

## Who's Lake is it Anyhow?

by Jim Morriss

About 30 years ago the City of Dallas had a big problem that caused some very upset and angry feelings in the citizenry of our county. It seems that there were two old dilapidated buildings that had once housed lead reclamation businesses. It was found that the land around these buildings was contaminated with lead. The city was commanded by the EPA to clean up the two sites. To do that, they had to demolish the two buildings and collect the rubble along with the top foot of soil, then remove this stuff to somewhere out of the city. There was a creditable rumor that the leaders in Dallas had decided that they would move all of the bad stuff to a dump site in south Denton County.

Naturally everyone here said, "NOT IN MY BACK YARD!" But Dallas was determined that it wouldn't hurt us and there was nothing else they could do with the junk. Finally, after a lot haggling and harsh words, some bright person said, "Is it smart for Dallas to put its contaminated waste in the watershed that drains into Lake Lewisville, which is your own water supply?" Immediately plans were changed and "Big D" decided to truck the stuff off to Louisiana. It is an interesting story but much of the angst and anxiety could have been avoided if the people in Denton County had just known their own history and remembered about the big "Achilles Heel" that Dallas has.

In 1841, when John Neely Bryan built his cabin overlooking the Trinity River, he had no clue that his house would form the nucleus of what would one day become a huge metropolis. If he had only known he might have found a better location. His goal was to find a good place to cross the river. However, the greatest need for any city in the state of Texas is an unfailing water source. The Trinity can supply more than enough water but not with any degree of reliability. Sometimes you get too much and sometimes nearly nothing. To have a city here you need a good storage reservoir. But Bryan, who didn't know any better, located the town right on top of the best place for a big lake. To stockpile a good supply of water Dallas would have to flood the city or else look elsewhere, preferably upstream. For a while they made use of cisterns, which were really just holes dug in the clay. Then they put dams on Bachman's Branch and on White Rock Creek. But the water that they could hold was not nearly enough. By 1920 with a population of more than 150,000 Dallas needed more water.

A big announcement was made on December 14, 1921 in the *Dallas Morning News* that a survey had already been made for a new lake to supply Dallas with the water that it needed. Three sites had been selected, the most desirable being what is now Grapevine Lake. They plotted another site on Denton Creek and a third on the Elm Fork close to the city of Garza. The only problem was that most of the people in Denton County seemed to

know nothing about it. To the city fathers of Dallas it didn't matter so much if a few farmers got upset with them. It was well known that people were moving away from the rural counties to the north and besides, the City of Dallas had five to six times the population of the whole county of Denton.

Most of the people in our area were not necessarily against a big lake but they didn't exactly embrace the idea either. Wherever the lake was to be put, it would remove some really good farm and pasture land from our rural county. The taxes on all of those acres would be lost forever. A lake would also cut the county in half. Citizens on the far side of a new lake would no longer be able to take a direct route to get to Denton. They would have to go around it or else do business in Grapevine or McKinney. It also seemed that most of the people from Dallas seemed to have an attitude that was irritating to the folks from this area.

The leaders of Dallas may have been a bit condescending but they weren't stupid. They knew they had the economic and political means to get whatever they wanted, but they certainly did not want bad relations with neighbors whose help they might one day need. So they started a campaign to promote the advantages that a big lake would bring to Denton County. Fishing, hunting, boating and a place for picnic outings were good things that we should all want to have near-by. There could also be economic advantages because people for miles around would flock to a lake and money could be made selling food and supplies to these visitors. Furthermore, property values around the new lake were sure to increase. The Dallas honchos also put their support behind a new light rail commuter train that in those days was called an "interurban line." This new enterprise would link the cities of Dallas, Denton and Wichita Falls and bring advantages to the citizens of all three cities.

For whatever reason Dallas decided the best place for its new water reservoir should be on the Elm Fork of the Trinity River and their persuasive emphasis became focused on the little town of Garza. The land that would be under the new lake was identified for purchase. Many land owners readily accepted the hard cash that was offered. Those who were reluctant to sell knew that they might soon find themselves in court fighting the City of Dallas in condemnation hearings. By the time that all of the land that would be under water was procured, very few people were opposed to the project, and some could hardly wait. In the summer of 1924 advertisements appeared in the *Denton Record Chronicle* for lots in a new subdivision called "Garza Beach Estates." This 61.2 acre development was located on the shores of the soon to be built lake. Readers were enticed with promises that bathing, boating, hunting and fishing would soon be available to owners of land on the new lake.

