and other families fled in wagons east towards Nacogdoches along the Old San Antonio Road. This evacuation is commonly referred to as the "Runaway Scrape" during the Texas war for independence from Mexico. The Tannehills lived in Huntsville and later moved to La Grange, where they purchased property and lived until 1839.¹⁸ The last of their seven children was born there.

¹⁴ Mexican Land Grant GLO File number SC 000018:12 and English Field Notes for this title.

http://www.glo.texas.gov/ncu/SCANDOCS/archives_webfiles/arcmaps/webfiles/landgrants/PDFs/1/0/2/8/1028915.pdf.

¹⁵ Townsend's and his family fled San Felipe de Austin before the Mexica razed the town in March 1836 in which his general store was burned. For more information on Townsend see Handbook of Texas Online, "TOWNSEND, NATHANIEL," accessed September 10, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fto33>.

¹⁶ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record A, book, 1840-02/1844-03; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht746173/m1/347/?q=Travis%20County%20Deed%20Records%3A%20Deed%20Record%20a; accessed June 1, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk's Office.

¹⁷ Smithwick, Noah. The Evolution of a State, or Recollections of Old Texas Days. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983. Original copyright 1900.

¹⁸ Lewis Publishing Company, publisher. History of Texas, together with a biographical history of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson counties: containing a concise history of the state, with portraits and biographies of prominent citizens of the above named counties, and personal histories of many of the early settlers and leading families, book, 1893; Chicago.

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Prior to 1838, the last town on the edge of the frontier closest to the future location of Austin was Bastrop; Comanche, Montopolis and Waterloo did not yet exist. A few settlers, including Reuben Hornsby and John F. Webber, had established homesteads above Bastrop that would later provide the nucleus for small settlements, but at the time their farms were no more than waypoints on the trail leading north from Bastrop. In the summer of 1838, plans were in motion for what would become Montopolis and Waterloo. On June 5, Edward Burleson wrote to James Perry conveying he had returned from the mountains and examined the town site [the future Waterloo], and proposed to commence laying off lots the following week.¹⁹ Burleson apparently fulfilled the proposal: The following month when George Bonnell's party passed within sight of Fort Houston, he wrote they had reached the intended site of Montopolis at the east bank of the Colorado, and three miles further, reached Waterloo.²⁰ Note that Bonnell wrote "intended site of Montopolis," indicating there may have been some activity in process.

While the historical record is silent on dating when the first Montopolis survey stake was struck, a lawsuit filed during the 1840 fall term of the Travis County District Court by William S. Wallace²¹ against Jesse Tannehill sheds light on how early the

(texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph29785/m1/313/?q=TANNEHILL: accessed June 7, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu;

¹⁹ [Transcript of letter from Edward Burleson to James F. Perry, June 5, 1838], letter, June 5, 1838;(texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph217132/: accessed January 13, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History.

²⁰ Bonnell's Observations [manuscript]: 1838-1839, 1844, 1 v. (24 p.); 26 cm., Edward E. Ayer Manuscript Collection (Newberry Library) Newberry Library. Manuscript. Ayer MS 95. Newberry Library, Chicago IL.

²¹ Wallace was at the Battle of Brushy Creek and the Flores Fight. He is credited with killing Manuel Flores in the fight. See http://www.williamson-county-historical-commission.org/Liberty_hill/Manuel_Flores_Historical_Marker_texas.html Wallace purchased 450 acres of the Noel Bain survey on Onion Creek. See Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record C Pg. 296. His original log cabin and corn crib still exist on a tract of this land that is now part of Austin–Bergstrom International Airport property and is identified as Wallace-Burleson-Moore farmstead. See Hardy, Heck, Moore & Associates, Terri Myers, May 1996, Historic Context for Southeast Travis Co and Cultural Resources Survey and Assessment for the New Austin Airport, Travis County, Texas. Also see USDI National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form – Name: Wallace, William Simpson House, Prepared by Mary Maier,

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planning had begun. Wallace, an experienced surveyor,²² entered an agreement with Jesse Tannehill on January 20, 1838 to lay out the town of Montopolis.²³ Note that President Lamar's reported buffalo hunt (after which he is said to have stated "This should be the seat of future Empire") is credited to be in the autumn of 1837 or 1838.²⁴ The January 1838 agreement to lay out the town may be a clue that Lamar's hunting trip was the autumn of 1837 and that Tannehill was the first to capitalize on Lamar's dream. Tannehill's headright, the half he still owned, was about two miles south of the reported buffalo hunt and on the same side of the river.

In September 1838, the 800-acre tract that would become the Town of Montopolis was divided among three partners, Tannehill, Silas Dinsmore and James Smith. The deed recording the division does not describe the town by name but represents the initial planning of the partnership.²⁵ Of the three partners Dinsmore had been involved in the planning of two other towns.

Dinsmore was appointed by Sam Houston as the first chief justice of Matagorda County in December 1836, and was reappointed by President Mirabeau B. Lamar on January 23, 1839.²⁶ He had been involved in establishing the town sites of Austin and Manhattan in Matagorda County, efforts initially described as "the boom in town

May 2, 1981, Alexander Architectural Archives, University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin. Several valuable sources of information for Wallace are cited in this application.

²² John Holmes Jenkins III, ed., *Recollections of Early Texas: The Memoirs of John Holland Jenkins* (1958); rep., 4th Edition, pp 239-272 University of Texas Press in Austin, 1975),

²³ Travis County Archives, District Court Case Files, William S. Wallace vs. Jesse C. Tannehill, Cause No. 10, Fall Term 1840

²⁴ Texas State Historical Association. *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, Volume 14, July 1910 - April, 1911, p114-115 periodical, 1911; Austin, Texas. (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth101054/; accessed January 13, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Texas State Historical Association.

²⁵ Bastrop County Clerk's Office, Deed book, Vol B, page 229 and 269.

²⁶ Handbook of Texas Online, Diana J. Kleiner, "Dinsmore, Silas," accessed May 16, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fdi20>.

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speculation of 1837–39,”^{27,28,29} but which met the same fate as Montopolis: never developing into solid communities.

Little is known of James Smith before he came to Travis County.³⁰ Smith is reported to have settled near the north line of Montopolis about a half mile north of the river and was the only settler there before 1839.³¹ After the establishment of Austin in 1839, Smith purchased lots on the east side of the government tract that shared the west line of the Montopolis tract. Smith died on January 25, 1845 from a gunshot wound received from a “villainous overseer” of his.³² In 1854 a lawsuit was taken up between his heirs to settle the estate. Out of this settlement his wife Elizabeth Smith was assigned 126 acres embracing the “*the homestead residence*” consisting of outlots 39,

²⁷ Handbook of Texas Online, Rachel Jenkins, "Austin, TX (Matagorda County)," accessed May 16, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hra94>.

²⁸ Handbook of Texas Online, Rachel Jenkins, "Manhattan, TX," accessed May 16, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hrmax>.

²⁹ Detailed information on Austin & Manhattan:
<http://www.usgenwebsites.org/TXMatagorda/communities.htm>.

³⁰ The Montopolis resident, James W. Smith, is not to be confused with the first Travis County Judge, James W. Smith, that was killed by Indians on January 22, 1841 – see Austin Gazette, Jan. 27, 1841 and Roberts, Madge Thornall. The Personal Correspondence of Sam Houston, Volume 1: 1839-1845, book, 1996 Pg.s 75, 77 & 79; Denton, Texas.
(texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc9715/m1/1/?q=%22austin%20city%20gazette%22; accessed September 10, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Press.

