

## ABSTRACT

A historical study of Bell's Hill, an older section of Southwest Waco, Texas, 1885-1955, reveals a complex community characterized by social/cultural, ethnic/racial, and economic diversity. From its early history when artesian wells attracted investors, Bell's Hill became a working-class community where industries located adjacent to the nearby railroad, attracted a growing, diverse population. Once there, residents built strong social institutions and developed neighborhoods that eventually included a sense of community. Beyond the perceived image of the working-class stereotype, there existed a multifaceted community comprised of well-defined neighborhoods. By studying this community, new insight emerges about to the impact of working-class communities, such as Bell's Hill, on the overall growth of the larger, urban place of Waco, Texas, and the industrial New South during the period under study.

Going Up Bell's Hill:  
A Social History of a Diverse, Waco, Texas, Community  
in the Industrial New South,  
1885 - 1955

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
Baylor University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Master of Arts

By  
Sandra Denise Harvey

Waco, Texas

August, 1995

Copyright © 1995  
Sandra Denise Harvey

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
PREFACE.....	vi
Chapter	
1. Discovering a Sense of Place.....	1
2. Discovering a Sense of Being.....	27
3. Discovering a Sense of Living.....	48
4. Discovering a Sense of Faith.....	74
5. Discovering a Sense of Economy.....	107
6. Discovering a Sense of Learning.....	119
7. Discovering a Sense of Mortality.....	135
8. Conclusion.....	152
APPENDIX ONE.....	160
SOURCES CONSULTED.....	164

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The history of Bell's Hill is also a part of my history. As a child, I attended St. Mark Lutheran School and heard stories about the community from my parent and grandparent who once lived in the part of Waco known as Bell's Hill. But the story told in these pages could not have occurred without the tremendous help of many individuals.

First, I would like to thank the residents of Bell's Hill who agreed to be interviewed. They painstakingly endured hours upon hours of probing in order to capture their memories. Some memories were painful and I appreciate the honesty and sincerity of the interviewees: Charles and Ruth Armstrong, Helen Geltemeyer, Edna Gottlieb, Claud Harvey, Thomas Harvey, Manuel and Eva Hernandez, J. P. Jones, Santos Martinez, Louise Murphy, Kathryn Owens, Estelle Pederson, Harry and Lois Raines, Majorie Rozelle, Fred and Mildred Stengel, Jr., Florine Reinke, Katherine Renfro, Nadine and Hollis Thorne. In addition, to the residents I would like to thank the people who kindly endured my probing into the church, county, and school records in search of information. A special thank you is extended to the staff of the First Church of the Nazarene for their tireless efforts in obtaining the necessary records of their church.

Second, I would like to thank the staff and student

workers of the Institute for Oral History at Baylor University for their continual support throughout my thesis. Thank you, Lois E. Myers, for continually providing me with the necessary equipment for my oral interviews and the flexibility to finish this thesis. Thank you, Dr. M. Rebecca Sharpless, for supporting me throughout the project and for contributing to the strength of the oral interviews with her expertise in daily life and rural America.

The Texas Collection staff and the archivist, Ellen K. Brown, assisted me tremendously throughout this project. They endured numerous inquiries and gladly complied with all of my requests.

I would like to express my appreciation to my director, Dr. Thomas L. Charlton, who painstakingly traveled through this community with me. His tenacity and imagination contributed much to the story of Bell's Hill. Appreciation is also expressed to my second and third reader, Dr. James M. SoRelle and Dr. T. Lindsay Baker, for their valuable insight.

Throughout this year long process, my parents and friends have continually been there for me with their love and support. I came to realize how invaluable they all were to me. Two of them deserve special recognition. A special thank you to David Faulkner for providing me with the encouragement and support I needed in order to finish this project. Finally, to my mother, Wanda Webb Harvey, who throughout my formative years instilled in me the value of learning and encouraged me to pursue my goals, thanks are not enough.

## PREFACE

With the emergence of social history in the 1960s, new methodologies and topics about the past were opened for historians to study. No longer were historians concentrating on only the traditional themes of history such as political power or the elite. Instead, social historians focused on population groups previously perceived as lacking historical merit, such as working-class people. In addition, the social historians began incorporating the field of history with other disciplines thus providing a multidisciplinary outlook to their studies, something uncommon with traditional historical research.

This outlook on history not only opened up avenues for historians and other scholars in the humanities, but also for the people being studied as well. Whereas traditional historians tended to direct their findings to the academic world, public historians, using social history methodologies, wrote about people and for people, often in order to provide them with new insights into their own surroundings. These people who otherwise would consider history to be separate and untouchable by common hands, now discovered their place in the historical world.

With the increasing popularity of social history, historians realized that difficulties existed within the

field. Since categories within social history included various disciplines, these historians began dealing with subjects in different ways. In examining a particular place, either rural or urban, there are at least two approaches which one can take. These include the study of local history or of community history. Local history can be written without the direct involvement of people in the immediate area, whereas community history cannot occur without the inclusion of the individual people who are central to the story. Neither is considered better than the other, they are just different approaches.

The direction taken in this master's thesis is to study a community, because the involvement of the people is essential to its understanding. Even with their involvement some ambiguity must remain in such an historical work, as suggested by the following questions: What is a community? How does the concept of community apply to this thesis project?

Historians for many years have defined communities and neighborhoods in general terms. Because these two concepts are complex, the general definitions do not fully encompass most neighborhoods and communities. As a result, the general consensus among historians is that the terms are best defined with the community of study in mind.

In this study, the term "community" represents the established parameters, geographical boundaries of a place, and the people who settled, lived, and worked there. "Neighborhood," on the other hand, represents more specific

parts of a community. In particular, the people and enclaves in which they lived or grouped themselves.

With these terms in mind, this thesis suggests that a greater understanding of the larger community can be obtained by studying diverse enclaves or neighborhoods. In addition, an understanding about an individual's sense of community can be ascertained from studying these neighborhoods. For instance, families chose to enter the community and settled in neighborhoods; once they became familiar and comfortable in a small area, a new sense occurred--one of community. Residents no longer viewed themselves as different from their neighbors. Instead, the neighborhood took on a homogeneous look as residents perceived this new sense of community.

Bell's Hill, located in Southwest Waco, is the focus of this thesis. Bell's Hill allows for the testing of the terms neighborhood and community since by studying the neighborhoods an understanding of the community as a whole occurs.

Originally, a community such as Bell's Hill, appeared to represent, to individuals outside of the area, a stereotypical working-class community, one they perceived to be easily understood. The evidence does not support this idea. Instead, by studying the community inside out, one encounters the various neighborhoods and how these neighborhoods comprised the integral parts of the larger community itself.

For a clearer view of the diverse neighborhoods of Bell's Hill, one must study housing patterns and religious,

economic, and educational institutions. For example, the neighborhood known as Tintop Alley resulted from people moving into the community in search of manufacturing jobs. They could not afford better accommodations and had to rely upon factory housing. As a result, this area reflected an economic neighborhood of people brought together by necessity. In the interim, though, they ultimately formed a community as well.

Other parts of Bell's Hill were not settled in the same fashion as Tintop Alley. Instead, the residents of central Bell's Hill usually had a choice as to where they would live and how. But the result was the same and, after moving into the area and establishing themselves in a neighborhood, they eventually developed a sense of community.

Consequently, by focusing on the neighborhoods, many questions about the community can be answered, such as, how did they live in Bell's Hill? What were their lifestyles? What recreational activities were available to the residents? What problems did the residents of the neighborhoods encounter? What religious and educational opportunities existed for residents?

These are just a few questions which are addressed in this study in hopes of bringing the community of Bell's Hill beyond the one-dimensional stereotype of a working-class community. The intent is to discover the many neighborhoods which made up the community and the diversity which they contributed to Bell's Hill.

With the foregoing objectives in mind, the thesis is

organized to present a multifaceted history of Bell's Hill. The first chapter of the study locates Bell's Hill physically within Waco, Texas, McLennan County. Early residents discovered artesian wells which attracted investment and construction of residences. Discussions of architectural development in Bell's Hill and other examples of the structural environment comprise this section. Chapter Two examines the social/cultural aspects of the area following the depletion of the artesian wells and focusing in particular on the migration of residents to Bell's Hill and their everyday lives. Chapter Three expands on the cultural characteristics of the hill and addresses the hardships experienced by many residents. Through the use of church records and journals, Chapter Four focuses on the various religious beliefs residents brought to Bell's Hill. As a result, a multitude of different denominational churches appeared on the hill which enabled residents to fulfill their spiritual and social needs. Chapter Five deals with the economic progression of Bell's Hill from an area with virtually few businesses to one dominated by numerous companies. The discovery of artesian wells led to the first major business on Bell's Hill. With the progression of time, the economic focus changed to manufacturing centers and railroads, then following World War I, another dimension was added to the economy with the addition of service-oriented businesses. Chapter Six examines the educational systems available to the children of Bell's Hill. Included in this chapter is an examination of the differences between the

private and the public elementary schools on the hill.

Chapter Seven deals with the effects of a natural disaster on the hill, focusing on the varied experiences of the people who survived the 1953 Waco Tornado and the destabilizing effects the storm had on the residents.

The final section, Chapter Eight, summarizes the conclusions drawn about the history of the hill. Consequently, a historical exploration of Bell's Hill, a section of Waco, Texas, 1885 - 1955, reveals a complex community characterized by social/cultural, ethnic/racial, and economic diversity.

## CHAPTER ONE

### DISCOVERING A SENSE OF PLACE

"Crossroads" is an interesting concept with several connotations. For individuals, reaching a crossroad in life often results in life-changing decisions. At other times, a crossroad for an individual means closing one chapter of life and opening another. Crossroads are not limited to individuals. The term may also be used to describe certain geographical areas. McLennan County, or specifically Waco, is considered a crossroad, but instead of evoking a negative connotation, Waco represents a crossroad location where much significant activity occurred in the past.<sup>1</sup>

Geographical crossroads exist in many places, but this study focuses on a well-known one in the Brazos Valley region. The Brazos Valley of Texas attracted various individuals long before modern roads brought settlers or travelers to the area. Waco, located within the Brazos Valley region, was at the focal point of the crossroads in this area.

The demarcation as a crossroads may be conferred upon Waco for both geographical and geological reasons. The first factor which contributed to Waco becoming a crossroads centers upon the geographical positioning of the Brazos

---

<sup>1</sup>Jess Stein, ed., The Random House College Dictionary (New York: Random House, Inc., 1984), 319.

Valley region within Texas. Waco provided great physical advantages for the formation of a community. There are several advantageous facets about Waco which encouraged settlement. Waco was located on the dividing line between two prominent geological formations--the Blackland Prairie, which lay to the west, and the Grand Prairie, which lay to the east. The Blackland Prairie is the dominant feature, covering three-fourths of McLennan County; the Grand Prairie accounts for the remaining one-fourth.<sup>2</sup>

The Blackland Prairie has had great influence in McLennan County. In this region, crops grew readily due to the rich nutrients found within the black soils. The three dominant soil types found in the Blackland are alifisols, mollisols, and vertisols. The largest soil type found in the Blackland around Waco is the vertisols. This type of soil contributes greatly to the production of fertile crops and also plays an important role in the story of communities such as Bell's Hill.<sup>3</sup>

The dividing line between these two Texas regions occurs near Waco and is known as the Balcones Fault. The Balcones Fault extends from northeast to southwest through the center of Texas. Rivers such as the Trinity, Brazos, and Colorado, run perpendicular to the fault. The fault is composed of Austin chalk, a hard limestone substance, and consists of

---

<sup>2</sup>John Maxwell Burket, Jr., "Geology of the City of Waco and Its Environs" (Thesis, Baylor University, 1959), 10.

<sup>3</sup>C. Thomas Hallmark, "Nature and Origin of the Blackland Soils," in The Texas Blackland Prairie Land, History and Culture, eds. M. Rebecca Sharpless and Joe Yelderman, Jr. (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University, 1993), 42-4.

a series of breaks.<sup>4</sup>

Cutting a path through the Balcones Fault is the Brazos River. It was the Brazos River that provided the region with one distinct influential crossroad. For 840 miles the river meanders through Texas, heading for the Gulf of Mexico. In its wake the river contributes to abundant wildlife and fertile soils.<sup>5</sup>

These two geological formations, the Balcones Fault and the Brazos River, interacted to produce a phenomenon which resulted in the growth of Waco along the Brazos. A unique crossing existed at the Brazos River due to the close proximity of the river to the Balcones Fault. The Austin Chalk prominent in the Balcones Fault became exposed due to the continual erosion from the Brazos River. The hard-rock river bottom at Waco provided a unique opportunity for wildlife (and eventually settlers) searching for access across the river. There is evidence that the crossing connected various ecological chains, such as ancient mammoths. Archaeological research has led to the discovery that mammoths indigenous to the West and mammoths indigenous to the East appeared in the Waco region. The contributing factor to this phenomenon was the existence of the hard-rock bottom crossing. This type of crossing also allowed for individuals to continue on their journey westward, which

---

<sup>4</sup>"Crossroads", produced by the Institute for Oral History, 28 min., Baylor University, 1990, videocassette.

<sup>5</sup>Rupert N. Richardson, Ernest Wallace, and Adrian Anderson, Texas: The Lone Star State (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1988), 6.

would have been virtually impossible otherwise.<sup>6</sup> Arguably, therefore, it may be stated that the formation of Waco was directly linked to the existence of a hard-rock bottom river crossing.

A geographical factor contributing to Waco's characteristic as a crossroad also includes the presence of abundant rainfall. Due to the Balcones Fault, or the escarpment's higher elevation, the trade winds coming in from the West and from the Gulf of Mexico meet at the higher elevation.<sup>7</sup> This fault is a dividing line between the arid climate of the West and the humid, tropical nature of the East. The meeting of these two types of climates and the winds result in abundant annual rainfall for the area. Along the Blackland Prairie some of the largest recorded rainfalls have occurred,<sup>8</sup> thus presenting yet another advantageous situation for the ecological system around Waco.

The Balcones Fault not only contributed to the abundance of rainfall, but also the entrapment of water as well. Water would become encased in the limestone, and thus the area around Waco would have an abundant water supply referred to as "the springs." The Waco Indians early believed that local springs provided them with longevity. In fact, an early

---

<sup>6</sup>"Crossroads".

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Joe. C. Yelderman, Jr., "The Water: Nature and Distribution in the Blacklands," in The Texas Blackland Prairie Land, History and Culture, eds. M. Rebecca Sharpless and Joe C. Yelderman, Jr. (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University, 1993), 48-9.

observer of the Waco Indians remarked that the Indians maintained, "almost superstitious veneration for the big spring on the Brazos, and had a legend that as long as they drank of its waters their tribe would flourish and never become extinct."<sup>9</sup>

With the advantages apparent at Waco, Anglo-American settlers began taking advantage of the natural features and establishing settlements. Long before Waco became an established site, immigrants saw the potential in Texas and began entering the territory in 1821.<sup>10</sup> With the establishment of Texas as a republic in 1836, the Anglo-Americans' presence increased in larger numbers, until they became one of the dominant forces in the republic.<sup>11</sup> This posed a problem for the Indian population of Texas who were slowly losing control of the area.

At first, the Waco Indians, some of the early inhabitants, accepted the Anglo-Americans into the Waco region. They allowed the forerunner for the city of Waco and the first Anglo-American settlement, the Torrey Trading Post, to be established because the settlement appeared not to interfere with their lifestyle. Opened in 1844, the trading post provided a valuable service to early Indian traders and others. Trappers captured furs, then traded them at the post

---

<sup>9</sup>Roger N. Conger, "Highlights of Waco History," intro. in A Pictorial History of Waco (Waco, Tex.: Texian Press, 1964), 2.

<sup>10</sup>Robert A. Calvert and Arnolde DeLeon, The History of Texas (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1990), 48.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 73-4.

for supplies. With the overabundance of wildlife in the region, it provided fur traders with lucrative business opportunities. Some furs found in the region included deer, bobcat, bear, and buffalo, thus strengthening the point that the Waco region contained a variety of wildlife.<sup>12</sup>

In 1845, Texas entered the United States and settlers began viewing the state in a new light.<sup>13</sup> With problems brewing in the American East, people looked to the new state as an answer to the problems they encountered.<sup>14</sup> Texas settlers began pushing to the West and on passing through McLennan County, discovered that Waco would be a perfect spot to establish a community. As discussed earlier, there were many positive features of this area (geological and geographical) which attracted permanent settlement. These aided in the production of crops and the raising of animals.

The settlers were not welcomed in Central Texas by the Native Americans with open arms as the earlier inhabitants had been. The new hostility of the Indians was due to a perception of their being robbed by the Anglo-American settlers. As surveyors inspected the area and began in 1849 to divide the land, even though the region was already inhabited by Indians. Out of frustration and fear, the Indians attacked and killed early settlers such as Laughlin

---

<sup>12</sup>Conger, 5-6.; Henry C. Arbruster, The Torreys of Texas: A Biographical Sketch (Buda, Tex.: The Citizen Press, 1968), 14.

<sup>13</sup>Conger, 5-6.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 9.

McLennan and his wife. In addition, Fort Parker, located near Waco, was also attacked. William S. Fisher, Texas's secretary of war, ordered the Texas Rangers to establish a base near Fort Parker to provide protection to the fledgling settlement. The brief establishment of Fort Fisher, in Waco, occurred due to outbreaks of violence and resistance met by the early settlers. With the wheels of settlement in motion, however, it became virtually impossible to stop the influx; the Indians' time here was limited and the new residents soon became white settlers, mainly from the southern region of the United States.<sup>15</sup>

In 1850, the Texas Legislature established McLennan County, with the county seat at Waco. Early landowners offered free use of local land to the new state government in return for the location of the county seat at Waco. This action provided Waco with additional revenue as people traveled into the town to conduct their legal business. By 29 August 1856, the town of Waco had evolved into the city of Waco. Now additional people entered the county and soon discovered the rich fertile grounds of the Blackland Prairie.<sup>16</sup>

In 1861, the Civil War erupted and Texas seceded to become a part of the Confederacy. McLennan County, along with the majority of other Texas counties, favored secession

---

<sup>15</sup>Patricia Ward Wallace, Waco: Texas Crossroads (Woodland Hills, Calif.: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1983) 10-11, 14-15, 17, 26.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 9.

and severed ties with the Union.<sup>17</sup> The reason for the support centered on Waco's dependence upon a plantation economy and lifestyle. Even though the general population of Waco was 749 in 1859, the slave population was more than double that number, at 1938.<sup>18</sup>

At the outset of the Civil War, railroads were becoming popular in the United States and began to advance into Texas. But with the impending crisis, the laying of tracks ceased and it was not until 1872 that the Waco TAP entered Waco from the south.<sup>19</sup> During most of this time transportation was a major problem throughout Texas. The sheer distance of cities from one another complicated the matter, most having to rely on stagecoaches or other forms of transportation.<sup>20</sup> The hard-rock bottom crossing at Waco allowed travel from east to west, and vice versa. With the coming of the railroads into Waco, individuals could now travel north and south as well.

The emergence of the railroads contributed to Waco's furthered reputation as a crossroads. Without the railroad a town often became nonexistent because people followed the tracks. Railroads not only provided travel through Waco, but also brought additional settlers to the region, some for the fertile soil they discovered here and others to work

---

<sup>17</sup>Richardson, Wallace, and Anderson, 212.

<sup>18</sup>Conger, 10.

<sup>19</sup>Bob Poage, McLennan County Before-1980 (Waco, Tex.: Texian Press, 1981), 89.

<sup>20</sup>Richardson, Wallace, and Anderson, 188-89.

in new industries springing up in Waco. With the passage of time, even more people wanted to live within the city and forgo farm life.

In addition, the railroads provided Waco with economic surplus in the face of the devastating depression in 1873.<sup>21</sup> The railroads provided a metamorphosis for Waco, as different people began entering the city from various walks of life, and Waco had something unique to offer, the Suspension Bridge. The first of its kind across the Brazos River, work was finally completed on the Waco Suspension Bridge in 1870. As a result, Waco matured from a sleepy little town to a viable contender on the economic market.<sup>22</sup> The land was conducive to cotton raising and by 1880, cotton surpassed cattle in Waco as the most valuable grown commodity.<sup>23</sup> With such opportunities, Waco saw many people living far better than residents in other cities.

As Waco grew into an upstanding and honorable community, it acquired several nicknames which provide insight into the versatile community. Such names as "Six Shooter Junction" and "Waco, Texas get your guns!" became synonymous with the area, due to the many saloons located in the Waco community and numerous reported crimes.<sup>24</sup>

One of the most famous violent incidents occurred in

---

<sup>21</sup>Poage, 89, 95.

<sup>22</sup>Conger, 12.

<sup>23</sup>Poage, 114.

<sup>24</sup>Wallace, 25-6, 34, 46-7.

1898 with a shootout involving William Cowper Brann and Tom E. Davis. Brann was the publisher of a monthly magazine entitled, *Brann's Iconoclast*, a very critical newspaper reporting activities occurring in Waco, especially at Baylor University. Davis, a Baylor supporter, fatally shot Brann for the editor's radical ramblings and, in turn, Brann returned fire, also fatally wounding Davis.<sup>25</sup>

Another name given to Waco was "Athens of Texas," due to numerous educational opportunities available to the people of Waco and its surrounding communities. In 1886, Baylor University had moved from its original site at Independence, Texas, and merged with the preexisting Waco University. In addition, Texas Christian University formed in Waco, remaining there until 1910, the year when a devastating fire left the school in virtual ruins. Unable to rebuild in Waco, TCU relocated to Fort Worth. There were also several educational opportunities for the African-American population in Waco. In 1881, Paul Quinn College moved from Austin to Waco in order to provide former slaves with skills to aid their assimilation into society. Consequently, the nickname "Athens of Texas" suited Waco and attracted a variety of individuals to this crossroads.<sup>26</sup>

A town nickname, which would ultimately contribute to the formation and identity of the Bell's Hill community, was

---

<sup>25</sup>Conger, 15.

<sup>26</sup>Poage, 149-52.

"Geyser City."<sup>27</sup> The man who became the namesake for Bell's Hill and the watery title given to Waco was Joseph Daniel Bell.<sup>28</sup> With Waco's growing popularity due to the excitement over the new Suspension Bridge and the entrance of railroads into the community, many people ventured to Waco in search of fame and fortune. In the late 1860s, Bell also chose to seek his fortune in the industrious town. A native Georgian, Bell soon revolutionized the municipal utility departments and provided Waco citizens with water and gas.<sup>29</sup> By 1868, with prosperity ensuing, Bell built a house in Southwest Waco on a substantial elevation.<sup>30</sup> The elevation started around Fifteenth and Clay streets and continued to rise until the hill reached its peak at 460 feet at an approximate point later located at Twenty-second and Ross.<sup>31</sup> Bell completed his two-story home just in time for the birth of his first son,

---

<sup>27</sup>Thomas Turner, Sr., "Waco The Geyser City," Discover Waco (August 1995), 16.

<sup>28</sup>Dayton Kelley, ed., The Handbook of Waco and McLennan County, Tx (Waco, Tex.: Texian Press, 1972), 26.

<sup>29</sup>Turner, "Waco The Geyser City."

<sup>30</sup>"Old Landmark of Bell's Hill Is Sold to Lutheran Church Here," Newspaper Clipping File, Florine Reinke, Elm Mott, Tex. In possession of Florine Reinke.

<sup>31</sup>U. S. Department of Interior Geological Survey Waco West Quadrangle Texas, McLennan County 7.5 minutes series (topographic) Texas Collection, Baylor University, 1959.

Henry Bell.<sup>32</sup>

As Waco prospered throughout the 1870s and 1880s, the Bell's Hill area remained virtually uninhabited and provided no indication of the impending events, especially those surrounding the discovery of the artesian wells. Surprisingly, little settlement occurred in the area; few streets existed except for Clay, Webster, and Jackson, and their existence hinged on nearby railroad tracks. Most of the citizens in the area were working-class laborers, a mirror image of the residents to come.<sup>33</sup>

Waco's tremendous growth and industrious attitude, however, helped to lift the translucent veil on Bell's Hill, if not permanently, at least for a short period of time. In 1889, Joseph Daniel Bell decided to dig for artesian water. He placed the first crew at the edge of the area and began drilling. The public ridiculed him and continued to do so until Bell reached a depth of 1,830 feet, the point at which he discovered a substantial well of mineral water averaging about 103 degrees Fahrenheit.<sup>34</sup> Reportedly, the first well was near what became the corner of Sixteenth and Burnett

---

<sup>32</sup>"Old Landmark of Bell's Hill Is Sold to Lutheran Church Here." In later years the home was demolished in order to prepare for the new sanctuary and educational facilities. The home became synonymous with mystery and mystique, as young children feared this monstrous house which at one time stood as a beacon for prosperity in early Waco. Florine Reinke Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 15 November 1994 at the Reinke home, Route 1 Box 738, Elm Mott, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

<sup>33</sup>Directory of the City of Waco 1888-89 (Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Co., 1889), 56-197.

<sup>34</sup>Turner, "Waco the Geyser City."

streets.<sup>35</sup> Upon this discovery, there was a flurry of activity to locate more wells and Bell subsequently dug sixteen additional wells, in the area between Fifteenth and Nineteenth from Jackson to Dutton streets.<sup>36</sup> One of the wells located at Twenty-third Street and Cleveland, remained visible for many years, and, much later, was a fond memory of those students who attended Bell's Hill Elementary School.<sup>37</sup>

With the discovery of warm mineral water, a new industry for Waco and Bell's Hill was born. Mineral water, believed to be therapeutic, prompted bathhouses to emerge in the immediate neighborhood. Local merchant and civic leader Tom Padgitt erected a two-and-a-half story bathhouse at Fifteenth and Clay, an effort to avoid being outdone by the downtown Natatorium Hotel at Fourth Street and Mary Avenue. Such establishments not only became prominent business ventures, but the mineral wells also became tourist attractions. The *Cutter's Guide to the City of Waco*, in 1894, advertised the many local bathhouses and the healing powers of the mineral water. The guide indicated that many of the homes around the Bell's Hill area were elegant in stature, but that beyond the Padgitt bathhouse, very little existed, a picture confirmed

---

<sup>35</sup>"Waco the Geyser City, Famous Around the World as a Resort," Waco-Tribune Herald, 30 October 1949.

<sup>36</sup>Turner, "Waco the Geyser City."

<sup>37</sup>"Waco the Geyser City, Famous Around the World as a Resort."

by city directories from that time period.<sup>38</sup>

With the discovery of the water wells, Bell and his partner, James Moore, became local heroes of the community, because residents saw the potential gain to be made from their unique discovery.<sup>39</sup> Thereafter, Bell and Moore mainly received public approval, instead of ridicule, for future activities. The general public met within days following Bell's discovery of the first artesian well and placed upon the local April 1889 ballot an amendment for the right to continue drilling for future wells and development of the city water department.<sup>40</sup> The Bell Water Company experienced tremendous success, but Bell decided to sell the company. On 29 January 1904, Bell transferred ownership of his company to the City of Waco.<sup>41</sup> Bell thereby ended his association with his greatest local success, the discovery of artesian water.

