

H.S. and Eliza J. Gray of Nameless, TX. Part I: Family Cemetery, Fairview School, Gray House

Overview

In 2023 residents of Nameless reported knowing about or finding the grave of Eliza J. Gray, wife of H.S. Gray. That was the first confirmed burial associated with what was known as the Briggs Cemetery at Nameless. The cemetery was already a recorded cemetery with THC but its precise location was not known. The discovery of the grave allowed THC to pinpoint the cemetery location. **(UPDATE: the cemetery has been renamed the Gray Family Cemetery and is now designated a Historic Texas Cemetery. An application for a THC historical marker has been filed. More below).**

So while this project started with a focus on the cemetery, it quickly expanded into a broader history of the Grays and the early Fairview community, later renamed Nameless.

H.S. and Eliza J. Gray were among Fairview's (later renamed Nameless) earliest settlers arriving in 1874. In 1877 they deeded 1.5 acres to Travis County for a free public school; believed to be the first Fairview School. H.S. Gray having been a teacher previously may have been the first teacher. In 1881 H.S. Gray presided over elections at Fairview School, this before the current Fairview / Nameless School building was established at its current location.

This article, a work in progress, is a summary based on deed work, census, newspaper articles, etc of what we've learned about Hubbard S. (H.S.) Gray and his wife Eliza Jane, maiden name thought to be Crawford.

Last but not least, what is thought to be the house the Gray's built was moved October 10, 2023 to the Travis County property where the Nameless School and Cemetery are located in order to preserve the building. The house was just east of today's Nameless School across Nameless Road, an area being developed into a subdivision. The house is thought to have been built ca. 1876 and subsequently lived in by various families of Nameless up until at least 1964.

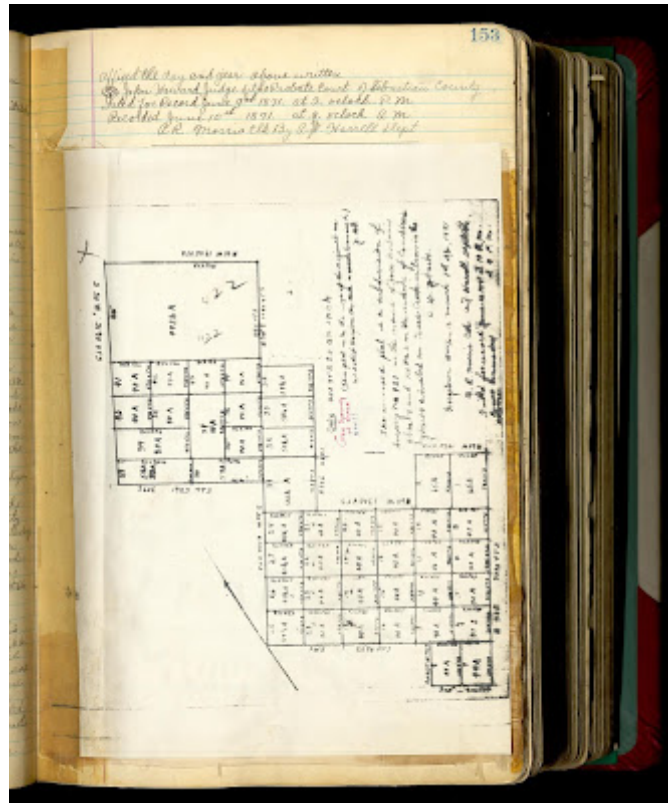
Because this article continues to grow, documenting the architecture of the house has been broken into a separate [Part II](#).

Before Arriving in Nameless; Ybarbo Subdivision

H.S. Gray, who was born in Tennessee in 1818, had immigrated to Texas and was living in San Saba in 1860, *where he was employed as a school teacher* (important for later). In the 1860 federal census, he was living with James L. and Berthier Crawford, whose 38-year-old daughter, Eliza Jane, also was a member of the household. H. S. Gray and Eliza Jane Crawford may have married in San Saba.

1870 they are living in Williamson County per the census.

1871 the Ybarbo patent is subdivided (see below); each survey is numbered. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record V (transcript) Page: 153. This is the record which future land deals by the Grays will be based upon. Unfortunately these subdivision surveys are not part of today's TCAD information. One can however georeference parts of this map on top of the Ybarbo GLO grant to get *approximate locations*.