³¹ Brown, Frank. Annals of Travis County and of the City of Austin (From the Earliest Times to the Close of 1875): Volume 2, Chapter V Pg. 29, book, Date Unknown;
(texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph841129/m1/104/?q=Chapter%20V; accessed June 1, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Historical Commission.

³² History of Boggy Creek Farm and farmhouse, <https://www.boggycreekfarm.com/history>.

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40 and 41 of the City of Austin and farm lots 4, 5 and 8 of Town of Montopolis.³³ ³⁴ She later sold 41 ½ acres of the Montopolis portion of this tract to her daughter Caroline A. (Smith) Brown. The deed to Caroline describes the tract as a “*farm known as the “Old Place” of James Smith*”.³⁵ This tract is bisected by the H&TC Railroad and shares most of its west line with the east line of the Austin outlots 40 and 41 where Boggy Creek Farm and James Smith’s 1840/41 house is located today³⁶ These tracts can be seen on an 1891 map of Austin and surrounding properties.³⁷ The “Old Place” of James Smith is most likely the location that Brown described as being where Smith first located in 1838.

In January 1839, the towns of Waterloo and Comanche were incorporated, and the commission to select a new seat of government was appointed. Some sources state Montopolis was incorporated before Austin, but it was not. That same year, Tannehill moved to the headright where Montopolis was to be located and built a two-story home and outhouses from logs taken from old Fort Coleman.³⁸

³³Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record X, book, 1872-08/1873-03; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth746177/m1/452/?q=Travis%20County%20Deed%20Records:%20Deed%20Record%20X; accessed June 1, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk’s Office.

³⁴ Travis County Archives, District Court Case Files, Smith vs. Smith, Cause No. 253, Spring Term 1854.

³⁵ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 28, Pg. 289 book, 1874-11/1875-03; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth787618/m1/295/?q=Travis%20County%20Deed%20Records:%20Deed%20Record%2028; accessed June 1, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk’s Office.

³⁶ History of Boggy Creek Farm and farmhouse, <https://www.boggycreekfarm.com/history>.

³⁷ Austin and Surrounding Properties - 1891, GLO Map #421, <http://www.glo.texas.gov/history/archives/map-store/index.cfm#item/421>.

³⁸ Brown, Frank. Annals of Travis County and of the City of Austin (From the Earliest Times to the Close of 1875): Volume 2, book, Date Unknown; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth841129/m1/17/?q=tannehill; accessed June 7, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Historical Commission.

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Several historical accounts of the City of Austin describe Montopolis and Waterloo as rivals for the new seat of government.³⁹ The two closely located communities would be enough to produce a competitive atmosphere but there was more to it than that. Before Burleson's upriver trip in the summer of 1838 he had inquired with the administrator of Stephen F. Austin's estate, James F. Perry, about a certain 10-league tract that Austin had claimed. If Austin had received clear title, the tract would have spanned an area from Tannehill's upper line to Mount Bonnell with Waterloo at the center. As a result, Perry and the heirs of Austin, much like Tannehill, rushed to lay out a town, confident that they would secure title to the land and profit from the location, provided it was selected as the seat of government. That is where the rivalry started. In August 1838, Burleson reported to Perry that the proprietors of Montopolis were stirring up Waterloo settlers by telling them they would not receive clear titles from James Perry.⁴⁰

With the towns in hot competition, was Montopolis ever considered for the seat of government? Judge Alex Terrell's 1910 speech to the Texas State Historical Commission implies, in the earliest planning stages, it may have been:

*"A few cabins had been built on the river two and a half miles below [Jacob] Harrell's cabin, and they called the place 'Montopolis.' **The site selected for the Capital extended below and above that place so as to include Harrell's cabin. Two or three other settlers had built their cabins in 1839 at the river ford near Harrell's, and they called the place 'Waterloo.'**"*⁴¹

Unfortunately, the commission left no field notes or communications of their January-March deliberations to confirm Terrell's claim, but if accurate, Montopolis

³⁹Gray, S. A & Moore, W. D. Mercantile and General City Directory of Austin, Texas---1872-1873., book, 1872; Austin, Texas. (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth38126/; accessed January 15, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

⁴⁰ Jenkins, John H & Kesselus, Kenneth; Edward Burleson Texas Frontier Leader; Austin, Tex. : Jenkins Pub. Co., 1990., p159-163.

⁴¹ Texas State Historical Association. The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, Volume 14, July 1910 - April, 1911, p114-115 periodical, 1911; Austin, Texas. (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth101054/; accessed January 13, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Texas State Historical Association.

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came very close to achieving capital designation. If this failure was not enough to dim her future, a change in the siting of the city of Austin may have been the final blow. In June Edwin Waller wrote to President Lamar describing that change:

*"The location I have selected [for the city of Austin] does not conflict with the town below as you fear. I had been advised to place it below but chose the present site which gives a distance between our lower line and the upper line of the other town of at least two miles. This selection of mine has been highly approved by all who have seen it and I doubt not will give universal satisfaction."*⁴²

The only "town below" that Waller could be describing is Montopolis. Waller's use of words may actually hint that, in reality, they did not want a sister city in such close proximity to Lamar's dream city. Waller writes, "*The location I have selected does not conflict with the town below.*" It begs the question, who conflicts with who? Was the underlying concern actually that Montopolis might prosper and overshadow Lamar's dreamed seat of the empire? Over 100 years later, during an Austin City Council discussion, a council member expressed a similar sentiment stating that she did not want any little "wart" cities on the outskirts.⁴³

The siting of Montopolis may have been a factor to disqualify it for the seat of government and for Waller to move Austin two miles upriver: Almost all of the tract occupies low-lying areas prone to flooding from the Colorado River and Boggy Creek. In 1839, no settler had been there long enough to witness such floods, but the terrain was obvious. Until the LCRA projects tamed the Colorado, the lower end of the Montopolis tract would have been inundated during several major river floods. Boggy Creek floods devastated the Govalle area until being channeled by the US Army Corps of engineers in the 1980's and 90's. The Boggy Creek 100-year floodplain, pre-channelization, extended roughly from Bolm Road and Springdale to south of 5th street at the corner of E. Cesar Chavez and Shady Lane.⁴⁴ At 719 Shady Lane Howard's

⁴² The papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar by Lamar, Mirabeau Buonaparte, 1798-1859; p 11; Texas State Library; Gulick, Charles Adams, 1896-; Elliott, Katherine; Allen, Winnie; Smither, Harriet.

⁴³ Minutes of City Council, City of Austin, Texas Regular Meeting, October 4, 1951 10:00A.M. Accessed online at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/edims/search.cfm>.

⁴⁴ Boggs, Anna Christine 2016. Controlling Boggy: A Historical Study of Creek Channelization in Austin, Texas. Master's thesis Retrieved from

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Montopolis Nursery is approximately on Farm Lot 2 of the town tract, about a quarter of a mile from the river. 719 Shady Lane is actually closer to Boggy than the river but it is on a high spot just out of the Boggy 100 year flood plain. A Colorado River flood in 1938 covered Howard's Nursery and deposited sand, destroying stock. Eugene Howard claimed the deposits ruined the soil and caused \$58,000 in damage.⁴⁵ Any of the highest Colorado River floods, coupled with Boggy Creek flooding, would submerge nearly all of the town tract south of Bolm Road.