By 1920, Waco's image as the "Geyser City" would be a faint memory due to the depletion of the artesian wells. With a lack of publicity from the wells, the Bell's Hill area disappeared from local press headlines and entered a translucent state. In addition, the lack of general interest by investors in Bell's Hill resulted in the demise of

---

<sup>38</sup>Turner, "Waco, the Geyser City"; Dayton Kelley, ed., "Business Guide of the City of Waco, For the Year 1894," Waco Heritage and History 3 (Fall 1975): 23-4.; Charles Cutter, Cutter's Guide to the City of Waco, Texas, (Waco, Tex., 1894), 5.

<sup>39</sup>Waco Evening News, 13 March 1889.

<sup>40</sup>Waco Evening News, 15 March 1889.

<sup>41</sup>McLennan County, Texas, Deed Records, Vol.162:340.

building luxurious homes and resorts such as the nearby Padgitt Natatorium.<sup>42</sup> Instead, the neighborhood transformed into a working-class community, but the name "Bell's Hill" became synonymous with the hill.

### **BELL'S HILL**

Thus begins the story of Bell's Hill, a small neighborhood community located in the southwest portion of Waco. The community, translucent in a sense, metamorphized as Waco grew over the decades.

Citizens of Waco in the early decades knew where the "hill" was and they knew why it was referred to as the "hill." The construction of houses began slowly, with the greatest concentration of structures centering around the streets of Clay, Webster, Burnett, and Jackson.<sup>43</sup> Otherwise, most of the area long remained undeveloped. As citizens moved into the rest of Bell's Hill, they had the unique opportunity of choosing their own house numbers due to the sparseness of

---

<sup>42</sup>Cutter, 17.

<sup>43</sup>Directory of the City of Waco 1888-89, 42-189.

neighbors and other dwellings.<sup>44</sup>

People came into Bell's Hill for various reasons, one possible factor being the continual flooding of the downtown area and East Waco.<sup>45</sup> North Waco was an impossible home for the middle-class people, as that area contained the relatively wealthier neighborhoods of Waco. As a result, the Bell's Hill locale offered Waco residents with a convenient, near-rural atmosphere as well as an affordable neighborhood. Residents of Bell's Hill were in close proximity to the railroad, and also to several manufacturing firms for which many of Bell's Hill citizens worked.

By the 1920s, the Bell's Hill region began to reflect a suburban atmosphere. Most of the homes in the area now were numbered and access to the streets continued through Twenty-ninth Street. But the population still reflected a

---

<sup>44</sup>Nadine and Hollis Thorne and Kathryn Owens Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 13 January 1995 in the Thorne home, 2604 Ross, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.); The U.S. census population in 1880 showed few residents in Bell's Hill. The city limits at that time did not extend out to the hill. Tenth Census of the United States: McLennan County population schedules. Waco-McLennan County Library, Waco, McLennan County, Texas. Microfilm.; The 1890 census was not available, but Waco's overall population in 1900 was 20,686 and approximately 782 of these people resided in Bell's Hill. Kelley, 53.; Twelfth Census of the United States: McLennan County population schedules. Waco-McLennan County Library, Waco, McLennan County, Texas. Microfilm.; By 1910, Waco's population had increased to 26,425 and Bell's Hill community saw an increase as well, with approximately 1,349 people living on the hill. Kelley, 53; Thirteenth Census of the United States: McLennan County population schedules. Waco-McLennan County, Texas. Microfilm.; The growth increase continued in 1920, with 38,500 people living in Waco and 1700 of these people lived in Bell's Hill. Kelley, 53.; Fourteenth Census of the United States: McLennan County population schedules. Waco-McLennan County, Texas. Microfilm.

<sup>45</sup>Poage, 228-29.

traditional working-class neighborhood. The local population included contractors, truck drivers, meat cutters, and other trades.<sup>46</sup>

The laborers backed political parties which would look favorably on the working-class laborers. They usually supported the Democratic party, but they also tended to vote with the third parties such as the Socialist, People's, and Prohibition parties in the early 1900s through the 1910s.<sup>47</sup> As time passed, inhabitants continued to support the Democrats, but the reflection of traditional perceptions was evident in the Bell's Hill neighborhood. During the contested 1924 governor's race, for example, Miriam A. Ferguson did not receive substantial electoral support from the Bell's Hill neighborhood. Instead, the citizens in Ward Three--Bell's Hill--supported her contender in the Democratic primary, James Whitfield Davidson.<sup>48</sup> General support for the Democratic party in Bell's Hill continued through the 1952 presidential election. Then, in Dwight D. Eisenhower's second presidential campaign, in 1956, the pattern changed. Citizens in Bell's Hill apparently perceived the Republican party as reflecting traditional attitudes to which they had grown accustomed and Bell's Hill, along with many other

---

<sup>46</sup>Waco City Directory (Houston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1920), appendix.

<sup>47</sup>McLennan County, Texas, Voting Records, 1902-1914, 14-5, 61.

<sup>48</sup>McLennan County, Texas, Voting Records, 1915-1926, 49.; Eldon Stephen Branda, ed., The Handbook of Texas A Supplement Volume III (Austin, Tex.: Texas State Historical Association, 1976), 228.

voting districts, supported the Republican, Eisenhower.<sup>49</sup>

The evolving conservative attitude expressed in inhabitants' voting patterns spilled forth into the types of houses they inhabited. As stated earlier, during the late 1800s and early 1900s several prominent homes had appeared on Clay and Webster. These homes reflected a sense of wealth due to their elaborate nature. Following the decline of the artesian wells, houses in Bell's Hill began to diverge from their original stature and now reflected simpler and affordable tastes. Children who grew up on the hill later referred to the more elaborate homes on Clay and Webster Streets as those belonging to the "rich" or "well-to-do" families. Children fantasized about entering the homes to envision the enormous wealth of the owners.<sup>50</sup> It would be a mistake to assume that great wealth existed as a direct result of the appearances of these houses. Instead, the early homes of Bell's Hill reflected the architectural diversity on the hill, not upper social or economic classes.

The Joseph D. Bell house, located at Twentieth and Clay, did not reflect the styles generally viewed later. Built in 1868, the Bell house was presumably the oldest residence built on the hill, approximately twenty years before its owner discovered the artesian water wells. The Bell house consisted of two stories and contained several enormous

---

<sup>49</sup>McLennan County, Texas, Record of Election Returns, Volume 7, 12, 54.

<sup>50</sup>Helen Geltemeyer Oral History #2 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 14 December 1994 at her home, 2025 Hermanson, Waco, Texas; tape in author's possession.)

rooms.<sup>51</sup> What once was a beacon of wealth, by the forties and fifties reflected the changing of time. The house no longer enjoyed the status it held in early days. Instead, in later years, it was a place to be feared, especially by neighborhood children.<sup>52</sup> In 1953, the Bell house gave way to a new era, as St. Mark Lutheran Church bought the structure and the adjacent property on which to build a new church and educational facility.<sup>53</sup>

Even though elaborate houses existed on Bell's Hill, it is a misconception to assume that individuals subsequently followed Bell in building on the hill. The few elaborate homes came many years later. But in 1928, the sparseness of residences of Bell's Hill remained readily apparent. The dwellings did not reflect a dense suburban area;<sup>54</sup> instead, a country atmosphere prevailed. A common local sight included buildings adjacent to the home used as wash rooms, smoke houses, or even barns.<sup>55</sup> Another common sight during the twenties were water towers,<sup>56</sup> primarily due to the delay in

---

<sup>51</sup>"Old Landmark of Bell's Hill Is Sold to Lutheran Church Here."

<sup>52</sup>Reinke Oral History #1.

<sup>53</sup>"Old Landmark of Bell's Hill Is Sold to Lutheran Church Here."

<sup>54</sup>Florine Reinke Family Photograph, 1928. Copy in author's possession.

<sup>55</sup>Texas Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (New York: Sanborn Insurance Company, 1926, microfilm), Reel 40, 346, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

<sup>56</sup>Reinke, 1928 photograph.

the arrival of city utilities. Instead Bell's Hill residents had to rely on private water storage units in order to maintain their own water supplies. By the fifties, however, such conditions gave way to modern suburban conveniences. Instead of the country atmosphere and isolation prevalent in the twenties, the fifties reflected a suburban atmosphere. By that time houses were in close proximity to one another, and the presence of streets and curbs in Bell's Hill could be found. Long since gone were the water towers and barns, to be replaced by streets and garages.<sup>57</sup>

## **ARCHITECTURE**

Throughout the Bell's Hill community, numerous types of architecture emerged and flourished. Two prominent types were Queen Anne and Craftsman.

### **Queen Anne**

The Queen Anne architectural style was commonly known as Victorian homes.<sup>58</sup> A prominent characteristic of this house was the high-pitched roof, the spindle work and the porch. A relatively famous example of the Queen Anne style found in Bell's Hill was the Hoffmann house. Owned by two sisters, Fay and Bird, they taught dance and performed professionally for a short time. Their Bell's Hill house located at 1921 Webster reflected the type of architecture popular in the late 1880s

---

<sup>57</sup>Florine Reinke Family Photograph, c.1950s. Copy in author's possession.

<sup>58</sup>Virginia and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984), 266.

through 1900.<sup>59</sup>

### **Craftsman**

With the passage of time, architectural styles changed. No longer was the Queen Anne style popular as residents searched for economically feasible houses. Instead, most citizens patterned their homes after the Craftsman style. Beginning in 1900, architects turned away from the historical looking homes and modernized the designs instead of reflecting the traditional Victorian homes. The new Craftsman style remained popular until the 1940s, accounting for many of the homes built within the Bell's Hill area.<sup>60</sup>

A general description of the popular Craftsman style architecture was as follows:

Low-pitched, gabled roof (occasionally hipped) with wide, unenclosed eave overhang; roof rafters usually exposed; decorative (false) beams or braces commonly added undergables; porches, either full-or partial-width, with roof supported by tapered square columns; columns or pedestals frequently extend to ground level (without a break at level of porch floor).<sup>61</sup>

The various architectural styles reflected the diverse individuals and families who moved into the Bell's Hill neighborhood, evidence that, once again, Waco was a crossroads for many people. The hill provided for the residents a rural setting, but within close proximity to

---

<sup>59</sup>M. Rebecca Sharpless, "The Hoffmannettes: Their Lives, Their Career, and Their Home," Waco Heritage and History 17 (Spring 1987): 2.

<sup>60</sup>McAlester, 454.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 453.

their work.

### **Problems with building**

Even though Waco was considered a crossroad, the difficulty of living on the hill revealed itself to the residents. The fertile soils of the Blackland Prairie posed a problem for individuals throughout Waco, but it was most evident to the residents of Bell's Hill. Earlier described were the Blackland Prairie's three soil types, the most prevalent of which was vertisols. This soil type extended on a line from north to south and was found in not only the Austin region, but also Dallas. Vertisols were made of smectilic clay and presented a problem for anyone living on this soil type.

The two general phenomena associated with the vertisols were slickensides and gilgai. The slickensides occurred when the soil swelled and the stress associated with it resulted in the failure of the soil. Subsequently, with the continual stress of the soil, gilgai formed. Instead of the soil maintaining an even plane, it became uneven. A series of high and low spots formed, resulting in problems for uncultivated land. As a related result, streets and pavement became unlevelled and cracked. Most houses built on this soil type could not contain basements due to the continual swelling and contracting.<sup>62</sup>

Residents of the Bell's Hill area realized that they had problems with the neighborhood's geological makeup and

---

<sup>62</sup>C. Thomas Hallmark, "Nature and Origin of Blackland Soils," 44-5.

geologists confirmed their belief. Baylor University geologists, J. W. Dixson, R. L. Bronaugh and S. H. Folk, discovered this when they conducted a survey of the soil. The three researched the feasibility of building a football stadium within the Bell's Hill community. Their consensus was that anything built on the soil would become vulnerable to shifting and substantial sagging. The geologists concluded:

Immediately underlying the black soil mantle in the Bell's Hill area is a layer of yellow marl, or soft clay shale, twenty feet or more in thickness at some places. The marl is plastic and easily deformed; some of the clay constituents are highly absorbent, causing them to swell rapidly when wet; it contracts and slacks badly when it dries....<sup>63</sup>

The information discovered by the Baylor geologists confirmed what the residents already knew: since the clay was permeable, it swelled during wet weather and contracted during drier times.

In the 1940s, Waco Independent School District administrators decided to conduct a survey of the school property. The administration wanted to determine what natural defects existed. The surveyors rated the Bell's Hill Elementary School located at Twenty-second and Ross lower due to the perceived problems associated with the shifting ground. The report stated,

Bell's Hill is a poor building in one way in that it is on soil of such a nature that it seems to "crawl" and produce cracks. It is impossible to keep such a building properly roofed. However, since it is a one-story building, it is not hazardous and on the whole rates comparatively

---

<sup>63</sup>Burket, 33.

high, 479.<sup>64</sup>

The figure 479 was out of a possible 1,000. The figure compared relatively favorably to other schools in the city.<sup>65</sup>

To an outsider, the shifting ground was a continual problem, but most Bell's Hill residents did not consider their situation to be grave. Instead, the consensus was that the situation was bearable. As opposed to the businesses and schools, residents adopted more primitive methods of combating the problems associated with the shifting ground. The success of their methods depended on whether they adopted temporary or permanent solutions. Since in the wetter season doors and windows would stick, some residents decided to crop portions of the doors. But, when the ground shifted again, the doors would then have considerable openings in them.<sup>66</sup> Citizens later expressed even greater difficulties due to the continual shifting of the ground. Not only did they experience problems with doors and wallpaper cracking, but also the shifting resulting in roof leaks, a considerable problem, especially for flat roofs. A costly structural problem associated with shifting ground was pipes breaking

---

<sup>64</sup>T. H. Shelby, The Report of a Survey of the Public Schools of Waco, Texas (Waco, Tex.: Hill Printing and Stationery Company, 1947), 238.

<sup>65</sup>Shelby, 237.

<sup>66</sup>Reinke Oral History #1.

and the warping of floors.<sup>67</sup>

The residents who sought permanent solutions such as building their homes on free-floating frames discovered great success. Such a house continually adjusted itself, producing few problems for residents.<sup>68</sup>

Bell's Hill, as a spatial area in Waco, was a suburb. It was where people lived and played within close proximity to their work. The Bell's Hill area also served as a rest-stop for travelers on the highway. Before the building of Interstate 35 in 1972 and the completion of Waco Drive in the 1950s, Eighteenth Street served as an important road, connecting Waco with the Temple highway. It was known as Highway 81 in the 1930s. The highway provided the residents who wanted to venture out on their own just such an opportunity. Some residents opened service stations and restaurants along the route to accommodate travelers passing through Central Texas.<sup>69</sup>

Other than the artesian wells and the coming of interstate travel, the community of Bell's Hill has remained virtually calm. Calmness does not mean the area was stagnant. Instead, people contributed to the growth and

---

<sup>67</sup>Harry and Lois Raines Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 16 November 1994 in the Raines home, 3504 Rolando, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

<sup>68</sup>Manuel and Eva Hernandez Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 26 September 1994 in the Hernandez home, 2714 Cleveland, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

<sup>69</sup>Charles and Ruth Armstrong Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 8 January 1995 in the Armstrong home, 1917 Clay, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

success of Waco. For some, Bell's Hill was an area they passed through on their way to another place; for others, it represented a working-class community.

Waco has been shown to be a crossroads; the intent now is to lift the veil of translucency from Bell's Hill. The goal is to explore the community and its uniqueness. Discovering the community in which residents lived is important, but discovering who they were and became is of equal importance. That is the next step in determining who lived in the area and how they survived.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DISCOVERING A SENSE OF BEING

To understand that Waco was a crossroads is to understand the attraction for individuals from different regions who came to the city. Following the 1870s and the arrival of the railroad, Waco grew by leaps and bounds. By the 1890s, Waco had three cotton compresses and a cotton mill.<sup>1</sup> Such industrial support provided an incentive for cotton farmers to settle in close proximity to the city.

During the next twenty years, railroads continued expanding into Waco. With the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe Railroad entering in 1910 and the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad Company deciding whether or not to build in Waco, industry began to boom. In addition, individuals from different cities could travel to Waco via the Dallas-Waxahachie Interurban line extending southward to the city.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, building permits doubled from August 1912 to August 1913, as people and industries began to discover opportunities in Waco.<sup>3</sup> Along with Waco, Bell's Hill grew as

---

<sup>1</sup>Directory of the City of Waco 1892-93 (Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1892), 4.

<sup>2</sup>Directory of the City of Waco 1911-12 (Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1911), 2.

<sup>3</sup>Directory of the City of Waco 1913 (Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1913), 3.

well. Individuals from rural provinces, cities, and countries traveled to the Waco area in search of individual happiness and prosperity. What evolved from such immigration was a community, consisting of people from diverse cultural heritages, who interacted with one another.<sup>4</sup>

Bell's Hill now became a cultural crossroads in a sense. Individuals who before might never have encountered one another became neighbors. Residents settled on the hill from different walks of life and for various personal and professional reasons. First and most prevalent, families followed the jobs. Industries in the early twenties provided many opportunities for financial advancement. Farm life took its toll on many families and they searched for an easier life in the city. Second, companies transferred individuals into the area. As indicated earlier, Waco was a Texas crossroad and with economic growth, companies expanded and transferred additional individuals to come into the area as employees. Individuals arriving in Waco discovered many parts of the growing community, including Bell's Hill.<sup>5</sup>

For factory workers, the Bell's Hill neighborhood provided close proximity to their work. Most workers could walk to work from their houses or ride street cars, thereby eliminating the need for many families to own automobiles.

---

<sup>4</sup>Stein, 272.

<sup>5</sup>Claud Harvey Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 18 March 1995 in the Harvey home, 233 Washington Blvd., Abilene, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.); Fred and Mildred Stengel, Jr. Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 26 September 1994, in the Stengel home, 1008 S. 19th, Waco, Texas; tape in author's possession.)

One family relocated to Waco from West Texas to work in the city's transportation department.<sup>6</sup> After entering the hill, they traded their car for a house, no longer needing an automobile due to their new location in the town.<sup>7</sup>

For former farm workers, living on the hill provided easy access to the city, but many also sought to retain a country atmosphere. Bell's Hill was on the outskirts of Waco, with the city limits extending to Twenty-ninth Street. People who preferred the country life could enjoy the country atmosphere without the burden of farm work. Lois Raines later remembered that her family could no longer stay on the farm because of the declining health of her father. By choosing to live in Bell's Hill, her father experienced a less stressful life, but the family still enjoyed the country atmosphere.<sup>8</sup> Family members could work in local factories and still raise farm animals that they loved so much.<sup>9</sup>

Majorie Rozelle's family entered the Bell's Hill area for a very different reason. While en route from Kansas to Houston, her family developed insufficient funds and decided to search for a job at Cameron Mill. They enjoyed the Bell's

---

<sup>6</sup>Claud Harvey Oral History #1.

<sup>7</sup>Thomas Harvey Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 25 February 1995, in the Harvey home, 2520 Sanger Avenue, Waco, Texas; tape in author's possession.)

<sup>8</sup>Lois Raines Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey, 16 November 1994, in the Raines home 3504 Rolando, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

<sup>9</sup>Hernandez Oral History #1.

Hill atmosphere so much that they built a home on the hill, never to complete the trip to Houston.<sup>10</sup>

Even though families came from all walks of life in settling Bell's Hill, the common consensus they shared centered on the affordability of homes. Not everyone in Waco considered the hill to be an ideal place to live, however. Following the depletion of the artesian wells, the neighborhood no longer retained the status of being affluent. Instead, for some other Waco residents, people who lived within the Bell's Hill boundaries represented an uncultured, unsuccessful society. By the 1920s, the neighborhood lost much of its earlier popular appeal. The only remaining redeemable quality was the nearby Texas Cotton Palace grounds. People from all over Waco, and well beyond, annually traveled to Waco to experience this event, only a few blocks from Bell's Hill.

For some Waco residents who lost interest in Bell's Hill, the housing shortage later caused by World War II forced them to revisit this undesirable neighborhood. Iona Russell, a previous resident of Bell's Hill, returned during the war for a few years. She later expressed dismay and humiliation at having to live in South Waco. The only people in the area, as far as she remembered, were "riffraff,"

---

<sup>10</sup>Majorie Rozelle Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 28 September 1994 in the Rozelle home, 2416 Burnett, Waco, Texas; tape in author's possession.)

unrespectable people, who preyed upon the affluent.<sup>11</sup>

Most residents in Bell's Hill did not share this woman's attitude, however, and expressed pride in their community.<sup>12</sup> In retrospect, residents entering Bell's Hill considered the neighborhood to be very beneficial to their families. The area had an elementary school, numerous worship centers, and convenient industry. When residents discovered these advantages, they knew that the neighborhood contained everything they wanted.<sup>13</sup>

Once residents entered the community in large numbers, housing became an issue. Most of the houses, especially in the earlier built sections of Bell's Hill, were rental properties. Even though the residents preferred to own their own homes, the expense of achieving that goal was often too great. Therefore, many residents chose to rent their houses. By taking a microcosmic view of one block in the Bell's Hill neighborhood, this concept becomes apparent. Through this dissection, it is evident that not everyone in Bell's Hill was able to afford home ownership. Instead, Morris Rubinsky, owned a majority of the 1700 block of Burnett.<sup>14</sup> Outside companies also expressed interest in Bell's Hill as well,

---

<sup>11</sup>Iona Beatrice Russell, "Oral Memoirs of Iona Beatrice Russell," Interview by M. Rebecca Sharpless (Regis, 4 December 1986), Oral Memoirs of Iona Beatrice Russell, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas. 94.

<sup>12</sup>Raines Oral History #1.

<sup>13</sup>Stengel Oral History #1.

<sup>14</sup>McLennan County, Texas, Tax Roll 1938, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Tex., 671.

owning some of the land themselves. One resident in the thirties purchased his land from the Anheiser-Busch Company.<sup>15</sup> Other companies, like the Fort Worth-based Archenhold Realty, acquired considerable amounts of property in Bell's Hill throughout the twenties and thirties. Instead of selling the property as a land developer, the company retained ownership and rented the homes to individuals.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, individuals throughout Waco controlled the rental property and they also usually chose not to sell. The Bell's Hill property provided Waco citizens with lucrative benefits from rents collected in the neighborhood. Ruth Armstrong later recalled a perceived control of the land in Bell's Hill by the local Jewish businessmen.<sup>17</sup> A review of deed and tax records, reveals that, indeed, Jews maintained substantial tracts of land throughout Waco, including Bell's Hill. For instance, the 1700 block of Burnett mentioned above, was controlled by Morris Rubinsky, a local Jewish businessman who resided within the South Third Street neighborhood commonly known as the "Jewish community."<sup>18</sup>

Even when housing owners offered to sell Bell's Hill rental property, some families could not afford their own

---

<sup>15</sup>Hernandez Oral History #1.

<sup>16</sup>McLennan County, Texas, Tax Roll 1928, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Tex., 24.; Tax Roll 1938, 24.

<sup>17</sup>Charles and Ruth Armstrong Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 14 December 1994 in the Armstrong home, 1917 Clay, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

<sup>18</sup>Tax Roll 1938, 671.

houses. One deterrent was job instability, as residents had to rely on sporadic job opportunities in order to support their families. Such unstable financial situations were not conducive to home ownership.<sup>19</sup> Besides, as Harry Raines later described life in the twenties, twelve dollars a month in rent was more realistic to pay than a total of seven or eight hundred dollars to purchase a home.<sup>20</sup>

The later general consensus among Bell's Hill residents was that most families ultimately owned their homes. When asked to reflect on rental property, many residents contended that this was not a common occurrence on Bell's Hill. That families rented there was a reality. Sporadically throughout Bell's Hill owners and renters lived adjacent to one another.<sup>21</sup>

Some families, however, did not purchase, build, or rent their homes in the Bell's Hill neighborhood. A common practice in the early thirties and forties was to move a house into a desired block. Nadine and Hollis Thorne recalled relocating a cottage-style house from a region in western Central Texas to Bell's Hill.<sup>22</sup> Thomas Harvey recalled his home serving at one time as a garage apartment,

---

<sup>19</sup>Hernandez Oral History #1.

<sup>20</sup>Raines Oral History #1. In researching the deeds of some of the homes in the Bell's Hill community, the price of \$700-800 dollars was not an inflated price, most of the property sold for \$650.00. McLennan County, Texas, Deed Records, Vol. 334: 362.

<sup>21</sup>Waco City Directory 1930-31 (Houston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Co., 1931), 471, 474.

<sup>22</sup>Thorne Oral History #1.

before the removal of the garage.<sup>23</sup> The relocation of houses was a common practice as people tried to utilize every possible avenue in establishing homes in Bell's Hill.

Another option for local individuals was the boarding house. Some residents recalled the presence of boarders, usually single women, in the neighborhood.<sup>24</sup> During World War II, for example, women began working in factories to assist in the war effort. In 1942, the Waco Army Air Field came to Waco.<sup>25</sup> As many people entered Waco during this time, several instances of single women boarding with families occurred in Bell's Hill.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from the war effort, young couples boarded with strangers. The main reason was financial: it was too expensive for a young couple to embark on their own, and boarding assisted them during the early days of marriage. Many boarders became life-long friends with families with whom they shared housing in the Bell's Hill neighborhood.<sup>27</sup> According to the city directories, boarding was a common practice in the Bell's Hill community during the 1940s.

---

<sup>23</sup>Thomas Harvey Oral History #2 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 22 April 1995, in the Harvey home, 2520 Sanger Avenue, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

<sup>24</sup>Louise Murphy and Estelle Pederson, Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 27 September 1994, in the Murphy home, 2512 Ross, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

<sup>25</sup>Wallace, 65.

<sup>26</sup>Murphy and Pederson Oral History #1.

<sup>27</sup>Thorne Oral History #1.

Sometimes boarders were not familiar with the home owners, as described above, but many times boarders were other family members. Due to insufficient funds, the younger people found it necessary to share housing with parents and other relatives. One couple lived in an older home around Seventeenth Street. The house consisted of long hallways a layout which allowed them to subdivide the house easily. The couple's parents lived on one side of the home, while the young couple lived on the other. This provided each individual family with a sense of privacy, but without the increased housing expenses.<sup>28</sup> Usually the young couple remained in such homes until they obtained enough funds either to purchase their own house or rent their own residence.<sup>29</sup>

The Bell's Hill housing situation brought together a wide variety of individuals. Whether home owners, renters, or boarders, each of these sets of residents lived and survived in the Bell's Hill community.

