

MORRISS & GERALT ROAD INFORMATON

by Jim Morriss

South Denton County has, what you might call, a neighborhood feud raging about what should be the proper width of a major north-south thoroughfare. The next few months will probably determine whether Morriss Road and Gerault Road will remain as they are or if they will undergo a major change into a bigger and better highway capable of handling all of the added traffic that will soon be struggling to get to the (yet to be built) Flower Mound River Walk. Whatever the outcome, I hope that the combatants on both sides of the issue will remember that it really is a "Family Fight." We're still going to have to get along after the issue is settled. Rather than restate the same pro and con arguments, I'd like to take a moment to recall why those two family names were chosen to identify the road. It is ironic that Morriss Road runs directly into Gerault Road; which means that our most frequently misspelled road and our most frequently mispronounced road are one and the same. Just to the south of Flower Mound Road is Gerault Road. It was named for a family whose name is rarely pronounced correctly. The first three letters should sound like the first syllable of the word "GERanium." The second syllable should sound like the word "ROW."

An explanation is necessary on my own position on the "Stop Morriss 6" campaign: I live in Bartonville, not Flower Mound. Whether my neighbors decide to convert Morriss and Gerault Roads to six lanes or leave it as it is, will have little effect on me. I will not get into the quarrel even though I can see strong points on each side. Furthermore, my last name is spelled the same way as the pioneering family for which Morriss Road is named, but I am not directly related. The double "S" at the end of my last name is not the way it is usually spelled. However, it is the way I was taught to do it, just like the descendants of the Morriss family that settled in Denton County over a century ago were. I also have no connection to the Gerault family, only a deep feeling of respect and appreciation for pioneers like these.

Back in the middle of the 19th century, a boy named Louis Gerault was born in France. Louie grew up and married a girl named Marie Adam. The two had two sons: Paul, born in 1883, and Andre, born in 1885. Life in France was not pleasant in the last 25 years of the 1800's. The defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte was costly to France and impoverished many of its people. The regime of his nephew, Napoleon III, and the Franco-Prussian War made conditions even worse.

Louie had an older sister who married and moved to America. Her husband was a baker in Boston and must have been doing well there. She no doubt wrote to her family and told them that conditions were much better in the USA. Louie and Marie decided to relocate here also. They immigrated in March of 1887 aboard the ship "SS La Champagne." March was not a desirable time to cross the Atlantic, and Marie was pregnant. A daughter, Louise, was born on the ship as the family was still enroute to New York. Louie may have remained in the northeast for a time but eventually he heard of and moved his family to Texas.

Louie became a tenant farmer in Navarro County. Three more children were born as the industrious family learned to grow corn, cotton and cattle. Louis Gerault earned enough to move his family to Ellis County where he bought his own farm. As the children grew, most of the boys worked as farm laborers. However, the second son, Andre, became a blacksmith. Andre Lewis Gerault met and married a Texas girl named Kate Hammond. The two bought a house in Ennis, Texas and Andre worked as a carpenter there. They had three sons, Andre, Louis and Charles.

Andre Leon Gerault was born on April 7, 1918 in Ennis where he grew up and attended high school. As many young men did during the depression, Andre got a job in the CCC to help support his family. In 1941 he married Levenia Belle Edwards just three months before the attack on Pearl Harbor. The two lived with the

bride's family in Oklahoma until Andre enlisted in November of 1942 and became a Corporal in the US Army Air Corps. Their first child was born in 1944. Shortly after the conclusion of the war, Andre returned home and moved his family back to Texas. In the Army he had developed a fondness for airplanes, so he got a job working in Dallas near Love Field. But he also had inherited a love for the simpler life style of rural farm life.

On September 17, 1946, Andre and Levenia made a down payment and received a deed for a 39.9 acre parcel of land about a mile northeast of what would soon be the deep end of Grapevine Lake. Three more children were soon born there. Over the next 56 years the Gerault's paid off the mortgage, raised their four children and grew an abundance of vegetables, corn, peanuts, cattle and hay. They also became tireless workers in their church and very respected members of the community.

