

EANES: PORTRAIT OF A COMMUNITY

Written
by
Linda Vance

Researched
by
Dorothy M. Depwe

*I think you will find
this book very interesting.
Thank you for
helping us in a special way.
Dorothy Depwe*

*In appreciation -
Linda Vance*

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Rollingwood

In 1946 two brothers, A.B. and George B. Hatley, with some of their friends and relatives, bought 300 acres of the Dellana Ranch's north pasture. They paid about \$300 per acre for the land, which was bounded on the south by Bee Cave Road and on the north by the Colorado River, and ran from Zilker Park on the east to approximately Bulian's Dairy on the west. Charles Dellana, Sr., had a few years earlier sold some of the pasture to S. Finley Ewing, who knew the Hatleys. Those involved in the Hatley deal were: Beryl and A.B. Hatley, May "Dutchess" and George B. Hatley, Marge and Raymond Farley, Vance Riley, Mrs. Vyron Harkins, Robert Hatley, G.M. Bettis and Davis Reed.⁷¹

The newly purchased land was further divided among the participants and A.B. Hatley began developing about eighty-six acres along the Colorado River into a subdivision which became known as Bluffington, whose major thoroughfare was Stratford Drive. There A.B. and Beryl built themselves a home on three acres. Others who purchased nearby lots were the Bradfords, Marshalls and Kinsers. For many years Stratford Dr. was a dead-end street at both ends, and all residents had to go through Rollingwood proper to get to Austin. Some years later Austin annexed much of Bluffington and Stratford Dr. was extended eastward over Smith [Dry] Creek and through Zilker Park. The western extension of the street occurred in 1970 when a waterline, which was tied in at Red Bud Trail cleared the right-of-way.

In 1947 approximately forty-two acres of Dellana Hills was developed. This area included Peak Road, north and south, Ewing, Brady and Ridgewood streets. Also included were Jeffery and Gregory streets named after A.B. Hatley's twin grandsons. Some years later parts of this section were annexed into the City of West Lake Hills.

Timberline Terrace which backs up to Smith Creek, started developing about 1948. Included in it were Westgate and Ewing Circles and Southcrest. The first commercial land in this section was sold some years later for the Texaco service station which now occupies the corner of Bee Cave Road at Edgegrove.

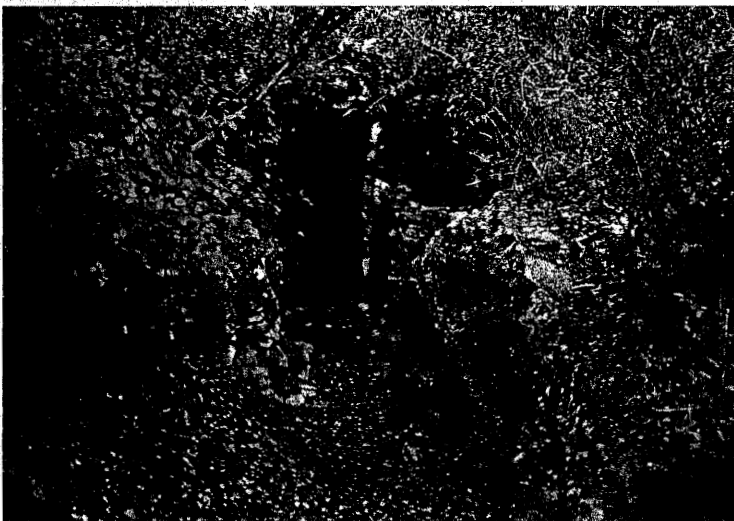
Almost all of the streets in Rollingwood are named after members of the Hatley family or their friends. Too, along Rollingwood Drive there was a peculiar house numbering system because George B. and A.B. Hatley started their own numbering systems from opposite ends of the street, one working from east to west and the other from west to east, apparently without any coordination.