### **Houses**

Upon discovering the diverse background of individuals who resided in Bell's Hill, one might assume that the houses, too, reflected diversity. Houses throughout the area, however, remained those of a working-class community. But, even though the homes reflected a frugile attitude, social class differences existed in Bell's Hill. Class difference

---

<sup>28</sup>Raines Oral History #1.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

was evident in the overall physical quality of Bell's Hill homes. Basically, there were three levels of homes. Elaborate homes were found around Clay and Webster streets, a reflection of the beginnings of Bell's Hill. Modest homes were found throughout the hill, as were "shotgun" homes. "Shotgun" homes existed along Tintop Alley, as referred to by Anglo-American residents due to the tin roofs, or "Fifteenth Street," as referred to by Mexican-American residents in Bell's Hill.<sup>30</sup>

### **Tintop Alley**

The residents of Bell's Hill were socio-economically a world apart from their Castle Heights neighbors who lived acrossed the railroad tracks on Austin Avenue. So were the residents of Fifteenth Street, who resided just a few blocks from the majority of their Bell's Hill neighbors. Local companies, such as Nash-Robinson, owned the lower-class homes of Bell's Hill and rented them mostly to Mexican-American families. These houses, located adjacent to the railroad tracks, on Mary Street, closely resembled each another. Generally, they contained four or five rooms, with the kitchen in the back. Space quickly became an issue in these houses, since the family size was usually quite substantial. As a consequence, the family used every room as a bedroom.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup>Santos Martinez Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 18 January 1995 at Tito's Downtown Barber Shop, Lloyd's Building, 900 Austin Avenue, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.); Armstrong Oral History #1.

<sup>31</sup>Martinez Oral History #1.

Adequate space was not the only concern of the Fifteenth Street residents. Whereas residents farther up the hill enjoyed the luxury of modern utilities as early as the 1920s, Fifteenth Street residents experienced a relatively primitive lifestyle well into the 1940s. Indoor plumbing did not exist. Instead, each family relied on a pipe at the rear of the house for fresh water. To complete such tasks as taking a bath or washing dishes, the Mexican-American family kept a boiling pot on the stove at all times to provide hot water. Outhouses, a distant memory by the forties to other residents of the hill, were long in use by the poor in Bell's Hill.

Residents residing adjacent to the railroad tracks experienced other inconveniences. In addition to a lack of indoor plumbing, gas and electricity did not soon reach these residents. Families there relied upon wood-burning stoves, both for cooking and heating. For some families who worked for the railroad, free wood was often available from the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad Company.

Even with such inconveniences, the memories of Tintop Alley residents were happy ones. Most of the neighbors at that locale were relatives; the children constantly enjoyed the company of their cousins.<sup>32</sup>

### **Bell's Hill**

Moving up the hill, the scene was not much different. The homes, like those of Tintop Alley, contained four or five rooms, with kitchens in the back and screened-in back

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

porches. The main difference centered on the presence of amenities. Few residents on those streets later recalled using outhouses, particularly in the older section of homes. But, even though a house had a bathroom, the family usually did not have a bathtub. Until after World War II, most residents had to bathe in a number-three wash tub. Families in central Bell's Hill could not afford or obtain bathtubs until the late forties.<sup>33</sup>

The exteriors of Bell's Hill homes consisted mainly of wood or stucco and very rarely would the homes be made of brick.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, fireplaces did not exist because this was an expense most residents could not afford. The key word throughout the working-class community was "essentials." Whatever was essential to the survival of the family was in evidence; if it was not necessary, the family did not have it.

Similarly, the interiors of houses reflected the outsides. The bare necessities were in evidence. Homes had bare pine floors, with an occasional throw rug to cover the floor. Residents covered walls with wallpaper, but otherwise, rooms remained bare of extensive decorative items.<sup>35</sup> To cover the walls with objects would not be the

---

<sup>33</sup>Hernandez Oral History #1.

<sup>34</sup>Louise Murphy and Estelle Pederson Oral History #3 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 10 October 1994 in the Murphy home, 2512 Ross, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

<sup>35</sup>Murphy and Pederson Oral History #3.

norm; an act such as this would be a sign of luxury.<sup>36</sup>

Beds commanded the most space in the house, as families constantly needed additional sleeping quarters. It was not an obscure sight to see beds in the living room. A family considered itself most fortunate if there was an elaborate bedroom suite or dining room suite.<sup>37</sup> Some furnishings in the houses had sentimental value. In traveling to this country from Mexico, the Hernandezes brought a high-headboard bed with a feather mattress, a treasured piece of furniture for the family.<sup>38</sup>

### **Cooling Devices**

Summertime in Texas can be unbearable. Temperatures at times can well exceed one hundred degrees, with close to 100 percent humidity. This can pose serious health problems for many people, especially the young and the elderly.<sup>39</sup> Most Bell's Hill residents did not have the luxury of air conditioning, which, even after such cooling became common, was too expensive to install and maintain. Charles Armstrong recalled that during the late thirties and early forties, Castle Heights residents were among the first in Waco to have air conditioning. At the time, Armstrong worked for an ice

---

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Reinke Oral History #1.

<sup>38</sup>Manuel and Eva Hernandez Oral History #2 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 1 October 1994 in the Hernandez home, 2714 Cleveland, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

<sup>39</sup>Richardson, Wallace, and Anderson, 8.

company and it was his responsibility to deliver ice daily to a Castle Heights resident. He recalled the elaborate system which cooled the house, but also required a large quantity of ice in order to cool properly.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, Bell's Hill residents had to deal with the sweltering Texas heat through sheer inventiveness.

Some Bell's Hill families possessed floor fans and, if fortunate, ceiling fans. But, for the most part, the best way of combating heat came from fanning oneself with a piece of paper. There were other ways of keeping cool, including raising windows in a home. This simple act also contributed to social life because the residents with open windows kept abreast of what was occurring elsewhere in their neighborhood.<sup>41</sup>

One of the hardest times to deal with the high Texas heat index was at night. Residents later recalled great discomfort in being inside at night due to the lack of a breeze. A solution to this problem was for residents to turn their screened-in back porches into sleeping porches during summer months, thus enabling them to receive a somewhat restful night's sleep, without completely suffocating inside the house. Residents without screened-in porches did not suffer inside during the summer. Instead, they literally moved their bedrooms outside. Since the prospect of rain was

---

<sup>40</sup>Charles and Ruth Armstrong Oral History #2 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 8 January 1995 in the Armstrong home, 1917 Clay, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

<sup>41</sup>Rozelle Oral History #1.

not a concern, they enjoyed a peaceful night's sleep under the stars. The only problems they had to contend with were bugs, an occasional chicken roosting on their head, or a curious cow browsing over to investigate the situation. Otherwise, the outdoor-sleeping arrangement worked well, and Bell's Hill people received relief from the summer heat, but not from the constant humidity.<sup>42</sup>

A relatively greater concern during the summertime was the preservation of perishable foodstuffs. Throughout the twenties and thirties, Bell's Hill residents generally relied on the ice box to cool and preserve their perishable commodities. A typical wooden ice box consisted of two doors on the front and a lid on top in which to place a block of ice. The rack located on top of the ice box adjusted to accommodate the size of ice needed. The ice box required a drip pan underneath to capture excess water.<sup>43</sup> Some residents recalled drilling a hole through the floor and allowing the water to flow underneath the house.<sup>44</sup>

Ice had to be replenished in early ice boxes every couple of days, depending upon the weather. To accomplish this, residents possessed an ice card to place in their windows to alert ice companies as to how much ice they needed to have delivered. The ice cards distributed by the Geyser Ice Company and the Southland Ice Company contained four

---

<sup>42</sup>Harvey Oral History #1.; Martinez Oral History #1.

<sup>43</sup>Harvey Oral History #1.

<sup>44</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #2.

figures, the numbers twenty-five, fifty, seventy-five, and one hundred. If the resident wanted twenty-five pounds of ice, the family placed the "twenty-five" card side-up in the window signaling the need for ice. Deliveries occurred whether or not a family was at home at the time. The delivery men entered the homes through the rear and placed the ice in the ice box.<sup>45</sup>

Families also discovered other means of preserving perishable goods, particularly vegetables. Since some of the homes did not have underpinnings, many residents placed vegetables underneath the house, a practice that allowed for additional space in the ice box, as well as a reduction in the need for ice.<sup>46</sup>

Placing vegetables under the house worked better during cooler weather, but for frugal Bell's Hill residents, cooler temperatures also meant having to discover ways to heat their home. During the wintertime, residents returned to sleeping indoors and relied on wood- or gas-burning stoves for heat. In addition, quilts made by the women in the household served as additional sleep protection from winter.<sup>47</sup>

### **Food Products**

The innovation of Bell's Hill residents carried over into other areas of their lives. Since Bell's Hill reflected

---

<sup>45</sup>Harvey Oral History #1.

<sup>46</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #2.

<sup>47</sup>Hernandez Oral History #1.

the crossroads characteristic of Waco, residents brought to the area their diverse lifestyles. An example of such diversity apparent throughout the neighborhood was the innovative means of providing food for their families. The presence of livestock provided a connection for many residents not only with their former lives, but also animals enabled residents to have a sense of self-sufficiency by providing them with sources of additional nourishment. During the early twentieth century, residents also used animals as a mode of transportation. A common Bell's Hill sight in the twenties was children using donkeys as modes of travel.<sup>48</sup>

Among the earlier farm animals in Bell's Hill were hogs. Due to the country atmosphere of the hill, residents raised hogs on their nearby land. During certain cool times of the year, residents would butcher hogs. A man would usually contact residents to inquire whether he might butcher a hog for a portion of the meat. This process would be a day-long event, usually involving the whole family. The benefits they reaped from the hog overshadowed the uncomfortable actions associated with hog killing. Hogs contributed greatly to the nourishment of the family, and Louise Murphy stated, they used everything on the hog, "...except the squeal."<sup>49</sup> From hogs, residents garnered soap and lard, as well as the numerous meat byproducts. Utilizing as much of the animal as

---

<sup>48</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #2.

<sup>49</sup>Louise Murphy and Estelle Pederson Oral History #2 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 5 October 1994 in the Murphy home, 2512 Ross, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

possible was a valuable lesson for young people on Bell's Hill.<sup>50</sup>

Chickens, the most numerous animal on the hill, became popular as well. This multi-functional animal provided residents with eggs, meat, and fertilizer. Every few years, residents relocated the chickens in their yards and the previous place became the location of a garden. Natural fertilizer helped to produce abundant food crops for the residents.<sup>51</sup>

The animal owned by more people however, was the cow. The availability of grazing land allowed for the creature's presence. There were dairies along Dutton Street and beyond Twentieth-ninth Street providing an incentive for other Bell's Hill residents to become interested in owning cows.<sup>52</sup> The responsibility for a cow usually fell to the children, who found vacant lots for the cow to graze, usually within the same block as the children's homes. As time progressed and more individuals entered the community, grazing space became a problem and the cow a nuisance. Following World War II, cows began to lose their appeal, and Bell's Hill residents slowly discontinued the use of these animals. For the duration of these animals' presence on Bell's Hill, cows provided residents with milk and butter. These dairy

---

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Harvey Oral History #2.

<sup>52</sup>Directory of the City of Waco 1913 (Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Co., 1913), 9.; Hernandez Oral History #2.

products enabled residents to avoid buying such items at neighborhood groceries.<sup>53</sup>

Animals provided only one facet of self-sufficiency for residents in the Bell's Hill community. Gardens also contributed greatly to the overall food intake of Bell's Hill residents. Some gardens covered the span of a vacant lot; others fit within the confines of a backyard. The residents actually enjoyed producing their own food. The gardens consisted mainly of beans, black-eyed peas, and other types of green vegetables. Residents did not purchase many vegetables at neighborhood groceries because of the successes of their gardens. To preserve their raw food supply, residents canned vegetables they did not immediately use and saved them for leaner times.<sup>54</sup>

The gardens and the animals presented residents with a viable alternative to purchasing food products from outside sources. Through the concerted efforts of the residents to care for the animals and the fertility of the land, Bell's Hill provided substantial food for the residents.

A typical Bell's Hill meal reflected the residents' dependency upon the success of such efforts. Many meals consisted of beans, cornbread, eggs, milk, sausage, peas, or whatever else they grew on the land. Meat was a luxury commodity which usually appeared only on Sundays or special occasions. Living within their means was an important

---

<sup>53</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

<sup>54</sup>Murphy and Pederson Oral History #2.

philosophy of the Bell's Hill residents.<sup>55</sup>

### **Household Duties**

When the residents were not consumed with providing for meals and caring for the animals, other duties required their attention. The women in each family bore much responsibility in Bell's Hill. Cleaning the house, washing and ironing the clothes, and other chores fell to the women. Residents remembered their mothers cleaning house virtually every day to ensure that this did not later become a major task.

Without the presence of water heaters, women had to heat water on stoves or over an open fire if they were doing laundry. Laundry was a task which proved most difficult. Usually, the designated wash day was Monday. Unless the family was fortunate enough to own a manually operated wringer washer, the women built a fire behind the home and placed a cast iron kettle over it. Once the clothes soaked and boiled for a while, it was then necessary to scrub them over a rubboard to get them clean. Upon completion of this task, the garments were hung outside to dry in the sunshine.<sup>56</sup>

Ironing was another arduous and sometimes dangerous task. The most common irons in Bell's Hill were those placed on a stove and heated; however, in order to ease the job, individuals sometimes switched to gasoline irons. This proved to be very dangerous, as gasoline irons had a reputation for exploding. None of the Bell's Hill residents

---

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Hernandez Oral History #2.

later recalled such an incident, but this was an ever-present danger in Bell's Hill.<sup>57</sup>

In between providing nourishment and caring for the home, the women also sewed and quilted. A task which some later viewed as a hobby was actually a necessity in Bell's Hill. Quilts provided a family with a source of warmth through the winter. Sewing and quilting, although difficult tasks, brought some relief to women because these activities allowed them to sit down and rest.

Although residents' lives appeared difficult, most considered themselves fortunate to live in Bell's Hill. They developed great friendships and experienced happy as well as sad times. The crossroads they discovered in Waco proved beneficial to them after all. Discovering the joys and sorrows they experienced while living on Bell's Hill, will be the next area of interest in this study.

---

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DISCOVERING A SENSE OF LIVING

People tend to prefer tranquil lives with few interruptions. Without adventure and excitement, however, life is often mundane. Life on Bell's Hill brought much adventure, but also much hardship to the residents. Residents experienced laughter, happiness, and the sorrows associated with life. These experiences sometimes brought neighbors together or tore families apart, but they are important to the story of Bell's Hill. Such occurrences provide a living, breathing view of Bell's Hill, as well as that found in the two-dimensional picture provided in previous chapters.

Residents of Bell's Hill discovered dimensions about the neighborhood which gave them a greater sense of home and safety. For some, the act of listening to the sheer peacefulness of the hill provided them with joy. Others enjoyed the sounds of nearby steam-engine trains (prior to the 1950s) struggling to make it up the hill.<sup>1</sup> The Baylor chimes of Pat Neff Hall, after 1940, entertained some residents of Bell's Hill as they sat in their yards at night.<sup>2</sup>

The presence of interesting smells also enhanced their presence on the hill. Residents in Bell's Hill could enjoy the sweetness of the flowers or the continual baking of bread

---

<sup>1</sup>Stengel Oral History #1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

coming from bakeries such as Southern Maid Bakeries.<sup>3</sup> Both of these smells added richness to their lives. Whether it reminded them of their previous lives before moving to the hill or provided a sense of security, the presence of these and other aromas reminded them that they were at home on Bell's Hill.

Residents of Bell's Hill seemed to be concerned with money. Most families' salaries lasted only until the next payday. Money determined whether or not the family owned a car, what type of entertainment they could afford, and how many medical bills they could accrue and pay. Even though family income dictated the extent of their lifestyle, the most important social institution on the hill was the family unit. Residents would later recall the closeness that they shared, and feelings that provided the stability for families against life's hardships.

Family and friends provided residents with both entertainment and fellowship. For Bell's Hill men, their daytime hours consisted of work in local factories and businesses throughout Waco. Bell's Hill women, on the other hand, quite often had dual responsibilities. Before the 1940s, women generally stayed at home and cared for their children and houses. After the onset of World War II, local companies such as Hawk and Buck, J. M. Wood, and tent factories utilized the women of Bell's Hill in order to

---

<sup>3</sup>Hernandez Oral History #2.; Raines Oral History #1.; Waco (McLennan County, Tex.) City Directory 1948 (Dallas, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Co., 1948), 562.

replace the drafted men, as well as aid in the war effort.<sup>4</sup>

As a consequence, life for residents on the hill was busy. When the day ended at work and household responsibilities completed, the Bell's Hill family found time to enjoy itself and the company of their fellow neighbors. Families usually did not leave the hill to be entertained, but instead found inventive ways to amuse themselves.

### **Indoor Entertainment**

One form of amusement on Bell's Hill was indoor entertainment. Families either relied on technological inventions for entertainment, or more creative families developed their own forms of entertainment.

Fortunate Bell's Hill families had obtained radios in the twenties and such conveniences provided them, as well as their neighbors, with many hours of enjoyment. The radio became a neighborhood-wide activity which included, at times, people who were unknown to the rest of the community. When a family purchased a radio, the salesperson gave the customer a blue light. Due to the scarcity of radios, if a family so chose, they replaced their porch light bulb with a blue light bulb, a symbolic invitation to neighbors as well as passers by, to enter the home and enjoy listening to radio programs with the family. Communal radio listening was not an everyday event. Instead, families only placed the blue light bulb out on special occasions.

In the mid-twenties, one young Bell's Hill man, Charles

---

<sup>4</sup>Murphy and Pederson Oral History #1.; Raines Oral History #1.

Armstrong, built a battery-operated radio and this appliance also provided a source of amusement for local listeners. But, it also became a source of mischief. The young man's radio enabled him to interfere with the local reception of radio programs by neighbors. When a special event, such as a boxing match occurred, he sometimes replaced the transmitted sports programming with the prankster's own radio live broadcast. Such uncontrolled amateur radio broadcasting continued on Bell's Hill until the local police discovered the sources of illegal radio transmissions.<sup>5</sup>

When there was not any static or other mischievous radio interference, Bell's Hill listeners tuned in to hear their favorite shows such as "Amos and Andy." Listening to radio was a limited activity. During the late twenties and thirties, radio show broadcasts were not available twenty-four hours a day; local broadcasts could be heard on Bell's Hill only from sun up to sun down.<sup>6</sup>

When the attention of Bell's Hill residents was not on their radios, local families enjoyed other indoor activities. Most residents later recalled the presence of musical instruments in their homes, specifically pianos. Harry Raines fondly remembered his home being filled with people and the sounds of music virtually every night. Essentially, they had a jamboree, since his family owned a piano and the neighbors brought in instruments such as a banjo, a fiddle,

---

<sup>5</sup>Armstrong Oral History #1.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

and a guitar. Such music making created a festive atmosphere for that resident and his younger siblings.<sup>7</sup>

Quilting also contributed to entertainment on Bell's Hill. Before many women worked outside of the home in the forties, the only time women got together was during quilting bees. Women spent many hours--sometimes all day--designing quilts to provide warmth for their families during the wintertime. When quilts were hand-sewn, it took about a week to finish one, but if they used a sewing machine, some women could finish a quilt in approximately one day's time.<sup>8</sup>

There were numerous quilting parties in Bell's Hill during in the twenties and thirties. As time progressed and women began working outside of the home, they no longer had time to participate in this activity. Most quilts were not finished in a day. As a result, women turned their attention to another activity. Sewing, instead of quilting, became popular and Bell's Hill women, especially church members, often prepared meals and spent the day together while sewing and in fellowship with one another.<sup>9</sup>

When electronic devices became readily available and affordable, some residents discovered entertainment with multiple band radios. Previously, Bell's Hill residents had known little about what occurred in the larger city. With

---

<sup>7</sup>Raines Oral History #1.

<sup>8</sup>Hernandez Oral History #2.

<sup>9</sup>Nadine and Hollis Thorne Oral History #2 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 1 February 1995 in the Hollis home, 2604 Ross, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

the multiple band radios, Bell's Hill families could listen to police radio reports and follow those that sounded interesting. Sometimes this proved a little unnerving. One time, for example, when a Bell's Hill couple and their friend appeared on the scene of a brawl between wartime service enlisted men, they inadvertently became entangled in the fight. The Bell's Hill residents tried to assist the police officer by taking some of the men to the police station, but they had difficulty at the station convincing the police that they were not direct participants in the brawl, but only broke it up.<sup>10</sup>

### **Outdoor Entertainment**

Not all entertainment in Bell's Hill occurred inside the home. For some, an enjoyable evening consisted of sitting outside on the porch visiting with neighbors. For others who wanted to spend some time away from home, they went to Bell's Hill Park. Located near the railroad tracks, the park contained a small creek and was an ideal setting for outdoor theatrical productions on a grassy slope that formed a natural stage. On one night a week, Bell's Hill residents could attend a free movie held in the park or just enjoy the peaceful natural setting.<sup>11</sup>

For the relatively more adventurous, local football provided much excitement. Municipal Stadium, located on the old Texas Cotton Palace grounds, became the center of much

---

<sup>10</sup>Raines Oral History #1.

<sup>11</sup>Martinez Oral History #1.

activity each fall. Bell's Hill children discovered ways to enter the stadium without paying in order to see the Baylor Bears take on opponents on the gridiron.<sup>12</sup> The Baylor Bear Club also held annual rodeos in Municipal Stadium, thereby generating great enthusiasm in the Bell's Hill area.<sup>13</sup>

Yearly events created much excitement for the Bell's Hill children for many years. The Texas Cotton Palace enthralled several generations of Bell's Hill residents. By 1894, the City of Waco raised enough money to open the Texas Cotton Palace, the purpose of which was to celebrate the importance of cotton to the area. Citizens participated in the first celebration, but the complex burned and was not rebuilt until 1910.<sup>14</sup> Residents remembered the popularity of the second Texas Cotton Palace and the enthusiasm each fall at the opening. Helen Geltemeyer recalled her excitement and longing to partake in the activities. Her family's financial situation, however, was such that she was not allowed to enjoy the activities. Consequently, one day a friend visiting the Geltemeyer home gave her and her sister enough money to get into the palace complex. Even though they could not pay to ride the attractions or purchase food, the girls reveled

---

<sup>12</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #4 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 22 February 1995, a car interview, while driving through the Bell's Hill neighborhood; tape of interview in author's possession.)

<sup>13</sup>Stengel Oral History #1.

<sup>14</sup>"First Cotton Palace," Waco Tribune-Herald, 30 October 1949, 16-8.

in the fact they attended the Texas Cotton Palace.<sup>15</sup>

After the Texas Cotton Palace's demise in the early thirties, Bell's Hill residents witnessed additional annual events which came to the area. The traveling circus regularly thrilled the children of Bell's Hill. Circus personnel would unload the animals at the Katy Depot, located around Eighth and Mary, and then caravan the animals to beyond the Waco Circle, the usual site for the event. While in town, trainers washed the animals near the vicinity of Seventeenth and Flint, and this provided Bell's Hill children with additional opportunities to see a variety of exciting animals without attending the circus, a goal too expensive for many Bell's Hill families.<sup>16</sup>

If the circus was not in town, a carnival was probably nearby. It was common for carnivals to set up on the old Texas Cotton Palace grounds, and such events captivated the Bell's Hill residents with their daredevil antics.<sup>17</sup> These activities also brought much joy and anticipation to families of the area.

Residents who had a penchant for more aggressive sports activities ventured to Wright Wrestling Hall, located at Fourteenth and Clay. More Bell's Hill men than women frequented this place, where they enjoyed dramatic action

---

<sup>15</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #4.

<sup>16</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #2.

<sup>17</sup>Martinez Oral History #1.

during public wrestling events.<sup>18</sup>

Children in Bell's Hill also entertained themselves by attending various churches and local parties. Parties were popular in individual homes. Some of the activities consisted of the game of musical chairs, or if a parent's back was turned, the children engaged in kissing games.<sup>19</sup>

### **Organizational Entertainment**

Organized activities comprised a third type of entertainment in Bell's Hill. Social clubs were available to residents through churches and fraternal organizations. There were numerous social clubs in Waco, but few Bell's Hill women belonged to them, perhaps because Bell's Hill women rarely had time to become entangled in social commitments. Whereas wealthier women possibly had attendants in their households, Bell's Hill women had to rely on themselves and assistance from their children to perform household duties. While husbands participated in the local Masonic chapter at Eighth and Washington, a popular organization for women was Eastern Star.<sup>20</sup>

Another organization similar to Eastern Star and the Masons was the Mutualista. Formed by Mexican-American residents, this organization provided opportunities for people to socialize and to reflect on their Hispanic

---

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #3.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

heritage. Their activities included preparing celebrations for Mexico's Independence Day.<sup>21</sup>

### **Local Excitement**

The reliance upon outside entertainment was not always necessary to add excitement to the Bell's Hill residents' lives. At certain times, life on Bell's Hill proved interesting and provided local color for residents. The perceived isolation from the outside world dissolved and national events touched their lives. One such event that created local excitement occurred in the twenties, when the famous gangster duo of Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow frequented Bell's Hill. The Hardy family, who lived on the hill, had two sons involved in the Parker-Barrow gang, and this caused great heartache for the family but brought notoriety to the neighborhood.<sup>22</sup> It was the friendship between the Hardy boys and Bonnie and Clyde that brought the infamous couple to visit the Bell's Hill community. Federal authorities realized that the duo frequented the Bell's Hill neighborhood and tried to capture them at the Hardys' home in the 1700 block of Clay, but to no avail. Frank Hardy, one of the boys, provided the duo with a safe hideout and alerted them to authorities' plans in time for them to escape.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>Hernandez Oral History #2.

<sup>22</sup>Mary Kemendo Sendon, Oral Memoirs of Mary Kemendo Sendon, typed transcript of a series of tape-recorded interviews conducted by Lois E. Myers, in progress, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, Texas.

<sup>23</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #2.

Not all the local excitement was associated with criminal activity. Another duo who lived on Bell's Hill was the famous Hoffmannettes. Fay and Bird Hoffmann resided in their family home at 1921 Webster. For a brief period in the early nineteen hundreds, the sisters, known as the Hoffmannettes, were prominent professional dancers, but Wacoans remembered them more for their dancing school rather than their professional dance career. Following their professional career, the Hoffman sisters returned to Bell's Hill and converted part of their home into the Hoffmannettes School of Dance, where they taught young people from all parts of Waco.<sup>24</sup>

Children living near the Hoffmann house, however, did not attend their dance school, largely due to the inaffordability of the dance lessons. Consequently, Bell's Hill residents' later memories of the Hoffmanns were not for their dance school, but for their lavish style of dress and overt, eccentric behavior. On one occasion, for example, Fay and Bird walked across seats in the downtown Waco Theater to reach their desired destination instead of walking down the aisle like other theater patrons.<sup>25</sup>

## Holidays

Aside from the numerous forms of entertainment and local excitement, Bell's Hill families enjoyed life in other ways.

---

<sup>24</sup>Waco (McLennan County, Tex) City Directory 1948, 582.; Sharpless, "The Hoffmannettes: Their Lives, Their Career, and Their Home," 5, 7.

<sup>25</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #2.

The most memorable events in Bell's Hill were holidays. Residents later recalled throughout their time on the hill that families embraced the seasons without accruing debt, and holidays produced some deep memories as the people of Bell's Hill struggled to deal with their meager financial situation.