The citizens of Denton County became alarmed in 1960 when the city of Irving (seeking greater tax revenue) made an audacious attempt to annex much of the southern part of the county. Residents in a wide area quickly gathered to defend their property from the incursions of this very unwelcome invader. Several residents of the area got an injunction to prevent Irving from completing their hostile takeover. A legal ruling on February 16, 1961 forced Irving to drop its plans to subjugate (and tax) the citizens of Denton County. Andre Gerault and many of his friends continued in their resistance movement. They held an election to incorporate their land

into a city. That would make their families safe from annexation by anyone. On February 25, 1961, a vote was passed by a count of 105 to 1 to form the City of Flower Mound. Andre was asked to work on the town Park Board and he excelled in that position for seven years.

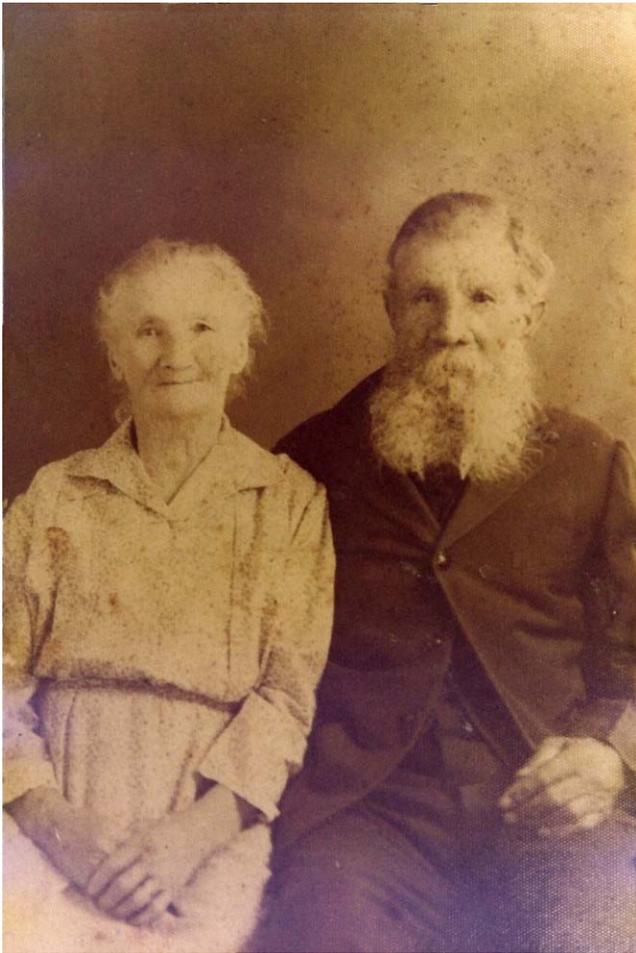
As civilization grew closer to their farm, the Gerault's family grew up and moved away; Andre and Levenia remained some of the prominent citizens of Flower Mound. Andre retired from his job and in 1992 sold his farm. A large part of the property eventually became, Gerault Park. Andre died in 2002 and is buried in Flower Mound Cemetery. Levenia Gerault, one of our surviving pioneers, still lives in Flower Mound. Whether you want to see Gerault Road expanded or if you don't, it is important to know why the road has that name. If you have young children it might be appropriate to explain to them who their park was named for. If you do that, here are a few pictures and a poem that explains how to say the name. I think Mr. Gerault would have liked that.

Ode to a Road

All the kids from Flower Mound,
Really ought to know,
The road is spelled with a-U-L-T
But it sounds just like "Jer - Row."

Next month I will explain the naming of Morriss Road.

Jim Morriss
jmorriss@aol.com
817-491-4201



Here are Louie and Marie Gerault who came to the US in 1887. This Picture was taken about 40 years later.



The Gerault children in about 1903. Andre and Louise are standing. Seated are Paul, Anna and Joe.



Andre Gerault and Kate Hammond (about 1917.) Andre worked as a blacksmith and carpenter in Ennis.



Here is Pvt. Andre Leon Gerault going to war in 1942.



Newlyweds Andre and Levenia Gerault in 1941.



The first documented evidence of drag racing on Gerault Road was made in 1967. Andre is driving the red tractor and son, Joe pilots the green one.