1874 Arrival in Nameless; Earliest Date for First Burial

1874 HS and wife Eliza buy parts and wholes of surveys 17 18 23 and 24. The grantor was E.W. Talbot. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 27 Page: 4,

Eliza's grave -- and infant, and likely H.S. Gray -- were buried on survey #23. Eliza, born 1822, would have been 52 at this point. Did they arrive in Nameless with a child, the birth falling after the 1870 census? The size of the crypt is small so assume the child was very young.

More below.

Big take-away: Grays arrive in Nameless in 1874. As the Pape-Dawson report suggests there was an infant buried in Eliza's grave (presumably their child that preceded her in death). 1874 is then the earliest the death would have taken place; likely the first burial in the cemetery (i.e. could have been later, but no earlier).

Note: we are still uncertain of whose child the infant was. Given Eliza's age, and the small size of the crypt, one possibility is it was a stillborn baby of the Grays prior to arrival in Nameless, the crypt having been

brought with them.

1876 More Land; Gray Homestead

So where was the Gray homestead?

The Grays expanded their land holdings in 1876; the Pape-Dawson report says about 40 acres were acquired, but my read of the deed shows two separate acquisitions from Talbot totaling 80+ acres. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 39, pp. 355-356. Without getting into the deed calls, the school lot (see next section; school lot deed calls start at SW corner of survey #22) and Gray homestead appear to be on this land acquired in 1876.

Based on oral history recorded in Genny Kercheville's book, *Nameless: Its History and Its People* (Turner family history, p.35 and Bonnet family history, p.94), as well as deed information cited, historic news accounts, and based on the archeology report done by Pape-Dawson for the Travisso developer (Taylor Morrison), the "Gray place" (Kercheville p.35) was east of Nameless Road across from today's Nameless School. An old house located there is thought to be their home, though modified over the years into the 20th century.

Thought to have been first occupied by the Grays, it would later be occupied by the Bonnet family, sold, then reacquired by Nolan Otho Turner and Willie Bee (Bonnet) Turner (who grew up in the house) when they moved back to the Nameless area and purchased her home place in 1939. Nolan Turner spoke at the Nameless School historical marker dedication in 1970.

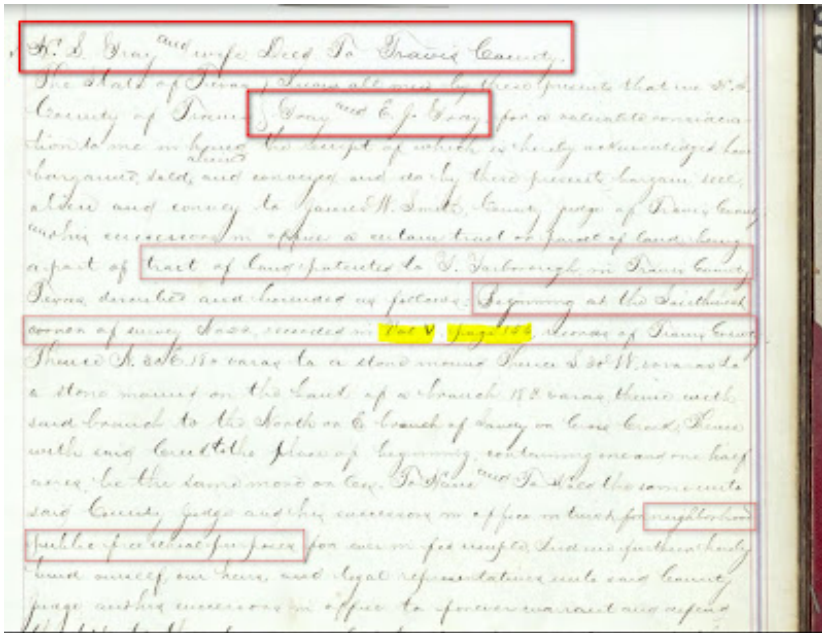
For more about the house Turner / Bonnet / Gray house itself [see Part II](#)

The big take-away: the Gray homestead and house appear to be on land acquired in 1876.

1877 Land Deeded to Travis County for Public School

1877 HS and wife Eliza deed 1.5 acres to Travis County for a public school; this was from the land acquired the previous year, 1876.