Bell's Hill residents celebrated holidays with very little commercialization. Holiday advertising was rare and the residents celebrated the seasons according to their own family lifestyles and traditions. One of the most intriguing holidays in Bell's Hill was Halloween, a time when small children dressed in costumes and took part in trick-or-treat activities. During the twenties and thirties, that holiday also represented a time when both children and young adults captured local attention through pranks. For teenage pranksters, activities such as relocating outhouses and placing them on tops of houses, or greasing the streetcar tracks which ran up Clay Street to Twentieth, brought great joy.<sup>26</sup> For other residents, however, Halloween was a devilish night, one on which adults dared not venture out of their homes. Young adults involved themselves in even more destructive activities than teenagers, as their pranks consisted of breaking window lights or letting animals loose in the neighborhood.<sup>27</sup>

Thanksgiving, on the other hand, centered on the family unit. In Bell's Hill, families lived in very close proximity

---

<sup>26</sup>Raines Oral History #1.

<sup>27</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

to one another. In the late twenties, large family gatherings were common in Bell's Hill, with twenty or more family members gathering at a relative's home. By the forties and fifties, however, Bell's Hill families began splintering away. The separation did not occur because of a reversal in family values, but due to the increasing physical distance between houses of family members.<sup>28</sup>

An enjoyable holiday in Bell's Hill was Christmas. During the twenties and thirties, few families could afford to buy elaborate gifts; instead, the focus of Christmas in Bell's Hill was on family and the Christ story. The typical Bell's Hill family did not display a Christmas tree. A tree was a luxury and people did not spend their money frivolously.<sup>29</sup>

Whereas adults, at times, could comprehend the lack of money, small children did not understand. During the twenties, Ruth Armstrong agonized over a neighbor's elaborate holiday tree. While a student at Bell's Hill Elementary School, she became determined that her family would have a Christmas tree and she decided to travel to the "grove," located adjacent to Twenty-sixth Street, an area backed by the railroad track and full of mesquite trees and secret hiding places for the children. With the help of her friend, her family enjoyed a Christmas tree for the first time that

---

<sup>28</sup>Raines Oral History #1.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

year.<sup>30</sup> Bell's Hill children learned from their elders the necessity to remain within the means of their budgets. Instead of accruing momentous debts for holidays, the Bell's Hill families discovered ways to enjoy the holidays while staying within their means.

### **Safety**

The constant activity in Bell's Hill could have caused parents to worry about their children and their safety. For instance, Ruth Armstrong's parents might have been concerned about her traveling to the "grove," but they were not. Consequently, in Bell's Hill there was little concern about crime and safety by residents throughout the fifties. Most citizens viewed their neighborhood as a place of peace and tranquility.<sup>31</sup>

Bell's Hill women traveled unescorted from downtown Waco at night to their homes in Bell's Hill. Only once did this become a potential problem when one resident realized that she was being followed by a man after she got off a bus at Twentieth and Clay. Fear overtook her and she imagined what might occur next. Only after she safely reached her home and locked herself inside did she discover that the man had not been following her after all. Instead, the stranger she feared had just moved in next door and was heading for his

---

<sup>30</sup>Armstrong Oral History #1.

<sup>31</sup>Murphy and Pederson Oral History #1.

own home.<sup>32</sup>

During the Depression years of the 1930s, hoboes continually roamed the hill. Hoboes were transients who sought homes which would provide them with food, and they had systems for informing the next hoboes as to which resident might aid them on their journey. Hoboes marked curbs of homes willing to assist. Other than their continual presence, the hoboes did not present a danger to the Bell's Hill community. On the contrary, Bell's Hill residents viewed them as weary travelers trying to reach their final destinations.<sup>33</sup>

## **PERSONAL HARDSHIPS**

As in any community, there were good and bad times; Bell's Hill was no different. There, residents both experienced pain and sorrow, and in numerous ways. Sometimes personal problems centered on issues of money, at other times on health. Sometimes the pain was severe and in the forms of family problems and/or racism. Each of these types of problems in Bell's Hill should be addressed.

## **Medical Treatment**

Medical doctors appeared only occasionally throughout the early twenties and thirties in Bell's Hill. Most local residents did not rely on general medical practitioners for

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

help with their common ailments, but instead, turned to nearby neighbors and family members to deal with whatever health crisis was at hand. Some did not seek medical treatment because of lack of money. While there were physicians practicing not far away from Bell's Hill, effective medicines were scarce.<sup>34</sup> Not until the late forties, when the discovery of mold in Peoria, Illinois, revolutionized medicine, would penicillin become available in large quantities. Beginning in 1944, when medical doctors distributed penicillin readily to patients,<sup>35</sup> Bell's Hill residents began seeking professional medical treatment to a greater extent than in earlier years. Until then, residents relied on home remedies and the advice of experienced individuals. Some remedies, for example, included whiskey for pneumonia to dislodge congestion in a victim's chest, Vick's Vapor Rub to deal with an assortment of ailments, and vinegar to treat bee stings and ant bites.<sup>36</sup> If such home remedies did not work, Bell's Hill families took more serious steps. For instance, Harry Raines later remembered his mother sending him to the local "witch doctor," as she was dubbed by Bell's Hill neighborhood children. It was a frightening

---

<sup>34</sup>Armstrong Oral History #1.

<sup>35</sup>Gordon Carruth, ed., What Happened When: A Chronology of Life and Events in America (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1989), 784, 792.

<sup>36</sup>Murphy and Pederson Oral History #2. Louise Murphy's father encountered a bee hive and received numerous stings on his head. Murphy took the vinegar and rubbed it into each bite. The process took several hours due to the density of the bites, but he did not experience any problems due to the bites.

experience, because the local medicine woman put a dime in the middle of a plate and poured something onto it. When it crawled to the middle, she placed these items into a pouch which she positioned around his neck. According to Raines, this cured him, even though the tactics used by the woman frightened him. The "witch doctor" also claimed to have mystical powers, such as the power to foretell the future. She warned Raines's mother one day that her sister's death would occur in three days. Exactly three days later, the family received word that, indeed, his aunt had died. Thereafter, the children feared this woman, but the adults around the neighborhood flocked to her for readings and healings. She was a source of local entertainment, as well as a source of radical medical treatments.<sup>37</sup>

When the time came for a pregnant woman to deliver a baby, the Bell's Hill family often used a mid-wife. This practice ended slowly after the 1920s and by the 1930s, midwifery was no longer common in Bell's Hill. Local families began to contact doctors for birthing assistance, but the actual births still occurred in the home.<sup>38</sup>

Residents remembered doctors making house calls in Bell's Hill. This was a common practice and local doctors considered it the best way to treat their patients. If the doctor was unable to assist, there was no charge for the family for the physician's inconvenience. The practice of

---

<sup>37</sup>Raines Oral History #1.

<sup>38</sup>Rozelle Oral History #1.

housecalls continued into the 1950s, when more residents owned automobiles and were able to visit doctors' offices in other sections of Waco.<sup>39</sup>

## **Depression**

During the thirties families on the hill had to contend with the problems associated with the Depression. Some survived better than others, but for most survival in Bell's Hill included the reliance on public assistance. A portion of the residents declined assistance, even though there was need. One young man, for example, refused to accept a pair of government overalls because he did not want anybody to know he had received a handout.<sup>40</sup> He, as well as others, concluded government assistance was unacceptable. They fervently believed that all residents should be self-sufficient.<sup>41</sup>

For those Bell's Hill residents willing to accept Depression-era assistance, they went to the Texas Cotton Palace grounds, located between Clay and Dutton Streets on Fifteenth to receive surplus commodities. Others residents traveled to Providence Hospital, on North Eighteenth Street, where they received soup.<sup>42</sup>

Whether or not residents accepted government assistance

---

<sup>39</sup>Hernandez Oral History #2.

<sup>40</sup>Armstrong Oral History #1

<sup>41</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #2.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

during the 1930s was irrelevant. Bell's Hill consisted of a cross-culture of people drawn from diverse backgrounds. Some were fresh off the farm; others had moved from other cities or from East Waco. Some Bell's Hill people worked in factories; others worked for the municipal government in some capacity or another. Each person dealt with problems they encountered in a different way adding to the diversity in the community.

### **Family Problems**

Family-related problems existed in the Bell's Hill community and these were sometimes the most difficult problems to address. Bell's Hill families often suffered in silence and neglected issues badly in need of attention. This sometimes led to outbursts, instead of reasonable actions. The transference of anger to children and spouses occurred often in Bell's Hill, resulting in compounded feelings of anguish and pain.<sup>43</sup> Individual outbursts were not always related to physical abuse. Sometimes alcoholism led to a cry for help.

During Prohibition, it was not an uncommon sight to see Bell's Hill residents involved in the illegal production of alcohol. Generally, such residents made alcohol in bathtubs so that if the local police discovered the practice, they could easily dispose of the evidence.<sup>44</sup> Although this activity appeared harmless, alcohol consumption posed a

---

<sup>43</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #3.

<sup>44</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

serious problem for some Bell's Hill residents. Unhappy with life and their jobs, some citizens turned to alcohol for solace and in some instances this became a deadly combination. Hollis Thorne later recalled the night he opened his door to discover a Cameron Mill co-worker bleeding profusely. After a bout of drinking, the despondent man had slit his throat, only to become frightened afterwards. The injured man survived the incident, but neighbors recognized the dangers associated with continual alcohol abuse.<sup>45</sup> Family members became painstakingly aware of the consequences of alcoholism and long remembered the agony associated with an alcoholic family member.

A momentous day in the lives of local young people was that of high school graduation. One such day, however, as Helen Geltemeyer's family gathered together to attend the ceremony and provide support to the recent graduate, her day of personal triumph turned into one of humiliation. When Geltemeyer's father disappeared before the ceremony, they searched the bars around the downtown Waco Square only to find him too intoxicated to attend his daughter's graduation ceremony.<sup>46</sup>

Unfortunately, for that family, the pain did not end with the humiliation of graduation day. After years of unhappiness with his job at Southwestern Bell Telephone Company and his family, Vivian Williams chose to commit

---

<sup>45</sup>Thorne and Owens Oral History #1.

<sup>46</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #2.

suicide in a spectacular manner. He barred the barn doors, poured gasoline over himself, and struck a match. The intensity of the fire overtook him and he burst through the doors. Neighbors watched in horror as the man ran through the neighborhood literally burning to death. For the rest of their lives, the memory of the desperate man remained etched in their minds. For Bell's Hill this event long remained a tragic example of the dangers of alcoholism.<sup>47</sup>

The community of Waco, in general, turned away from the reality of the situation and classified the incident as an accident. The local press reinforced this view, reporting that the man had accidentally ignited himself, even though family and friends knew otherwise.<sup>48</sup> The press report was an example of how society tried to mask activity which might be overtly against the social norm during the forties.

Ten years later in the 1950s, another tragedy occurred in Bell's Hill. Another man took his life, this time by hanging himself in his garage. Again, the Waco press chose not to report the event accurately. This time the press stated that the man had been recently ill, but Bell's Hill neighbors knew otherwise.<sup>49</sup> This time the incident was unrelated to alcoholism, but it serves to show that serious problems existed on the hill. In addition, such occurrences

---

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>"V. E. Williams Is Dead of Flames; Rites Due Today," The Waco News-Tribune, 14 June 1941, 1.

<sup>49</sup>"Wacoan Found Dead," The Waco News-Tribune, 6 April 1954, 1.

confirm the continual masking of family tragedies by society throughout the forties and fifties. Instead of addressing the issue, the press chose to ignore problems and present a mask to the people. Consequently, the families who suffered in silence did so due to the belief that their situations were rare.

Family problems were not the only serious issues evident on Bell's Hill. The community was not an all Anglo-American neighborhood. Actually, Bell's Hill has always been an integrated area, despite some residents' long-held inclination to believe otherwise. Almost ignored by the majority on Bell's Hill were Mexican Americans and African Americans who did not live in the heart of Bell's Hill, but along the railroad tracks in areas such as Tintop Alley.<sup>50</sup> Racism and racial misunderstanding became a serious problem in Bell's Hill.

After World War I, the Ku Klux Klan had a profound effect in the Waco community. The Klan controlled a racial/ethnic minority in Waco through fear,<sup>51</sup> and the memory of Klan activities long remained vivid for several Bell's Hill residents. During one of the numerous rallies held near the Waco Circle, the power the KKK exerted over people's lives became evident. Helen Geltemeyer later recalled recognizing a Klan member in public while he was robed. At

---

<sup>50</sup>Waco City Directory (Houston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Co., 1924), 619; Directory of the City of Waco 1913 (Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Co., 1913), 23.; Martinez Oral History #1.

<sup>51</sup>Wallace, 55, 59.

the time, she was only ten years old and it seemed natural for her to speak to her neighbor when she recognized him at a Klan event. Because her mother feared the Klan might retaliate against her family, for a period of time, she kept constant watch over her daughter.

Whether it was in an outward display of power or through subtle hints, the Klan controlled racial minority groups. They sent messages, especially to African Americans, to remain in their "places." One tragic event on the hill involved a car dragging a black man through the neighborhood. Neighbors never discussed the incident or reported it to the local authorities.<sup>52</sup>

The travesty of justice did not stop there. Even children became involved in such activities. One father gave a black man's finger to his child, who proudly displayed the body part to her friends throughout the neighborhood. Instead of being appalled, many of the children found this fascinating.<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, although the hill had an ethnically diverse population, few Bell's Hill people later remembered the presence of minorities on the hill. Conversely, racial minorities on the hill did not publicly remember or acknowledge acts of overt racism toward them.

Racism in Bell's Hill was not always blatant and open, as seen by the actions of the Klan. More often, racism and bigotry took the form of subtle discrimination. There is

---

<sup>52</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #4.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

evidence, for example, of discrimination toward local individuals who spoke the German language. The one German-American church on the hill was St. Mark Lutheran Church. From its founding, the church had provided German-language religious services for its congregation. Over time, the German-language services declined and English became the more prevalent service. By 1941, the church was holding approximately two services a month in German and eight services in English.<sup>54</sup> After the bombing of Pearl Harbor and America's entry into World War II, that church discontinued its German-language services completely and never returned to this traditional practice.<sup>55</sup>

Association with politically incorrect countries resulted in additional examples of discrimination in Bell's Hill. In the forties, people did not accept blatant racism as easily as they had in the twenties. Now, they chose to discriminate against individuals. Thomas Harvey later recalled a local individual who supported the Nazi party during World War II. Every morning, that Bell's Hill resident displayed a Nazi flag in his front yard, a practice that outraged the neighborhood and eventually led to his arrest.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup>Statistical Year-book of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio & Other States for the Year 1940 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), 159.

<sup>55</sup>Statistical Year-book of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio & Other States for the year 1942 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), 146.

<sup>56</sup>Harvey Oral History #1.

While discrimination appeared throughout Bell's Hill, it was especially evident in the public elementary school. Most of the teachers at Bell's Hill Elementary School were young Anglo-American women,<sup>57</sup> some of whom practiced acts of discrimination against Mexican-American pupils.<sup>58</sup> It was therefore the Mexican-American children who became the targets of discrimination at school in Bell's Hill. At one point in the forties, a child entered the school after moving from Mexico. His teacher misperceived the child's academic ability because of an obvious lack of fluency in English, but when he received the highest grade on a math test, the teacher required the child to redo the math test at the chalkboard. To the chagrin of the teacher, the pupil successfully completed the task, but this did not end the discrimination experienced by Mexican-American children in the Bell's Hill school.<sup>59</sup>

From the above it can be seen that Bell's Hill residents experienced joys as well as sorrows. Their lives reflected more than the two-dimensional picture one often perceived of a neighborhood of a city. Having established a new perception of Bell's Hill, the focus will now turn toward the

---

<sup>57</sup>Public Schools of Waco, Texas Course of Study 1909-1910 (Waco, Tex.: Hill-Kellner-Frost, Co., 1909), 8.

<sup>58</sup>Samuel W. Newman, ed., History of Waco Independent School District (Waco, Tex.: Waco Independent School District, 1976), 80. It should be noted that no African-American children attended Bell's Hill Elementary until after the school officially desegregated in 1971. In the early years, Bell's Hill African-American elementary school pupils attended District Negro School.

<sup>59</sup>Martinez Oral History #1.; Harvey Oral History #1.

religious opportunities presented to the Bell's Hill residents.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCOVERING A SENSE OF FAITH

Religion has always been an important part in the development of Texas. As in earlier American history, in other places, the people who came to Texas valued religion. People brought various organized religions into Texas. After 1836, the most prominent religious denominations in Texas for many years were the Methodists and Baptists.<sup>1</sup> One possible reason for the strength of these two religions was their utilization of circuit preachers to minister to people living in isolated places. In Central Texas, McLennan County reflected this pattern, and the first two church denominations to organize formally there were the Methodists, in 1850, and the Baptists, in 1851. Although the Methodists appeared first, the Baptists soon gained considerable control of McLennan County and would long the dominate denomination.<sup>2</sup>

Following the organization of local Methodist and Baptist churches, additional denominations formed within the county. The denominational growth could be attributed partly to the railroads which began to enter McLennan County in the 1870s. Railroad transportation provided more people with opportunities to settle in McLennan County and thereby helped to bring to the community at least some of its religious

---

<sup>1</sup>Calvert and DeLeon, 112.

<sup>2</sup>Poage, 128-30.

diversity. As examples, the Episcopalians, the Disciples of Christ, along with the Roman Catholics, all organized churches in the county around 1870, and the very next year, the Jewish community entered the Waco area.<sup>3</sup>

Bell's Hill also experienced religious diversity. As in Waco as a whole, the Methodists and Baptists tended to dominate Bell's Hill through the formation of some of the first church congregations. Within a short time, however, there were numerous denominations settling in the Bell's Hill neighborhood, making possible an assumption that Bell's Hill was a birthplace for several church denominations in Waco. Many churches which later grew into major social institutions in Waco started on the hill, before expanding beyond their origins. Bell's Hill may be perceived as the "holy hill." This chapter contains an examination of the various religious denominations represented in the history of Bell's Hill, from the Church of Christ, Assembly of God, Pentecostal, Nazarene, Lutheran, and Methodist, to the relatively more represented Baptists.

In undertaking an examination of churches in the history of the Bell's Hill neighborhood, some churches may be inadvertently omitted. Churches presented in this section of the thesis were those that were most visible within the community. Their visibility included the existence of church facilities and their longevity on the hill. As a consequence, they became the most memorable churches in the community.

---

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 130-31.

Instead of beginning with the original churches in the Bell's Hill community, the reader will first encounter the less dominate churches in the community. Progressing forward, the churches at the end of the chapter represent the most dominate and influential ones in the community and, in one sense, the most memorable.

The first two Bell's Hill churches to be addressed in this study reflect the post-World War II era. During and following World War II, the local population began to soar, as people who previously had worked the land during the twenties and thirties entered Waco to find jobs in industry. With a war in progress, industries such as Owens-Illinois and General Tire began growing in Waco. Subsequently, people began moving from nearby farms into the Waco area,<sup>4</sup> and with the influx of new residents, new religious denominations appeared in Bell's Hill, as well as in Waco in general. Two of these were the Bell's Hill Church of Christ and the Calvary Assembly of God.

## **CHURCH OF CHRIST**

### **Bell's Hill Church of Christ**

The Bell's Hill Church of Christ formed in 1946. During that year, local members of that faith established a church at 1901 Clay Street Methodist, a location that proved to be very advantageous for the church, since the church site was easily accessible from Highway 81 otherwise known as

---

<sup>4</sup>Wallace, 67.

Eighteenth Street. The first Church of Christ minister in Bell's Hill was Thurman E. Morris.<sup>5</sup> The church building was a one-story structure of stucco-type material. The congregation remained at this location well into the 1950s.<sup>6</sup>

## ASSEMBLY OF GOD

### Calvary Assembly of God

The second post-World War II church in the neighborhood was the Calvary Assembly of God. The congregation held its first meeting on 4 December 1945 and officially organized the church on 23 February 1946. Eighteen individuals appeared as charter members of the new Calvary Assembly.

Following the inception of the new church, the congregation received two lots at Twentieth and Dutton on which to build a place of worship. Subsequently, the members completed the building in late 1946, due primarily to the efforts of volunteer labor. It was at this time that the congregation decided to rename the church the Calvary Assembly of God.

The years following the formation of Calvary appeared to be fruitful. Members not only dealt successfully with the initial debt of the church building, but also bought additional property across the street. The building itself reflected the changing times. An examination of various

---

<sup>5</sup>Waco City Directory (Dallas, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Co., 1946), 61.

<sup>6</sup>Waco (McLennan County, Tex.) City Directory (Dallas, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Co., 1956), 41.

churches built in Bell's Hill before World War II shows that most reflected a relatively simpler form. Older churches in Bell's Hill had consisted mainly of wood or stucco, but the post-World War II church reflected a different style. Calvary church had stone walls and was esthetically more appealing, with decorative windows.<sup>7</sup>

With an attractive building and a progressive congregation, the church grew. Eventually, the members relocated the church to the Robinson community away from the Bell's Hill neighborhood, but the initial spiritual roots of the church remained on the "hill."

## **NAZARENE**

### **First Church of the Nazarene**

In 1910, the Bell's Hill neighborhood welcomed another religious body to the expanding community, the First Church of the Nazarene. Against various obstacles, this church began its mission by providing a house of worship for the believers, yet the journey was difficult and it was many years before the church could provide adequate accommodations for members. In June 1910, the church, as a new organization, officially formed. At first, the Nazarenes met in the home of one of the original thirteen charter members.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>Calvary Assembly of God (Waco, Tex.: Calvary Assembly of God Church, 1990), 4. For a list of church charter members, see Appendix One.

<sup>8</sup>Mrs. John Millican, "Brief History of First Church of the Nazarene of Waco, Texas" (Waco, Tex.: First Church of the Nazarene, c.1980s), 1. For a list of church charter members, see Appendix One.

Within a short period of time, the church acquired a home near Fifteenth and Webster. This building became the official meeting house for local Nazarene Christians and served until 1920.<sup>9</sup> In less than seven years, the church grew in record numbers,<sup>10</sup> causing the congregation to realize that the small structure was no longer adequate. Subsequently, the church purchased property and built at Eleventh and Clay. For the first time in the church's short history, the congregation had a real church building. This structure accommodated the congregation's growth as the membership peaked in 1930. The reason for that church's subsequent decline in membership could rest on the emerging dominance of the Baptist churches in the community. Another factor might be the continual turnover of Nazarene pastors between 1917 to 1955, for during this period, fifteen pastors served the church, the longest tenure being seven years.<sup>11</sup> Whatever the reason, the Nazarene church grew very slowly during its existence on Bell's Hill.

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Proceedings of the 4th Annual Pentecostal Church of the Nazarenes (San Antonio, Tex.: Pentecostal Church of the Nazarenes, 1917), Tables.

<sup>11</sup>Millican, 1.

## First Church of the Nazarene Church

### Church Membership

1910	13 members <sup>12</sup>
1917	81 members <sup>13</sup>
1930	136 members <sup>14</sup>
1940	112 members <sup>15</sup>
1949	166 members <sup>16</sup>

Even though the congregation declined slightly in the 1930s, the slowed development did not stop the active Nazarene congregation. In 1938, for example, the members decided once again to relocate the church within the Bell's Hill neighborhood, this time agreeing on a new location at Nineteenth and Flint.<sup>17</sup> The new street address provided the Nazarenes with an ideal location from which to serve all of the Bell's Hill community. The church became a beacon in the community, representing dedication and concern by church members for the entire neighborhood. The new facility can be attributed to the commitment of members, as they voluntarily

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>13</sup>Proceedings of the 4th Annual Pentecostal Church of the Nazarenes, (San Antonio, Tex.: Pentecostal Church of the Nazarenes, 1919), Tables.

<sup>14</sup>Proceedings of the 17th Annual Church of the Nazarene (San Antonio, Tex.: Church of the Nazarene, 1930), Tables.

<sup>15</sup>Journal of the Proceedings of the 27th District Assembly of the San Antonio District Church of the Nazarene (San Antonio, Tex.: Church of the Nazarene, 1940), Tables.

<sup>16</sup>San Antonio District Church of the Nazarene 37th Annual Assembly Journal (San Antonio, Tex.: Church of the Nazarene, 1950), Tables.

<sup>17</sup>Millican, 1.

provided the labor to erect and fund the entire project.<sup>18</sup> The members admired their new church, a stately building constructed of wood and extending to two stories. The main floor housed an auditorium which seated several hundred people. The basement level contained classrooms which accommodated the growth of the Sunday school department.<sup>19</sup> The church planners provided ventilation in the basement through windows located directly above the ground.<sup>20</sup>

The church provided a sense of stability for its members and they helped each other through difficult times. They also became their own sources of entertainment. One of the most spiritually uplifting and entertaining activities through the years was the seasonal revival. While other churches held revivals under tents, the Nazarenes of Central Texas created a camp ground near Bellmead, a suburb of Northeast Waco. It was at the camp ground that Bell's Hill Nazarenes participated with sister churches for a week of revival activities. At other times throughout the year, local members in the neighborhood relied on cottage meetings to facilitate fellowship together. Like other Bell's Hill congregations, most of the Nazarenes lived within walking

---

<sup>18</sup>Thorne and Owens Oral History #1.

<sup>19</sup>Thorne and Owens Oral History #1. Window for the basement classrooms existed right above ground level and this provided for an interesting incident. While Sunday School was going on one day, a little boy started running around the church. He accidentally slipped through one of the ground windows into his mother's classroom. Needless to say, it provided for an amusing story among the congregates.

<sup>20</sup>Nadine Thorne, First Church of the Nazarene Photograph, c.1940s. Copy of photograph in author's possession.

distance of their church, making parking lots at the church unnecessary. In this way, the congregation was a body of neighbors as well as church members.<sup>21</sup>

## MISSOURI-SYNOD LUTHERAN

### St. Mark Lutheran Church

In 1914, as World War I brewed in Europe, on the home front some people within the Bell's Hill area searched for a church home. In a town predominantly controlled by Baptists, Lutherans within the community had a difficult time finding their niche in the community. The Texas District of the Missouri-Synod Lutheran church sanctioned the formation of a new church in Waco around 1916 and next year, the people decided to act on the suggestion and form a Lutheran church in Bell's Hill. After several meetings, eight charter members officially organized the St. Mark Lutheran Church on 3 January 1917.<sup>22</sup>

Following this step of organization, the Lutherans acquired land at Seventeenth and Clay. Next, the congregation purchased the Norwegian Lutheran Church, located at Tenth and Jefferson, and relocated the building to Seventeenth and Clay. This decision seemed appropriate since the discussions concerning the formation of St. Mark had occurred in this church. Even though the pastor had an

---

<sup>21</sup>Thorne and Owens Oral History #1.

