

Notes from Two Recorded Interviews with Jack Kirkland
In 1988 and 1992
Interview by and Notes Prepared by Wheelice Wilson, Jr., in 2009

(Wilson's note: I have reviewed the recordings that I made of the interviews with Jack Kirkland and have attempted to summarize and categorize items that she mentioned. Jack's memory was extremely clear when these interviews took place. She had a keen sense of direction [north, south, east, west] and she also had good knowledge of the makeup of Coppell at the time of the interviews, one of which was done when she was ninety. She was always careful to state if her memory about something was less than perfect, which was rare, but this leads me to believe that her comments are accurate.)

Jack Kirkland's Family:

Jack Kirkland was born on April 11, 1902, in Coppell, Texas, in the Stringfellow house.

Jack's older siblings were Sally, Louise and Hubert.

Her grandfather was John McDaniel Stringfellow, who came to the area from Tennessee in 1878.

The Stringfellow family lived in a house on what is Loch Lane today. It was on the west side of the road, facing east. It was not a large house, but it was two-story.

This Stringfellow house was eventually purchased and moved by Dr. Clifford Sanders to an area near present North Lake, south of present Beltline Road. It was used as a clubhouse till it burned.

The Stringfellow farm extended west and contained about 40 or 50 acres.

Jack's father came from Madison County, Alabama. Her father and mother met in Texas.

Jack's father was a farmer and he worked a 40-acre farm in Coppell east of the present city hall, at the end of Lodge Road where Willow Wood is today. (Wilson's note: It is not clear what Jack meant by "Willow Wood." It does not appear to be a street or area in Coppell.)

Jack's father also worked building roads in the area; he mainly delivered gravel by wagon. He helped build a bridge west of present Highway 121 over Denton Creek, in 1910.

Jack's mother was a school teacher.

The Kirkland House:

Jack moved into the house when she was two years old, 1904.

The house may have originally been painted light gray, but it was painted white after that.

Other parts of the town (by Jack's recollection, about 1914):

Probably when Jack was between 6 years old and a teenager, Bethel Road in front of the stores in downtown Coppell were gravel. The gravel extended a bit east of there, but the other roads were just dirt roads.

There was a blacksmith shop on the corner of her grandfather's property before a church was built there, which would be the northwest corner of Bethel Road and Coppell Road, in front of the Kirkland house.

The bridge over Denton Creek, north of town, was built when she was eight years old (1910).

To travel toward Lewisville from the Kirkland house, one would travel north on Coppell Road, turn west onto Ruby Road, north onto State Road, east onto Thweatt Road (now Sandy Lake Road), and immediately back north on Coppell Road to go over Denton Creek on the bridge. (Wilson's note: In these interviews, Jack refers to, apparently, two bridges over Denton Creek. One of them, the one she seems to indicate that her father worked on, was located west of present Highway 121. She says that the original bridge was farther west than where the road is now. In this description of how to get to Lewisville from Coppell, she seems to indicate that one would get to the north end of present Coppell Road and go west again over that bridge. Another bridge over Denton Creek was east of present Denton Tap Road. Jack talks about going north on the extension of present Hartz Road, meandering back and forth, maybe on Lodge Road and others, and then crossing Denton Creek over a bridge that was eventually replaced at a site farther east, where Denton Tap Road now crosses the creek. Evidence of the moorings of this original bridge have been found.)

To get to Lewisville from Grapevine, one had to travel through Coppell, before Highway 121 was built.

There was a lumberyard on the northeast corner of Bethel and Coppell Roads, where the present old barbershop is now.

The first post office was inside a store in the downtown area of Coppell. When Jack was 3 or 4 years old, she remembered getting mail from a woman clerk.

During Jack's youth, Hartz Road went north from present Sandy Lake Road. (It was eventually closed and abandoned, but it was reopened as a new street after development.) After going north, Hartz Road turned east, merged with Lodge Road, then went north over Denton Creek.

In 1910, Jack's father worked on providing the gravel for roads, and he helped build the bridge over Denton Creek that was west of present Highway 121. At that bridge, the road eventually merged into present Round Grove Road and went into Lewisville.

To get to Grapevine from downtown Coppell, one would travel west on Bethel Road, turn south about a mile from town, travel south to the railroad, cross the railroad, turn north again and cross the tracks again, and then go west into Grapevine on what is now E. Wall Street. (Wilson's note: Early Grapevine maps identify this street as "Coppell Road," and it ended at downtown Grapevine's Main Street. On the other side was Wall Street. Therefore, it is logical that, at some point, the city renamed the eastern part of this street "E. Wall Street.")