The metes and bounds were recorded with an obvious error: the 2nd call immediately backtracks on the first (wrong direction given; not uncommon). Here's the deed as recorded: Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 39 Page: 579.



The corrected deed calls (some paraphrasing) are below.

Start at southwest corner of survey #22 as in Vol V p.153. This is the north bank of Sandy, about 40 varas east of a creek (branch) that runs into the Sandy from the north. The *last* call of the deed *starts* at the intersection of the creek and Sandy, follows the creek, and ends back at the starting place. This is a pretty clear way to find the start of the survey; this has been determined to be about about lat/long 30.5240, -97.9218.

Corrected deed calls are from the above starting place:

1. N 30 E 180 varas
2. N 30 W 40 varas (corrected direction)
3. S 30 W 188 (which I've added in lieu of "meandering" 188 varas down the branch)
4. Follow Sandy Creek downstream to starting point, abt. 40 varas east.

We'll show the school lot in maps below.

The big take-away: this is likely the first Fairview School; given HS was a teacher in 1860 may mean he was an early teacher if not the first. This would almost certainly be the Fairview School later referenced in 1881 where he is overseeing elections. The school lot was about .29 miles east of the Gray cabin. By 1882 (if not earlier) the teacher is W.P. Burns (see below).

1880 Census

HS and Eliza appear in the census. There is some notation that she has some kind of illness, and indeed she dies a few years later. They do not appear to have children *at this time*. But hold that thought. Neighbors include P.T. Stroud, first postmaster.

1881 Elections at Fairview Schoolhouse

HS presides over elections at Fairview schoolhouse. This predates the current Nameless School building. This suggests the first Fairview school was located on the property the Grays deeded to Travis County in 1877. *Weekly Democratic Statesman*. (Austin, Tex.), Vol. 11, No. 3

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph277805/m1/3/zoom/?q=gray&resolution=1.5&lat=3117.2500000000027&lon=2134.75>

The fact that he is presiding over elections held at the schoolhouse suggests he was a person of some prominence. Given this, why has his history not been passed down in the Nameless community? It may be because neither were survived by children, hence after his death no Grays living in the community. And these were still relatively early days for Nameless.

1882 Eliza Dies

Eliza dies. Her grave is on their property. THC records that location as the Briggs Cemetery at Nameless. One might ask, Why was she not buried in nearby Nameless Cemetery? She died July 1882, several months before the earliest recorded burial in Nameless available on Find A Grave. Even if there are earlier unmarked graves in Nameless, this illustrates Nameless wasn't the up and established cemetery we think of today. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/250106199/eliza-j-gray/photo>

The archeologists with Pape-Dawson inspected the grave and concluded there was likely a child buried there as well. From the report (p.11):

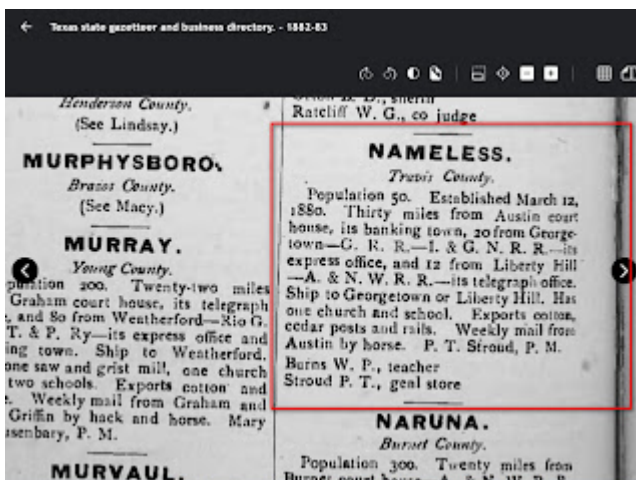
"In addition to the Eliza J. Gray marker, a second marker consisting of a relatively small stone tomb is located beneath Eliza's headstone and on top of her presumed grave. The tomb is chest-style with four sides and sealed with a lid carved with a stepped cross on a shield in high relief. Partial sweeping of loose soil covering the tomb confirmed a stone crypt. The tomb measures approximately 63 cm (24.8 in) in length (east-west) by 44 cm (17.3 in) in width (north-south) and is consistent with the size for an infant which partially correlates the 1986 TCHC cemetery inventory [at the Austin History Center] which listed Gray (wife) and infant within what was called the "Briggs Cemetery."