<sup>22</sup>Twenty-Fifth Anniversary 1917-1942 St. Mark Lutheran Church (Waco, Tex.: St. Mark Lutheran Church, 1942), 2. For a list of church charter members, see Appendix One.

official church, the congregation could not sustain a parsonage at the time. In addition, the members relied on sister Lutheran churches throughout the Texas District to subsidize the fledgling congregation.<sup>23</sup> This reliance would continue until 1926, when the Bell's Hill Lutheran church officially became self-sufficient. Before this time, the popularity of the church allowed for the growth of resources. Next, the congregation authorized the building of a six-room parsonage behind the church, a project completed in June 1923.<sup>24</sup>

The Lutheran church operated differently than similar institutions in Bell's Hill. Although the basic idea of Christian worship was essential, the German influence remained strong in the Lutheran church. The church conducted German-language services to accommodate the German-Lutheran heritage, even though a "German Scare" resulting from the recent war ran rampant through the organization of the church.<sup>25</sup> Over time, there were concessions within the Lutheran church and in 1926, the elders decided to offer dual worship services in English and German in order to assimilate within the community.<sup>26</sup> Later in August 1941, another concession occurred. With World War II imminent, the elders

---

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>24</sup>Church Records, Leger in possession of St. Mark Lutheran Church, Waco, Tex., 13; Twenty-fifth Anniversary 1917-1942 St. Mark Lutheran Church, 3.

<sup>25</sup>Wallace, 54.

<sup>26</sup>Church Records, 13.

decided to discontinue German-language services.<sup>27</sup> Even though the United States had not yet entered the war, fear and prejudice against the Germans might have impacted the decision to eliminate religious worship in dual languages.

Until this time, the church generally offered two German services and eight English services each month. The duality of the services had been slowly dwindling with the initial German scare during World War I. By looking at the percentage of English services in the Texas District, one can ascertain the church's position on German services.

#### **St. Mark Lutheran Church**

##### Percentage of English-language Services

1920	30%
1932	55%
1938	62%
1940	70%
1941	77%
1942	†84% <sup>28</sup>

†--indicates the year St. Mark discontinued the German services

As with other churches in the area, St. Mark Lutheran continued to grow and eventually needed to expand its facilities. Throughout their years at 1701 Clay and after relocating to a new facility at Twentieth and Clay--even deeper into the neighborhood of Bell's Hill--the Lutheran congregation continued to grow, as shown by the following statistical table:

---

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 14

<sup>28</sup>Statistical Yearbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States for the Year 1942 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House Company, 1943), 146.

**St. Mark Lutheran Church**  
**Church Membership**

1917	70 members <sup>29</sup>
1928	252 members <sup>30</sup>
1930	255 members <sup>31</sup>
1942	385 members <sup>32</sup>
1945	300 members <sup>33</sup>
1953	643 members <sup>34</sup>
1954	644 members <sup>35</sup>

The smaller church grew in 1927 into a larger facility. An additional eighteen square feet were added to the church space, along with a tower, vestibule, and other features.<sup>36</sup> Even with this new space, the church continued to require a larger area, especially after the addition of a school, which will be discussed later. The church location at 1701 Clay became too small, and in 1948, the opportunity arose for the church to acquire an entire city block of land at Twentieth and Clay. Wishing to stay within Bell's Hill, the church sold its original structure to the Gospel Lighthouse, a Pentecostal congregation, for \$6,000 and bought property at

---

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 1917, 134.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 1928, 133.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 1930, 134.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 1942, 146.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 1945, 129.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 1953, 141.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 1954, 143.

<sup>36</sup>Church Records, 13.

Twentieth and Clay, for \$13,100.<sup>37</sup> Before the construction process began, the original home of Joseph D. Bell had to be razed. From all accounts, the new location that St. Mark chose was the site of the first home in Bell's Hill.<sup>38</sup> Five years later, the local Lutheran church began planning for the new church structure and a school.<sup>39</sup> The congregation contracted with C. E. Construction Company, and on 16 January 1955, dedicated their new complex, with the founding pastor, G. H. Briar, returning to St. Mark to assist in the dedication.<sup>40</sup> The new complex reflected a modern style. Used to a wooden structure, the Lutherans now enjoyed new brick buildings. The sanctuary contained impressive stained glass windows, with a very prominent stained glass window in the front.

The church offered various opportunities for the members to become involved. In looking at the Lutheran clubs, the most noticeable distinction was their division into separate programs for men and women. Services available to men included the St. Mark's Men's Club and the choir. The latter did not attract many participants, whereas the men's club was very popular. The club provided men not only with fellowship, but also with opportunities to promote the

---

<sup>37</sup>Waco City Directory (McLennan County, Tex.) (Dallas, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Co., 1953), 201; Church Records, 14.

<sup>38</sup>"Old Landmark of Bell's Hill Is Sold to Lutheran Church Here."

<sup>39</sup>Steve Randolph, Fiftieth Anniversary of St. Mark Lutheran School 1931-1981 (Waco, Tex.: St. Mark Lutheran Church, 1981), 11.

<sup>40</sup>Church Records, 14.

church. Men aided the various organizations during their early development, but the men's club disbanded around 1929. Ten years later, the men expressed an interest in the reemergence of the society and they again regained popularity and influence. This time they focused their attention on the "Lutheran Hour," a weekly, local radio program responsible for spreading the Lutheran gospel. In addition, the male congregation members could, if chosen, become church elders.<sup>41</sup>

Organizations in the church existed for Lutheran women as well. One such group was the St. Mark Lutheran Ladies Aid, organized in 1917. This society essentially took physical care of the church, such as providing both English and German hymnals, and the women made sure that the church was in good condition each week. Meetings of the society rotated from house to house until the church allowed the women to hold their meetings in the main building.<sup>42</sup>

For Lutheran young people on Bell's Hill there was the Walther League. This organization formed in 1919 and provided a source of both spiritual guidance and entertainment for the young people.<sup>43</sup> In noticeable difference between St. Mark and other churches in Bell's Hill, younger members of St. Mark usually went to the private school and consequently associated socially only with other

---

<sup>41</sup>Twenty-Fifth Anniversary 1917-1942 St. Mark Lutheran Church, 8-9.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 10.

members of the Lutheran congregation. Their source of entertainment was the Walther League which provided social festivities and study time.<sup>44</sup>

If indeed the St. Mark church experienced prejudice due to the German cultural influence in the church, the members did not later recall or wish to recall any negative incidents associated with that fact. But a sure sign of such problems may be seen in the relative isolation of St. Mark. Whereas some of the other Bell's Hill churches intermingled and participated in the different churches' activities, St. Mark members restrained themselves and refrained from becoming involved in other churches' activities. While Methodists and Nazarene church members recalled attending Baptist revivals, the Lutherans chose not to attend. Instead, the Lutheran church, for them, was the center of their universe. For this reason, there were always plenty of activities going on at the Lutheran church.<sup>45</sup>

## **METHODIST**

### **Clay Avenue Methodist**

Following in the footsteps of their sister Waco church, First Methodist, Methodists living in the Bell's Hill community decided to form another church to accommodate their needs. Around 1911, charter members of the Clay Street Methodist Church chose 1601 Clay as the location of a new

---

<sup>44</sup>Reinke Oral History #1.

<sup>45</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #2.

church building.

During the church's tenure on Bell's Hill, Clay Street, like other churches in the neighborhood, provided members with a sense of stability. The members enjoyed many activities sponsored by the church. The younger generation in the church became acquainted through fellowship parties held at members' homes.

More organized forms of activities centered on choir rehearsal and revivals. Revivals were important throughout the community and attracted new individuals to the church throughout the community. Such events also provided members with opportunities to become better acquainted with their neighbors.

A more memorable activity for the Methodists was the social, or supper, held on the church grounds. This activity not only brought the congregation together, but also created a convenient political forum for campaigning politicians. Before political campaigns discovered the radio airwaves, politicians relied on grass roots campaigning, and they accomplished this by visiting churches and traveling throughout a community. Since political careers could be sealed or destroyed according to the success or failure of the politician's campaigning, politicians provided church audiences with entertaining experiences. Children long remembered their amazement at political figures who spoke at Methodist gatherings in Bell's Hill and the intensity and fervor of their campaigning.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #3.

Times changed and with them the local church changed as well. Clay Avenue Methodist Church grew rapidly through 1925, but started gradually declining by 1935, as seen in the following presentation:

### Clay Street Methodist Church

	Church Membership
1919	405 members <sup>47</sup>
1925	579 members <sup>48</sup>
1935	552 members <sup>49</sup>
1945	486 members <sup>50</sup>

While declines in membership often led churches to halt building projects, such was not the case with Clay Street Methodist. Instead, throughout the thirties, that congregation supported the improvement of its facilities. The original building was estimated at a value of \$4,000. By 1935, however, after the decline began, the church building's new estimate grew to \$18,000. The church had a strong congregation, even though the membership numbers were in decline.

The acquisition of a new building, though, did not

---

<sup>47</sup>A. D. Porter, ed., Journal of the Central Texas Conference Fifty-Fourth Annual Session (Corsicana, Tex.: Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1919), 85.

<sup>48</sup>J. M. Bond, ed., Journal of the Central Texas Conference Sixtieth Annual Session (Fort Worth, Tex.: Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1925), 101.

<sup>49</sup>G. Alfred Brown, ed., Journal of the Central Texas Conference Seventieth Annual Session (Dallas, Tex.: Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1935), 79.

<sup>50</sup>G. Alfred Brown, ed., Annual Journal Central Texas Conference of the Methodist Church (Fort Worth, Tex.: Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1945), 137.

reverse the declining membership. Subsequently, the church members decided to relocate the church after membership declined with the movement of church families from the Bell's Hill area. Formerly a community-supported church, now without such support, the church was beginning to slip into oblivion,<sup>51</sup> causing the church to leave the Bell's Hill community in the fifties and relocate at 1301 South Twenty-third. During this process, the congregation chose a new name, the Asbury Methodist Church, but the probable reason for the name change was that the church no longer existed on Clay Avenue in Bell's Hill.<sup>52</sup>

## **BAPTIST**

### **Tabernacle Baptist**

The earliest known church in Bell's Hill was commonly known as Tabernacle Baptist Church. Approximately ten years after Waco's incorporation as a city, there developed a need for a second Baptist church organization in the area. The First Baptist Church adequately served Waco, but Benjah Harvey Carroll, its pastor, decided that a missionary Baptist church would help. Subsequently, First Baptist Church of Waco donated land around Fifteenth and Webster to establish

---

<sup>51</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #3.

<sup>52</sup>Waco (McLennan County, Tex) City Directory 1951, 14.

a church to be known as Second Baptist Church.<sup>53</sup> In April 1888, that church officially formed and during the same year joined the Waco Baptist Association. The formation of this church marked the beginning of that institution's long career dedicated to providing spiritual service to the Baptist and larger community of Bell's Hill.

Initially, the new Baptist church struggled to gain its own identity. It was only a matter of time, however, before the church moved to a new location at Eleventh and Clay Streets and, as a reflection of the move, the congregation changed its name to Clay Street Baptist Church. Members enjoyed the church, considering it to have a "homey" atmosphere. Mary Kemendo Sendon, a member of Clay Street, later recalled the dedication and concern of the pastor for the church and its members.<sup>54</sup> The church eventually moved again, and by 1915, became permanently established. This time, the congregation relocated the church to a building at Fifteenth and Clay Streets, renaming the church the Tabernacle Baptist Church.

Once there, at Fifteenth and Clay, the congregation decided to construct a new facility. In 1923 the

---

<sup>53</sup> Sandra Gine, "Baptist Church Turns 100," Waco Tribune-Herald, 16 April 1988.; Kelley, 18. The original location of the church was established on what used to be known as Padgitt's Park. Also, it was located next to the infamous Cotton Palace grounds, where it has remained to this day. "Tabernacle Baptist Church" A. Reilly Copeland Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, Typescript, n.p..

<sup>54</sup> Oral Memoirs of Mary Kemendo Sendon, typed transcript of a series of tape-recorded interviews conducted by Lois E. Myers, in progress, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, Texas.

congregation extended itself and built an elaborate church. Before this year, the members had worshiped in a church structure with an estimated value of \$7,000.<sup>55</sup> Following 1923, the church property grew to an estimated value of \$137,000. An elaborate stucco building consisting of seventy-five rooms accommodated fifteen hundred people.<sup>56</sup> The new prosperity of the church could be attributed to the appearance of a new, popular minister, A. Reilly Copeland,<sup>57</sup> but the church grew for many reasons. Throughout the history of this church, the congregation continually supported the decisions that were made. Looking at the growth pattern, before the arrival of Copeland in the early 1920s and after, people loyally joined the church:

---

<sup>55</sup>Proceedings Waco Baptist Association Fifty-sixth Annual Session (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1915), General Statistics Table.

<sup>56</sup>Waco Baptist Association Texas 69th Annual Session (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1928), Table III.

<sup>57</sup>"Tabernacle Baptist Church," n.p.

## Tabernacle Baptist Church

### Church Membership

1888	Second Baptist Church	83 members <sup>58</sup>
1898	Second Baptist Church	277 members <sup>59</sup>
1910	Clay Street Baptist	384 members <sup>60</sup>
1915	Clay Street Baptist	710 members <sup>61</sup>
1928	Tabernacle Baptist	1300 members <sup>62</sup>
1930	Tabernacle Baptist	1104 members <sup>63</sup>
1931	Tabernacle Baptist	1107 members
1932	Tabernacle Baptist	1150 members <sup>64</sup>

The only noticeable drop in membership occurred in 1930, when a rival Baptist congregation formed in the Bell's Hill area. Otherwise, the history of growth for Tabernacle Baptist to 1932 was steady. Everything went well for the congregation until 1932, when on 5 July, tragedy occurred at Tabernacle Baptist Church. At approximately

---

<sup>58</sup>Minutes of the Twenty-ninth Annual Session Waco Baptist Association (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Printing Co., 1888), Table I.

<sup>59</sup>Minutes of the Thirty-ninth Annual Session of the Waco Baptist Association (West, Tex.: The West Times Steam Print, 1898), 22.

<sup>60</sup>Minutes of the Fifty-first Annual Session of the Waco Baptist Association (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1910), Membership Statistics.

<sup>61</sup>Proceedings Waco Baptist Association Fifty-sixth Annual Session (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1915), General Statistics Table.

<sup>62</sup>Waco Baptist Association Texas 69th Annual Session (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1928), Table I.

<sup>63</sup>Waco Baptist Association Texas 71st Annual Session (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1930), Table I--Part Two Church Membership, etc.

<sup>64</sup>Minutes Waco Baptist Association Seventy-third Annual Session (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1932), Table I (Part Two)--Church Membership.

12:30 a.m. the wooden church building burst into flames. The fire was fueled by high south winds and, within a short time, the flames reached forty to fifty feet above the building<sup>65</sup> in an event long remembered by Bell's Hill residents. Residents later recalled seeing the enormous flames lapping at the night sky and their shock at witnessing such an event. Even though a fire station was nearby at 1716 Clay, the intensity of the church fire, fueled by high winds, rendered the firefighters helpless,<sup>66</sup> and within two hours, the fire destroyed both the church and four homes in close proximity to the church. The fire surprised the citizens and the church members. Controversy surrounded the fire, Bell's Hill residents suspected foul play. But Ruth Armstrong's uncle cleaned the church at night and reported nothing extraordinary which might have caused the fire.<sup>67</sup>

Some Bell's Hill residents speculated that the fire was an event in retaliation for the outspoken minister's actions. The only person present in the church at the time of the fire was A. Reilly Copeland, the pastor, who had had surgery earlier that day and had gone to the church to work. Copeland fell asleep in his office and awoke shortly after midnight to the smell of smoke. Realizing that he was trapped, he escaped through a window with a fifteen-foot drop

---

<sup>65</sup>"Tabernacle Baptist Church and Four Residences Burned," The Waco News-Tribune, 5 July 1932, 1.

<sup>66</sup>Raines Oral History #1.; Waco City Directory (Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmey Directory Co., 1930), 34.

<sup>67</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

to the ground. The fall injured Copeland; he strained his back and burst a knee cap. The cause of the fire remained undetermined,<sup>68</sup> but to some in the community, there was only one plausible cause: arson.<sup>69</sup>

Following the fire, the church met in what was referred to as "the little theater," until 1933, when a new structure was built.<sup>70</sup> Following the fire, perhaps due to the controversy surrounding the entire incident, Copeland and his congregation decided to withdraw from the Waco Baptist Association and became with relative ease an independent Baptist church.

Although some members of the church withdrew membership and rejoined the Southern Baptists, Copeland's church continued to command a great audience in Bell's Hill. The spirit within the church represented a saving grace to many people; members of the separate Tabernacle Baptist later described the church as bare and rambling, but the people crowded into the church and sat on wooden chairs just to be a part of a spirit-filled church. They endured sweltering heat and walks from their houses to attend their neighborhood church.<sup>71</sup> Tabernacle Baptist Church, along with other churches in the Bell's Hill area, did not have parking

---

<sup>68</sup>A. Reilly Copeland, The Revival Voice, November 1932. Newsletter, Copeland Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

<sup>69</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

<sup>70</sup>"Tabernacle Baptist Church," n.p.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

facilities for church members. The reason for this was that many of the members were within walking distance of the church. Consequently, the churches thrived due to the continual neighborhood support. As the neighborhood changed, though, so did Tabernacle Baptist. Members began dying out or moved out of the neighborhood. The replacement of these members did not occur, and within four years after the celebration of their centennial, Tabernacle Baptist Church closed its doors forever. On 26 July 1992, the last sermon was preached as the church building passed to new owners, the Restitution Revival Church.

A. Reilly Copeland was an important figure for almost forty years of the church's history. He became its pastor in 1922 and remained in that position until 1955. Following his retirement, he remained active in the church by managing the Bible bookstore located in the church until 1961.<sup>72</sup>

Copeland was a "fire and brimstone" preacher: Throughout his ministry, he would identify evils in the city and verbalize them, through Sunday worship services, revivals, and his newsletters.<sup>73</sup> Copeland's continual antics resulted in eleven criminal libel suits against him filed by the sheriff, the chief of police, a district judge, a health

---

<sup>72</sup> "A. Reilly Copeland," Waco Tribune-Herald 17 November 1982. Copeland Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.; Armstrong Oral History #2.

<sup>73</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #3.

department nurse, and three city officials.<sup>74</sup>

Upon learning that these charges were being filed, Copeland retaliated through his numerous newsletters. He attacked everyone bringing the slander suits with yet additional malicious statements. For instance, he attacked Judge Richard I. Munroe, characterizing him as a poker player, booze guzzler, and frequent visitor of prostitutes. Copeland considered himself to be a "watch dog" for Christianity, and this was his moral duty. He stated, "Before God, if I never accomplish but this one thing of running a man like Munroe from office I'll thank God a million times in heaven for all I might have suffered for it here on earth."<sup>75</sup>

Copeland's manner, although agreeable to most of his congregation, sometimes created great tension, which in turn culminated in physical encounters.<sup>76</sup> At other times, his attacks might not end in a physical confrontation, but would result in a close watch being kept on this flamboyant minister by the local law enforcement. Bell's Hill citizens remembered anxiously watching representations of the McLennan County sheriff's department surrounding Copeland's tent revival meetings in hopes of arresting the outspoken

---

<sup>74</sup>"Grand Jurors Return Eleven Bills Against Waco Minister," Waco Times-Herald, 13 January 1925. Copeland Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

<sup>75</sup>A. Reilly Copeland, "Murder Suggested by Judge Munroe," 1-2. Copeland Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

<sup>76</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

minister.<sup>77</sup>

Copeland not only attacked individuals, but also prominent institutions throughout Waco. Baylor University became one of his favorite targets, due to its deviation from what Copeland termed "conservative teachings." The general cause of his attacks on Baylor was Copeland's perception of liberal infiltration throughout the institution. He campaigned for the removal of President Samuel P. Brooks, for example, because Brooks allowed the teaching of evolutionist ideas in Baylor University.<sup>78</sup> Later, he questioned Pat Neff's accumulation of personal wealth, but when this attack did not produce the results he desired, Copeland focused on female students at Baylor and belittled Neff for allowing women to bob their hair and smoke cigarettes. Copeland justified this attack by saying, "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for covering" (I Corinthians 11:14, 15).<sup>79</sup>

### **Emmanuel Baptist**

During the height of A. Reilly Copeland's active years, a second Baptist church congregation, Emmanuel Baptist Church, formed on Bell's Hill. Like Tabernacle, Emmanuel thrived due to widespread community support. During the fall

---

<sup>77</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #3.

<sup>78</sup> A. Reilly Copeland, "Liberty, Freedom and Tolerance." Copeland Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

<sup>79</sup>A. Reilly Copeland, ed., The Revival Voice, November 1932. Copeland Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

of 1930, twenty-two charter members officially established Emmanuel Baptist Church.<sup>80</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that the founders of Emmanuel were people who had left Tabernacle due to the actions of Copeland. Others could have transferred their letters of membership from Tabernacle Baptist Church to Emmanuel.<sup>81</sup> Upon review, Tabernacle lost two-hundred and sixty-eight members due to withdrawals from the church. And by the end of 1930, forty-nine members considered Emmanuel Baptist Church to be their church home.<sup>82</sup> Apparently, some within the church considered themselves to be a "truer" Baptist church in the area. The idea resounded in the goal of the new church which stated,

Whereas it appears to us that there is a real need for a Baptist Church in this locality, and after much prayer and seeking of guidance, after calling our people together, it is resolved that we now enter upon the organization of a church.<sup>83</sup>

Regardless, the emergence of Emmanuel did not seriously or adversely affect Tabernacle Baptist Church. In fact, Tabernacle continued to grow, at least through 1932, when it severed all ties with the Waco Baptist Association. The

---

<sup>80</sup>Emmanuel Baptist Light, 13 September 1935, 1. Emmanuel Baptist Church Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas. For a list of church charter members, see Appendix One.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>82</sup>Waco Baptist Association Texas 71st Annual Session (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1930), Table I Part Two--Church Membership, etc.

<sup>83</sup>Katherine Renfro, A History of Our Church History (Waco, Tex.: Emmanuel Baptist Church, n.d.), 1.

church lost as many members as it gained, leading to a conclusion that people left the more radical church in search of a relatively more moderate form of Baptist doctrine that they found in Emmanuel.

The members of Emmanuel quickly began to build toward their future. Volunteers constructed a forty-eight by ninety-foot wooden structure, which was estimated at \$6,200 in value. The church building had thirteen rooms and accommodated four hundred people.<sup>84</sup> Within three months after the formation, the congregation of Emmanuel Baptist moved into their building located at 1819 Gurley.<sup>85</sup>

The church grew beyond all expectation of the original planners and builders. In fact, throughout the initial five years of the church, the membership increased on the average of five persons per Sunday, evidenced by contemporary statistical tables:

---

<sup>84</sup>Waco Baptist Association, Seventy-third Annual Session (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1932), Table III--Part Two--Church Property of Waco Baptist Association: Renfro, 1.

<sup>85</sup> Renfro, 1.

# Emmanuel Baptist Church

## Church Membership

1930	49 members <sup>86</sup>
1931	334 members <sup>87</sup>
1932	422 members <sup>88</sup>
1940	1414 members <sup>89</sup>
1943	1084 members <sup>90</sup>
1950	1412 members <sup>91</sup>
1952	1610 members <sup>92</sup>

The one noticeable difference during the period of growth came in 1943. During that year, another Baptist church formed in Bell's Hill when Memorial Baptist Church emerged due to the diligence of some former Emmanuel members. Even though a slight decline occurred, Emmanuel continued to grow steadily.

As a result of such growth, the church outgrew its location at 1819 Gurley and in 1937, the congregation built yet another wooden structure, this time at 1104 South Nineteenth.<sup>93</sup> The new, larger facility seated one thousand

---

<sup>86</sup>Minutes Waco Baptist Association 71st Annual Session (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1930), Table I Part Two Church Membership, etc.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 1932, Table I (Part Two) Church Membership.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 1932, Table I (Part Two) Church Membership.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 1941, Table I Part 2 Church Membership, etc.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 1943, Table I Part 2 Church Membership, etc.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 1950, Table A Part 2 Church and Membership Table.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 1952, Table A Church and Membership Table.

<sup>93</sup>Renfro, 1.

people and contained eighty-six rooms in a building estimated to have a value of \$30,200.<sup>94</sup> The church experienced further growth and, as America entered the fifties, Emmanuel changed with the times and decided to erect an additional structure. Members devised to pay for the facilities through a brick selling program. Each member donated as much as possible and, in doing so, if they gave a certain amount of money, they received one brick in their name.<sup>95</sup>

Emmanuel Baptist not only accommodated the growing numbers, but like other churches, provided a sense of stability in the lives of its members. Congregates later recalled the activities and enjoyment they shared in attending Emmanuel and in participating in its many activities.<sup>96</sup> Most of the members lived within walking distance of the church. They knew their neighbors and usually socialized with their church members at sites away from church. Mostly, their lives revolved around the church and largely determined the use of their free time. Members involved themselves in church work or the organizational efforts at Emmanuel. Activities geared toward the women included Women's Missionary Society (WMS) which formed shortly after Emmanuel in 1932. An example of activities

---

<sup>94</sup>Minutes Waco Baptist Association of Texas 1941 Eighty-second Annual Session (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1941), Table V Part 1 Church Property of Waco Baptist Association.

<sup>95</sup>Renfro, 2.

<sup>96</sup>Katherine Renfro Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 25 June 1994 in the Renfro home, 747 N. Old Robinson Road, Robinson Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

they participated in were quilting parties held in homes, with proceeds raised from such endeavors contributed to the church. The men of Emmanuel were involved as deacons or choir members, but few of them participated in social activities like those of the women.<sup>97</sup> Another activity at the church was the Baptist Training Union (BTU), a weekly scheduled event that vigorously involved the young people of the church. The philosophy of Emmanuel and similar Baptist churches was that if the church trained its young people, they would carry on church work in later life. Subsequently, Emmanuel established a mission church at Fifteenth and Conner, a place where the church could provide a training ground for the BTU; the mission became significant in "increasing" Emmanuel's membership.<sup>98</sup>

The need for mission work in the Bell's Hill community was obvious to most Emmanuel members. People in Bell's Hill seeking assistance often sought out the local churches. On one occasion, a drunk prostitute entered the church and startled the congregation at Emmanuel during a worship service. The minister requested that she leave the church and return when she was sober. The woman, however, never returned to the church and the members gave up an opportunity to minister to her, but the need to reach out to suffering

---

<sup>97</sup>Emmanuel Baptist Church Light, 22 November 1935, 1, 4. Emmanuel Baptist Church Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

<sup>98</sup>Emmanuel Baptist Church Light, 12 September 1935, 3. Emmanuel Baptist Church Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

people in Bell's Hill was evident.<sup>99</sup>

### **Memorial Baptist**

Over time, church members grew restless and wanted to begin yet another church complex within the Bell's Hill area. Realizing that the community of Bell's Hill contained many families the Emmanuel congregation decided to form an additional church. In 1943, this vision became a reality and Memorial Baptist Church was formed.<sup>100</sup> The new church attracted attention and, by the end of 1943, 185 members were attending Memorial, which soon had a wooden church which accommodated six hundred people in twelve rooms with an estimated value of ten thousand dollars.<sup>101</sup> By 1950, the church congregation grew to 743 members, with an additional 132 joining by 1952.<sup>102</sup>

To an extent, church records leave some doubt about the true reason for the establishment of Memorial Baptist Church. At least some of the people who founded Memorial seem to have been disgruntled with Emmanuel, a conclusion suggested by a gap in the official church history distributed by Emmanuel. The Emmanuel history contains extensive detail about the

---

<sup>99</sup>Armstrong Oral History #3.