The dam on Sandy Lake Road was built about 1915.

Moore Road extended south all the way to Hackberry, through what is now a North Lake.

According to Jack, the house that has been called the first brick house in Coppell was apparently located on the northwest corner of present Denton Tap Road and Bethel School Road, where, later, J. C. Thweatt had a small trailer park. (Wilson's note: Other accounts have this brick house located along the present railroad tracks, on the north side, facing south, possibly one-quarter mile east of present Denton Tap Road.)

In about 1914, the area along Bethel Road, going east, looked like this:

- A blacksmith's shop (owned by Kirby and probably gone by 1900) was on the northeast corner of Bethel and Coppell Roads, where the barbershop would be.
- A lumberyard was on the same corner, owned by Tom Moore.

- Tom Harrison's large store which sold dry goods (not really a "general store," which would also sell groceries), which contained the first post office.
- In later years, a barbershop would be in this location.
- A store owned by the Ratliffs would be next.
- A brick bank building, built in 1909, on the north side of the street, east of the big store.
- A two-story grocery store on the southwest corner of Bethel and Coppell Roads, facing east. Upstairs was a meeting place for the Woodmen of the World lodge.
- There was a drugstore on the southeast corner of Bethel and Coppell Roads, facing west. (Jack says that this drugstore was there before her time.) It had a second floor where the Farmers' Union met. There was a doctor's house which served as his office south of this drugstore. This drugstore was eventually used as a restaurant for a while. Later, the corner had a "filling station" (a service station).
- There was another house near this corner (apparently on what is now Wilson property) which faced south. This was John Foster's house.
- There was another doctor's house farther east on Bethel Road, on the south side, probably about one-third way between Coppell Road and Denton Tap Road. This was probably Dr. Bennett's house.
- There was another blacksmith's shop which had a mill, between 1910 and 1920, located on property along Bethel Road, in downtown, south of what is now the Deli.
- East of the bank along Bethel Road was the W. O. Harrison house, a fancy residence. It burned and was replaced by the house that sits there now, across from the present location of the Wilson house.
- East of that, was a large square house.
- Dr. Emmett Bennett built the house on the north side of Bethel Road that became known as the Coats house.
- Across the street from the Coats house, on the south side of Bethel Road, was Dr. Kemp's house, which later became a rental house.
- The next house along Bethel Road, on the north side, sometimes called the Maud Standifer house, was built by Tyler Harrison.
- The stone house still standing on the north side of Bethel Road, often called the Canaughton house, was a chicken farm.
- On the south side of Bethel Road, across from the Canaughton house, was the Bennett house.
- At the end of Park Street, at the entrance to Grapevine Springs Park, on the southwest corner was the Henry Bennett house. It faced south. It had a big barn. Jack remembers sheep being sheared there.

There was a cotton gin on present Freeport Street. It faced north.

Present Freeport traveled over the railroad and went on south.

Sometime near 1905, there was a two-story house on the corner of present Freeport, at the railroad tracks, south of Coppell. At one time, the house was a "health hotel," but, for the most part, a family just lived there.

The first public water well was built about 1911 in downtown Coppell. The county paid half the expense and the city paid the other half. It was required that there be a public watering trough.

The John Harrison house, later owned by Mr. Whittiken and occupied by Jesse Harlin, grandfather of Pete Wilson, was located on the south side of present Southwestern Blvd., across from present Pinkerton Elementary School.

What is now known as Beltline Road, running south toward Irving from Coppell, did not run directly south. Somewhere between Coppell and Irving, on what is now airport property, the road turned west for a ways, then turned back east to its former path.

The land that is now airport property, south and southwest of Coppell, was known as “the prairie.”

Cemetery:

What is now called Historic Bethel Cemetery was once known as Sands Cemetery.

Jack remembers a boy being buried there who was traveling through in a covered wagon and who died near present Freeport Road.

(Jack remembers another boy being killed by a train passing through. It was thought that he might have been trying to get a cow off the tracks.)

Beer Joints:

Even after 1933, there were “beer joints” along present Sandy Lake Road. It was called “the white way” because of all the lights that illuminated the area. Even at Jack’s house, one could hear the nickelodeon music.