In April 1839, Waterloo was selected as the location for the new seat of government, but Jessie Tannehill and his partners continued to develop a town formalizing plans, finally recording the town plat with the Bastrop Clerk on July 2, 1839. The deed book entry states that

*"the Citizens J. C. Tannahill (sic), J. B. Lester, Wm. M. Eastland, James Smith, John L. Lynch and Silas Dinsmore, declared that they were the joint owners in common and proprietors of the Town of Montopolis, including the adjacent farming lands, containing in all eight hundred acres, it being a part of the Tannahill (sic) League...contiguous to the upper line of the said League fronting the Colorado River and extending back for a quantity between parallel lines, being a breadth of Twelve Hundred and fifty one varas...all eight-hundred acres, it being apart of the Tannahill (sic) League."*⁴⁶

This deed clarifies the location of the Town of Montopolis on the left bank of the Colorado River, opposite of the current community of Montopolis. The north line of the town tract is the north line of Tannehill's remaining half league, and the south line is the north line of the half league Tannehill sold to Nathaniel Townsend. With this information and GIS mapping tools the town tract can be represented as an overlay on contemporary maps.⁴⁷

The town platted was approximately 800 acres out of the lower portion of Tannehill's remaining half league. There were 14 small farm lots from approximately

<https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/43926/BOGGS-MASTERSREPORT-2016.pdf?sequence=1>.

⁴⁵ The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Jul 27, 1939; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Austin American Statesman Pg. 2.

⁴⁶Bastrop County Clerk's Office, Deed book, Vol C, page 499-504.

⁴⁷ Sheet 1 thru 4 - Montopolis Tract Maps – Lanny Ottosen and Griffin Price, 2017.

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22 to 25 acres each, and three large farm lots just over 100 acres each. There were 53 building lots 240' x 240' that were subdivided into eight 60' x 120' lots and two fractional lots. Main Street ran from the river northeast through the middle of the building lots and small farm lots. One deed record identifies the northeast corner of block 48 as B Street and H Street indicating all streets, other than Main Street and Broad Street, were alpha names.⁴⁸

The January 1838 survey agreement between William S. Wallace and Tannehill describes a substantially larger town than the final plat filed in July 1829.⁴⁹ The agreement states Wallace was to lay off 644 Building Lots and 40 Farm Lots. Assuming the 644 lots were on eight lot blocks like the final plat there would have been 80½ town building blocks. A town of this size would have occupied much more than the final 800 acre tract, perhaps taking up all of Tannehill's remaining one-half league.

Travis County Commissioner's court minutes dated June 2, 1840 record a road from Austin to Bastrop, and provide details that help align the town tract relative to Austin. The court minutes state:

*"the road shall go down Pine Street (5th Street) of the Town tract of Austin till you strike Broad Street of the tract of Montopolis & continuing Broad Street to Main Street in said Town of Montopolis then along Main Street till it strikes the corner of farm lots no. Six and Seven then east with the line of said lots Six and Seven to the lower line of the [Montopolis] Town tract."*⁵⁰

The Commissioner's minutes are the only document that mention Broad Street, but an 1846 article of agreement dividing the estate of James Smith into three equal parts among Jessie Tannehill, Thomas Smith and James Smith heirs, pinpoints

⁴⁸ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record A, book, 1840-02/1844-03; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph746173/m1/347/?q=Travis%20County%20Deed%20Records%3A%20Deed%20Record%20a: accessed June 1, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk's Office.

⁴⁹ Travis County Archives, District Court Case Files, William S. Wallace vs. Jesse C. Tannehill, Cause No. 10, Fall Term 1840.

⁵⁰ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Clerk Records: Commissioners Court Minutes A, p 16, book, 1839-02/1852-06; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph662100/: accessed January 14, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk's Office.

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Main Street. The road ordered six years earlier by the Commissioners had become an established route as evidenced by the 1846 agreement stipulation of “*reserving and keeping open the Main street leading to the river.*” The survey calls for the land division to clearly define Main Street’s location and width, providing the basis for mapping Main Street through the building lots.⁵¹ As can be seen on the attached map, Montopolis Main Street is the same route as present day Shady Lane, and the corner of farm lots six and seven described in the 1840 Commissioner’s Court minutes are on Shady Lane north of Boggy Creek, in the parking lot of Dan’s Burgers on Airline Drive. The 1840 Commissioner’s Court route can be further traced by newspaper reports describing a “Montopolis Road.” In 1895, Julia Lee Sinks described her approach to Austin from the east as “*We crossed Walnut Creek at the old crossing and not long after reached the old **Montopolis road**, and on it we reached the City of the Hills.*”⁵² A 1931 Austin newspaper described the route to the new Austin abattoir (slaughterhouse), but approaching from the west, or from the city, to Pleasant Valley road:

*“Austin people who plan to visit the plant (the abattoir) are asked to go out East Sixth street, down Pedernales to the **Montopolis road** (5th street) across the H.&T.C. railroad tracks and turn to the left at Pleasant Valley road leading to the abattoir.”*⁵³

⁵¹ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record B, book, Pg. 305, 1844-03/1849-12; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph746175/: accessed January 24, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk’s Office.
<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph746175/m1/319/?q=Travis%20County%20Deed%20Records%20Deed%20Record%20b>

⁵² The Galveston Daily News. (Galveston, Tex.), Vol. 54, No. 203, Ed. 1 Sunday, October 13, 1895, newspaper, October 13, 1895; Galveston, Texas.
(texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph465919/: accessed January 23, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Abilene Library Consortium. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph465919/m1/14/?q=montopolis>.

⁵³ The Austin American (1914-1973); Mar 22, 1931; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Austin American Statesman p.10.

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The abattoir and the streets described are visible on a 1939 City of Austin, Texas Use District Map.⁵⁴ A 1939 Austin news article completes the route description connecting the “Montopolis road” to Shady Lane.⁵⁵ It may have been common customary to describe the route as the Montopolis Road, but like its progenitor, would never be shown as such on maps.

The same June 2, 1840 commissioner's court minutes also record that Wesley Hunt was granted permission to establish a ferry across the Colorado River “*a short distance above [the] crossing at Montopolis*”.⁵⁶ There are several sources that help triangulate the location of this ferry. A family genealogy of Wesley Hunt and his wife Jane (Bratton) Hunt states this ferry was located about a mile from Austin outlots the Bratton family owned. These outlots were number 29, 30 & 14 of Division O; 29 & 30 fronted the current E. Cesar Chavez on the south and Outlots 14 and 30 fronted current Tillery St. on the east. Just a stone's throw to the river from outlots 29 and 30 was a place once called Bratton Shoals⁵⁷, which was approximately where the current Longhorn Dam is now located. This is likely the location of the Hunt Ferry. So what was the crossing at Montopolis these minutes mention? An agreement between the Montopolis partners entitled James Smith to establish a ferry at the foot of Main Street on the river, although there is no evidence Smith ever exercised the option, but it provides a probable reference point for the Montopolis Crossing.⁵⁸ Hunt's ferry was

⁵⁴ City of Austin, Texas Use District Map - 1939, GLO Map #452, <http://www.glo.texas.gov/history/archives/map-store/index.cfm#item/452>.