<sup>100</sup>Minutes of Waco Baptist Association of Texas (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1944), Table I--Part 2--Church Membership.

<sup>101</sup>Minutes of Waco Baptist Association of Texas (Waco, Tex.: Waco Baptist Association, 1944), Table II--Part 2--Church Property.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, 1950, Table A--Part 2--Church and Membership Table.; *Ibid.*, 1952, Table A--Part 2--Church and Membership Table.

formation of another church in 1949, Beverly Hills Baptist Church, at 4100 Memorial. Emmanuel even contributed the land to enable the formation of this church,<sup>103</sup> leading to a conclusion that the break between Memorial and Emmanuel may not have been amicable.

There were other forms of religious activity on Bell's Hill not associated with the local organized churches. Neighbors later recalled the pure enjoyment at hearing numerous revivals held by the African-American community near the Waco circle. The greatest memories of these revivals centered around the angelic singing once heard throughout the neighborhood.<sup>104</sup>

Unless there were special activities, such as the African-American revivals, most local religious events occurred at the various denominational churches. For the citizens of Bell's Hill, the churches provided stability and individuality that residents needed in order to survive the everyday trials of life. Without the churches, Bell's Hill citizens would have had very little to identify with and would have lacked opportunities for fellowship. Even though the churches had problems, members generally supported them and clung to them during times of hardship. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that the churches of Bell's Hill were the heartbeat of the community, as much as citizens themselves.

---

<sup>103</sup>Renfro, 2.

<sup>104</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #2.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCOVERING A SENSE OF ECONOMY

The translucent nature of Bell's Hill may be attributed to the lack of direct, overall economic impact that the community had on Waco. Without major industries actually developing in the neighborhood, Bell's Hill developed into a residential community of a relatively larger city. But, in subtle ways the community developed certain tangible signs of economic life of its own as a neighborhood. Such economic evidence developed in the form of grocery stores, barber shops, beauty shops, washeterias, service stations, and restaurants. More importantly, Bell's Hill indirectly impacted the larger Waco economy by providing at least some of the work force for manufacturing industries located along the nearby railroad tracks.

The discovery of artesian wells and the building of the railroad in the late eighteen hundreds had first prompted businesses to build in and around the hill. Tom Padgitt, a prominent early Waco businessman was a prime example of a local citizen who decided to capitalize on the presence of the artesian wells, and he built a bathhouse, the Padgitt Natatorium, at 1416 Clay,<sup>1</sup> an institution that served as a source of recreation as well as medicinal means for the

---

<sup>1</sup>Directory of the City of Waco 1894-95 (Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1894), 221.

invalid. Elaborately built, the Padgitt bathhouse consisted of twenty-four rooms, twelve vapor baths, two German needle baths, and electric and Russian baths. Both men and women enjoyed the luxurious nature of the Padgitt bathhouse. People flocked to Waco, as the Bell's Hill area became known for its medicinal waters. Street cars regularly carried individuals from the downtown area to places such as the Padgitt Natatorium and others.<sup>2</sup> To accommodate his customers, adjacent to the bathhouse, Padgitt developed a park, known as Padgitt Park and Theater, to provide additional enjoyment for the public.<sup>3</sup> As a result of such developments, Tom Padgitt contributed significantly to the growing public exposure of the area, especially to that part of Waco contiguous to Bell's Hill.

The earliest manufacturing centers to build adjacent to Bell's Hill were Slayden-Kirksey Woolen Mills and Dennis Manufacturing Company.<sup>4</sup> The Slayden-Kirksey Woolen Mills contributed significantly to the growth of the hill. By the late 1800s, the company had constructed its own mill village adjacent to the plant to house workers and their families.<sup>5</sup> Such companies brought newcomers into the area, some of whom chose to live in company housing, while others found more suitable houses farther up the hill. The houses occupied by

---

<sup>2</sup>Cutter, 5, 7, 9, 17.

<sup>3</sup>Directory of the City of Waco 1894-95, 300.

<sup>4</sup>Cutter, 35.

<sup>5</sup>Texas Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Reel 40, 37.

the workers remained intact long after the demise of Slayden-Kirksey Woolen Mills and other companies built mill villages for their workers. In later years, this mill-village area of Bell's Hill would commonly be referred to as "Tintop Alley."<sup>6</sup>

The beginning of the new century witnessed more companies entering Bell's Hill along with families. New industrial neighbors included the Nash-Robinson & Company, the Texas Coffin Company, Waco Sash & Door Company, and the William Cameron & Company. They, too, chose to build along bustling Mary Street along the railroad tracks and but a few blocks from Bell's Hill.<sup>7</sup>

By the twenties, additional opportunities for employment entered the Bell's Hill area. This brought job-seeking people into Waco in even greater numbers. Businesses such as Central Motor Company, Simmons Feed & Fuel, Texas Company, Humble Oil Company, Central Texas Iron Works, and other manufacturing industries located and built places of employment along Mary and Jackson streets.<sup>8</sup> These companies were strategically on the railroad, and workers who live in Bell's Hill were within walking distance of their homes. The thirties saw additional businesses such as the McLennan County Garage and Maxwell Manufacturing Company also build on the hill.

---

<sup>6</sup>Armstrong Oral History #1.

<sup>7</sup>Directory of the City of Waco 1913, 25, 84.

<sup>8</sup>Waco City Directory 1926-27 (Houston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory, Co., 1927), 572, 605.

The biggest influx of economic activity in Bell's Hill following the thirties consisted of "mom and pop" businesses, small-scale local businesses. As some workers sought to improve their lives, they opened their own businesses.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, grocery stores, drug stores, beauty shops began to open, contributing to the overall economic health of the hill.<sup>10</sup>

The trend of family-owned businesses opening continued in the forties. A few manufacturing industries appeared, such as the Waco Beer Company, Clark Concrete Company, and Southern Maid Bakeries, but the most significant local manufacturing centers were those that had established themselves in the early nineteen hundreds.<sup>11</sup> What followed afterward, not to be ignored, were locally owned and operated small businesses.

### **Grocery Stores**

With manufacturing industries located near the railroad, Bell's Hill consisted mainly of residential homes. Within these city blocks, however, many independently owned small businesses emerged and succeeded. Residents long recalled grocery stores in virtually every block of Bell's Hill.<sup>12</sup> In many cases, a store owner lived adjacent to the store, or

---

<sup>9</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

<sup>10</sup>Waco (Texas) City Directory (Houston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory, Co., 1938), 451, 487, 465.

<sup>11</sup>Waco (McLennan County, Tex.) City Directory 1948, 555, 562.

<sup>12</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

close by the business.<sup>13</sup>

The twenties saw an increased emergence of grocery stores in the Bell's Hill area, many of them located along Clay Street.<sup>14</sup> There were also a few grocery stores along Mary and Flint streets. Interestingly, there was an early grocery store on Mary Street owned by an African-American resident. That store served a block largely made up of African-American house renters.<sup>15</sup>

The main impact of the grocery stores arose in the thirties, when the greatest influx of such neighborhood businesses occurred. Grocery stores located in Bell's Hill at this time included Tusa, Byford, Clark's, Gilliams groceries. Meirs Drug Store, located at Seventeenth and Clay, became popular for its abundance of merchandise.<sup>16</sup>

The presence of these stores throughout Bell's Hill contributed to the self-sufficiency of the entire area. Residents did not have to travel great distances to acquire staple goods. Instead, children usually could walk to the end of the block, or the next, to fill a family's grocery order. Local stores allowed residents to charge items and pay them off later after receiving their paychecks. Otherwise, if families needed their money for other purposes, store owners carried the families through the hard times.

---

<sup>13</sup>Reinke Oral History #1.

<sup>14</sup>Waco City Directory 1926-27, 588-89.

<sup>15</sup>Directory of the City of Waco 1913, 14.

<sup>16</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

Local Bell's Hill stores did not employ many individuals, for these were locally, family-owned businesses.<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, the owners involved themselves in every aspect of business.

Over time, Bell's Hill residents began to erect additional businesses besides grocery and drug stores. The community began turning to service economies, as well as still providing the labor force for the manufacturing centers in Bell's Hill. The decision to open businesses in the area probably resulted from a few outside events during the thirties. For example, the Texas Legislature decided to enact a state highway building plan, and one of the new highways built during this time was Texas Highway 81, otherwise known as Eighteenth Street. With the new highway cutting through Bell's Hill, local residents with sufficient capital could appeal to travelers venturing through Waco along the highway.<sup>18</sup> The majority of new businesses located along Eighteenth Street were either service stations or restaurants.<sup>19</sup>

### **Service Stations**

Residents, if they were fortunate enough to own businesses, utilized their labor skills and began businesses which were service oriented. Some of the service oriented

---

<sup>17</sup>Thorne and Owens Oral History #1.

<sup>18</sup>Waco City Directory 1930, 12.

<sup>19</sup>Waco (McLennan County, Tx) City Directory 1946, 493, 534.

businesses on Bell's Hill included service stations. One of these was a Texaco gasoline station located on Eighteenth Street. During World War II, the opportunity arose for Charles Armstrong to purchase the service station for roughly five hundred dollars without accruing debt through loans. In order to maintain this deal, he worked at Cameron Mill while working at the service station as well.

Five years later, Armstrong sold that business and entered a partnership with the Sinclair Service Station across the street. The new station was larger, allowing Armstrong to engage in automotive mechanical repairs. The majority of the money garnered from the business came from fixing flat tires. During World War II, rubber was expensive, and even for a time after the war, people preferred not to buy new tires.

Oil was another good seller in the Armstrong service station. Sinclair sold its own brand of oil, and as an incentive, the company would promote something called "Capacity Day." The service station that sold the most oil would receive a midget car. The Eighteenth Street station owner was fortunate in winning the midget car, which became a treasured item to Charles Armstrong.

The Bell's Hill service station stayed open from seven in the morning until nine in the evening, seven days a week to accommodate travelers along Highway 81, as well as Bell's Hill residents. For some people in the community, the service station was a source of part-time jobs, in addition to their full-time jobs. Most of the people working in the

service station worked full-time during the week for Cameron Mill Company and on weekends for the service station, trying to earn extra money to provide adequately for their families.

By purchasing a franchise, Armstrong had to abide by the rules of the company. After many years, Sinclair no longer wanted Armstrong to continue to repair cars, asking him to concentrate on gasoline, oil sales, and other company products. Armstrong subsequently decided to purchase a home at 1917 Clay and to utilize the back shed to continue repairing cars.

The majority of Armstrong's customers continued to use his services after he left Sinclair. The biggest problem, though, with running a repair shop out of his home was the lack of privacy. At all hours of the night, people brought their vehicles, leaving notes of conjecture for Armstrong to find the next morning. But he continued to serve the Bell's Hill community, along with other small shops, until he no longer physically could continue the work.<sup>20</sup>

### **Beauty Shops**

In addition to the service station, another important service-oriented business in the Bell's Hill community was the beauty shop. In the thirties and forties most local beauty shops were located in downtown Waco. For many reasons, residents of Bell's Hill did not frequent these hair-care establishments as much as other Waco residents. Over time, this changed and the utilization of beauty shops

---

<sup>20</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

increased. Consequently, as women began leaving the homes and working in factories or retail businesses in the forties and fifties, the affordability of beauty shops became a reality. Thereafter, beauty shops began appearing in the Bell's Hill area to accommodate the growing desire of local women to utilize this service.

Ruth Armstrong became very interested in opening a beauty shop in Bell's Hill. In the late forties, she attended beauty school and became a licensed beautician. She immediately opened her own shop at Twenty-ninth and Dutton, an establishment which served not only Bell's Hill residents, but many North Waco residents as well. The successful Armstrong beauty shop soon became very confining however. Armstrong hired five workers and ran a successful business, but had very little time away from there. After several years, she decided to relocate the shop to her home, and after remodeling and installing the necessary facilities according to state law, she re-opened for business. About 50 percent of the customers remained with her, not because she was a bad beautician, but due to the fact she no longer hired anyone to help her in the shop.

Even though having the beauty shop in her home was convenient, Armstrong discovered the difficulties associated with working at home, as her home was constantly invaded by customers and she could not enjoy much time away from the business for fear of losing customers to other beauty shops in Bell's Hill. Around the corner from Armstrong's shop, there was another beauty shop. Mary Painter's shop located

at 1700 Clay served the older women in the community, whereas Armstrong's shop catered to middle-aged women. Armstrong never advertised; new customers came to her through referrals.<sup>21</sup>

The greatest concern expressed by Bell's Hill business owners was the lack of privacy, especially if the business existed within the owner's home. Otherwise, local businesses in Bell's Hill appeared to operate smoothly. Owners did not later recall any problems they experienced with their customers. Perhaps this was mainly due to the concerted actions of owners to provide satisfaction to customers. If someone was unhappy with the work done, the owner would redo the job without an additional charge.

Insurance protection was an issue Bell's Hill residents had to contend with if they were business owners. Complete insurance coverage during the forties and fifties was not feasible. Instead, owners carried liability alone; the only time an owner in Bell's Hill had to rely on insurance coverage was when a customer claimed that a service station had destroyed his automobile's engine. Even though the owner questioned this report, he repaired the engine for the customer without further charge.

Crime was not an issue, either. Harry Raines later recalled the milk company delivering products to the local stores and leaving them out front. No one bothered such items, and when the store owner opened the business each day,

---

<sup>21</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

he brought the delivered items inside.<sup>22</sup> Most of the time, any problem with theft came from within a business itself. At the service station a robbery occurred, but it was later discovered that an employee was the perpetrator and the business owner ultimately chose not to file criminal charges.<sup>23</sup>

This appeared to be a pervasive theme throughout Bell's Hill: Business owners in the community trusted their customers; they needed them in order to survive. If a business acquired a reputation for bad service or being unfriendly, customers gravitated to other stores. This fact alone caused owners to assist customers in every way possible.<sup>24</sup>

The 1940s saw additional businesses entering Waco. General Tire and Owens-Illinois also saw Waco as a crossroads for manufacturing. Consequently, with the new additions, Waco's population increased from 55,982 in 1940 to 84,706 in 1950.<sup>25</sup> New industry also came to Bell's Hill. Along with the "mom and pop" businesses, companies such as Jewell Concrete Products and Texas Wood Products Company, Incorporated, now decided to build on the hill, instead of on

---

<sup>22</sup>Raines Oral History #1.

<sup>23</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

<sup>24</sup>Murphy and Pederson Oral History #1.

<sup>25</sup>Wallace, 67.

the railroad tracks.<sup>26</sup> The appearance of larger industries signaled a demise for locally owned businesses, such as Byfords and Gilliams Grocers. With the arrival of big business, chain grocery stores such as H.E.B. began to enter the area. Residents recalled the slow demise of "mom and pop" businesses in Bell's Hill due to their inability to compete with larger concerns.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, the fifties began a decade of phasing out the traditional way of life in Bell's Hill, making room for more impersonal approaches.

In retrospect, the Bell's Hill neighborhood contained businesses relatively insignificant to most residents in Waco. But to Bell's Hill families, those local businesses represented independence from the rest of Waco. By patronizing local businesses, Bell's Hill residents ensured the economic growth and stability of their neighborhood, while they also supported their neighbors and friends.

---

<sup>26</sup>Waco (McLennan County, Tx) City Directory 1946, 514, 521.

<sup>27</sup>Thorne and Owens Oral History #1.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCOVERING A SENSE OF EDUCATION

An important institution for any family is school. Decisions about moving into a neighborhood, such as Bell's Hill, can hinge on the academic institutions in the vicinity.<sup>1</sup> Education had been an important issue for some Bell's Hill residents for a long time, as the appearance of a private school occurred in the late eighteen hundreds. For a brief period of time, Mrs. Cora Bacon directed a private school at Twentieth and Webster.<sup>2</sup> The focus of this chapter centers on the scholastic institutions in Bell's Hill and their place in the lives of residents.

Before the formation of a public school system, Wacoans relied on private and church-related schools to educate their youngsters. These avenues to learning proved successful for the Waco community and contributed significantly during early decades to Waco's reputation and claim as the "Athens of Texas."<sup>3</sup>

The official incorporation of the City of Waco occurred in 1856, but the quest for a public school system began several years earlier. In the mid 1850s, the opportunity

---

<sup>1</sup>Stengel Oral History #1.

<sup>2</sup>Directory of the City of Waco 1888-89, 42.

<sup>3</sup>Conger, 13.

arose to separate Waco into districts. Because of this, the development of a public school system would be possible. The early citizens concluded, however, that Waco did not need a public school system, the basic reason for their decision revolving around the excellent nature of private schools at that time. As Waco began to grow, the need for public schools re-emerged. Finally, the citizens acceded to the formation of public schools, and, subsequently, between 1856 and 1860, eighteen public schools formed just prior to the Civil War.

War consumed the Waco area for several years, but following 1865, Waco began to change again. The arrival of the railroads contributed greatly to Waco's growth in both industry and population. This further development encouraged the official formation of a public school system, an event which occurred in 1871 to the chagrin of tax payers who did not want to support local schools.<sup>4</sup>

By 1882, Waco laid the groundwork for the public schools with a special election providing for the formation of tax-supported, city-owned schools. The annual school term would be nine months in length, with a total of eight years of formal education. The Waco plan called for four years of primary and four years of grammar school. Students enrolled at approximately seven years of age and finished at sixteen.<sup>5</sup>

Private schools still dominated education in Waco. The

---

<sup>4</sup>Marian C. Butler, "Notes on the Waco Schools," (1942) Waco Independent School District Files, 8, 10-11. Typescript.

<sup>5</sup>Butler, 10.

success of the public school system and the state support it received allowed, in 1893, for the Waco Independent School District to break away formally from the City of Waco.<sup>6</sup>

#### **BELL'S HILL (SIXTH DISTRICT) ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Between 1899 and 1909, Waco's population increased from reported levels of 3,726 to 4,759,<sup>7</sup> bringing a need for additional schools. As a result, in 1903, the WISD school board decided in a special meeting to purchase several tracts of land in North Waco and South Waco. For sixteen hundred dollars, the district now purchased a tract at Sixteenth and Burnett, the site of the new Sixth District Elementary School.

Students attending the new elementary school had to reside within the following boundaries established by the Waco Independent School District:

On North by Waco Creek to Seventeenth Street, thence up center of Seventeenth Street to center of Mary Street, thence along center of Mary Street to alley between Tenth and Ninth Streets, thence down line between Tenth and Ninth Streets, thence down line bounding west side of Eighth Street district to city limits thence around city limits to intersection with Waco Creek.<sup>8</sup>

From this description the boundaries established by the school district included the whole neighborhood of Bell's Hill.

---

<sup>6</sup>Butler, 2, 10-11.

<sup>7</sup>Newman, 52.

<sup>8</sup>Public Schools of Waco, Tx Course of Study 1909-1910 Statistical Report 1899-1909 (Waco, Tex.: Hill-Kellner-Frost Company, 1909), 9.

## Attendance

Bell's Hill elementary school in the beginning contained five grades.<sup>9</sup> The school attracted a sizable enrollment and continued to grow throughout the years. With growth came change, and in the mid teens, the name of the school changed from Sixth District Elementary School to Bell's Hill (Sixth District) Elementary School. The name reflected the makeup of the school's population, as well as the neighborhood geographical location of the school building.<sup>10</sup>

The early teachers at Bell's Hill were Baylor alumna who lived in the neighborhood.<sup>11</sup> For the year 1909, the school reported seven female teachers, a male principal, and the following numbers of students, by grade:

First Grade	33 males	23 females
Second Grade	41 males	27 females
Third Grade	44 males	45 females
Fourth Grade	41 males	36 females
Fifth Grade	17 males	16 females
Sixth Grade	0 males	0 females <sup>12</sup>

Ten years later, the enrollment had increased with the influx of families moving into the Bell's Hill area.

---

<sup>9</sup>Stengel Oral History #1.

<sup>10</sup>Directory of the City of Waco 1906-07 (Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1907), 210; Waco City Directory 1916 (Houston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1916), 145.

<sup>11</sup>Stengel Oral History #1.

<sup>12</sup>Public Schools of Waco, Tx Course of Study 1909-1910 Statistical Report 1899-1909, 16.

First Grade	115
Second Grade	78
Third Grade	67
Fourth Grade	80
Fifth Grade	56
Sixth Grade	0 <sup>13</sup>

There was an average daily attendance of 289 students for the year.<sup>14</sup> By the forties, the school would add the sixth grade, but school attendance in Bell's Hill did not increase dramatically, and the average daily attendance was 355 students.<sup>15</sup>

The above figures are misleading about the actual picture of the Bell's Hill student population. Racial minorities who lived in Bell's Hill are not represented in official reports. African-American children did not attend Bell's Hill Elementary until later court-ordered integration, but the presence of Mexican-American children was evident from the first. There were usually one or two Mexican-American children in each Bell's Hill class, but no separation of Hispanic students from Euro-American children may be detected in the school records.<sup>16</sup>

## **Building**

The Bell's Hill school facilities at Sixteenth and

---

<sup>13</sup>Course of Study Waco Public Schools 1917-1918 (Waco, Tex.: Waco Independent School District, 1917-1918), 5.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>15</sup>Shelby, 228.

<sup>16</sup>Murphy and Pederson Oral History #1.; Armstrong Oral History #1.

Burnett adequately met the needs of local students. A review committee, in 1909, considered the structure to be a "model of excellence," in terms of typical public schools. The eight-room building provided an atmosphere conducive to learning. Three hundred and eighty-nine students could attend the school comfortably.<sup>17</sup> The building had an estimated value of \$21,000, with \$1,200 of equipment.<sup>18</sup>

In approximately 1925, the Waco district tore down the preexisting building at Sixteenth and Burnett to make way for a new school facility.<sup>19</sup> The administration now chose the site at Twenty-second and Ross as the location.<sup>20</sup> The new facility for Bell's Hill contained necessary classrooms, a cafeteria, and a library. A 1947 review board, however, berated the school for its lack of additional space to encourage the children's musical and artistic abilities.<sup>21</sup>

The school offered hot lunches to accommodate the nutritional needs of students, but several Bell's Hill residents later recalled a lack of funds to allow them to purchase their lunches. Instead, such children either brought their lunches to school or walked home to have

---

<sup>17</sup>Public Schools of Waco, Tx Course of Study 1909-1910 Statistical Report 1899-1909, 36.; Newman, 50, 53.

<sup>18</sup>Public Schools of Waco, Tx Course of Study 1909-1910 Statistical Report 1899-1909, 12.

<sup>19</sup>Raines Oral History #1.

<sup>20</sup>Waco City Directory 1924, 156.; Waco City Directory 1926-27, 150.

<sup>21</sup>Shelby, 237-38.

lunch.<sup>22</sup> Harry Raines discussed difficult economic times experienced by his family in the late twenties and early thirties. Instead of concentrating on lunch for himself, he had to provide lunches for his younger brother and sisters. His mother, a hypochondriac, shirked her duties as a mother and left her younger children in the hands of her elementary-aged son. As a consequence, Raines's typical lunch on a school day consisted of salt pork and biscuits with syrup.<sup>23</sup>

As adult women entered the work force and families became financially more stable, the children of Bell's Hill did not return home for lunch as they had in the twenties and thirties. Most residents did not later remember many people purchasing their lunches at school, but the official statistics indicate otherwise. Sixty-seven percent of the children in Bell's Hill bought their lunches at school, as opposed to 16 percent bringing their lunches, or 17 percent going home to eat lunch.<sup>24</sup>

### **Curriculum**

From the inception of the Bell's Hill school until the twenties, teachers and the principal decided what academic subjects students needed to be taught. Later on, teachers were required to adhere to a printed curriculum supplied by

---

<sup>22</sup>Thorne and Owens Oral History #2.

<sup>23</sup>Raines Oral History #1.

<sup>24</sup>Shelby, 228.

the administration.<sup>25</sup>

The teacher-student ratio in Bell's Hill remained relatively stable. Each grade consisted of one teacher and twenty to thirty students per classroom.<sup>26</sup> The teacher stayed with one class the entire school day. She taught all subjects, from the traditional reading, writing, and arithmetic to history, social studies, science, and music.<sup>27</sup>

The involvement of students' parents in the Bell's Hill school was minimal. Occasionally, parents would go to the school for individual parent-teacher consultations. More commonly, however, they became involved in various parent-teacher organizations.<sup>28</sup>

A huge annual event for both students and families on Bell's Hill occurred at the time of the Maypole festival. This event consisted of a picnic and the celebration of the successful end of another school year. Residents later recalled the annual, colorful wrapping of the Maypole and the huge enjoyment experienced by the children.<sup>29</sup>

#### **ST. MARK LUTHERAN SCHOOL**

Bell's Hill, as a community, had the advantage of choosing between two elementary schools. As previously

---

<sup>25</sup>Newman, 88.

<sup>26</sup>Raines Oral History #1.; Martinez Oral History #1.

<sup>27</sup>Martinez Oral History #1.; Raines Oral History #1.

<sup>28</sup>Thorne Oral History #2.

<sup>29</sup>Rozelle Oral History #1

stated, before the public school system contributed to the education of Waco youth, private schools fulfilled this important role. This was especially true for children whose parents could afford to send them to private schools.

The private elementary school on the hill belonged to St. Mark Lutheran Church. Education of the children of the congregation had been a major concern of the Lutheran church ever since the arrival in North America of H. M. Muhlenberg, in 1742. St. Mark Lutheran Church formed in 1917, with the intention of eventually adding a school as well. The school would serve a purpose, "...to serve as a missionary agency of the church..."<sup>30</sup> Also, members of the church considered a Christian education to be a foundation essential for the well-being of the child. Members adhered to the biblical phrase,<sup>31</sup> "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not turn from it." (Proverbs 22:6)<sup>32</sup>

In 1922, the members of St. Mark Lutheran Church concluded that the time was right for the establishment of a school. The church elders held a special meeting in preparation for beginning instruction of the children. Members donated equipment such as several desks, blackboards, globes, and other items in anticipation of the school's formation, but the year passed without the official formation

---

<sup>30</sup>Twenty-Fifth Anniversary 1917-1942, 5-6.

<sup>31</sup>Randolph, 13.

<sup>32</sup>Robert G. Hoerber, Concordia Self-Study Bible (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), 977.

of the school. It was not until 1929 that the subject of a Lutheran school could be addressed again.

After successfully polling the congregation, the church began offering day classes to students before officially forming the school. Day classes at St. Mark did not replace the compulsory public school attendance, but this provided the church with a preview of how effective a school might be. Two years before the official school formation, the enrollment figures proved positive:

1928	21 students <sup>33</sup>	
1930	18 students	1 teacher <sup>34</sup>

As a result in 1931, the decision was made to begin an official elementary. To reiterate, the day school could not take the place of the public schools, but the school formed in 1931 became an officially registered elementary school. The Texas District of the Lutheran Church provided the necessary funds to provide a salary for a teacher. Louis F. Krenzke, a Lutheran teacher's seminary graduate, accepted the call to become the first teacher of St. Mark Lutheran School.<sup>35</sup>

## Building

In March 1930, the congregation purchased a house and adjacent lot located behind the church for the prospective

---

<sup>33</sup>Statistical Year-Book of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States of the Year 1928 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), 133.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 1930, 134.