There is however, as we later discovered, much more to the story. Eliza had a sister Margeret Angelina Crawford Harris (1834-1908) married to one David Alexander (D.A.) Harris. About 1881 sister Margaret and her husband moved in with the Grays to help take care of both of them. More on this in 1886 below.

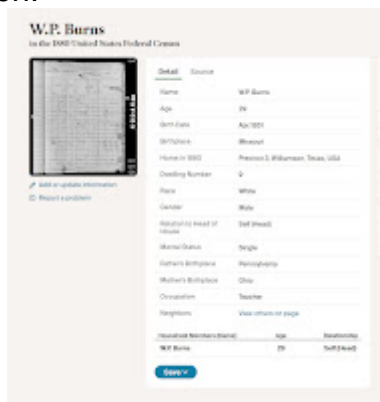
1882 Nameless in Texas State Gazeteer

Nameless, Texas appears in the *1882-83 Texas State Gazeteer and Business Directory* (online with *FamilySearch.com*, viewer page 588). W.P. Burns is listed as the school's teacher. Burns appears in the 1880 census living in Precinct 3 of Williamson County. Two possibilities here: 1) he was also the teacher in 1880 and "commuting" to the school from his home in Williamson County, 2) he came to Nameless after 1880, arriving by at least 1882, to be the teacher. This also makes one wonder if the Grays who came to

Nameless from Williamson County might have known W.P. Burns previously. Note also P.T. Stroud is the Nameless postmaster, and owns the general store. We know from the 1880 census they are neighbors.



1882-83 Texas State Gazetteer and Business Directory provides some useful interesting info about Nameless. This source was used in the Nameless historical marker application.



W.P. Burns appears in the 1880 census living in Precinct 3, Williamson County. Age 29, single, and occupation teacher. Click to enlarge.

1885 First Map with Nameless, TX: U.S.G.S.

The first map to include Nameless is the U.S.G.S. survey of Williamson, County, which included the northwest tip of Travis. The survey was done in 1885, with printing in 1893. This map is key in that the post office was still up and running, and USGS surveys were "boots on the ground" so surveyors are telling us where the central *focus* of the community was located.

The 1885 USGS survey shows Nameless at the intersection of today's Nameless Rd. and a road coming from Bagdad and Leander. That road would later be County Road 290 (not to be confused with US 290)

parts of which are currently (2023) extant, but not completely; subdivisions etc. have broken up the road. Indeed, by the time we visited the cabin in 2023 the whole area had already been bulldozed for the Travisso subdivision; any remnants of that road were long gone.

This intersection was just across Nameless Road from today's Nameless School. This was the original location of the Gray house before being moved to the Travis County property where Nameless School is located. This intersection was located using three maps:

- 1885 U.S.G.S survey of Williamson County, Texas, Georgetown sheet. 1893 edition. [Geo-referenced copy](#)
- 1934 Map of Boundaries of Common, County Line and Independent School Districts. Topographic and Road Map of Travis County. Prepared 1932 by Travis County Engineering Department. Copy at Travis County Archives.
- 1962 aerial covering from Leander to Nameless, available from Historic Aerials. [Geo-referenced copy](#).

See more on this YouTube video <https://youtu.be/a28PaU0hsgl>



Geo-referenced 1885 USGS survey showing start of CR 290 today (click to enlarge). This start location and end point at Nameless across from today's Nameless School agrees with the 1934 Travis County map cited above.



The intersection (1964) identified in 1885 USGS map using maps referenced.

Worth noting for 1885, Genny Kercheville, author of *Namless: Its History and People*, says "The post master was James Polk Colley ... He came to Texas in 1859 and in 1868 married Eliza Smedley. In 1877, they moved to Smedley property on Nameless Rd. now called the Colley Ranch." Both the book *Texas Post Offices by County* and Nameless THC marker application had misspelled his name as "Corley"; the misspelling likely originated with the 1880 census that makes the same mistake.

1886 H.S. Gray Dies

HS dies intestate and in 1887 his heirs back in Mississippi are appointing an executor for the estate. Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 75 Page: 239. The Pape-Dawson archeologists conclude HS Gray was likely buried next to wife and infant in what is now an unmarked grave (p.11):

"[while H.S.'s grave has not been located] based on practices at the time, it is likely that H.S. Gray was interred next to his late wife and according to southern Christian traditions, he may have been interred to her immediate right. A lack of a formal burial marker for H.S. Gray may be due to his passing intestate."