⁵⁵ The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Nov 22, 1939;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Austin American Statesman
Pg. 6.

⁵⁶ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Clerk Records: Commissioners Court Minutes A, book, 1839-02/1852-06; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph662100/m1/58/; accessed June 4, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk's Office.

⁵⁷ Gammel, Hans Peter Mareus Neilsen. The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897 Volume 4, book, 1898; Austin, Texas. (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph6730/m1/1298/?q=bratton; accessed June 7, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu;

⁵⁸ Jesse C. Tannehill Papers, 1832-1867, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, Texas

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discontinued in 1841⁵⁹, after which a number of other ferries were operated above and below Montopolis. It was not until 1877 that the Montopolis Ferry Company was incorporated, launching the last ferry that would serve that area in the 19th century and the only one bearing the name Montopolis.

From 1840 to 1842 a series of legal disputes involving Tannehill and Smith probably contributed heavily to the ultimate dissolution among the partners. The first was the aforementioned lawsuit filed by William S. Wallace in the fall term of the 1840 Travis County District Court. The next was a petition dated December 29, 1840 filed by Tannehill to the 5th Congress. Tannehill's petition constitutes the first of two "border wars" where Tannehill had to fight to maintain the boundaries of the Montopolis tract on both his upper and lower lines:

*"To the Hon Senate & House of Representatives
Of the Republic of Texas*

*Your petitioner would respectfully solicit
the attention of your Hon body to the conflicting
surveys of the Austin City Tract & his land.
The Surveyor appointed for the purpose of dividing
the Austin City Tract when running the boundary
line of Said tract digressed materially from the
original surveys as they are plainly marked
& encroached upon the land of your petitioner
thereby cutting off a considerable quantity of valuable
land part of which is in cultivation & has been
sold by the Government Agent.
The land of your petitioner is his own headright which
he received from the Mexican Government as a colonist
& which he has owned through many years of toil &*

⁵⁹ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Clerk Records: Commissioners Court Minutes A, book, 1839-02/1852-06; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph662100/m1/73/; accessed June 7, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk's Office.

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danger & no part of his land is included in the Austin City tract as established by the Commissioners who located the Seat of Government.

*He would therefore ask your Hon body to have the dividing line between his land and the Austin City tract established according to the original Survey & your petitioner as in duty bound will ever pray,
Jesse C. Tannehill”*⁶⁰

It would be January 18, 1842 in the 6th Congress session before the survey error was rectified with the outcome in Tannehill's favor:

*“[The] Committee on Public Lands, reported that the government Surveyor had overreached upon the tract of Jesse C. Tannehill in surveying the Austin City out lots, and recommended the cecession [sic] of the sale which had been made of said lands the money refu[n]ded to the purchaser, and the land returned to Mr. Tannehill.”*⁶¹

By December 1839 the Masons had moved the Grand Lodge of the Republic of Texas to Austin. In November of the following year Tannehill attended what may be his first lodge meeting since he left Tennessee. He and a man named K. Holliday are recorded as brother visitors from Paris Lodge, No 55, Tennessee. In 1846 he was nominated and elected unanimously as Grand Treasurer of the Grand Lodge of the Republic of Texas serving until at least 1852.⁶²

In the middle of his fight with the government over his upper line Tannehill was also trying to collect on a debt. In the fall of 1841 Tannehill and Smith initiated a suit

⁶⁰ Ancestry.com. Texas, Memorials and Petitions, 1834-1929 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013. This collection was indexed by Ancestry World Archives Project contributors. Original data: Memorials and Petitions. Austin, Texas: Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

⁶¹ House Journal: 6th Congress Regular Session, 1841-1842 Volume II, Capital Printing Co. 1944, accessed online at the Legislative Reference Library of Texas <https://lrl.texas.gov/collections/journals/journals.cfm>.

⁶² [Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas From Its Organization in City of Houston, Dec. A. D. 1837-1857, Volume 1.](#)

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against one John Wood claiming he owed them money on a past due note. The note was dated January 16th 1839. Wood's petition claimed that before the note was given he was induced by representatives of the plaintiffs or agents of the Town of Montopolis to settle there. Wood stated they (the plaintiffs) promised if he would do so and erect buildings of certain dimensions, they would convey to him in fee simple the lots where he had erected the buildings, free from all costs. Additionally, they would sell to him certain farm lots, and that he would have the use and enjoyment of timber growing on other parts of the town tract. Wood claimed he had met his commitment to erect the buildings, and he took a note for the farm lots, but the plaintiffs refused and prohibited him from getting timber from any other part of the town tract. The effect was they prevented him from cultivating his lots, which he then claimed had been rendered wholly useless. The plaintiffs also refused to make him titles for the lots where he erected buildings. Wood therefore refused to pay his note because Tannehill and Smith refused to hold up their end of the agreement. The case dragged on until October 1846, when the court ordered it dismissed with each party paying their own cost. This case reveals some interesting points in that Wood's ability to purchase the farm lots was conditioned on the commitment to erect buildings. He then took the note for the farm lots, which was dated January 16, 1839. Evidently Wood had erected the buildings before January 1839. He obviously had to be at work by the fall of 1838, so after James Smith, Wood may have been the second settler to arrive.⁶³

The fall term of 1842 brought another suit that represents the second in Tannehill's "border wars." In the first one, Tannehill fought for his upper or west line between his tract and the Austin City tract. This time he fought for the lower line or east line between his land and Nathaniel Townsend. Townsend sued Tannehill over the location of the line separating their tracts. The outcome was an order for the county surveyor to resurvey the Townsend line. The squabbling over the line between Tannehill and Townsend would continue for twenty years.

In 1849 when Tannehill sued Peyton Wade Nowlin for squatting on his land Townsend added himself as a defendant, claiming it was his land and Nowlin was a renter. Tannehill claimed that Townsend never took possession of his land and therefore it belonged to Tannehill. The court case is incomplete and does not contain

⁶³ Travis County Archives, District Court Case Files, Tannehill & Smith vs. John Wood, Cause No. 5, Fall Term 1840.

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the final judgment, but obviously Townsend won as he sold tracts after this date, and the balance was left to his heirs. The last two cases over the same property line between them were Townsend vs. Tannehill in 1859 and Tannehill vs. Townsend in 1861. The latter appears to have finally ended the riff.

Most accounts of Montopolis in its first two years mention a few families living there, but who were they? Based on various sources, an implied "census" can be compiled:

James Smith & Family (arrived in 1838)

Jesse Tannehill & Family (arrived in 1838 or 1839)

James Wood (erected buildings before January 1839)

Augustus Kertley (arrived at least in 1840 as evidenced by November 1840 sheriff sale of his house on block 46) ⁶⁴

Neiland Sowles⁶⁵

By 1841, the Montopolis partnerships were liquidated and the land began to be sold in an irregular pattern that, with the exception of Main Street, began dissolving boundaries of many of the lots laid out in 1839. Furthermore, the development of Govalle in the 1850's by Swen Swenson unintentionally contributed to erasing the original Montopolis boundaries and memory. The land that Swenson purchased, becoming Govalle, was comprised of out lots of the government tract sharing the west line of the Montopolis tract. As Swenson and other Swedes purchased land eastward into the Tannehill league and the old Montopolis town tract, the border of the area recognized as Govalle moved eastward with it. The present eastern Govalle boundary runs south from where 183 intersects Springdale Road to the Montopolis Bridge taking in roughly half of the original Montopolis Town tract area.

