

The Fielder Flash

Arlington Historical Society

January 2025 Newsletter



Our Venues

Fielder Museum | 1616 W. Abram Street

Knapp Heritage Park | 201 W. Front Street

Arlington Heritage Memorial Grounds | 600 W. Arkansas Lane

Contact Us

Email: fielderh@swbell.net

Website: www.arlingtontxhistory.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/FielderHouseMuseum

Phone: 817-460-4001

A note from the editor



Here we are in 2025! This month's newsletter features a look back at the Arlington Historical Society in 2024. We also have an article about Jonas Harrison and his son, William. The article was compiled by Debra Harrison White, one of our readers who is passionate about her family's history. Thanks for sharing this with us, Debra! If you'd like to contribute an article about your family history or anything else, email me your ideas! Also, check out the Upcoming Events below for a special event on February 23rd at Fielder Museum.

Jason S. Sullivan, 01-30-25

Newsletter Editor

JasonSSullivan@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

- **February 20**—Texas Author Book Club continues with "Forget the Alamo" by Bryan Burrough, Chris Tomlinson, and Jason Stanford—Fielder Museum, 6:30 PM
- **February 23**—Arlington History Double-Header Event: Presentation and Book Signing of "Rivers and Destinies" by Deb Cornelius, followed by a Presentation and Q&A session with Arlington Archosaur Site Discoverer Art Sahlstein—Fielder Museum, 2:00 PM
- **March 20**—Texas Author Book Club continues with "Tears of the Truffle Pig" by Fernando A. Flores—Fielder Museum, 6:30 PM

Arlington Historical Society News

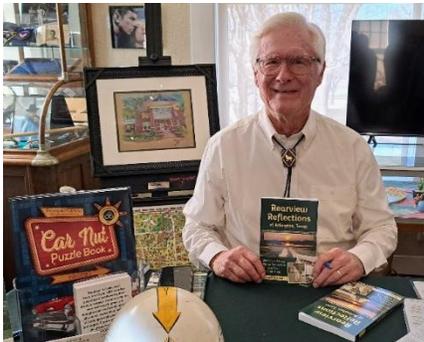
A look back at 2024

It was a busy and productive year for the Arlington Historical Society. Here are a few highlights.

We launched our Marker Monday campaign on Facebook in January, highlighting a different historical marker in Arlington each week. People have enjoyed learning about Arlington's history through the markers. In February, we hosted Danny Armstrong for a book signing at Fielder. Danny's memoir—"Rearview Reflections of Arlington, Texas"—has some great stories about growing up in small-town Arlington in the '50s and '60s. Pioneer Days at Knapp was a fun event in March; we also had some superb Women's History exhibits and displays at Fielder.

Summer was big for us. *Really big.* The "Seashores of Ancient Arlington: A Rich Fossil Record" exhibit was widely popular and brought many first-time visitors to Fielder Museum. Due to the demand, we kept extending the exhibit, and the talks presented by Art Sahlstein were also very popular. It was the most-attended exhibit we've had in years and drummed up quite the interest.

We celebrated Knapp Heritage Park's 20th anniversary in September with an enthusiastic turnout, making it a memorable weekend. On Veterans Day, the City of Arlington and the Arlington Historical Society dedicated a plaque—"In Memory of the Fallen"—listing the names of those from Arlington who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam. A few holiday events at Knapp rounded out our year. We look forward to 2025!



Photos:

- Danny Armstrong at his book signing
- Pioneer Days at Knapp
- Part of the Women's History exhibits
- Promo for the fossil exhibit
- Knapp Heritage Park 20th
- Geraldine Mills and Mayor Jim Ross with the Vietnam plaque

Newsletter Exclusive

We're excited to have a guest contributor this month! Debra Harrison White is a 5th-generation Harrison on her father's side, who is James Thomas Harrison. Debra is a descendant of Jonas Harrison, a pioneer attorney and statesman from New Jersey who came to Texas in 1820. Notably, he's the namesake of Harrison County in East Texas. After his death, the family relocated to Tarrant County. His son, William, was a prosperous farmer and an early settler in Arlington. The Harrison family is honored on Texas Historical Markers for Harrison County and Harrison Cemetery.



Unfortunately, we couldn't locate a photo of Jonas, but we have a few others to help tell the story. Without further ado...

FRONTIER LURED MANY TO TARRANT
by Debra Harrison White

Harrison County, in far East Texas

The frontier has always been a magnet for Americans—the educated and prosperous, as well as the poor and unlettered.

JONAS HARRISON was born October 11, 1777, in Woodbridge Township, New Jersey. By late 1807, he was a full-fledged attorney. Harrison had been admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Michigan and the Circuit Courts of Detroit and Huron. He moved to Lewiston, New York, opened a law office, and taught school in the rear of the building. One of his pupils, Betsey Cooke, would become his wife in 1811.

Two years prior, he had become Collector of Customs, Collector of Internal Government, and Mastery of Chancery of the State of New York. In December 1813, during the Battle of Buffalo, the British and their allies drove him from Lewiston.

The family fled to Batavia, a nearby town, and settled at the location where Buffalo Creek had been destroyed. Harrison established himself as a member of the Buffalo Bar and was elected by the State Legislature as one of the Trustees of the rebuilt village of Buffalo Creek. The village recovered from the battles by 1816. He was one of the founding fathers of Buffalo, New York. He was also the organizing Director of the Bank of Niagara, a founder and member of the vestry of Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, a Mason, and built the finest house in Buffalo.