As mentioned previously, as we later learned in 2024, Eliza had a sister Margeret Angelina Crawford Harris (1834-1908) married to one David Alexander (D.A.) Harris. That H.S. Gray died and was buried on the property is confirmed by testimony given by Gray's brother-in-law, D.A. Harris who was married to Eliza's sister, Margeret. About 1881 D.A. and Margeret moved to Nameless to care for H.S. and Eliza "to the end of their natural lives and each of them and bury them" (sic). After Eliza and H.S. died (1882 and 1886 respectively) D.A. and Margeret inherited the property, a fact later disputed by Gray family in Mississippi. The case was decided for the defendant D.A. Harris (discussed in Pape-Dawson Engineering archeology report citing District Court Minutes 1, pp. 91-92. Also District Court Cause No, 10305).

That H.S. Gray is buried along side (?) Eliza is further supported by oral history recorded by James Mulkey Owens' research notes on Nameless, Texas. In an oral interview May 30, 1970, with Mrs. W. T. Colley, née Barbara Charlotte Lohman, she said "the graves in the Anderson ... pasture is that of Mrs. Gray and that her husband is also buried there (J. M. Owens research notes on Nameless, Austin History Center).

Key take-aways:

- *The first Fairview school was likely on the property the Grays deeded to Travis County in 1877. A Mr. W.P. Burns was the teacher as early as 1882 (per the census maybe 1880 or earlier).*
- *The Grays likely had a young child (baby) that died before her, so after arriving in 1874 and before the census in 1880.*
- *Upon her death, Eliza was then buried with the child's crypt placed on her grave.*
- *Upon his death, H.S. Gray was then buried beside wife and child in what is now an unmarked grave.*

Maps, Photos



Part of the subdivision of the Ybarbo grant



Landmarks in 2022



Landmarks on 1964 aerial



Turner / Bonnet / Gray cabin



Turner / Bonnet / Gray cabin



Turner / Bonnet / Gray cabin



Drawing of cabin as it might look after restoration to a dogtrot / dogrun. Courtesy Joel T. Russell, Architectural Consultant



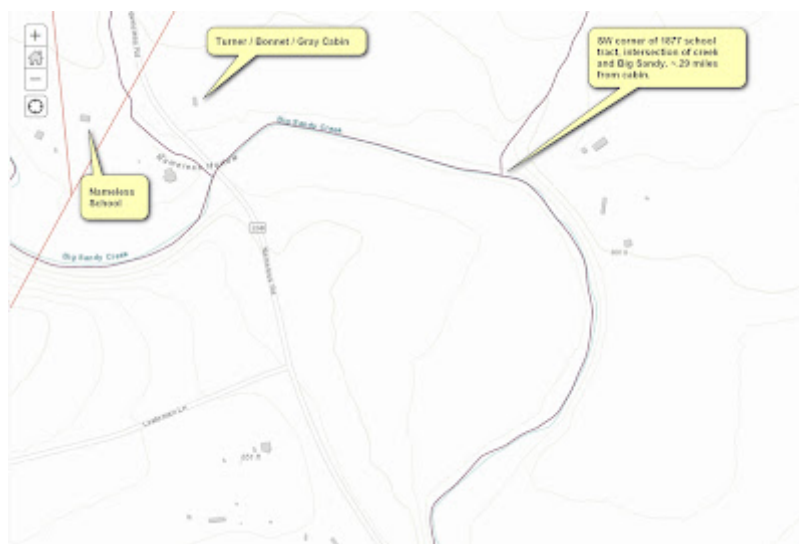
Cemetery photo. Notice child's crypt.



Cemetery photo



Cemetery photo



County map showing intersection of creek (branch) with Big Sandy. Per deed, where the creek's east bank intersects Big Sandy marks the SW corner of the school lot. This is about .29 miles east of the Gray cabin.



Higher resolution 1964 aerial of cabin and surrounding. Click to enlarge.