Later that fall the interurban rail line opened with a great festive ceremony. On September 30, 1924 a party of 250 officials from Dallas and other connecting cities made a celebratory inaugural run. Stops were made in Farmers Branch, Carrollton, Lewisville, Garza and finally in Denton. Dignitaries gave speeches in each of the cities. In Garza, Dr. D. G. Taylor welcomed the visitors and made a prediction that Garza would soon have a population of 3,000 because of the interurban and the new lake. Dallas mayor Lewis Blaylock thanked the town for their hospitality and for their cooperation in locating the lake in Denton County. The mayor then went on to praise the town of Garza and echoed the sentiment that its growth was imminent. In fact ground was broken on the start of the dam just five days later on October 4. The two projects seemed to be intertwined with a feeling of good will.

The euphoria over the opening of the commuter rail line and the start of the lake did not last long. On October 25, 1924 a report was printed in the *Dallas Morning News* stating that the Dallas Commissioners were considering an ordinance that would prohibit all swimming, boating, fishing and hunting at Dallas' new lake. As work continued on the dam subsequent articles in the *Morning News* demonstrated that the views of the officials in Dallas were becoming more opposed to any recreational use for the lake. Their biggest concern was the possible pollution of the water in the lake. Citizens in Denton saw this as a complete reversal of the position that Dallas expressed when they were trying to convince Denton of the advantages to placing a lake here. Officials in Dallas were now repeatedly denying that they ever said that they would allow any use of their lake. On July 17, 1927, Denton County Judge, Brent C. Jackson insisted that he would have absolutely no trouble getting 500 citizens to testify under oath about the promises made by Dallas officials when they were selling their project. Dallas Mayor Blaylock came right out and stated that no fishing, hunting, boating or swimming would be allowed. The lake was owned by Dallas and would be subject only to rules and enforcement passed by the Dallas City Commission.

As the dam neared completion more articles appeared in the *Morning News* outlining the dangers in allowing recreational use of the lake. It should be noted that the position that Dallas was taking was not unusual in the 1920's. Many other cities outlawed trespassing of any kind around water reservoirs. This was often the case in man-made lakes but this one was so big no one could imagine keeping everyone off of and out of the water. Dallas officials were not only concerned about swimming, hunting and fishing, they also were becoming alarmed about the possible development of area towns and more houses close to their lake. The problem Dallas had was that they owned the land under the lake but not the shore around it. They would not be able to legally block access to the lake. They had also recently helped to promote the development of the area

and they even planned and started building a fish hatchery to stock "their lake" with bass and other game fish.

Finally the project was finished. The construction company that built the dam staged a big barbeque dinner on November 8, 1927. The event was attended by 3,000 members of the Denton and Dallas communities but no mention was made of what activities would or would not be allowed. Apparently no one wanted to spoil the party by starting an argument. Even though the dam was complete, no water could be collected until more trees and underbrush were cleared from the lake bottom. Then on February 16, 1928 the floodgates were closed and water impoundment began. Leaders in Dallas staged several meetings to establish plans for their control of the lake. On September 11, 1928 several Dallas officials actually came to Denton and met with the mayor, R.E. Burt, and other officials to clear the air and seek cooperation. Exactly what they discussed is not known but we do know that the City of Denton had no control over south Denton County. Nor did they seem to want to establish any jurisdiction beyond their city limits. To the people of that time "Dallas and Denton were at loggerheads." Slowly, water started to pool behind the big, two mile long dam. If very much water was collected in the first year little was said about it in the Dallas and Denton news media. Then in the spring of 1930 our area was blessed with several weeks of good soaking rain. At last we had a lake and it was officially named "Lake Dallas." All of the conflict seemed to have passed, - - - until summer came.

As soon as triple digit temperatures hit, J. Waddy Tate, the new Dallas mayor, started receiving reports that people were swimming in the lake. A story in the *Dallas Times-Herald* stated that at least a dozen swimmers were arrested by "lake guards" and turned over to Denton County for prosecution. The *Times-Herald* story went on to say that the swimmers were set free with no punishment and Mayor Tate wanted to know why. Denton County Attorney Earl Street and Judge Walter Koons patiently explained that they would accept no charge against nor would they prosecute any swimmers caught in Lake Dallas because it was not against any Denton County law. Mayor Tate fumed over the fact that his mega-city could do nothing to control these impudent hicks from Denton. Then seeming to rub salt in the wound, on page one of the August 13, *Denton Record Chronicle* the following note appeared:

*There has been some controversy as to swimming in Lake Dallas and according to a Denton man's statement Wednesday morning there are some few who really 'observe' the rules and regulations regarding the use of the lake. He said, "It is my understanding that it's against the rule to go in the lake with clothes on and I have-been told that there are some of the swimmers who are enjoying the waters and at the same time are not disobeying the rules."*

Mayor Tate made a call to Austin and asked the governor to send Texas Rangers to arrest people swimming in Lake Dallas. Governor Moody knew that there were a lot of voters in Dallas but he also knew there was no state law being broken and he could not help. Then Mayor Tate received a letter from a Mrs. D. Davis from Denton who stated that his information, that a dozen people were swimming in the lake, was clearly wrong because the actual number was closer to 250 and growing every day. Mrs. Davis went on to tell the mayor that he might as well get accustomed to the situation because there would be absolutely nothing he could do about it.

