



Vets Village

1946 - 1960

Veterans Village Park

Table of Contents

Vet Village – Historic Context	2
Pioneer Villagers of Vet Village	5
Nancy Gates at Vets Village in 1946	7
Interior of a hutment, Mrs. Dan Frenzel at Vets Village in 1946	8
1948 Yucca – Vets Village Photos	9

Vet Village – Historic Context

The end of World War II created a new type of student eager to exchange their military service for higher education. The flood of former soldiers to Denton in 1946 to attend North Texas State Teachers College (now UNT) created growth and housing stress for these non-traditional students. Construction on Bruce Hall began in 1946 but it didn't open until 1947. The College purchased an empty three acre lot at 308 Bradley Street, between West Oak and Scripture, to provide housing for veterans. In the rush to generate living quarters, the location lacked a name. The March 1, 1946 Campus Chat story headline resolved that, proclaiming ***Vets Village Selected As Name for Hutments*** as Army-surplus squad huts started arriving for veteran housing.

Vets considered the plywood pre-fabricated housing set up at the Vets Village on the Bradley Street lot "hutments" because they considered them a cross between an apartment and a hut. Hutments created excitement and a sense of place where returning veterans could live with their families. The Campus Chat documented this trend in a story on March 8, 1946: ***Irish Bride Leaves Native Land to Claim Souvenir Husband, NT Vet Village Home:***

"Because a button popped off the jacket of GI Frank Gioviale in an Irish café during a match shortage, an Irish bride and one-year-old daughter are on their way to Vet Village, Denton, Texas. When Gioviale, a senior music major at NTSC, started to unbutton his jacket before the fireplace in a bus station cage in Belfast, North Ireland, about two years ago, a highly polished button snapped off his jacket. A few minutes later when a nurse at a nearby table asked him for a light, he inquired whether she had needle and thread. She, admiring his highly polished button, wanted it for a souvenir, not knowing that with the button went the tall, wavy-haired Frank Gioviale of Texas. For this Irish nurse, then Miss Tillie Charlton, of Cookstown, North Ireland, is now Mrs. Frank Gioviale.

After a year in Ireland, Gioviale "toured" France with the medical corps. Daughter Ruth was born while he was in France, but not until after V-J day could he see her. Just before his unit returned to the States, he got a furlough to North Ireland. It was early last October when he last saw his wife and baby, but he has just received word that they are leaving Ireland for Texas immediately. Gioviale, who hails from Beaumont, says that Texas will seem warm to his wife compared to her native North Ireland. He is now busy getting his Vet Village prefabricated house ready to become an Irish lassie's first Texas home."

Vets Village consisted of 50 hutments, separated about six feet from each other with small front yards, divided by three roads named (Ann) Sheridan Ave., (Joan) Blondell Ave., and (Nancy) Gates Ave. Ann Sheridan and Joan Blondell were movie stars who both attended North Texas State Teacher's College, now the University of North Texas. Ann Sheridan was a Denton native attending Denton schools and the NTSTC until won a Hollywood talent contest. Joan Blondell was a student at the College from 1926 to 1927 who became a movie star during the 1930s. Hollywood starlet and Denton native Nancy Jane Gates was the namesake of Gates Avenue. A playground financed by Ms. Gates allowed space for children of veterans to swing and slide in the middle row of huts.

By the end of 1946, 30 married couples and 20 single veterans resided in Vets Village. They had special events, like a Valentine's Day party in 1947. The veterans and family members living at Vets Village called themselves "villagers."



By the summer of 1946, the six rows of small gray hutments were carefully arranged on the three short avenues, an playground for the villagers children in regular use. Bicycles were abundant in Vets Village, as only a few veterans owned cars, as seen in this 1947 aerial photo. In 1947, about two-thirds of the veterans were married and at least ten of their wives were also enrolled in the college.

Since the Vets Village was in a “food desert,” and villagers were without cars, 29 veterans created the Vet Village grocery in July 1947. The impromptu store provided access to canned goods, baby food and dog food as villagers organized to assist each other and their community. The Community Cooperative Association, created in December 1947, offered charge accounts for grocery items at 313 Sheridan Avenue to serve the villagers, faculty and the general public.

YOU'RE INVITED

. To become a Stockholder in a New Community Project.