From 1852 to 1859 Jesse divided his land among his living children: Cynthia B. Minor received Austin City outlots and a tract from the James C. Harrelson survey. The other children, Jane Burleson, Frances Richardson Tannehill, and Jesse J. Tannehill all received portions of his headright consisting of over 200 acres each. One

⁶⁴ Bonnell, George W. Texas Sentinel. (Austin, Tex.), Vol. 1, No. 48, Ed. 1, Saturday, November 14, 1840, newspaper, November 14, 1840; Austin, Texas. (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph80049/m1/2/: accessed June 2, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History.

⁶⁵ Bastrop County Clerk's Office, Deed Book Vol C, p508

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tract he lived on until he died and was deeded by the aforementioned siblings to their brother William J. Tannehill. No probate, will or deed from Jesse Tannehill to the children has been located. This tract was about 378 acres. Jane Tannehill died January 17, 1855 and Jesse March 17, 1863.

The earliest occurrence of the Montopolis place name on 19th century maps is the USGS 1894 topographic map of Austin and Travis County that identifies "Montopolis Ferry." Nearby Del Valle is shown as a town on this map because the post office that it grew up around had been established sixteen years earlier on June 5, 1878 with William M. Givens as the first postmaster.⁶⁶ The ferry shown on the 1894 map can be traced to the Montopolis Ferry Company chartered December 3, 1877 for a term of 20 years. An 1879 lawsuit, Montopolis Ferry Company vs. B.R. Townsend, narrows the target to locate where the ferry landing may have been. The suit awarded Townsend possession of a tract of land that matches the tract of land inherited from the estate of his father Nathaniel Townsend. The southwest corner of B.R. Townsend's tract adjoined the southeast corner of the Montopolis Town Tract. The suit also described a nuisance created by the ferry company consisting of ferry cables and anchors on Townsend's tract that the ferry company was to remove. The case files identify the president of the company as John T. Miller, who owned a large farm on the right bank of the Colorado River on the Santiago Del Valle grant.⁶⁷ GIS map studies of the Montopolis Town Tract locate the shared Montopolis/Townsend corner on the left bank of the Colorado River approximately in the middle of current Colorado River Park Wildlife Sanctuary which is also directly cross river from John T. Miller's tract. Until 1950 Montopolis Drive was named Miller Lane as the road ran from Montopolis Ford and later Montopolis Bridge following John T. Miller's property line running southwest. Therefore, the ferry landings on both sides of the river are most likely to have been located just upriver from the current Montopolis bridge. A deed or lease agreement for this tract to the ferry company has not been located but the fact that the court ordered to possession to Townsend implies some form of agreement had been in

⁶⁶ Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, Austin 1:125,000 1894.

⁶⁷ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record P, book, 1860-11/1862-10; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph746170/m1/546/?q=Deed%20record%20p: accessed June 27, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk's Office.

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place.⁶⁸ The fact that Miller was the president of the company, and his farm was on the south side of the river may explain why the post office established there in 1897 was named Montopolis.⁶⁹

In the early to mid-20th century, while the Montopolis community west of the river began to evolve, the name lived on in the original town tract area east of the river through local landmarks including the Montopolis Drive-In Theater, Howard's Montopolis Nursery, and the Montopolis School. Today, none of these remain and the focus has shifted entirely to the community west of the river on the Santiago Del Valle grant area. Jessie Tannehill never owned any part of the Del Valle grant, nor was he in any way responsible for development or settlement west of the Colorado River, where the current community of Montopolis is located.

By 1965 the last remaining cultural imprint of Jessie Tannehill in the original Montopolis Town Tract area was his house and the family cemetery behind it. That year a descendant of Jessie Tannehill, Ann Thiele Holder, wrote Texas Governor John Connally requesting her ancestor Jessie Tannehill and his wife's remains be relocated to the Texas State Cemetery.⁷⁰ The letter stated they were buried behind a house at 5510 Ledesma Street, Austin, Texas. The request was granted, and they were reinterred to the State Cemetery in 1965.

Holder describes other burials in what she calls the "family plot." They also represent a unique situation as they are reported to contain the remains of slaves. She describes a negro family that Jesse had bought: Mordecai, his wife Polly, and their son R.D. Holder states that Jesse, with his son Frank, Mordecai, and R.D., hauled logs and bricks from the abandoned Fort Colorado and helped erect Jesse's two-story house and these four men erected Frank's house. She reports that when Frank Tannehill was on furlough from war in about January 1864 he and his wife Sarah visited his father and

⁶⁸ Travis County Archives, District Court Case Files, Montopolis Ferry Company vs. B.R. Townsend, Cause No. 5107, Fall Term 1879.

⁶⁹ John J. Germann and Myron Janzen, *Texas Post Offices by County* (1986) sourced from the Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-1971. NARA Microfilm Publication, M841, 145 rolls. Records of the Post Office Department, Record Group Number 28. Washington, D.C.: National Archives. Accessed online at Ancestry.com. U.S., Appointments of U. S. Postmasters, 1832-1971 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

⁷⁰ Letter to Governor John Connally and supporting documents supplied from the files of the Texas State Cemetery.

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mothers burial plot observing that “*faithful Mordecai and Polly, too, had succumbed to old age and infirmities during the past year, and they had been placed close to close to R.D. in a corner of the family plot.*” Therefore Mordecai and Polly’s death dates can be estimated as 1863, the same year as Jesse. According to Holder, in the spring of 1862 when Frank enlisted in the CSA 16th Infantry, R.D. had accompanied him to Camp Groce at Hempstead, Texas. In April when R.D. became seriously ill, Frank sent him back home to be nursed by Polly and Charlotte but to no avail, he died. Therefore R.D.’s death date is about April 1862. Charlotte was also a slave in the Frank Tannehill household and may have been R.D.’s wife. Based on Holder’s linear story-line Charlotte was still alive in 1864. A fourth slave Holder identified was a grandson of Mordecai and Polly named Lee. Charlotte and Lee’s death date and burial locations are not mentioned in Holder’s book.⁷¹

It is important to note that Holder states her book is not a “*history book nor a literal biography,*” and that she tried to “*characterize the principals involved according to the way they have been described to [her],*” which implies she understandably relied on elements of oral history. However, these burial reports and a deed describing a cemetery coinciding with the known burial location, warrant protection of the site. The Texas State Historical Commission has recorded this site as TV-C207.

Two 19th century deeds describe the outline of a cemetery that coincides with the known location from which Jesse and Jane were moved. The first is a deed for a 34.7 acre tract from William J. Tannehill to Carl Sjoberg dated January 1, 1875.⁷² The deed calls set apart the northeast corner of the tract describing two corners of a cemetery roughly 72’ x 47’, an area much larger than the typical 19th century family plots. The second deed is from Carl Sjoberg to Claus Sjoberg dated June 20, 1891.⁷³ After this

⁷¹ Tennessee to Texas Francis Richardson Tannehill 1825-1864, Ann Thiele Holder, Austin Pemberton Press, 1966 – copy available at the Austin History Center.

⁷² Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 28, book, Pg. 362, 1874-11/1875-03; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth787618/m1/368/?q=Travis%20County%20Deed%20Records:%20Deed%20Record%2028: accessed June 5, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk’s Office.