One of the beer joints was called Edward’s. It was located on the south side of Sandy Lake Road, adjacent to the present property which is the strip shopping center containing Express Fitness. This beer joint was a small red and white house.

Movie theaters and shows:

At one time, there was a movie theater on the southeast corner of Bethel and Coppell Roads, where the Kirkland house is now located.

Jack remembers a movie theater that was just a tent with bleachers, owned by Mr. Cole. It was a colorful tent, fancy inside, open at the top. Silent movies were shown there. One time, the bleachers collapsed.

By 1918, there was a movie shown in Tom Harrison’s vacant store.

By 1920, movies were shown in the store on the southwest corner of Bethel and Coppell Roads. Jack remembers the title of one movie, “On the Trail of the Octopus.” Jack’s sister Sally sold tickets there, and Jack took tickets.

Traveling shows would come through the town. They would set up in a tent, usually on school or church grounds.

Plays were sometimes put on by young people in town, sometimes in a vacant store. Jack remembered this taking place in 1925.

There were also some plays put on by the schools and churches.

Gypsies:

Gypsies would travel through and stop in Coppell in 1915. They traveled in covered trucks. They wore colorful clothes. They would steal things from the stores.

Automobile:

Jack had her first automobile ride when she was 8 years old.

Churches:

John Stringfellow, Jack's grandfather, donated land for the first Methodist Church in Coppell and helped build it.

The lumber for this church building was brought from East Texas by wagon, except for the "sleepers" (boards which supported the floor), which were obtained locally.

The first Methodist Church was built in 1879, on the northwest corner of Bethel and Coppell Roads, probably replacing the blacksmith shop that stood there.

This church building was across from where the Kirkland house would be built later.

The front entrance to the church building faced east, but that entrance was on the "end" of the building, so the length of the building ran east and west.

A brush arbor was built behind the Methodist church. Another brush arbor was built behind the Baptist Church when it was built later. Eventually, a tabernacle was built. (Wilson's note: A brush arbor was just a simple structure that would hold dry brush for a roof and which caused potential problems with fire because lanterns were hung underneath for light. The sides were open to allow in a breeze. A tabernacle was apparently a more permanent structure, still open on the sides, but with a standard roof. Both these structures were used in the summertime, allowing church services to be held outside, where it was cooler. The tabernacle that Jack mentioned stood behind the Baptist Church until at least the 1950s. I remember, as a child, being inside the tabernacle at a church revival.)

A second Methodist Church building was built in 1904. It was located slightly more north than the original building. Its front entrance also faced east, but the length of the new building ran north and south.

Schools:

Bethel School was located on the southwest corner of present Moore Road and Bethel School Road. Bethel Church was a separate building and was located on the same corner. The school was located farther south than the church. Both the school and the church faced east.

There was a log cabin on the northwest corner of this intersection. Jack remembers a well there and a stile (a couple of steps that allowed a person to climb over a fence).

Bethel School Road was a dirt road, with ditches on each side. It was graveled in about 1912. (Wilson's note: Bethel Road and Bethel School Road were, until much later, the same road.)

Sally Brooks, Jack's older sister, taught at Bethel School.

The first school house in Coppell proper was located just west of the first Baptist Church, on present Bethel Road, also west of the original Kirkland house. It was not close to Bethel Road, but a little farther south. It was a two-room building.

When Jack was in the second or third grade, sometime around 1907 or 1908, a new school was built. The new building was built in front of the old school building (farther north, closer to Bethel Road), then the old building was torn down. The new building was two-story.

The new school building faced north, with two doors on the front.

It had a vestibule with two stairways, one on each side.

There was one large room downstairs and two rooms upstairs.

Grades 1 through 9 were housed in this building.

After the ninth grade, students went to school in Grapevine.

Grapevine Springs Park:

People in the town of Grapevine loved to come to the park in Coppell. They had picnics.

Jack's mother told Jack that many religious camp meetings were held in the park when Jack's mother was a girl.

There were lots of grapevines in the park.

The railroad:

In 1915, the depot was open all the time.

Passenger trains stopped routinely.

One train, the "Lone Star," did not stop in Coppell.

A baseball team:

On present Bethel School Road, there was a baseball diamond. Baseball teams from Lewisville, Carrollton, and Grapevine would come there to play.

Coppell had a baseball team. Jack remembers games on July 4th.