**THE COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE
ASSOCIATION OF DENTON, TEXAS**

Stock is available to faculty members, students and the public at only \$10 per share. This entitles you to stock dividends at the end of each year and a rebate on all purchases.

This store, though small carries a complete line of staple groceries, canned foods, baby food, milk and fresh meat, as well as ice cream. You do **NOT** have to be a stockholder to trade—your patronage is invited.

Prices at or below other neighborhood stores.

COME TO **VET VILLAGE** AND SEE FOR YOURSELF

Vet Village became a neighborhood community. When they needed to request additional street lights, they elected a Mayor and Council to represent their needs in March 1949:

- William Kamenista, Denton, Mayor
- John Cunningham of Amarillo
- Bob Breckenridge of Marshall
- John Murphy of McKinney
- Bruce Wilson of Terrell

Applications for residence at Vet Village were restricted to veterans to address the tremendous demand for housing. By 1960, few veteran applications were received, so Vets Village accepted married students as the number of WW II veterans declined. In August 1960, the Vet Village, population of 69, was closed as the hutments were prepared to be razed. By 1961, new construction of seven buildings with efficiency apartments was completed as part of campus housing, designed for married students and graduate students. The location was named the Bradley Street apartments.

In a Campus Chat interview with President Matthews on July 1, 1960, he summarized the popularity of Vet Village, which always had a waiting list of future student veterans. Matthews recalled how Vets Village created a strong community for the villagers. A contract between the College and the federal government created Vets Village. The initial contract provided housing for five years, which was granted multiple extensions, but which lapsed in 1960. President Matthews estimated that “approximately 500 families have lived in the village” with fewer than 20 families being non-veterans which only occurred the last year of Vets Village when there was no waiting list of veterans. Vets Village began to service WW II veterans and, over time, included Korean conflict veterans.

The Vet Village was a well named home and that supported veterans returning from service to enrich their lives with higher education while living with their families in Denton.

The 1948 Yucca, annual college yearbook, documented Vets Village with several photos and a summary narrative about the veterans and their families:¹

[Veterans of WW II] Swells college enrollment, and lives a life of crowded housing, high prices, limited budget and wives and kids. He is a veterans of World War II, and now a student, who is more serious, aware of world problems and family matters. He is older, maybe wiser, and his presence affects the campus. In a few years he will be gone into better houses and away from school. He is really an American.

¹ North Texas State College. The Yucca, Yearbook of North Texas State College, 1948, yearbook, 1948; Denton, Texas. (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph61017/m1/74/?q=village; accessed February 11, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections. Photo spread on Pages 70 – 71.

Pioneer Villagers of Vet Village

The first WW II veterans “villager” creating Vet Village:

Frank and Tilley Gioviale and infant daughter Ruth; Campus Chat, March 8, 1946

Andrew Moon and wife – 3 years in Air Corp in Europe; Campus Chat March 22, 1946

Robert Clinton, offering Accordion lessons – Campus Chat March 29, 1946

Veteran children pictured on their playground with Nancy Jane Gates: Campus Chat July 5, 1946

- Judy McNutt
- Donna Whisenhunt
- Sue Branch
- Richard Schloemer

Dan Frenzel and wife – 215 Sheridan Street – Campus Chat August 2, 1946

Richard and Annette Phillips – Navy, based in Brazil; “Brazilian Bride” Campus Chat Oct. 25, 1946

Mr. and Mrs. Coquat and infant daughter, 117 Blondell; Campus Chat March 14, 1947

Owen “Skipper” Shipp and wife, 114 Blondell, Campus Chat March 21, 1947

Crellon Manire and wife, mother of Marshall, 1st baby born at the Village, 314 Gates; Ibid