⁷³ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 101, book, 1890-09/1891-08; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth834317/m1/513/?q=Travis%20County%20Deed%20Records:

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sale the tract was combined with other tracts, resold and subdivided many times, and no other deeds described the cemetery after 1891. The location of the burials on the property was confirmed by two individuals who had visited the cemetery before the Tannehills' graves were relocated. The first, Diane Ellis, a daughter of Anne Thiele Holder, identified the location on a grid drawing of the property.⁷⁴ Diane stated that when they went to see the graves her mother told her that some neighborhood boys found the headstones on the bank of the creek and carried them back up the hill and placed them on the graves. The second was Raul Espinoza, a great-grandson of Celia Martinez who was the property owner in 1965⁷⁵ when the Tannehills were relocated. Raul's identification was made during a pedestrian survey of the property on February 24, 2018 hosted by the current property owners and attended by the author, TCHC members Bob Ward, Richard Denney and Kelly Russell. Also in attendance was another descendant of Celia and cousin of Raul, Patricia Pardo-Savedra. The burial location is at the peak of a ridge line north of Ledesma Street. The north side of the location is a sharp cut bank in Little Walnut Creek (previously known as Fort Branch). Diane Ellis stated that at the time she saw it, she was concerned that it [the cemetery] would wash away because of the creek bank erosion.⁷⁶

In a 1968 interview, Anne Holder stated, "*the house built by Tannehill is still in existence at 5510 Ledesma Street, Austin. The house, now remodeled, was built from cedar logs and bricks that were retrieved when Fort Colorado was dismantled.*"⁷⁷ Due to subdivisions of the property after 1965, the 5510 street address no longer exists but has been determined to be the lot at 5506 Ledesma Street. The original house was still occupied in 1971 but based on review of historic aerial photographs it appears to have been demolished in 1973. GIS mapping of the original Montopolis tract reveals the

[%20Deed%20Record%20101](#): accessed June 5, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk's Office.

⁷⁴ Ellis, Diane, Re: Grid, Email to Ottosen, Lanny, February 20, 2018.

⁷⁵ Travis County Clerk Deed Records, Volume 2408, Page 253, Carl & Tura Hobbs to Celia Martinez, December 27, 1961.

⁷⁶ Ellis, Diane, Re: Cemetery, Email to Ottosen, Lanny, February 20, 2018.

⁷⁷ Texas State Historical Association. The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Volume 72, July 1968 - April, 1969, periodical, 1969; p 187 Austin, Texas.

(texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth117146/: accessed January 16, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Texas State Historical Association. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth117146/m1/220/?q=ledesma>

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house and burials were near the northeast corner of Farm Lot 3.⁷⁸ In 1975 Tannehill descendant Ann Thiele Holder and her husband donated a collection of antique tools to the Jourdan-Bachman Pioneer Farms in Austin, Texas. The oldest item in their donated collection was reported to have come from the Tannehill homesite on Ledesma.⁷⁹ Unfortunately the collections at Jourdan-Bachman were not catalogued so this Tannehill artifact cannot be identified.

An unpublished Tannehill history manuscript states the house was moved 200 feet west and south of its original location.⁸⁰ Currently the Handbook of Texas online reports the house was moved 200 feet north and east of the original site, but based on a review of a source data for this description, it is apparently a mistake. No other source has been located to support or refute these statements. Based on review of historic aerial imagery the house was in the same location from 1937 until it was demolished before 1973. Ann Thiele Holder's 1966 book on the Tannehill family includes a photograph of the house as it was in 1965 and an artist's conception of the same.⁸¹ The location of the house was only about 40 feet west of the Tannehill-Townsend line that was heavily disputed until the final resolution in 1861. If the house moved in the direction Baumgardner described, it would have originally been on the Townsend tract. Assuming Baumgardner was repeating oral history from Tannehill descendants, one plausible explanation is that the final settlement of the Tannehill-Townsend line moved the line east and family oral history simply mixed up what moved, the house vs. the property line.

Frank Brown reports a different location of Tannehill's house. He states that when Tannehill moved to his headright "*he built his home about three-quarters of a mile from the river, at the exact spot now occupied by the family of the late Wade*

⁷⁸ Montopolis Town Tract – Lanny Ottosen and Griffin Price, 2017.

⁷⁹ Pioneer tools given to park - The Austin American Statesman (1973-1987); Nov 30, 1975; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Austin American Statesman pg. H14.

⁸⁰ The Tannehills 1653-1863, J.T. Baumgardner, Austin, Texas 1959, Austin History Center in Austin, Texas, AF – Biography File 1797-1863 Tannehill, Jessie Cornelius.

⁸¹ Tennessee to Texas Francis Richardson Tannehill 1825-1864, Ann Thiele Holder, Austin Pemberton Press, 1966, Austin History Center in Austin, Texas, AF – Biography File 1797-1863 Tannehill, Jessie Cornelius.

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Henry.”⁸² The property the heirs of Wade Henry received by division of his estate do not coincide with the location of the 5510 Ledesma house. The Henry properties can be clearly seen on the 1891 Austin and Surrounding Properties map and are about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile south of the Ledesma property. No evidence to support or refute Brown's claim has been located.

The house on Ledesma that Ann Holder described could be a house that Tannehill erected and lived in, and the location Brown described could be accurate, but there is evidence that neither of these represent the first place the Tannehill family settled. In 1878 Jessie Tannehill's son, Jack, was called to testify as a witness for the plaintiff in a lawsuit. The testimony of Jack, and other witnesses, was to describe the location of the road from Austin to the Montopolis ferry landing. The transcript of his testimony begins with his statement that “*in 1839 we settled where Mr. Paul Deats house now is*”.⁸³

The location of Paul Deats house can be confirmed by primary source documents including plats presented with testimony and included with the case files that show the location relative to tracts owned by Deats. The tracts represented on these plats align with two Deats tracts on the 1891 Austin and Surrounding Properties map that identifies them on the left bank of the Colorado River as “*P. Deats Est.*”⁸⁴ An even more detailed plat that pinpoints the Deats house is included with a partition of the estate of Paul Deats recorded in Travis County Deed Record 102, dated September 2, 1891.⁸⁵

⁸² Brown, Frank. Annals of Travis County and of the City of Austin (From the Earliest Times to the Close of 1875): Volume 2, book, Date Unknown; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth841129/m1/16/?q=tannehill: accessed June 5, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Historical Commission.

⁸³ Travis County Archives, District Court Case Files, Montopolis Ferry Company vs. B.R. Townsend, Cause No. 5107, Fall Term 1879 – Pg. 123 of 247

⁸⁴ Austin and Surrounding Properties - 1891, GLO Map #421, <http://www.glo.texas.gov/history/archives/map-store/index.cfm#item/421>.

⁸⁵ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 102, book, 1890-12/1892-02; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth834413/m1/285/?q=Travis%20County%20Deed%20Records%3A%20Deed%20Record%20102: accessed September 10, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk's Office.