Alas, the panic of 1819 ruined him. New York law was not lax about the enforcement of imprisonment for debt. He sold his

Betsey Cooke Harrison; Jonas' first wife



Ellender Shannon Harrison

home. The New York Attorney General sold all other property but found it insufficient to pay his debts. Jonas announced openly that he was leaving on a prospecting trip. He returned from Detroit with two valises, then left, and that was the last time his wife, three children, and Buffalo ever heard of him.

Jonas quietly made his way down the East Coast and into Georgia. On June 26, 1820, he married Ellender Shannon. Jonas and Ellender traveled by horseback and crossed the Sabine River into Texas on December 31, 1820. The gateway was Camp Sabine, a U.S. Army post on the Texas-Louisiana border, which in those days was the Southwestern border of the United States. Good water supply and spacious grounds made Camp Sabine a mecca for immigrants. There, in the unpeopled section of the river's headwaters, they built a little log cabin, and eight children were born: Margaret, Jonas, Jacob, John, DeWitt Clinton, Thomas Jefferson, William Henry, and Almira.

In Texas, Jonas was in the full practice of law. He served as the acting Commissary of Police for the Sabine and Tenehaw Districts. He was a member of the Texas Convention in 1832 and petitioned for all land to be surveyed. By 1835, Jonas had petitioned a divorce for Sam Houston from his wife, recruited men for the Texas armies, and wrote the "San Augustine Resolutions," advocating an immediate Declaration of Independence from Mexico. He died in 1836 as Houston led Texas' Independence Army to victory.

Jonas Harrison was among the first to have a pre-need plan at his death. Neighbors and friends came to the little cabin, and there they found an instrument written in his own hand wedged between the walls. It included instructions that he be buried under a great boulder that capped the summit of a high hill, the foot of which he had lived. He also requested that his remains never be moved. Shortly after his death, a newly organized county in Texas was named in his honor—Harrison County, of which Marshall is the county seat.

His widow, Ellender Harrison, and their eight children remained on the farm until 1848. For reasons unknown, they relocated to Arlington. She saw the children mature and build their own lives. One son, DeWitt Clinton, left a small parcel of land for the Harrison Cemetery near Meadowbrook Drive and Randol Mill Road, in Fort Worth. Ellender died August 28, 1877, and is likely buried in an unmarked grave at this site.

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON was born in Shelby County on September 27, 1833. He was the son of Jonas Harrison, one of the earliest and most prominent pioneers of Texas. William was among the early settlers of Arlington, becoming a prosperous farmer and stock-raiser.

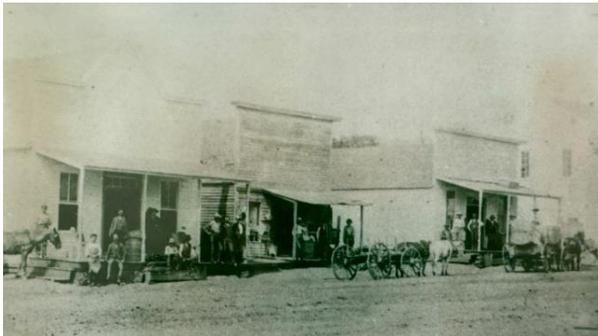
William was raised on the frontier. Early in life, he became familiar with every detail of farming and stock-raising. In 1848, after his father's death, he came with his mother and the rest of the family to Tarrant County, where he continued the stock business, raising horses and cattle.

William turned out to be a wise and sagacious farmer. After his marriage to Mary Jane Finger in 1858, in Tarrant County, he began investing in land where he lived. He first bought 100 acres, a part of it on credit. Harrison kept adding until he had acquired a sizable 1,800 acres but then gave some to his children. He retained about 1,200 acres—300 of which were under cultivation and which he rented. He conducted his stock business, consisting of raising, feeding, and selling horses, mules, cattle, and hogs. William and Mary Jane built a home in the location of the Wright Brothers Garage on West Division, and they farmed where then stood Moore Funeral Home.

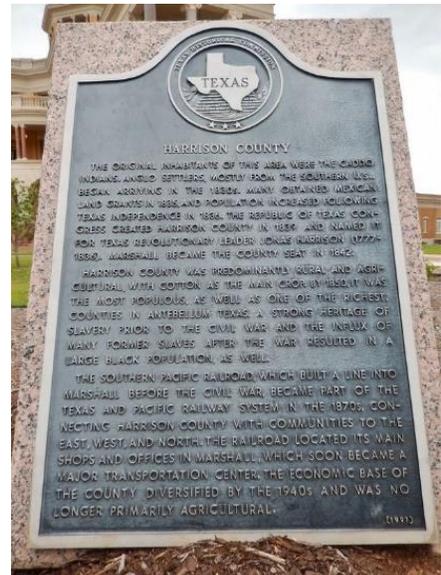


William and Mary Jane Harrison

In 1878, he engaged in the general merchandise business at Arlington under the firm name of Harrison, Ditto, and Collins, but sold his share after twelve months to establish the first hardware store in town. In addition to hardware, he also carried a line of groceries, continuing in business for three years. He then confined his operations to farming and stock dealing.



All his life, he had taken a laudable interest in public affairs and, at different times, filled various public offices. He served as County Commissioner for four years and had also filled the offices of Justice of the Peace, Coroner, and Notary Public. Mrs. Harrison and the children were church members, identifying with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Mr. Harrison, like his father, was a Mason. William died in 1899 and is buried in Arlington Cemetery.



Photos:

- Above: Downtown Arlington; first hardware store is far right
- Right: Texas Historical Marker for Harrison County