When Harry McKee moved to his land out on west Bee Cave Road in 1949 he remembers that there were hardly any houses in Rollingwood and that none of the streets were paved. In 1959 he traded some of his land on Bee Cave Road and moved to Rollingwood. Lots in Rollingwood were selling for about \$4,000 a piece and there were only about 150 people in the whole subdivision. Wild turkeys, deer and other animals roamed freely through yards and streets. He recalls that taxes were high, about \$400 per year, because there were so few houses to spread the costs around.⁷²

Near Smith Creek, in a ravine located near the 4900 block of Timberline, there are the remains of an old concrete bunker which was once used by the Walter Tips Company for the storage of dynamite. The Tips and Goeth families founded the company and the Goeth family moved to their property on the southside of Bee Cave Road, near old Walsh-Tarleton Lane, in the early 1940s. Another interesting landmark in Rollingwood is Bandit Cave, about which much has already

been written elsewhere in this book. One amusing historical fact is that in 1954 Rollingwood was home to "The Texas Chinchilla Ranch" which was located at 5009 Rollingwood Dr. The "ranch" was owned by Col. and Mrs. Charles M. Crawford. It is not known if the "ranch" was successful or not.⁷³

The inner portion of Rollingwood was developed by George B. Hatley, who built a home on Almarion Drive. Other streets in this section included Farley Trail, Vale, Vance, Bettis, Pickwick, Rockway, Wallis, Nixon, Hatley, Hubbard, Gentry, Inwood and Ashworth. In the 1970s the last open section, the north-west portion, was subdivided by George B. Hatley. It included Park Hills Drive, Pleasant, Laura, Michele, Chris and Brett streets. Major builders in this section were Phil Hines and James A. Kinsey, who owned Direct Development, Inc., and later James Jolly Clark.



Entrance to Bandit Cave, Rollingwood, 1986.
(Depwe Coll.)

In 1966 the Park Hills Baptist Church, formerly West Austin Baptist (see section on churches, Chapter V), purchased an eight acre tract from George B. Hatley. The property was at the corner of Bee Cave Road and the proposed Mopac Freeway. Gradually during the late 1960s and the 1970s commercial establishments began to build along Bee Cave Road. Although Harry McKee recalls that people thought the Rylanders were crazy to put a grocery store way out in the "boondocks" on Bee Cave Road. Today in 1986 just the Rollingwood section of Bee Cave Road sports all kinds of retail and office businesses, including The Corners, The Park, Heritage Square, BPI Systems, The Centre of Westlake, Centre I and II, Timberline Terrace and Austin Research Engineers.

In 1955 the Village of Rollingwood was formally incorporated. The village became the City of Rollingwood in 1963. Frank L. Scofield, an attorney, was the village's first mayor. Council members were: Marvin E. Bell, Clarence J. Menn, Sterling F. Koester, Dr. Preston M. Wheeler and W.I. Shaffer. The village's first city marshal was L.T. Gunn. All officers served without pay except the marshal, who received \$30.00, a whistle and had to use his own car on his patrols. Eventually Gunn was given a siren. In 1959 he was given a deputy to help with his duties. In 1986 the city has 24-hour protection which is provided by a nine-officer police force. The city owns two police cars.

The little village faced a host of problems in its early days. One of the most basic problems concerned garbage collection. In the beginning there were several open trash dump sites located in the area. The City of Austin even operated a sanitary land fill between Zilker Park and Rollingwood which many residents used. Eventually all of the dumps were closed down and in 1960 the city signed a garbage disposal contract with Mr. John Durbin, who provided garbage removal service until 1983. Since that time Longhorn Disposal Company has serviced Rollingwood.

Another persistent problem in the early days was the water system. The subdivision was served by several small, private water companies, which operated their own wells. They included the Village Water System, Timberline Water System and A.D. Stenger Company. Much of the original pipe network was made of cast-off equipment which had been purchased from Camp Swift, an old army base south of Elgin, and then hauled to Rollingwood and reinstalled. Most of the original pipes were metal and substandard in size. In some areas water pressure was poor and in other places the pipes lay directly on top of the ground, causing the water to freeze in the winter and to steam in the summer. Much of the water was rusty in color and taste. In 1963 a State Health Department report called for the upgrading of the entire system, a suggestion which was resisted by some owners of the private water companies. However, better judgement prevailed over economic considerations, and eventually through persistent politicking and confrontation the system was updated. In 1969 many of the homes in the subdivision began to receive City of Austin water. Much of the long struggle to upgrade the system was led by Harry McKee, George Nalle and Bob Ely, who still keeps a bottle of the old rusty water as a reminder of how far the city has come.

Interestingly, the whole problem could have been avoided if two individuals had been able to get along. It seems that the whole dilemma stemmed from the fact that strong-willed George B. Hatley and crusty old Austin mayor, Tom Miller, couldn't agree on Rollingwood's development and when Hatley tried to buy Austin water the mayor blocked his request. One early resident remembers that Miller was quoted as saying, "When I get through Rollingwood will be dead-wood!"⁷⁴ No one remembers why the two men were such determined enemies.