Landmarks in 1964 aerial above (Kercheville p.35)

3 pgs 2004021050

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 200 West 21st Street
 Austin, Texas 78791-2250
 512-463-6800
 thc.texas.gov

**DECLARATION OF DEDICATION FOR CEMETERY PURPOSES
 FOR THE GRAY FAMILY CEMETERY**

THE STATE OF TEXAS §
 COUNTY OF TRAVIS § KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS,
 §

That the Texas Historical Commission, an agency of the State of Texas, does hereby certify and declare:

That the Gray Family Cemetery, located in the J.A. Ybarbo Survey, Section 421, A-840, Travis County, Texas and more particularly described in Exhibit A as attached hereto, has been set aside and dedicated for cemetery purposes through historic use and that such property is now occupied by human graves.

That this dedication is subject to all the laws, rules, and regulations of the State of Texas regarding cemeteries now in effect and to those adopted after the effective date of this dedication, and is made in accordance with 15 Tex. Admin. Code Section 823.6.

This Affidavit of Dedication for Cemetery Purposes is signed and executed on this 26 day of September, 2024.

[Signature]
 Bradford Patterson
 Deputy Executive Director
 for Preservation Programs
 Texas Historical Commission

THE STATE OF TEXAS §
 COUNTY OF TRAVIS §

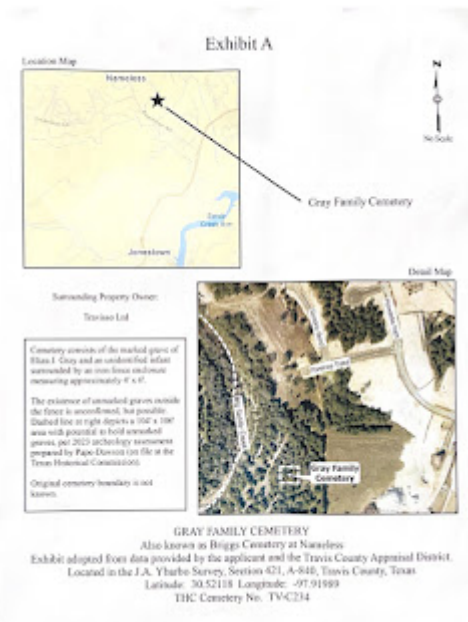
BEFORE ME, the undersigned authority, on this day personally appeared Bradford Patterson, known to me to be a credible person, whose name is above subscribed, and said person avers to me the statements contained herein are true and correct.

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO before me on this 26 day of September, 2024.

[Signature]
 SECRETARY PUBLIC and for the STATE OF TEXAS

GRIG ARBOTT, GOVERNOR | JOHN L. NAUPEL, CHAIR | EDWARD LÜNGEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Gray Family Cemetery designated Historic Texas Cemetery



Gray Family Cemetery designated Historic Texas Cemetery

Additional Sources

Adams, William Hampton. Machine Cut Nails and Wire Nails: American Production and Use for Dating 19th-Century and Early-20th-Century Sites. *Historical Archaeology*, 2002, Vol. 36, No. 4 (2002), pp. 66-88. Springer publishing. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25617025>

Fox News 7. October 10, 2023 the cabin was moved to county property where Nameless School and Cemetery are located. See "Historical Travis County homestead saved, relocated."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nANKwulHh7k>

Jordan, Terry. Texas Log Buildings, A Folk Architecture. University of Texas Press, 1978, 1994.

Kercheville, Genny. *Nameless: Its History and Its People*. Morris Publishing 2016.

Pape-Dawson Engineers. Memo to Taylor Morrison of Texas, Inc., June 2023. This is a report on archeology / background / deed-search w.r.t. the Grays and the cemetery. This report is on file with the Cemetery Preservation Program Coordinator for THC.

Rehder, John. Tennessee Log Buildings, A Folk Tradition. University of Tennessee Press, 2012.

Links to deeds cited above

1871 Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record V (transcript) Page: 153. Note there is another copy of this on record with the plat removed; this link is to the good copy.

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1510903/m1/157>

1874 Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 27 Page: 4

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph787615/m1/10/>

1876 Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 39 Page: 355

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph787609/m1/361/>

1877 Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 39 Page: 579

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph787609/m1/585>

1887 Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record 75 Page: 239

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph806897/m1/245>



Richard Denney
Vice-Chair
Travis County Historical Commission

RICHARD DENNEY
History Steward
Texas Historical Commission

**TEXAS
HISTORICAL
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