Mrs. Davis was right, eventually the city of Dallas realized that there was indeed not a thing they could do about it. People continued to swim, hunt and fish in and on Lake Dallas. The city got the water that they needed and no one died or got sick from drinking it. The good people of Garza even changed the name of their city to "Lake Dallas." For the next twenty years the supply of

water was more than adequate and the hard feelings gradually subsided.

By 1950 Dallas needed even more water and laid out plans to enlarge the lake. Despite the objections of many in Denton County, a new dam was constructed that doubled the size of the lake. This time there was no argument over swimming or fishing, the only dispute that developed was over the name that it should be called. On July 27, 1960, five years after the completion of the new dam, the name was officially changed to "Lewisville Reservoir."

Today the population of our region is much larger and so is Dallas. More lakes have been built and even more water is sure to be needed. Future conflicts are very likely to arise. It seems like a good idea to be aware of the big squabble we had just eighty years ago and how the demeanor of our big neighbors can change if they think their water supply is threatened.

# Announcing GARZA BEACH ESTATES

Not a city subdivision, but a Summer Paradise for YOU and YOUR loved ones!



## DENTON'S NEWEST PLAYGROUND

On the Shores of Dallas' New \$5,000,000.00 Reservoir Lake

# 15 MINUTES

**FROM THE**  
 From the new Dallas Reservoir Lake, Garza Beach Estates is located in the heart of the city, only a few minutes' ride from the center of the city. The lake is the largest in the state, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**Enjoyed on Reservoir**  
 Located on the new Dallas Reservoir Lake, Garza Beach Estates is a beautiful and well-kept area. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**Large Lots at Edge Price**  
 Add now you and your family can own your own Summer Home or Camp on the shores of the beautiful lake at a price within the reach of everyone. The homesites that we are offering have a 50-foot frontage and a depth of 100 feet, with prices ranging from \$10,000.00. Naturally, these prices will last for a limited time only.

**Canal Through Property**  
 GARZA BEACH ESTATES is a beautiful and well-kept area. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**Water Boat for Fishing**  
 You can have fun in this beautiful area. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**Every Summer Home**  
 Being, fishing, hunting and other sports are enjoyed in this beautiful area. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**How to Go**  
 Take out the Dallas Plan, which takes you to the property. Representatives will bring the deed to you. Only \$100.00 and up with a very small cash payment.

**Bathing and Fishing**  
 The best bathing facilities are located in the plans for Garza, which will include a swimming pool, a tennis court, a clubhouse, and a restaurant. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**Investment in Pleasure**  
 Everyone should own a Summer Home on the GARZA BEACH ESTATES. This is the best investment you can make. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**Check Business Features**  
 Aside from the summer homes, we have many other business features. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**A Plan for the Kidder**  
 Add to your investment a plan for the kidder. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**YOU CAN BUY A LOT \$98 UP FOR \$2450 CASH 485 PER MONTH**

The Southern States Company  
 Owners and Developers of  
**Garza Beach Estates**  
 Phone X 4018 301-302 Litz Bldg.

# FREE

Automobile Trip to Property Every Day

**FREE**  
 These Summer Homes, priced at their low price, are an investment opportunity that cannot be missed. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**Encourage Profitably**  
 Think of the enormous profits to be made on each small parcel of land. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**What Summer Says**  
 Roger Johnson, the great outdoorsman, said that he had never seen a more beautiful area. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**Don't Pass This Chance**  
 You can't afford to miss this opportunity. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept. The lake is the heart of the city, and the water is pure and clear. The surrounding area is beautiful and well-kept.

**How to Go**  
 Take out the Dallas Plan, which takes you to the property. Representatives will bring the deed to you. Only \$100.00 and up with a very small cash payment.

**FILL OUT AND MAIL TODAY**

Send me more information about Garza Beach Estates. I am interested in buying a lot of land on the lake. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my address is \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

In the summer of 1924 advertisements in the Denton Record Chronicle repeated the glowing accounts of all of the benefits that would soon be available to those who owned property close to the soon-to-be completed lake.