Limited street paving began in the mid-1950s. Developers in the subdivision resisted a full scale program because of the costs but George Hatley had the roads oiled several times a year to cut down on the dust and potholes. Dr. Bill Mayer and Harry McKee put in all of the stop signs. Starting about 1967 each home was assessed a paving tax and many of the streets were paved, thanks to the work of Mayor George Nalle, and councilman Bob Sites, an engineer with the LCRA who did all of the planning and specification work free to the city. Today all streets are paved and many have curbs and gutters.

Even paved streets did not attract many new residents, however. Roy Kovar, who bought the Texaco station in 1966 after he sold the nearby Circle "B" Riding Stables, was interviewed by Bonnie George in 1983. He recalled that when he bought the station he "sometimes had to wait an hour or two for a car to come by. He served ten to twelve cars a day and had one employee." Today the station serves approximately 400 cars and has 16 employees. Kovar also remembered that the station was Rollingwood's "civic center" because the police and city officials hung around during the day, the Rollingwood fire truck was housed at the station for ten years and the trash collector, Mr. Durbin, took his calls at the station. In 1979 Kovar opened a second station at Red Bud Trail and Westlake Drive.

Prior to 1975 all city and council meetings were held in local homes or in area office buildings. Harry McKee, who was a councilman in the early 1960s recalls that many meetings were held in downtown Austin in the Southwestern Bell Telephone building which was at 7th and Colorado. He also remembers that those were the days when Rollingwood was facing a lot of problems and sometimes fifty to sixty people would show up for the meetings, and there would be the "darnedest knockdown, dragouts you ever saw."⁷⁵

From 1958 to 1975 the city's day to day business was conducted out of the home of Anna and Clarence Wilson. Mr. Wilson was the city's bookkeeper, tax-assessor-collector, and handled water billings, traffic tickets, taxes and all other city business.

In 1975 the city constructed a 3,500 square foot Municipal Building on Nixon Drive. Bill Coleman designed the building, winning an architectural award along the way, and Cliff Hoerling was the contractor. The building cost about \$50,000. It has a large meeting room, all of the city's offices and the police department, and it has garages, some added later, which house the city's fire trucks and police cars. Flagpoles grace the buildings entrance and a city park is off to one side. The Rollingwood Women's Club helped to decorate the interior of the building and outfitted the building's kitchen.

From the early days there was talk of creating a park for children in the city. At one time the land around the old Austin Police Department Pistol Range, on east Rollingwood Drive, was considered, but it was deemed too rugged. Also, many citizens in the city resisted the creation of a park fearing that it would be used primarily by outsiders if an outside organization built a park. The Western Hills Optimist Club held its first meeting at Beard's store in 1955. The club's official induction ceremony was held at Eanes School, April 3, 1955. The founder of the club was A.A. "Mack" Hull, who had been the first president of the Austin Optimists in 1935. The Western Hills club had approximately twenty charter members, most of whom were active in civic and governmental affairs and many who lived in Rollingwood. The club's primary aim was "to encourage the development of youth." Shortly after organizing the club acquired eleven acres from George B. Hatley. The land was bordered by Rollingwood, Nixon, Gentry, Wallis and Pleasant Cove. While the land was being cleared and developed by the club members, aided by parents, football, little league baseball and girls' softball teams were organized. The first games were played on acreage at the corner of Ridgewood and Rollingwood (which was owned by the Austin Independent School District, and later by Eddie Joseph). This property was used temporarily.

Eventually the Optimist facility had ball fields, restrooms and a concession stand. In 1970 the Western Hills Athletic Club was organized and acquired several acres in a corner of the Optimists' park, where it built a swimming pool and tennis courts.

