



Annie Webb Blanton

A Woman's Place

WOMEN IN DENTON COUNTY HISTORY

by Nita Thurman

Denton County has had its share of women who made their place in history, although their stories are sometimes to be found only between the lines of recorded history.

There were many women who came first – the first pioneer women who moved into the raw land of Texas in the 1850s, followed by women who were pioneers in the male-dominated fields of medicine, education and politics like Dr. Claudia Potter and teacher Annie Webb Blanton who became the first woman elected to statewide office in Texas.

Some are only footnotes to history, independent women like Angeline Smith, a saloon owner in the late 1800s who thumbed her nose at authorities when they passed a law prohibiting selling whiskey without a permit. Angeline sold whiskey for ten cents a drink at her saloon. After the permit requirement law was passed, she gave her whiskey away free by the glass. But with each glass, she sold a ten-cent peanut.

Notorious outlaw Belle Starr was part of a gang – some say the head of it – that operated relay stations through North Texas to move stolen horses into Indian Territory and Arkansas.

There are a lot of other women who led the way. Elinor Hughes was the first woman elected as mayor of Denton. Emily Fowler was the guiding spirit behind the public library. Dr. Mary Evelyn Blagg Huey was a student at Texas Woman's University and went on to become its first female president.

The first pioneer women came in wagon trains with husbands and families, carrying everything they owned and valued behind a

team of oxen. Susan McCombs was one of those women. Her story is one of tragedy and tenacity.

Susan was born in 1824 near Lookout Mountain in Tennessee and married Wade Boyd there in 1843-44. They had six children before they left Tennessee for Texas in 1855. Their families and several other families joined them for the trek to Texas.

By then Susan had six children, the oldest ten and the youngest a baby. She walked most of the way, nearly a thousand miles. It was seven months before they turned off to claim land on Long Prairie in what is now Flower Mound.

She and Wade settled on 200 acres with a creek for water, trees for shade and firewood and prairie for pasture and fields. By then it was late fall. They lived in the wagon while they plowed and planted so they could make a food crop for the next year. Susan was pregnant, expecting her seventh child.

Finally, planting was done and Wade set about building a cabin. It was one of those warm, golden late-autumn days in Texas, and he took off his shirt while he cut and trimmed logs for the cabin. He was hot and sweaty when a cold norther blew in. By that evening, he was having trouble breathing. Before daylight the next day, he was dead.

Susan was still living in the wagon the next February when she had her baby. Their families helped build a cabin, and she and her children went on. She became the matriarch

of a large family. Her descendants are farmers, lawyers, judges, lawmen, businessmen and – above all – strong women.

Claudia Potter, the young woman who became a doctor, was on the staff at Scott and White Hospital in Temple for 41 years. She was the first woman to administer gas anesthesia in Texas and one of the first in the United States. Claudia was born in 1881 on a



The Boyd family of women.

farm in east Denton County and graduated from Denton High School in 1900. She was the sixth woman to graduate from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. She was in private practice briefly, and then Dr. A.C. Scott, co-founder of the Temple hospital, hired her, subject to approval of Dr. White who was out of town.

When Dr. White returned, he accused Scott of losing his mind. But he told Dr. Potter she could stay on probation for one month. He repeated the instructions a month later. Finally, he told her she would remain on probation but didn't have to report back each