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A Bastrop County deed adds further weight to the location identified in Jack's testimony; the same day the Motpolis proprietors filed the Town Tract plat with the Bastrop Clerk, the partners deeded Fractional Lot 55 to Jessie Tannehill.⁸⁶ By the time Paul Deats acquired the tracts the original town lots had been absorbed into larger tracts like Deats'. Based on the GIS mapping Fractional Lot 55 would have been located in the southeast corner of the P. Deats 35 acre tract shown on the 1891 Austin and Surrounding Properties map. It is a location one might expect Tannehill to select as it would be the first lot off the river at the foot of Montopolis Mainstreet where James Smith was authorized to establish a ferry. Based on GIS mapping that location today is on the river bank south of Red Bluff Road just east of where it turns north into Shady Lane. Utilizing a 1937 Tobin historic aerial photograph to analyze structures at this location pinpoints the it to current address 5005 Red Bluff Rd. As of this writing no evidence has been located to explain if Tannehill erected any kind of structure at the Red Bluff location. Perhaps a future historian will uncover evidence that supports Holder's and Brown's accounts.

One other early Tannehill residence still exists in Austin: the home of Jesse Tannehill's grandson, Francis (Frank) Richardson Tannehill, Jr. This early 20th century house is located at 4008 Avenue F in Hyde Park on property owned by Hyde Park Baptist Church. Frank is Anne Thiele Holder's grandfather. The house is currently not identified as a historic structure and is identified in a City of Austin rezoning order establishing a Hyde Park Civic Neighborhood Conservation Combining District (NCCD).⁸⁷

In Austin there remain two "landmarks" bearing the Tannehill name. Tannehill Branch Creek flows through Bartholomew Park and the Morris Williams golf course in east Austin and joins with Boggy Creek.⁸⁸ The second is Tannehill Lane which one might expect to be named for Jesse C. Tannehill, but deed records indicate it was likely named for a former slave of Jesse's, Lee Tannehill. An 1895 deed describes a right of

⁸⁶ Bastrop County Clerk's Office, Deed book, Vol C, Pg. 503.

⁸⁷ City of Austin Ordinance No. 900830-Q, Passed and Approved August 30, 1990.

⁸⁸ <http://www.austintexas.gov/blog/tannehill-branch-creek>.

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way for a road 20' wide running along the west line of Lee's 35 acre tract starting at his southwest corner running to the southwest corner of Jerry Plummer's tract.⁸⁹

These tracts can be seen on the 1891 Austin and surrounding properties map; their west lines align with the current route of Tannehill Lane and are also the west line of the Tannehill-Townsend line. To their west they abut a tract of about 150 acres that William J. Tannehill sold in 1874 to a family that became the nucleus for a freedman's community.⁹⁰ Many of the land owners around and including Lee Tannehill and Jerry Plummer were blacks. The location where Tannehill Lane intersects Jackie Robinson St. is approximately where Lee's 35 acre tract southwest corner was located. In the 1900 census he is shown as 56 years old born in 1843, and his wife Jane 48 years old with 6 sons and 2 daughters. In Holder's Tannehill book she describes a slave named Lee as a grandson of Mordecai, one of the slaves she reported buried in the family plot. She also quotes a letter written after Jessie Tannehill's death that states "*Yesterday we buried your father on the south side of your mother's grave. Lee made a good strong box and pegged it with nails since there aren't any nails available.*"⁹¹ Lee may be the son of R.D and Charlotte and may be black Lee Tannehill for whom Tannehill Lane is named.

What factors caused the extinction of Montopolis east of the river? Lack of incorporation in 1839 effectively meant it was not recognized or acknowledged by the state. Edwin Waller moving the Austin survey 2 miles from Montopolis ensured it would not benefit from being closely connected to the new capital town site. Perhaps the biggest issue was simply that the real estate market was flooded with the government not only selling lots, but also giving land at no cost to individuals as script

⁸⁹ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 134, book, 1895-05/1897-10; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph864795/m1/20/?q=Travis%20County%20Deed%20Records:%20Deed%20Record%20134; accessed June 7, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk's Office.

⁹⁰ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record Z, book, 1869-01/1877-04; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph787627/m1/303/?q=Travis%20County%20Deed%20Records:%20Deed%20Record%20Z; accessed June 7, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk's Office.

⁹¹ Tennessee to Texas Francis Richardson Tannehill 1825-1864, Ann Thiele Holder, Austin Pemberton Press, 1966 – copy available at the Austin History Center

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for their service to the Republic. Speculators scrambling to invest in land were more likely to purchase lots on the government tract rather than in Montopolis, which they did. The series of lawsuits that began in the fall of 1840 could well have contributed to the collapse of the partnerships and spelled further doom for the enterprise. The evacuation of the area in 1842 during the invasion of Vasquez, and the subsequent archives war left Austin nearly vacant with streets “filled with grass and weeds”⁹². Just imagine the impact that event had on an already struggling Montopolis.

With the Montopolis venture dying within two years of its conception, the town tract never even made it onto any Travis County maps and the growth of Govalle in the 1850's began to displace the memory. By the 1870's, all that remained was the river crossing bearing the same name and an occasional mention of the Montopolis Road, but that, too, was never documented on any maps. In the early 20th century, the Montopolis of today began to forge an identity in a new location on the opposite side of the river.

III. OVERVIEW –The Montopolis of Today

The preceding section provided background information and primary sources defining the date and location of the Town of Montopolis and conclusions regarding its disappearance. Critics may ask if the original location was on the east side of the river,

⁹² Hollan and Butler, eds., William Bollaert's Texas, as quoted in Jeffrey Stuart Kerr, *Seat of Empire: The Embattled Birth of Austin, Texas*.

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how can the current location be explained? When did the Montopolis we know today become Montopolis? Unlike Tannehill's Montopolis having a definitive beginning with a location and town plat filed, the "new" Montopolis developed organically over time.

After the previously described 1894 topographic map, the next map that shows a place named "Montopolis" is the 1895-1896, 1910 Edition of the USGS Austin Quadrangle map.⁹³ Some may interpret the mark and name to represent a town on the south side of the Colorado River. However, it is important to note not all place names on 19th century maps represent towns, or neighborhoods. Many are simply post offices, stagecoach stops, or rail stations. It could be a town or community, but it depends on what comes first, the town or any one of the previously mentioned landmarks. In many places, communities have "grown up" around a landmark and the community assumes its name.⁹⁴

An example on the 1910 edition map represented the same as Montopolis is a place in South Austin near St. Elmo named Kouns. It was actually a rail station on the IGN railroad and got its name when the rail was extended from Austin to San Antonio.⁹⁵ In the late 19th century, Kouns was frequently referenced in newspapers as a polling location for the residents of the community around it. In 1918 at the request of the Austin Chamber of Commerce, the Railroad Commission of Texas renamed Kouns Station to Vincent in honor of Dr. R.E. Vincent, president of the University of Texas.⁹⁶ The south Austin Vincent neighborhood owes its name to Vincent Station.

The first Montopolis Post Office was established at the location shown on the 1895-1896, 1910 Edition map on June 14, 1897 with Jefferson D. Randolph as the

⁹³ Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, Austin 1:125,000 Surveyed 1895-96, 1910 Edition, 1941 Reprint.

⁹⁴ Germann, John J., "Re: Texas Post Offices By County", Email to Ottosen, Lanny, July 6, 2017. Collaborated with John drawing on his extensive knowledge of the origin of place names, towns and post offices gained through 4 decades of research to compile the Texas Post Offices By County.

⁹⁵ History of International-Great Northern Railroad Company – copy supplied by W. E. (Bill) Willits, Editor – Gulf Coast Railroading and Acting Archivist, Gulf Coast Chapter – National Railway Historical Society, Inc.

⁹⁶ The Statesman (1916-1921); Dec 28, 1918; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Austin American Statesman Pg. 6.