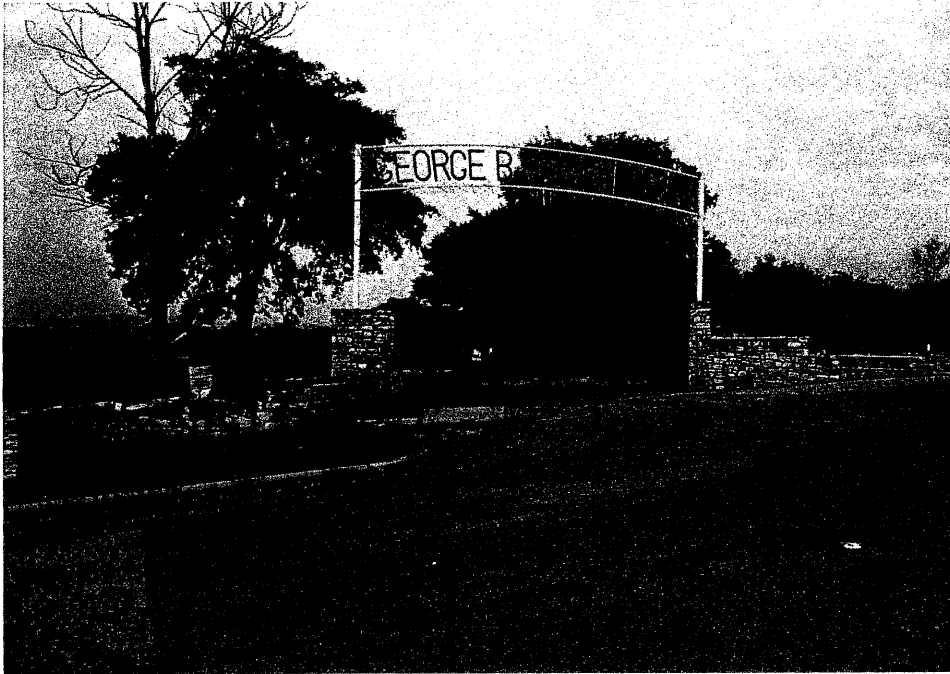
Through the years the Optimists' park has received a mixed reception. Some residents have disliked the crowds which it has generated. Some also objected to the cutting of curbs and the erection of the park's George B. Hatley Gate. Others in the community have viewed the park as an asset to the city. In 1986 more than 650 youths used the baseball fields, 550 participated in soccer, 140 played girls' softball and 70 participated in football. Also in 1986 the Optimists offered the park to the Eanes Independent School District. No action has yet been taken on the offer.

The Rollingwood Women's Club was organized July, 1958. A portion of the club's motto reads: "Our Rollingwood is where Heaven and the Hills hold hands." The club's first president was Marge Chinn. The membership has remained at about twenty members. Monthly meetings are held September through May. Projects of the club include a newcomers Wine and Cheese Party, the Halloween party at Bandit's Cave, a Christmas Open House, the May Picnic to honor city officials and the Fourth of July Parade.

Between 1968 and 1985 Rollingwood was protected by its own volunteer fire department, which was organized May, 1968. Early members of the department included: Bob Ely, Richard Fulcher, Brad Smith, Gene Richardson, Frank Hanlon, Pat Atkins, Fred Mueller, Franklin Bohl, Emil Bloomquist, Bob Bene, Bill Clark. Harry Rogers was appointed Fire Chief in 1974 and he established the Rollingwood Fire Association. Michael Selman served as first president of the Association. Through the years scores of Rollingwood residents joined and completed the Association's rigorous training program. For years all emergency calls and dispatches were routed through the Harry Rogers home, with Lavonne Rogers and her daughters, Roshay, Rosanne and Rosemary, helping to man the phones and CB radio and scanner.

Prior to the building of the Municipal Building Roy Kovar kept the department's fire trucks, including "Big Red," which he locked in his gas station garage at night. Many of the station's employees have been members of the department. For some years the department sponsored an annual city-wide barbeque to raise funds for the department and to honor the volunteers who valiantly fought fires, rescued trapped motorists from flash floods and assisted at hundreds of emergencies. Because of the fast growth of the area, in January, 1985, voters of Rollingwood elected to join Travis County Rural Fire Prevention District No. 1.

Like other areas in Eanes Rollingwood has changed dramatically in the last twenty years. And it has experienced its share of growing pains. Nevertheless the city is now a fullfledged municipality which has come a long way. In 1950 lots sold for about \$2,000 to \$4,000. By 1986 only a few lots were left in the 600 acre city, and they were priced from \$50,000 to over \$100,000. In 1960 a home could be bought for about \$17,000 to \$27,000. Today there are very few priced under \$175,000. In 1954, before incorporation, Rollingwood had about twenty-eight homes. In 1960 there were about eighty. Today there are 422.⁷⁶ In 1961 the tax rate for the city was 21c per \$100 valuation. By 1986 the rate had fallen to 16c per valuation, but of course the assessments were dramatically higher. Like all areas in Eanes Rollingwood has seen most of the changes come in just the last decade. In the belief that future growth and change should be directed to benefit the city the Rollingwood Neighborhood Association was organized in 1984.



George B. Hatley Park, Rollingwood, 1986. (Depwe Coll.)



City of Rollingwood Municipal Building, 1986. (Depwe Coll.)