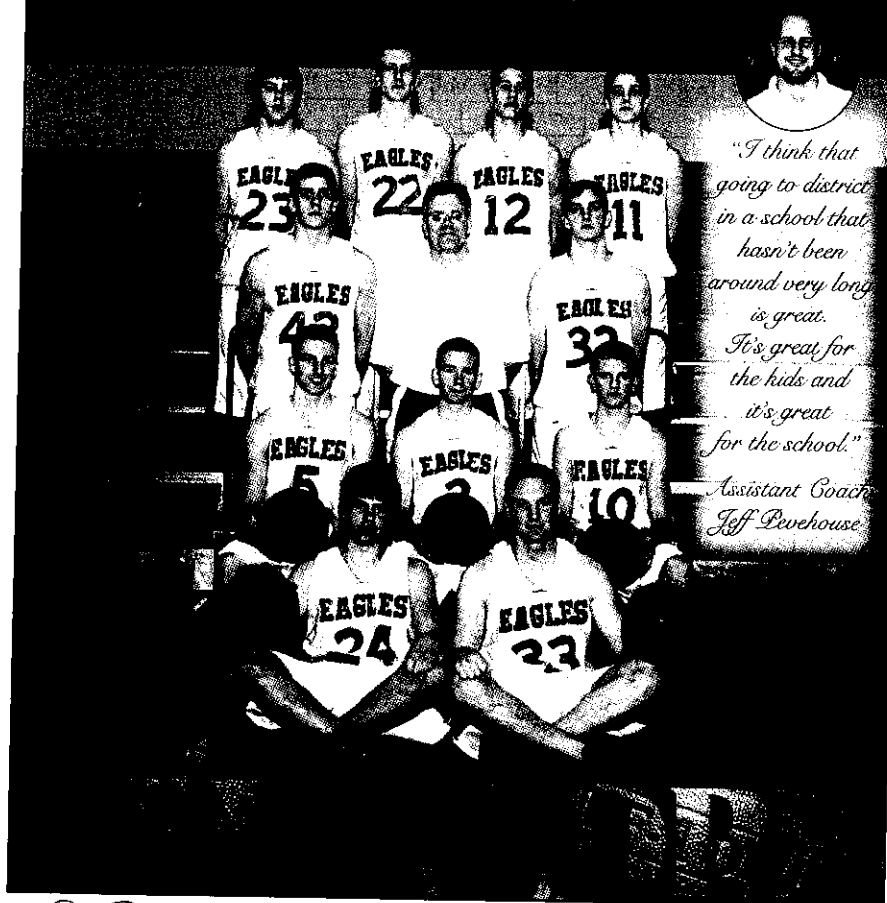
continued on page 23

The Pecan Picasso



SportsConnection

Argyle Eagles, left to right from top row: Ty Williams, Greg Butler, Jason Pierce, Jeff McBryde, Andrew Bradford, Coach Sain, Lee Muse, Jon Adam Head, Matt Tilton, Jared Newsom, Steve Martin and J.T. Lynch.



"I think that going to district in a school that hasn't been around very long is great. It's great for the kids and it's great for the school."

*Assistant Coach
Jeff Devehouse*

What is the key to the Argyle Eagles being the best team in district 12-2A? Reggie Sain, the head coach says, "Defense, plain and simple. Our guys take a lot of pride in their defense. That is our one main key to winning this year."

Since the Eagles are undefeated in district competition this year, the coach's insight helps in understanding what makes them a championship team. During practice and in games, Argyle defenders are trying to prevent a pass, block a shot, or steal the ball.

The Argyle boy's basketball team has more than a tenacious defense working for them. They have developed cohesiveness with each other on and off the court. In a tournament in Stephenville, four members of the team became sick. Lee Muse, #32, recalls trying to help one of his teammates feel better the night before the final game of the tournament: "Matt [Tilton, #3] wasn't feeling too good, so he went to sleep in his room. We turned his heater on full blast and put a lot of blankets on him to get him real hot so he would feel better at the game."

A third element that has contributed to the success of the basketball program this year is the loyalty and support of the student body, the parents and the Argyle community. With the strength of the competition in the district, these young men have accomplished more than just a near perfect season. They have developed a sense of pride in belonging to the community of Argyle. They have realized the fulfillment of a dream few teams ever get to experience.

Leads to Success

by James Hayes

continued from page 16

month. She was still on probation when she retired 41 years later.

During those years she did minor surgery and pathology and often doubled as night nurse after working all day as a doctor. She became the hospital's full-time anesthetist after gas anesthesia was developed.

In a 1947 interview with the Associated Press, Dr. Potter told of makeshift operations on kitchen tables and even once in a cotton field. The Scott and White team was summoned to operate on a migrant laborer with a ruptured appendix. Dr. Scott refused to operate in the only building, a shack covered with dirt and cobwebs. A place in the cotton field was cleaned and the sides of a cotton wagon were removed and placed on sawhorses for the operating table. The solicitous country

doctor who had summoned them held an umbrella to protect Dr. Potter from the broiling sun while she administered the anesthesia.

Annie Webb Blanton was born in 1870 in Houston and began teaching in a rural school in Fayette County after she graduated from high school. She graduated from the University of Texas in 1899 and joined the English faculty at North Texas State Normal School - now the University of North Texas - in 1901.

During those years, she became active in the Texas State Teachers Association and the fledgling movement for women's equal rights. She became the first woman president of TSTA in 1916.

Texas women got the right to vote in state primaries in 1918. When William P. Hobby, who was sympathetic to the women's movement, ran for governor in 1918, the

suffragists supported him and put up their own candidate for state superintendent of public instruction - Annie Blanton. She won in July 1918 by a large margin.

During her tenure as superintendent, a system of free textbooks was established, teacher certification laws were revised, teachers' salaries were raised, and efforts were made to improve rural education. She was re-elected in 1920 and served through 1922.

After returning to teaching, she founded the Delta Kappa Gamma Society, an honorary society for women educators, in 1929. The society had an international membership of 162,000 by the 1980s.

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