<sup>35</sup>Twenty-Fifth Anniversary 1917-1942 St. Mark Lutheran Church, 6.

school. The building did not have the appearance of a traditional school. The white, wood-frame house consisted of several rooms and a screened back porch.<sup>36</sup> The dwelling adequately met the needs of the school for a couple of years. By 1934, however, the congregation decided to remodel a room in the church educational building located adjacent to the main building.<sup>37</sup> The teacher and grades one through six enjoyed relatively more modern conveniences provided in the new location. In 1942, there was a need for additional repairs to the one-room school and the congregation approved that the facility be painted and remodeled.<sup>38</sup>

The enrollment of St. Mark school steadily increased for several years until the early forties:

1931	24 students	1 teacher <sup>39</sup>
1940	30 students	1 teacher <sup>40</sup>
1942	23 students	1 teacher <sup>41</sup>
1945	21 students	1 teacher <sup>42</sup>

With the entry of America into World War II, the association of the church with German culture led to problems for both the congregates and the school. School enrollment

---

<sup>36</sup>Randolph, 1.

<sup>37</sup>Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of St. Mark Lutheran Church, 3-4.

<sup>38</sup>Church Records, 13.

<sup>39</sup>Statistical Year-Book of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States for the Year 1931, 135.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 1940, 159.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 1942, 146.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 1945, 129.

dropped in 1942 and continued to decline until after the war. Even with the enrollment decline, the school remained open and following the war, St. Mark regained the students it had lost due to the war and a split in the congregation.

From 1948 until the mid-fifties, the enrollment increased rapidly:

1948	40 students	1 teacher† <sup>43</sup>
1950	60 students	1 teacher <sup>44</sup>
1953	73 students	1 teacher; 2 L teachers* <sup>45</sup>
1954	77 students	1 teacher; 2 L teachers <sup>46</sup>

\*--L denotes female assistant teachers present in the classrooms to assist the teacher

With the growth of the congregation as well as the school, the church decided to construct a new educational and church facility, choosing a site at Twentieth and Clay streets as their new location.

On 19 December 1948, the dedication of the school and parish hall occurred. With the additional room, the school decided to expand beyond grades one through six. In 1948, the school first offered kindergarten and seventh grade, a successful addition.<sup>47</sup> No longer did St. Mark students work in a one-room wood school. Instead, the new facility

---

<sup>43</sup>Statistical Yearbook of the Lutheran-Missouri Synod of the Year 1948 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1949), 131.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 1950, 140.

<sup>45</sup>Statistical Yearbook of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod for the Year 1953, 141.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 1954, 143.

<sup>47</sup>Randolph, 10.

constructed of brick offered an atmosphere more conducive to learning. An area located behind the school served as a recreational space.<sup>48</sup>

By 1959, the school added three additional rooms to accommodate rapid growth.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, as the school records indicate, the school received additional exposure and new students entered the elementary school from both within the Bell's Hill neighborhood and beyond.<sup>50</sup>

### **Teachers**

The school relied, at first, on one teacher to instruct all six grades. As enrollment grew, the teacher acquired helpers to assist him during daily instruction. One difference between the Bell's Hill Elementary School and St. Mark Lutheran School was the dominance of education in the latter institution by the male figure. Each teacher who came to teach at the Lutheran school was a graduate of a Lutheran college and was a male, except for one year during the forties. The initial teacher, Louis Krengke, remained at St. Mark until 2 August 1945, when he requested a release to accept another position. For the 1945-46 school year, the church relied on the services of Vera Edwards to guide the school until Kenneth Schwark accepted the position in August

---

<sup>48</sup>Personal Recollection of Author.

<sup>49</sup>Church Records, 13-14.

<sup>50</sup>Reinke Oral History #1.

of 1946.<sup>51</sup>

Schwark remained in this position until 1956, when Carl T. Boriack became the new instructor. Under Boriack's tenure, the school branched out beyond the traditional educational goals. He, along with the students, decided to choose an official mascot, the Mustang, as well as the school colors of green and white. Boriack decided to embrace extracurricular activities in hopes of producing well-rounded children.<sup>52</sup> Teachers contributed to the growth of St. Mark by dedicating themselves to the mission of providing substantial educational activities to Lutheran children of the church and in the Bell's Hill area.

### **Tuition**

One deciding factor in whether a child attended private school centered on the cost of education. Public school systems provided free, tax-supported, educational opportunities to every child. Private schools relied on tuition to cover the cost of the education they were providing. In the thirties, the tuition rate, at St. Mark, remained fixed at two dollars a month per student. This rate changed, however, with the rising cost of materials and salaries.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup>Randolph, 10.; Church Records, 14.

<sup>52</sup>Randolph, 11.

<sup>53</sup>Randolph, 7.

## Curriculum

The most important aspect of the Lutheran school in Bell's Hill was the curriculum the teachers decided to offer. The curriculum included phonics, reading, geography, writing, arithmetic, singing, Bible study, and religion. Religion was a major element in the children's educational development. Prayers and devotions were constant and important in the educational structure. When the children entered sixth and seventh grade, the curriculum also included Lutheran catechism, a subject taught by the pastor, which prepared the children to enter the Lutheran church as members after two years.

Florine Reinke later recalled the influence that the St. Mark school had on her life. Since she attended a private school, most of her friends were Lutherans and she did not associate with Bell's Hill neighborhood children of other faiths. Reinke enjoyed her years at St. Mark; the greatest influence the school had on Reinke centered on the religious and moral values the school reinforced in her life. On the other hand, the private academic instruction she received in the thirties may not have adequately prepared her as she entered South Junior High School, a division of the Waco Independent School District.<sup>54</sup>

When residents later recalled the elementary schools of Bell's Hill, their memories were usually positive. The schools not only equipped the students to continue their education, but also aided their socialization skills as well.

---

<sup>54</sup>Reinke Oral History #1.

The devotion of local residents to their schools may be summed up in a poem composed by Charles Armstrong, a Bell's Hill Elementary School alumnus:

Goodbye, Bell's Hill, Goodbye  
I'm leaving you now, but I won't forget the time  
    I've spent with you.  
The boys and girls and teachers great  
My memory will be with you.  
I've journeyed with you for days and years and now  
    we drift apart.  
But pleasant memories from things gone by is written  
    in my heart.  
Goodbye, Bell's Hill, Goodbye.<sup>55</sup>

This poem, long remembered by Armstrong, captured the spirit of the alumnus of Bell's Hill and St. Mark. The residents treasured the time spent in the schools and the fond memories of yesteryear. The past, however, does not always contain pleasant memories. One aspect of growing older is pain. At some point in time, people experience pain in their continuous travels through life. The transformation from innocence to a state of awareness created much pain for the Bell's Hill residents. The incident connected with this actions was the Waco Tornado of 1953. This will be the topic explored in the next chapter.

---

<sup>55</sup>Armstrong Oral History #1.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### DISCOVERING A SENSE OF MORTALITY

Nineteen forty-nine marked the centennial of the incorporation of Waco. Wacoans looked with great anticipation to the fifties. The nation as a whole changed as a new political era began with the presidential election in 1952 of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Technology improved and the American people began basking in the advancement of the new decade.

Waco also appeared to be on the cutting edge of technology, especially in the field of aeronautics. The Waco Army Air Field, renamed in 1945 as James Connally Air Force Base, and Blackland Army Air Field remained open as federal bases in Waco after World War II. Partly, as a result of this activity, the city became a crossroads in technology. In addition, other industries continued to locate within Waco and the future for the city seemed to brighten with the passing of time.<sup>1</sup>

The future of Bell's Hill appeared bright as well. More new residents continued to move into the neighborhood following World War II<sup>2</sup> and Baylor University located its varsity football stadium on the western edge of Bell's Hill,

---

<sup>1</sup>Wallace, 68-9.

<sup>2</sup>Stengel Oral History #1.

thereby providing further public exposure to the area. Yet, as in the decades which preceded the fifties, Bell's Hill remained translucent. People who traveled through the area hardly realizing the separation of the area from Waco. Local events during the fifties would disrupt this translucency, however, and Wacoans would cast their attention onto the area, if only for a brief moment.

Before 11 May 1953, Wacoans seemed to enjoy a relatively peaceful history. The weather remained favorable to the residents, only presenting serious problems in the form of flooding. Once the Whitney Dam came into being, flooding on the Brazos River no longer posed a problem for the people of Waco, especially those in East Waco.<sup>3</sup>

Many attributed the calmness of the weather of Waco to an Indian legend. People moving into the area heard this myth and at first might have expressed disbelief, but over time, they too became lulled by the continued calmness.<sup>4</sup> The Waco Indians supposedly had settled in the region due to the assumed presence of natural protection from violent storms; later residents also held to this belief. The elevation of the Balcones Escarpment would redirect any tornado heading for the city according to the local lore. Instead of affecting the city, any tornado would bypass the town and touch down in uninhabited areas, if at all.

Arguably, it could be said that Waco lost its innocence

---

<sup>3</sup>Poage, 228.

<sup>4</sup>John Edward Weems, The Tornado (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M Press, 1977), 74.

on the eleventh of May of 1953. On this date, one of the deadliest tornadoes in American history tore at the heart of Waco. No longer could residents believe the Indian legend; instead, fear and vulnerability replaced the peace and tranquility they had earlier known.

Intellectually, Waco residents knew about tornadoes. The year 1953 had been unseasonably warm; numerous tornadoes were reported throughout Texas during the first half of the year.<sup>5</sup> On Monday, the eleventh of May, the Waco Times-Herald headlined a story concerning the tragic weather-related loss of a Waco family that died while visiting family members in Minnesota when a deadly tornado occurred. Many people were killed in that incident, including the family from Waco.<sup>6</sup> Later on the afternoon of the eleventh, the newspaper and local radio stations reported weather damage in San Angelo, Texas, from morning tornadoes.<sup>7</sup>

Evidence had mounted for several days that should have caused Waco residents to prepare for storms. The weather maps for the region indicated that there might be a problem. An article that appeared shortly after the fateful date reported,

---

<sup>5</sup>John H. Griffiths and Greg Ainsworth, One Hundred Years of Texas Weather 1880-1979, Office of State Climatologist, Monography Series No. 1, Department of Meteorology College of Geosciences Texas A & M University (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University, 1981), 128-29.

<sup>6</sup>Betty Dollins, "Tornado Victims' Kin Torn by Grief," Waco Times-Herald, 11 May 1953, 1.

<sup>7</sup>J. P. Jones Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 25 June 1994, in the Jones home at 736 N. 59th, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

...[The] circulation over the United States was dominated by a trough in the West and a ridge in the East, both of which had height departures from normal of about equal magnitude (-12 over Nevada, +11 over South Carolina). This circulation provided a stronger-than-normal flow of air from the Gulf of Mexico northward through the central part of the country, and also an abnormally strong eastward flux of cool Pacific air through the Southwest trough into the region east of the Rockies...It is believe that a large-scale circulation pattern of this type is especially favorable for the development of severe squall lines and tornadic activity since it provides for more frequent and more intense interactions between the maritime polar and maritime tropical air masses than would normally occur. It has long been recognized, of course, that intense squall lines and tornadoes are most favored synoptically where cold, dry Pacific air masses are advected rapidly aloft over moist tropical air in lower levels.<sup>8</sup>

Unstable weather existed that day over Waco, but a local meteorologist, C. A. Anderson, predicted calm weather.<sup>9</sup> He reported around one-thirty that afternoon that if a tornado occurred, it would be west of Waco and the city itself would only have to contend with high winds and hail. Otherwise, the weather situation appeared stable.<sup>10</sup>

Even though Waco's meteorologist appeared confident, the national weather service issued a storm watch for the Waco vicinity, especially following the morning tornadoes in San Angelo. Later, they rescinded the watch, only to reinstate a tornado warning after two weather fronts collided in Texas

---

<sup>8</sup>Weems, 7.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, 33.

<sup>10</sup>"Storms Hit West Texas; 'No Cause for Alarm' Here," Waco Times-Herald, 11 May 1953, 1.

around noon.<sup>11</sup> Local schools decided to end the day early due to the continual weather bulletins being issued,<sup>12</sup> but by four o'clock that afternoon, the threat of severe weather appeared to decrease and the national weather service canceled the warning. Thirty minutes later, however, a deadly tornado struck the city of Waco.<sup>13</sup>

Local residents later recalled pleasant weather for most of the day. As the afternoon wore on, the air became humid and still as the skies grew darker. No fear existed, though, as they believed that Waco would probably experience yet another spring rain. Life continued as normal. Katherine Renfro and her husband, Edward, of Bell's Hill hung bathroom wallpaper while their daughter was further up the hill taking a piano lesson.<sup>14</sup> Louise Murphy was canning vegetables recently gathered from her garden.<sup>15</sup> No one in Bell's Hill realized the approaching danger.

Witnesses outside the city saw a "monster" cloud invisible from within the city. One witness recalled, "It was so wide and the rain so heavy, it was impossible for

---

<sup>11</sup>Francine Parker, "Tragedy Erased Old Indian Legend of Immunity," Waco Tribune-Herald, 11 May 1988, 1.

<sup>12</sup>Waco Tornado 1953: Force that Changed the Face of Waco, Vol. I, Oral Memoirs of Lillie Aguilar (Waco, Tex.: McLennan County Library, 1981), 3.

<sup>13</sup>Weems, 33.

<sup>14</sup>Renfro Oral History #1.

<sup>15</sup>Murphy and Pederson Oral History #3.

anyone in the city to see the funnel approaching."<sup>16</sup> The storm first hit the suburban region of Hewitt before continuing on into the Bell's Hill neighborhood.<sup>17</sup> Entering around Twenty-ninth Street, the heavy weather proceeded to travel northeasterly, cutting a two-block path as it moved toward downtown Waco.<sup>18</sup> At approximately 4:34 p.m., the twister moving at thirty to thirty-six miles per hour, severed the electric power lines to Bell's Hill Elementary School.<sup>19</sup>

For a brief moment attention focused on the Bell's Hill neighborhood as Wacoans noticed the unusual cloud heading for the downtown vicinity. One man stated that the Veterans' Administration Hospital was no longer visible and that within minutes Baylor Stadium disappeared behind a "...curtain of rain and darkness."<sup>20</sup>

### **Storm**

While downtown Waco awaited the inevitable, the Bell's Hill residents were the first to experience the fury of the tornado. Ruth Armstrong and her two sons started walking from their home at 2104 Connor to meet her husband at his

---

<sup>16</sup>"The Waco Disaster." Office of Civil Defense, Waco, Texas, 23. Typescript, in archives of City of Waco.

<sup>17</sup>Weems, 105.

<sup>18</sup>"The Waco Disaster," 2.; Wallace, 68-9.

<sup>19</sup>"The Waco Disaster," 23.

<sup>20</sup>Weems, 105.

service station on Eighteenth Street, but before they reached their destination, the storm hit. She found shelter at a neighbor's house at South Nineteenth Street as the neighbor ushered them into a closet where they all rode out the storm. The storm lifted the house off of its foundation, but Armstrong and her children survived unharmed. Immediately after the storm, she telephoned her husband and while they were talking, the lines went dead.<sup>21</sup>

Marjorie Rozelle's daughter, Dona, was also taking her afternoon music lesson at Pauline Bullock's residence at 2209 Burnett.<sup>22</sup> The teacher realized the seriousness of the situation and placed the children under a bed.<sup>23</sup> Rozelle remembered her relief at their safety, especially when she learned that a piece of lumber went through the house in the very room where her daughter had been only a few minutes earlier.<sup>24</sup>

Around Nineteenth Street, Mildred Stengel took her children next door to comfort a friend, an elderly women who began experiencing heart palpitations when the storm grew severe. Stengel attempted to calm Mrs. Ernest Collins down by trying to take her mind off the storm, but this was a difficult task as the sounds of things breaking echoed

---

<sup>21</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

<sup>22</sup>Weems, 106.; Waco (McLennan County, Tex) City Directory, 1953, 70.

<sup>23</sup>Weems, 106.

<sup>24</sup>Rozelle Oral History #1.

through the house.<sup>25</sup>

The sound of the 1953 tornado was not the only thing residents later recalled, but also its fierceness. Nadine Thorne remembered trying to close a door when the storm began, but the wind forced the door open, slamming her into a wall. For several days afterward, she experienced excruciating pain as a result of her ribs pulling loose from her sternum.<sup>26</sup>

Another resident in close proximity to the storm scene experienced the power of the wind, too. Edna Gottlieb tried to shut the kitchen door when the wind blew the door open again. The force threw her against the floor, causing her to lose consciousness. She did not regain consciousness until the storm had passed.<sup>27</sup>

As the storm continued on toward Eighteenth Street, Charles Armstrong witnessed much devastation on Bell's Hill. He recalled the glass windows of the service station swelling in and out.<sup>28</sup> Roofs of houses went flying by along with the roof and glass store front of the restaurant across the street from Armstrong.<sup>29</sup> Someone tried to drive down the

---

<sup>25</sup>Stengel Oral History #1.; Weems, 106-7.

<sup>26</sup>Thorne and Owens Oral History #1.

<sup>27</sup>Edna Gottlieb Oral History #1 (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on June 1994, in the Gottlieb home, 514 N.38th, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

<sup>28</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

<sup>29</sup>"Emmanuel Baptist Hardest Hit In South Waco's Ravaged Area," Waco Times-Herald, 13 May 1953, 2.

street in the storm and, after passing the intersection at Eighteen and Clay, a telephone pole came flying through the intersection. That individual narrowly escaped death or severe injury.<sup>30</sup>

The storm raged on and significantly affected structures in Bell's Hill around Thirteenth and Clay. After the Texas Cotton Palace's demise in the thirties, property at that location had been used for other activities. City officials had destroyed most of the buildings. The swimming pool now occupied a building once used by the Texas Cotton Palace. One end of the original building remained, with a large wall looming over the pool where local children spent many hours with friends.<sup>31</sup> On this fateful day, several swimmers enjoyed themselves as the storm drew closer. Thinking it would be over relatively soon, the swimmers and the life guards huddled in the changing rooms. The velocity of the storm forced the wall to collapse on them.<sup>32</sup>

The deadly storm next encountered other Bell's Hill residents as it continued across the hill. Santos Martinez, who worked for the H.E.B. Food Store located beyond the Sun Pool, later recalled the windows exploding and all the canned food items rolling out the windows. Employees and customers rushed to the back of the store while cars hit the front of

---

<sup>30</sup>Armstrong Oral History #2.

<sup>31</sup>Stengel Oral History #1.

<sup>32</sup>Weems, 107.

the building.<sup>33</sup>

### Damage

While the storm continued on downtown and into East Waco, residents of Bell's Hill began emerging from their shelters. Rain continued to fall, and because there was even a threat of a tornado the very next day, the physical damage in the area could not be accurately assessed for several days.<sup>34</sup> The greatest concentration of damage occurred to houses along Clay, Flint, Cleveland and Ross streets, especially between Eighteenth and Twenty-fifth. Residences throughout this particular parameter experienced either severe damage or complete destruction.<sup>35</sup> Other parts of Bell's Hill experienced minor damage such as fallen trees or shingles missing from roofs.<sup>36</sup> Eva Hernandez, who resided at 2714 Cleveland, did not even realize that the storm contained a tornado, for her section of the hill received minimal damage.<sup>37</sup>

Other residents in Bell's Hill were not as fortunate, however. The most tragic scene on the hill occurred at the Sun Pool. Out of the several boys who huddled in the

---

<sup>33</sup>Martinez Oral History #1.

<sup>34</sup>Thorne and Owens Oral History #1.

<sup>35</sup>Bell's Hill Photographs, 13 May 1953. Copy of photographs in author's possession.

<sup>36</sup>Betty Dollins, "Bell's Hill Homeless Struggle To Repair Tornado's Damage." Waco Times-Herald, 18 May 1953, 1.

<sup>37</sup>Hernandez Oral History #1.

changing rooms, two died. One was the son of a police officer and his father helped dig through the debris to recover his body.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to losing the young males at the Sun Pool, several other Bell's Hill residents died during the tornado in downtown Waco. The Hernandezes later remembered the tragedy they discovered over the course of a few days to their elderly next-door neighbors on Cleveland Street. The day after the tornado, the Hernandezes noticed that the dogs of the neighbors continued to bark and whine throughout the day. They fed and watered the dogs, anticipating the couple's return, but in a few days, a death notice appeared in the press concerning the couple. She had died in one of the downtown office buildings; and he had died outside in the car waiting for her.<sup>39</sup>

Otherwise, Bell's Hill remained intact. Most of the storm damage of 1953 centered on downed power lines, trees, roofs, and sheds. Several houses in the neighborhood hardest hit were completely destroyed. One of worst scenes was at Mary L. Henderson's home, at 928 South Nineteenth Street.<sup>40</sup> When the tornado hit, Henderson went to shut the front door, but in the process the door fell on top of her and the house

---

<sup>38</sup>John Chopelas and Jim Cox, "One Body in Debris at Sun Pool; Second Feared Dead," The Waco Times-Herald, 12 May 1953.

<sup>39</sup>Hernandez Oral History #1.

<sup>40</sup>Dollins, "Bell's Hill Homeless Struggle To Repair Tornado's Damage," 1.

disintegrated around her.<sup>41</sup> She lost everything that day; the only items standing after the tornado were the water heater and the stove.<sup>42</sup> Fortunately, she escaped with her life.

Other damage existed in the form of house foundational problems. Lillie Aguilar recalled her house being lifted off of its foundation and settling several feet from its original site.<sup>43</sup>

Even in the face of tragedy, comedy occurred. A frantic resident called authorities following the storm to report the downing of an airplane. Upon checking in the Stengel family's back yard, the neighbor had discovered a piece of an airplane. Stengel calmed his neighbor, assuring him that it was not an airplane caught in the storm. Unbeknown to the neighbor, Stengel had obtained a trainer airplane for his children and what once was a source of entertainment for them provided Stengel with some comic relief during a devastating tragedy.<sup>44</sup>

Even for residents who lived in a part of Bell's Hill that did not experience the actual tornado, there was still damage. High winds and large hail associated with the tornado caused thousands of dollars of damage, each, to several residences throughout the hill. Kathryn Owens was

---

<sup>41</sup>Stengel Oral History #1.

<sup>42</sup>Dollins, "Bell's Hill Homeless Struggle To Repair Tornado's Damage," 1.

<sup>43</sup>Waco Tornado 1953: Force that Changed the Face of Waco, Vol. I, Oral Memoirs of Lillie Aguilar, 5, 11.

<sup>44</sup>Stengel Oral History #1.

one such resident, but she did not realize that a tornado had occurred until someone told her of the events.<sup>45</sup>

Houses were not the only property items damaged. The most memorable damage in Bell's Hill occurred at Emmanuel Baptist Church. The white, framed-wooden church structure received severe wind damage. Initially, the church building appeared to be in good condition, but three hours later, the main church auditorium's roof collapsed. At the time of the tornado, three workers were in the church; if the roof had collapsed at that time, those individuals would have perished.<sup>46</sup>

Since the weather continued to be inclement, all furnishings and books inside the church were at risk. Congregates swarmed to the church and rescued the piano, hymnals, and pews before water damaged these items. In addition, the church had to regroup in order to hold funeral services for the two members who had lost their lives downtown.<sup>47</sup> But this tragedy did not prohibit the congregation from holding services, and Reverend Tilson Maynard stated, "We're not discouraged by any means."<sup>48</sup> Instead of worshiping in the main auditorium, the church held

---

<sup>45</sup>Thorne and Owens Oral History #1.

<sup>46</sup>"Emmanuel Baptist Hardest Hit In South Waco's Ravaged Area." Waco Times-Herald, 13 May 1953, 2.

<sup>47</sup>Renfro, 2-3.

<sup>48</sup>"Emmanuel Baptist Hardest Hit In South Waco's Ravaged Area," 2.

services under a tent until workers stabilized the building.<sup>49</sup>

## **Repair**

Almost immediately, individuals in Bell's Hill began clearing away storm-related debris and repairing their homes and businesses. The heavy rain and a lack of electricity hampered efforts for several days, in addition to the scare of a gas leak.<sup>50</sup> Most residents' lives returned to a semblance of normal within a few days. Neighbors and family members contributed countless hours to the repairs of the church and to their neighbors' homes.

An important issue which surfaced following the tornado was insurance protection. Most residents had some form of insurance, but nobody had natural disaster insurance which would include tornadoes.<sup>51</sup> Mrs. J. B. Lewis had lived on the hill for thirty-two years and she had always carried fire insurance. Lewis later reflected on the feelings of many local residents when she stated, "I guess it is too late to lock the barn door after the horse is stolen."<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, many families who suffered losses did not have the funds to rebuild their homes or businesses. Instead, they relied on their family, friends, the Red Cross, or federal

---

<sup>49</sup>Renfro, 2-3; "Emmanuel Baptist Hardest Hit In South Waco's Ravaged Area", 2.

<sup>50</sup>Thorne and Owens Oral History #1.

<sup>51</sup>"The Waco Disaster," 23.

<sup>52</sup>Dollins, "Bell's Hill Homeless Struggle To Repair Tornado's Damage," 1.

aid to assist them in their relief efforts.

Upon review, insurance companies estimated that only 20 percent of property owners in Waco had insurance.<sup>53</sup> As a result, Waco relied upon a substantial emergency relief fund implemented by President Eisenhower quickly following the disaster.<sup>54</sup>

Even though federal funds were made available, several Bell's Hill families refused federal aid altogether. They considered the issue to be a private matter to be resolved among their family members.<sup>55</sup>

### **Effects**

When the final counts occurred, the total number dead in Waco reached one hundred and fourteen individuals, with 1,097 injured.<sup>56</sup> Approximately fifteen hundred homes in the city received some damage or were destroyed.<sup>57</sup> Property damage soared to over fifty-one million dollars, the greatest

---

<sup>53</sup>"The Waco Disaster," 23.

<sup>54</sup>"\$250,000 For Immediate Use; More Due Later," Waco Times-Herald, 16 May 1953, 1. Under Public Law 875 Waco was eligible for \$5,000,000 at the time Governor Allan Shivers requested \$2,436,000, with the intent of requesting additional funds as needed.

<sup>55</sup>Waco Tornado 1953: Force that Changed the Face of Waco, vol. I, Oral Memoirs of Lillie Aguilar, 11.

<sup>56</sup>Jaclyn L. Jeffrey, "The Waco Tornado of 1953 as Symbol of Modernization and Rite of Initiation," (Department of Anthropology, University of Florida), 1. (typescript)

<sup>57</sup>Texas National Guard, Waco Disaster Operation: Texas National Guard 11th of May thru 20th of May 1953 (Waco, Tex.: Texas National Guard, 1953), 1.

concentration of death and destruction occurring in the central business district.<sup>58</sup>

The disaster touched everybody in Bell's Hill in some way. Most people either knew someone who survived or perished that day in downtown Waco. The situation especially touched Helen Geltemeyer's mother. A month before the disaster, her mother had left the R. T. Dennis Company to become an employee at Stratton-Stricker, a rival furniture store in downtown Waco. Most of her friends died that day, and Geltemeyer's mother realized that if the incident had occurred a month earlier, she, too, might have been a victim.<sup>59</sup>

Some residents chose to take action after the catastrophe. Clyde Blackburn later recalled a man in the Bell's Hill neighborhood constructing a storm cellar. From that day forth, the man's wife constantly vacated to the storm cellar during every storm, spring rain, or severe thunderstorm.<sup>60</sup>

The 1953 tornado shattered the myth about the land protecting the people of Waco. No longer did they place faith in the Indian legend; in fact, several suggested that the tornado was "Redman's Revenge" for what the Euro-Americans had historically done to the Indians of the region.