Herbet Ferrill and wife, 213 Sheridan; Ibid

Richard Wilson and wife and 3 kids, 105 Blondell; Ibid

Bill Kamenitsa and wife; Campus Chat July 25, 1947

Edwin Worley, from Denton, and wife; Ibid

Ralph Davis, from Bridgeport; Ibid

Glen Johnson, from Bridgeport; Ibid

Harold Langley, from Vinton, LA; Ibid

Elgin Phillips, from Marshall, TX; Ibid

C. D. Sealey, from Denton, Ibid

Jack Dial, from Amarillo, Campus Chat, July 9, 1948

Jack Moore, from Marshall, TX, Ibid

V. G. Marshall Deidenheimer, Ibid

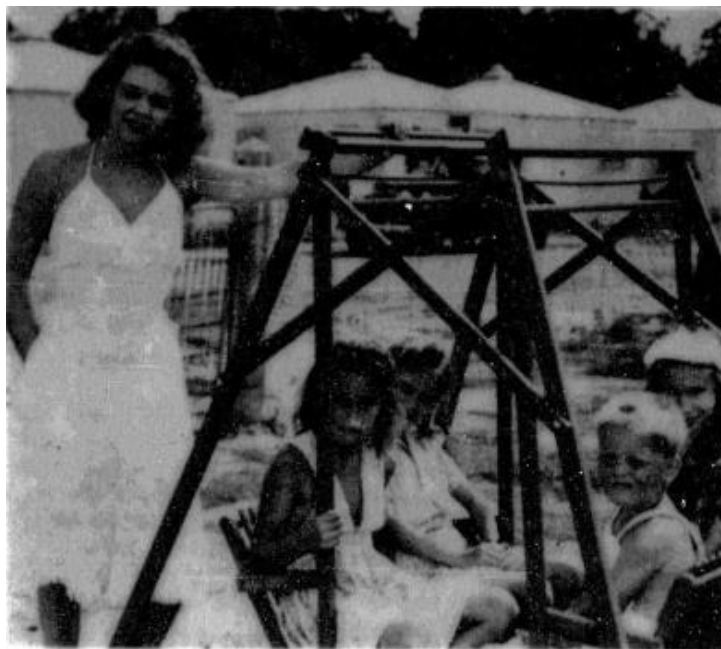
Elgin Phillips, Ibid

John Bremmer, Denton, Ibid

The 1948 Christmas party recorded 45 village children greeting Santa. Included were:

- Edlon W. Long of San Benito, his wife and 2 children, Sherrie 16 months and Terry 3 months
- Ray Griffin of Sherman, his wife and 2 daughter, Martha 2 and Beverly 2 months
- Hubert Dutton of Whitesboro, his wife and Ronald 9 months
- Joe Coquat, Oakville, his wife and daughter, Janis 2 years
- Roy Wagoner, Mesquite, his wife
- Herbert Ferrill, Arlington, his wife,

Nancy Gates at Vets Village in 1946



STARLET NANCY JANE GATES walked down Gates avenue in North Texas State's Vet Village last week shortly after she arrived in Denton from Hollywood. Miss Gates, in above photo, inspect: the sign on the street named for her, accompanied by Dr. C. L. Schloemer, NT biology instructor and Vet Village proctor. In lower photo, she watches four of Vet Village's younger generation at play. Children in the picture are Judy McNutt, Donna Whisenhunt, Sue Branch, and Richard Schloemer. ²

² The Campus Chat (Denton, Tex.), Vol. 29, No. 30, Ed. 1 Friday, July 5, 1946, newspaper, July 5, 1946; Denton, TX. (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph313447/m1/1/?q=%22vet%20village%22)

Interior of a hutment, Mrs. Dan Frenzel at Vets Village in 1946

The interior of a hutment contained a kitchenet, bathroom and portable plywood walls that could be arranged to petition areas as bedrooms and living space by each resident.



TYPICAL RESULT of recent interior decoration being done at Vet Village is this corner of the hutment of Mr. and Mrs. Dan Frenzel. Mrs. Frenzel is shown turning on the radio in her home at 215 Sheridan street in Vet Village.

3

³ The Campus Chat (Denton, Tex.), Vol. 29, No. 33, Ed. 1 Friday, August 2, 1946, newspaper, August 2, 1946; Denton, TX. (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph313450/m1/3/?q=%22215%20Sheridan%22: accessed February 11, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

1948 Yucca – Vets Village Photos



Veteran mows the lawn in front of his home.



Wives check list
at co-op grocery.

Hanging out clothes follows
the weekly washing.

The price of eating is high.





Kids frolic on village playground.

The family eats economically.



Wives play bridge while husbands are in school . . .

. . . or exchange gossip on the lawn.