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postmaster.⁹⁷ The Montopolis community most Austinites recognize today developed by accretion around this post office over the following decades.

Newspapers in the late 19th century and early 20th century continue to mention Montopolis as a place name on the river using references such as “near the Montopolis Bridge.” By the 1940’s, however, newspapers frequently describe the general area as the “Montopolis area” or the “Montopolis Community” in reference to the location west of the river that we recognize today. Businesses also sprang up using the name. For example “Montopolis Food Mart, Montopolis Community at McCarty Ave,” and a January 11, 1949 advertisement for “Culp’s Grocery, Montopolis Community.”⁹⁸

In 1950, residents of the area requested a name change that resulted in a strong message defining the “new” Montopolis community. The change was initiated when seventy residents of the community presented a petition to the Travis County Commissioners Court requesting two roads be renamed. The roads, Miller Lane and Boothe Lane ran from the Montopolis Bridge extending to Burleson Road. These old road names had been in place at least since 1898 when Travis County Commissioners surveyed all the roads in the county.⁹⁹ The Commissioners’ Court approved the change, which gave birth to Montopolis Drive.¹⁰⁰ With street signs on every corner and the exit signs from the freeways billboarding the name Montopolis Drive, it is understandable

⁹⁷ John J. Germann and Myron Janzen, *Texas Post Offices by County* (1986) sourced from the Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-1971. NARA Microfilm Publication, M841, 145 rolls. Records of the Post Office Department, Record Group Number 28. Washington, D.C.: National Archives. Accessed online at Ancestry.com. U.S., Appointments of U. S. Postmasters, 1832-1971 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

⁹⁸ The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Jan 11, 1949; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Austin American Statesman Pg. 9.

⁹⁹ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Clerk Records: Road Book Precinct 4, book, 1898/1902; (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth713035/: accessed January 14, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Travis County Clerk’s Office. Also companion map to the road books, Map of Travis County Roads Surveyed by John E. Wallace and Thomas R. McDonald 1898-1902 – Austin History Center – Oversize Map Case, Map O-9, Wallace, John E.

¹⁰⁰ Travis County (Tex.). Clerk's Office. Travis County Commissioners Court Minutes, Volume 4, p. 148 – Special Session of the Commissioners Court July 19, 1950 and the accompanying petition signed by area residents.

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people today must believe they are entering *the* Montopolis, the same one Jessie Tannehill established in 1839.

The City of Austin initiated the next and final step in the evolution of the “new” Montopolis by announcing annexation plans of the area. In August 1951 the Austin Statesman ran an article captioned “MONTOPOLIS CLUB ORGANIZED TO FIGHT ANNEXATION.” It states that the “newly organized Montopolis Civic Club” plans to oppose annexation before City Council, and that they would meet at Culp Food Stores on Montopolis Road.¹⁰¹ The year prior residents petitioned *for* a change, this time they petitioned in *opposition* of a change. The next day Mr. James Culp attended the council meeting and presented a “petition protesting the annexation of the Montopolis Community.”¹⁰² Citizens continued the fight through November that year.¹⁰³ In spite of these protests the city would, over the next two years, annex portions of the community defining the Montopolis community we know today. Austin City Council closed the 1953 sessions with their last meeting on December 23rd. This milestone may represent the true birth date for the community, as the Council recorded the Montopolis zoning area that defined a boundary of the community. The minutes of the meeting describe it as this:

“AREA. 7. Montopolis Area - Original Zoning The Montopolis Area is best described as that property within the corporate limits of the City of Austin which is located southeast of the Colorado River and generally southwest of the Bastrop Highway. Development in this area restricts itself generally to those properties adjacent to Montopolis Drive, Vargas Road and the Bastrop Highway. The Montopolis Community is made up of several platted additions immediately adjacent to the major streets, a strip of commercial development immediately northeast and southwest of the Bastrop Highway and an abundance of one and two acre tracts which are used as home and small farm sites.

¹⁰¹ The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Aug 22, 1951; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Austin American Statesman Pg. 17.

¹⁰² Minutes of the City Council, City of Austin, Texas, Regular Meeting, August 23, 1951, 10:00A.M Accessed online at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/edims/search.cfm>.

¹⁰³ The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Sep 20, 1951; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Austin American Statesman Pg. A17.

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*The entire west area is utilized by the Austin Country Club and is the location of their golf course and Country Club. In addition to the home sites existing on the small agricultural tracts there are a substantial number of residences in the several recorded additions. There are in addition to the above mentioned uses several churches adjacent to Montopolis Drive and also two public schools.”*¹⁰⁴

At the close of 1953, Montopolis was official; the area now had boundaries and a main street heralding the Montopolis name that would appear on new maps. These actions have unconsciously shifted the focus from 114 years before where Jessie Tannehill and his partners platted the original Town of Montopolis.

III. SIGNIFICANCE

The town of Montopolis along with Waterloo and Comanche represent the first three towns laid out on the frontier above Bastrop. Many small towns and communities have gone extinct without even a trace of their name remaining. Montopolis is significant in that it was the only one of the three towns vying for selection as the seat of government, and its name remained in use as a community in

¹⁰⁴ Minutes of the City Council, City of Austin, Texas, Regular Meeting, December 23, 1953, 10:00A.M. Accessed online at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/edims/search.cfm>.

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our 21st century landscape. It is also unique that the original town actually became extinct, only to be reborn in a new location.

In addition to the historical significance, the name itself holds the distinction of being the only place named Montopolis in the United States, and most likely the only one in the western hemisphere. The proprietors, or one of them, apparently created the name themselves using Latin and Greek root words. Borrowing “mont” from Latin for mountain and “polis” from Greek for city we get Montopolis.¹⁰⁵ The closest names anywhere else in the world are two municipalities in Italy, Montopoli di Sabina and Montopoli in Val d'Arno.

Contemporary misrepresentations of Montopolis' origin diminish the imprint Jesse Tannehill left on Travis County history and inaccurately describe the history of the current neighborhood of the same name. Establishing a historical marker to tell the story will enlighten the public of the rich history of the town and its founder that provided the seed for a community name that will likely endure in perpetuity.

In contrast to the historical significance and supporting records cited in this report to answer the question posed in the first sentence, the writer of a 1931 Austin Statesman article best expressed “the why” with this poignant summary:

“Soon Austin will celebrate its centennial. In 1839 the town was laid out. A struggle between Montopolis and Waterloo over which should become the capital city has not been told often...Finally Waterloo was chosen and Montopolis died out.

*In the grounds of the [Howard's] Montopolis Nursery there is now a corner stake of one of the blocks of that dead town – a monument to the wanted hope of some pioneer. Ought not that story be engraved in stone, so every man who stops may read?”*¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Howe, Daniel, Professor Emeritus History, UCLA, “Re: Classical Education in America, Email to Ottosen, Lanny, July 21, 2017. Note: Howe's article in the online Wilson Quarterly offers interesting insight into the rise and fall of ancient Greek and Latin study in America. In this article Howe states “Americans loved Greek and Roman names for new towns” See Wilson Quarterly, Classical Education in America, Spring 2011. <https://www.wilsonquarterly.com/quarterly/spring-2011-the-city-bounces-back-four-portraits/classical-education-in-america/>.

¹⁰⁶ The American-Statesman Staff The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Aug 12, 1931; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Austin American Statesman Pg. C1.

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