---

<sup>58</sup>Jeffrey, 1.

<sup>59</sup>Geltemeyer Oral History #3.

<sup>60</sup>Clyde Blackburn Oral History #1. (interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 2 July 1994, in the Blackburn home, 2240 Warren Road, Lorena, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.)

Regardless of its cause, the tornado provided a rite of passage for Waco. The city evolved beyond the stage of innocence and began to realize its vincibility. The city government soon developed a disaster plan following the 1953 tornado because city leaders realized that they, too, had been lulled by an Indian legend.<sup>61</sup>

In retrospect, residents realized that they no longer had a natural protector against the storm and as a result the people feared the unknown and what it might hold for the citizens of Waco. C. Ronald Rosensteil stated,

The composer of Beowulf was a fairly competent psychologist. He understood that evil undefined, nebulous and without bounds is the most frightening of all. This is what a tornado is to Disastervillers. The second most powerful contributor to their anxiety is that they had no Beowulf with whom to fight the darkness. They feel that nothing really could be done if the monster were to strike again.<sup>62</sup>

As in the poem, the Bell's Hill residents now feared the dark clouds and what they might mean for the neighborhood. Yet, the residents survived and rebuilt their neighborhood and continued on with their daily lives. In a short period of time, the families returned to work, and school, and life went on, except that hereafter, the Bell's Hill residents carried with them the struggles they endured and the lessons they learned, especially about the brevity of life.

---

<sup>61</sup>Jeffrey, 16, 18-19.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 5, 18.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSIONS

Community histories are not only rewarding to people who reside in the community, but also to historians involved in the study. With the added historical evidence of people, historians can ascertain a different view of the community otherwise unknown without the people. As a result, the unanalytical perceptions with which historians enter a project can change following extensive and indepth study.

Upon this study's inception, the scholar perceived the community of Bell's Hill as a homogeneous, working-class community, which contributed little to the city of Waco. After researching and experiencing the community through the people who lived in it, the scholar changed from the original idea and became more inclusive in her understanding of the community.

To depend solely upon the image of a working-class community as insight into the Bell's Hill community would have been a travesty. Stereotyping communities, such as Bell's Hill, creates problems because many times this obscures one's view of the whole and almost always limits one from seeing the past in all its complexities. It also results in one not fully understanding contemporary situations because the

past was never fully examined.

By exploring beyond the stereotype, one discovers a greater picture of the community as a whole. This occurred in the study of Bell's Hill. After completing a close analysis of the history of Bell's Hill, the dynamic historical community became evident to the reader, one characterized by social/cultural, material culture, religious, educational and economic diversity.

One of the first areas in which the diverse nature of Bell's Hill could be seen in was social/cultural. People came to live on the hill from different walks of life and for different reasons. Families, who settled on the hill, came from rural and urban areas around Waco and the state of Texas. In addition, some families ventured to the hill from other states, many of those in the lower South, or even other countries.

Bell's Hill attracted these people for various reasons. In the early years, the prosperity of the artesian wells brought investors to the community with anticipation of economically developing the hill. After the demise of the wells, no longer were investors interested in the area and residents entered for a new reason: manufacturing. Many of the families who decided to settle on the hill had jobs in the local factories along the railroad. As a result, Bell's Hill was advantageous for them because it allowed them to live within close proximity of their work.

While some residents chose to live on the hill, others had no choice. In order to work in the factories and supply

a home for their families, some residents had to rely on mill villages for their dwellings. If they had been given the opportunity, the mill villagers probably would have preferred living in better accommodations than those provided by the factories.

Even though they resided in the same community, like their migration to the hill, families brought with them their own unique heritages and cultures which created various social neighborhoods on the hill. Families discovered people similar to themselves, and after settling in the community and establishing a neighborhood, the people gradually developed in their own small group a sense of community.

Social/cultural diversity was not the only form of complexity seen on the hill. Bell's Hill also saw the emergence of several distinct architectural styles and related evidences of material culture that lead the scholar to ascertain a second example of diversity in an often misunderstood section of Waco.

A simplistic perception which could be made about this complex community was that the architectural styles were homogeneous. This was not accurate. When the economic developers entered the hill during the late 1800s, they built elaborate homes reflecting the Victorian age. But as time progressed, the styles of houses changed. No longer were the elaborate homes affordable, and families built conservative, cost-efficient houses which reflected their economic status. Even these types of conservative houses changed with the years, as craftsman-style homes evolved into ranch houses as

Bell's Hill entered the late forties and fifties.

The houses not only reflected various time periods, but also levels of affluence. A portion of the residents were fortunate enough to be able to purchase their own houses, while others who resided on the hill had to rent. As a result, the more elaborate houses were usually owned, whereas the simpler houses were used for rental property. Consequently, the material culture added another dimension to the study and the understanding of the diversity which existed in Bell's Hill.

Another complexity noted from the study of Bell's Hill was religious diversity. As people moved to the hill, they brought with them their own religious traditions. This resulted in an abundant number of religious institutions in the community. The churches provided religious neighborhoods for their members where they participated in numerous social activities. With faithful following, the churches became strong enough to persevere through catastrophes (tornado of 1953), lending evidence to the conclusion that they were more than just churches in a larger community, instead they established their own neighborhood within the larger realm.

The study of Bell's Hill also included the story of educational diversity on the hill. With the existence of both private and public elementary schools, families were able to choose which educational avenue they wanted their children to follow, if they were financially able. If the children attended the public school, they encountered the issue of ethnicity/race with the presence of Mexican-American

children in the classroom. Even though the ethnic makeup of Bell's Hill was not complete in the schools, since African-American children were not allowed to attend, the students still were able to experience cultures other than their own.

The children who attended the private Lutheran school experienced a more homogeneous society, but the influence of the German community was strongly felt in the private school. Therefore, the traditions and beliefs of the Lutheran church became ingrained into the lives of the children who attended this school.

Whereas the majority of Bell's Hill residents could choose which school to send their children to, the African-American children had to attend racially segregated schools located outside of the Bell's Hill community. These children did not have the same opportunity available to the other children of experiencing the cultural diversity on Bell's Hill. This is further evidence of the educational diversity which existed on Bell's Hill. For some children education was a choice, for others it was mandated by the color of their skin or their financial situation; either way educational diversity did exist.

Diversity extended into other aspects of the community; for example, the economic history of Bell's Hill was one of complexity. Before the discovery of artesian water on the hill, the area reflected a rural, agricultural community providing a small portion of farm products to the city of Waco. This changed in 1889 with the discovery of artesian water wells, and a new industry was born. Quickly, the area

became a neighborhood of economic development with investors building elaborate bath houses and recreational facilities to accommodate guests coming in from all over. In addition, transportation improved in the area with the appearance of street cars in the Bell's Hill community.

With the demise of the wells, the economic life on the hill changed too. The proximity of the railroads to the hill brought industries into the area, and with the manufacturing centers, different people resided on the hill.

But as in earlier times, the manufacturing centers did not monopolize the economic life of Bell's Hill. Following World War I, a new highway came into the community, along with opportunities for some residents to withdraw from the labor force to service-oriented businesses. This added another dimension to the economic life on Bell's Hill as service stations, beauty salons, and grocery stores began appearing throughout the hill.

Diversity was not the only thing the study revealed about Bell's Hill. Families coming into the community added not only complexity, but also strong cultural ethics. The residents prided themselves on their dedication to their work, their ability to deal with the hardships in their lives and the determination to rely upon themselves in times of trouble. Once they settled on the hill, they intended to remain no matter what occurred and for many residents life on the hill consisted of constant hardships. Residents turned to their neighbors, family or their neighborhood churches for reassurance and support during their trials. Through it all,

they persevered and remained steadfast on the hill.

Throughout the study a constant theme of diversity has occurred. Like other communities' histories, Bell's Hill continued to evolve and diversify after 1955. The ethnic/racial culture of Bell's Hill has expanded and more Mexican-Americans reside in the area than before 1955. Many of the churches presented in the study no longer exist. The congregations have either moved out into other parts of Waco or closed their doors forever. Yet, religious institutions are still important in Bell's Hill, as in the old church buildings, new congregations go to worship. Besides the churches, the greatest change can be seen in the manufacturing centers. No longer do any exist in Bell's Hill; Cameron Mill has closed and Central Texas Iron Works moved into another Waco community. As a result, the people who enter Bell's Hill now do not base their decision on the manufacturing centers.

The story of Bell's Hill is not complete, the community is even more complex than what has been presented in this study. In order to gain an even greater understanding, an extensive study of the economic history, such as cost of living with emphasis on renting or owning would be useful. In addition, historians could concentrate on the introduction of utilities in the area and the involvement of the WPA programs in residents' receiving utilities. Further analysis could examine the demographics of the area and the existence of ethnic/racial groups on Bell's Hill and their place on the hill. As one can see, the story of Bell's Hill has by no

means come to an end; instead it is only beginning.

Further study of Bell's Hill or other communities like it would render valuable information to society about the working-class communities in the United States and their impact on the economic growth of the cities, states and the nation within which they reside. In this story, Bell's Hill has contributed by demonstrating how Waco's growth depended in part on the people in Bell's Hill. The community was in existence fairly soon after the incorporation of Waco; therefore, the hill helped Waco in its quest to become a major economic city, one which not only aided Texas' economy, but also the nations. In conclusion, this community in Central Texas, barely known to those outside of the hill, provides new insight into the development of the industrial New South between 1885 and 1955.

## APPENDIX ONE

Calvary Assembly of God Church formed due to the tenacity and strong religious beliefs of the charter members listed below:

### **Calvary Assembly of God Church Charter Members**

Rev. W. A. Edwards, pastor

Mrs. W. A. Edwards	L. A. Brown
Mrs. B. J. Blackburn	Olene Walts
Mr. E. W. Fuller	Quinten Edwards
Mrs. E. W. Fuller	Mary Kirks
Ms. Wanda Fuller	Mavis Sims
Mr. J. N. Hale	Mary Cleveland
Mrs. J. N. Hale	Margaret Merrill
Mrs. J. N. Padgett	Mrs. Walts <sup>1</sup>
Ms. Dora Hale	

---

<sup>1</sup>Calvary Assembly of God (Waco, Tex.: Calvary Assembly of God Church, 1990), 4.

First Church of the Nazarene formed due to the tenacity and strong religious beliefs of the charter members listed below:

**First Church of the Nazarene Church**

**Charter Members**

Rev. and Mrs. T. D. Dunn, pastor

Miss Estelle Dunn

Mr. and Mrs. Buckmeyer

Mrs. Louisa J. French

Mrs. Webb

Mrs. Winfrey

Rev. and Mrs. J. B. Pearson

Mrs. Maggie (Pearson) Lavender

Miss Lizzie Ragsdale

Mrs. Pitillo<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. John Millican, "Brief History of First Church of the Nazarene of Waco, Texas" (Waco, Tex.: First Church of the Nazarene of Waco, Texas, 1980s), 1.

St. Mark Lutheran Church formed due to the tenacity and strong religious beliefs of the charter members listed below:

**St. Mark Lutheran Church**

**Charter Members**

G. H. Briar, original pastor

H. F. Englke  
Martin Franke  
J. Geisler  
A. W. Koester  
Kurt Muller  
H. Quiram  
E. Ruhnke<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Twenty-Fifth Anniversary 1917-1942 St. Mark Lutheran Church  
(Waco, Tex.: St. Mark Lutheran Church, 1942), 2.

Emmanuel Baptist Church formed due to the tenacity and strong religious beliefs of the charter members listed below:

**Emmanuel Baptist Church**

**Charter Members**

J. A. Cissell  
A. A. Hinson  
Marvin Wommack  
D. M. Massey  
A. M. Rogers  
W. S. Chamberlain  
I. P. Kitchens  
C. W. Monroe  
T. E. Smitherman  
Taft H. Harper  
Randall Massey  
Mrs. D. M. Massey  
Mrs J. A. Cissell  
Mrs. Montie Andrews  
Mrs. C. E. Washington  
Mrs. L. C. Albright  
Mrs. W. S. Chaberlain  
Rev. r. G. Alexander  
Mrs. C. W. Monroe  
Mrs. W. T. Armstrong  
Mrs. A. A. Hinson<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Emmanuel Baptist Light, 13 September 1935, 1. (Emmanuel Baptist Church Manuscripts; Texas Collection; Baylor University)

## SOURCES CONSULTED

### Primary Sources

#### Manuscript Collections

A. Reilly Copeland Papers. Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Church Records of St. Mark Lutheran Church (Waco, Texas).

District Journals of the Annual Assemblies of the Church of the Nazarene. San Antonio, Tex.: 1917, 1919, 1930, 1940 and 1950.

Emmanuel Baptist Church Papers. Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Journals of the Central Texas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Fort Worth and Dallas, Tex.: 1919, 1925, 1935 and 1945.

Minutes and Proceedings of the Waco Baptist Association. Waco, Tex.: 1888, 1898, 1910, 1915, 1928, 1930, 1932, 1941, 1943, 1950 and 1952.

Statistical Year-Book of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States. St. Louis, Mo.: 1928, 1930, 1931, 1940, 1942, 1945, 1948, 1950, 1953 and 1954.

Waco Independent School District Files. Waco Independent School District Superintendent's Office, Waco, Texas.

#### Government Documents: City

"The Waco Disaster." Waco, Tex.: Office of Civil Defense, 1953.

## Government Documents: County

McLennan County, Texas. Deed Records. McLennan County, Tex.: McLennan County Records Building, Deeds and Abstracts Department, Waco, Texas.

McLennan County, Texas. Record of Election Returns. McLennan County, Tex.: McLennan County Records Building, Volume 7.

McLennan County, Texas. Tax Roll 1928. McLennan County, Tex.: Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Tex., 1928.

McLennan County, Texas. Tax Roll 1938. McLennan County, Tex.: Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Tex., 1938.

McLennan County, Texas. Voting Records 1902-1914. McLennan County, Tex.: McLennan County Records Building, Waco, Tex., 1902-1914.

McLennan County, Texas. Voting Records 1915-1926. McLennan County, Tex.: McLennan County Records Building, Waco, Tex., 1915-1926.

## Government Documents: Federal

Tenth Census of the United States: McLennan County population schedules. Waco-McLennan County Library, Waco, McLennan County, Texas. Microfilm.

Twelfth Census of the United States: McLennan County population schedules. Waco-McLennan County Library, Waco, McLennan County, Texas. Microfilm.

Thirteenth Census of the United States: McLennan County population schedules. Waco-McLennan County Library, Waco, McLennan County, Texas. Microfilm.

Fourteenth Census of the United States: McLennan County population schedules. Waco-McLennan County Library, Waco, McLennan County, Texas. Microfilm.

## Government Documents: School

Course of Study Waco Public Schools 1917-1918 Waco, Tex.: Waco Independent School District, 1917-1918.

Public Schools of Waco, Tx Course of Study 1909-1910 Statistical Report 1899-1909. Waco, Tex.: Hill-Kellner-Frost Company, 1909.

Shelby, T. H. The Report of a Survey of the Public Schools of Waco, Texas. Waco, Tex.: Hill Printing and Stationery Company, 1947.

#### Government Documents: State

Griffiths John H., and Greg Ainsworth. One Hundred Years of Texas Weather 1880-1979. Office of State Climatologist, Monography Series No. 1, Department of Meteorology College of Geosciences Texas A & M University. College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University, 1981.

Texas National Guard Waco Disaster Operation: Texas National Guard 11th of May thru 20th of May 1953. Waco, Tex.: Texas National Guard 1953.

#### Directories

Calvary Assembly of God. Waco, Tex.: Calvary Assembly of God Church, 1990.

Cutter, Charles. Cutter's Guide to the City of Waco, 1894. Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Waco City Directory. Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory, Co., 1888.

Directory of the City of Waco 1892-93. Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1892.

Directory of the City of Waco 1894-95. Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1894.

Directory of the City of Waco 1906-07. Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1907.

Directory of the City of Waco 1911-12. Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1911.

Directory of the City of Waco 1913. Galveston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1914.

Waco City Directory 1916. Houston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1916.

Waco City Directory. Houston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1920.

Waco City Directory 1926-27. Houston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory, Co., 1927.

Waco City Directory 1930. Houston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1930.

Waco (Texas) City Directory. Houston, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory, Co., 1938.

Waco (McLennan County, Tx) City Directory. Dallas, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, 1946.

Waco (McLennan County, Tex.) City Directory 1948. Dallas, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory, Co., 1948.

Waco City Directory (McLennan County, Tx). Dallas, Tex.: Morrison & Fourmy Directory Co., 1953.

#### Maps

U. S. Department of Interior. Geological Survey, Waco West Quadrangle Texas, McLennan County. 7.5 minutes series (topographic), 1959. Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Texas Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Texas Collection; Baylor University, Waco, Tex., 1926, microfilm, Reel 40.

#### Oral History Interviews

Aguilar, Lillie, Oral Memoirs of Lillie Aguilar. vol. I, Waco Tornado 1953: Force that Changed the Face of Waco, Waco, Tex.: McLennan County Library, 1981.

Armstrong, Charles, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 18 December 1994, in the Armstrong home, 1917 Clay, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Armstrong, Ruth, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 18 December 1994, in the Armstrong home, 1917 Clay, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Armstrong, Charles, Oral History #2. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 8 January 1995, in the Armstrong home, 1917 Clay, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Armstrong, Ruth, Oral History #2. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 8 January 1995, in the Armstrong home, 1917 Clay, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Blackburn, Clyde, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 2 July 1994, in the Blackburn home, 2240 Warren Road, Lorena, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Geltemeyer, Helen, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 17 November 1994, in the Geltemeyer home, 2025 Hermanson, Waco, Texas; tape of interview in author's possession.)

Geltemeyer, Helen, Oral History #2. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 14 December 1994, in the Geltemeyer home, 2025 Hermanson, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Geltemeyer, Helen, Oral History #3. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 4 January 1995, in the Geltemeyer home, 2025 Hermanson, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Geltemeyer, Helen, Oral History #4. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 22 February 1995, in car of Sandra D. Harvey, Bell's Hill community, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Gottlieb, Edna, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 30 June 1994, in the Gottlieb home, 514 N. 38th, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Harvey, Claud, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 18 March 1995, in the Harvey home, 233 Washington Blvd, Abilene, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Harvey, Thomas, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 25 February 1995, in the Harvey home, 2520 Sanger Avenue, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Harvey, Thomas, Oral History #2. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 22 April 1995, in the Harvey home, 2520 Sanger Avenue, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Hernandez, Manuel, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 26 September 1994, in the Hernandez home, 2714 Cleveland, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Hernandez, Eva, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 26 September 1994, in the Hernandez home, 2714 Cleveland, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Hernandez, Manuel, Oral History #2. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 1 October 1994, in the Hernandez home, 2714 Cleveland, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Hernandez, Eva, Oral History #2. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 1 October 1994, in the Hernandez home, 2714 Cleveland, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Jones, J. P., Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 25 June 1994, in the Jones home, 736 N. 59th, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Murphy, Louise, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 27 September 1994, in the Murphy home, 2512 Ross, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Murphy, Louise, Oral History #2. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 5 October 1994, in the Murphy home, 2512 Ross, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Murphy, Louise, Oral History #3. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 10 October 1994, in the Murphy home, 2512 Ross, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Martinez, Santos, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 18 January 1995, in the Tito's Downtown Barber Shop, Lloyds Building, 900 Austin Avenue, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Owens, Kathryn, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 13 January 1995, in the Thorne home, 2604 Ross, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Pederson, Estelle, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 27 September 1994, in the Murhpy home, 2512 Ross, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Pederson, Estelle, Oral History #2. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 5 October 1994, in the Murhpy home, 2512 Ross, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Pederson, Estelle, Oral History #3. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 10 October 1994, in the Murhpy home, 2512 Ross, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Raines, Harry, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 16 November 1994, in the Raines home, 3504 Rolando, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Raines, Lois, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 16 November 1994, in the Raines home, 3504 Rolando, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Reinke, Florine, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 15 November 1994, in the Reinke home, Route 1 Box 738, Elm Mott, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Renfro, Katherine, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 25 June 1994 in the Renfro home, 749 N. Old Robinson Road, Robinson Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Russell, Iona Beatrice, "Oral Memoirs of Iona Beatrice Russell," interview by M. Rebecca Sharpless (Regis, 4 December 1986), Oral Memoirs of Iona Beatrice Russell. Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Tex.

Rozelle, Majorie, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D. Harvey on 28 September 1994, in the Rozelle home, 2416 Burnett, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's possession.

Sendon, Mary Kemendo, Oral Memoirs of Mary Kemendo Sendon.  
 Typed transcript of a series of tape-recorded interviews  
 conducted by Lois E. Myers. In progress. Institute for  
 Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, Tex.

Stengel, Fred, Jr., Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra  
 D. Harvey on 26 September 1994, in the Stengel home,  
 1008 S. 19th, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in  
 author's possession.

Stengel, Mildred, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D.  
 Harvey on 26 Septebmer 1994, in the Stengel home, 1008  
 S. 19th, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's  
 possession.

Thorne, Hollis, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D.  
 Harvey on 13 January 1995, in the Thorne home, 2604  
 Ross, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's  
 possession.

Thorne, Nadine, Oral History #1. Interviewed by Sandra D.  
 Harvey on 13 January 1995, in the Thorne home, 2604  
 Ross, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's  
 possession.

Thorne, Hollis, Oral History #2. Interviewed by Sandra D.  
 Harvey on 1 February 1995, in the Thorne home, 2604  
 Ross, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's  
 possession.

Thorne, Nadine, Oral History #2. Interviewed by Sandra D.  
 Harvey on 1 February 1995, in the Thorne home, 2604  
 Ross, Waco, Texas. Tape of interview in author's  
 possession.

#### Photographs

Bell's Hill Photograph, 13 May 1953. Photos taken of the  
 Bell's Hill neighborhood following the 1953 tornado.  
 Photos in possession of Richard Burson, owner of The  
 Goodie Mill, 1300 Washington, Waco, Texas.

Reinke, Florine Family Photograph, 1928. Reinke Personal  
 Archives; Elm Mott, Tex.

Reinke, Florine Family Photograph c. 1950s. Reinke Personal  
 Archives; Elm Mott, Tex.

Thorne, Nadine Photograph of the First Church of the Nazarene, c. 1940s. Thorne Personal Archives; Waco, Tex.

#### Video Documentary

"Crossroads". Produced by the Institute for Oral History. 28 min. Baylor University, 1990. Videocassette.

#### Newspapers

"Old Landmark of Bell's Hill is Sold to Lutheran Church Here." Unidentified newspaper clipping in possession of Florine Reinke, Elm Mott, Tex.

Waco Evening News, March 1889.

Waco Times-Herald, January 1925.

Waco News-Tribune, July 1932 - June 1941.

Waco Times-Herald, May 1953.

Waco News-Tribune, April 1954.

Waco Tribune-Herald, November 1982 - May 1988.

#### Thesis

Burket, John Maxwell, Jr. "Geology of the City of Waco and Its Environs." Master's Thesis, Baylor University, 1959.

#### Published Primary Sources

Millican, Mrs. John. Brief History of First Church of the Nazarene of Waco, Texas. Waco, Tex.: First Church of the Nazarene of Waco, Texas, c.1980s.

Randolph, Steve. Fiftieth Anniversary of St. Mark Lutheran School 1931-1981. Waco, Tex.: St. Mark Lutheran Church, 1981.

Renfro, Katherine. A History of Our Church History. Waco, Tex.: Emmanuel Baptist Church, n.d.

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary 1917-1942 St. Mark Lutheran Church. Waco, Tex.: St. Mark Lutheran Church, 1942.

## Unpublished Materials

Jeffrey, Jaclyn L. "The Waco Tornado of 1953 as Symbol of Modernization and Rite of Initiation." University of Florida. Typescript.

## Secondary Sources

### Books

Arbruster, Henry C. The Torreys of Texas: A Biographical Sketch. Buda, Tex.: The Citizen Press, 1968.

Branda, Eldon Stephen. The Handbook of Texas: A Supplement Volume III. Austin, Tex.: Texas State Historical Association, 1976.

Calvert Robert A., and Arnoldo DeLeon. The History of Texas Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1990

Carruth, Gorton, ed. What Happened When: A Chronology of Life and Events in America. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1989.

Conger, Roger N. A Pictorial History of Waco. Waco, Tex.: Texian Press, 1964.

Hoerber, Robert G. Concordia Self-Study Bible. St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1973.

Kelley, Dayton ed. The Handbook of Waco and McLennan County, Tx. Waco, Tex.: Texian Press, 1972.

McKechnie, Jean L., ed. Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary. New York; Simon and Schuster, 1983.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York; Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984.

Newman, Samuel W., ed. History of Waco Independent School District. Waco, Tex.: Waco Independent School District, 1976.

Poage, Bob. McLennan County Before-1980. Waco: Texian Press, 1981.

Richardson, Rupert N., Ernest Wallace, and Adrian Anderson. Texas: The Lone Star State. Edgewood, N. J. : Prentice Hall, 1988.

Stein, Jess, ed. The Random House College Dictionary.  
New York: Random House, Inc., 1984.

Weems, John Edward. The Tornado. College Station, Tex.:  
Texas A&M University Press, 1977.

### Periodicals

Hallmark, C. Thomas. "Nature and Origin of the Blackland Soils," in The Texas Blackland Prairie Land, History and Culture, eds. M. Rebecca Sharpless and Joe Yelderman, Jr. Waco, Tex.: Baylor University, 1993.

Kelley, Dayton, ed., Waco Heritage and History 3 (Fall 1975).

Sharpless, M. Rebecca. "The Hoffmannettes: Their Lives, Their Career, and Their Home." Waco Heritage and History 17 (Spring 1987).

Turner, Thomas, Sr. "Waco The Geyser City." Discover Waco, 16 (August 1991).

Yelderman, Joe C., Jr. "The Water: Nature and Distribution in the Blacklands," in The Texas Blackland Prairie, Land, History Culture, eds. M. Rebecca Sharpless and Joe C. Yelderman, Jr. Waco, Tex.: Baylor University, 1993.

### Other Works Consulted

Danzer, Gerald A. Public Places: Exploring Their History. Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1987.

Gardner, James B., and George Rollie Adams, eds., Ordinary People and Everyday Life. Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1983.

Kyvig, David E., and Myron A. Marty. Nearby History. Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1982.

Russo, David J. Families and Communities: A New View of American History. Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1974.

Russo, David J. Keepers of Our Past: Local Historical Writing in the United States, 1820s-1930s. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.

Spratt, John Stricklin. The Road to Spindletop: Economic Change in Texas, 1875-1901. Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1955.