



# Century-old Forest Hills

## *Digging into Our Past*

By Judy Whalen

With Forest Hills approaching its 100-year celebration in 2024, the FHNA will develop a FH digital library collection of historical information about our homes circa 1920-1930-1940, notable residents, trees, urban myths, fun facts and more!

Please contact History Committee Chair Judy Whalen - 214 535-2077 with information you have to help build the collection into a potential book.



### **Forest Hills - A Twinkle in His Eye**

Warren Angus Ferris could be considered the Father of Forest Hills.

“In 1849, Warren Ferris settled down

after years of surveying the Dallas County area to farming east of White Rock Creek within the borders of what is now Forest Hills. His log cabin stood on the eastern edge of a large grove of trees about 200 yards east of the present junction of St Francis Drive and Garland Road, where he farmed 85 acres. He had six head of horses, 30 head of cattle, 80 head of hogs, two dogs, three cats, 200 chickens and hives of bees. The thickets of White Rock Creek provided some of the best hunting. Everywhere deer, turkeys and prairie chickens were thick as ants on the hills and bear, panthers, wolves and wildcats kept to the river and creek bottoms. Buffalo, wild mustangs and maverick cattle roamed. On White Rock Creek near where the spillway of White Rock Lake is presently located, Ferris built a gristmill. He fished White Rock Creek and also Ash Creek that runs along our present-day Barbaree/ Forest Meade neighbors.

Throughout time, Ferris sold off acres of his property. Ferris died in 1873 and was buried in the Warren Angus Ferris Cemetery. In 1988 his



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cemetery at St Francis and San Leandro received a Texas Historical Marker, bringing long-overdue attention to the accomplishments of this pioneer Dallas settler.

After the homestead was deserted by 1875, the old log cabin became a stopover for drifters, as did the vacant Ferris farmhouse he had built later. Some say the James boys (gang) stayed there and Sam Bass and his gang holed up in the farmhouse prior to their robbery of the Texas & Pacific train in Mesquite in 1878. The house was destroyed by fire around 1909.”

### **READ MORE**

At “descendant section” of Friends of Warren Ferris website

### **READ MORE**

Book excerpt from *Land is the Cry! Warren Angus Ferris, Pioneer Texas Surveyor and Founder of Dallas County*

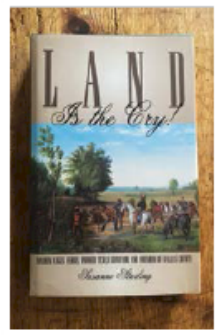


Photo by Johnny Williams, Jr.

### **Build a Lake and They Will Come**

In the 1840s, while Texas was still an independent republic, settlers like Warren Ferris began establishing homesteads on the high ground surrounding the White

Rock Valley. In this once shallow-lined valley Indigenous Peoples hunted for bison that came to drink from White Rock Creek and graze its grassy banks. It was there that Warren Ferris had once fished and had built a grist mill little knowing that eventually it would be converted into a beautiful lake.

In the early 1900s when Dallas had a growing need for water resources, a dam was built on White Rock Creek forming a reservoir and the first water from it was pumped into the Dallas mains. Dallasites quickly discovered the lake and the surrounding land was an ideal place for outdoor sports. The lake became known as the “People’s Playground” with weekend cabins being the first structures along its banks. At one time there were more than a hundred private fishing cabins! A fish house still exists in the back yard of one San Fernando Way house!

### **READ MORE**

Excerpt from *White Rock Lake Museum History WRL*

By April 1924, Leon L. Fechenbach had dedicated the plat of the Forest Hills Addition, six miles from the Dallas city limits, bounded by Garland Road (old Bankhead Highway); Lakeland Drive (old John West Road); the Santa Fe Railroad tracks; Highland Road (then called Wilshire Blvd.); and one block of San Rafael Drive. An advertisement in the November 30, 1924 Dallas Morning News shows an English Tudor house with the headline, ‘Forest Hills along the shores of White Rock Lake’ and the proclamation, “Your home in a forest” - built among massive oak, elm, and pecan trees—built within a stone’s throw of beautiful White Rock Lake—is possible in only one addition—FOREST HILLS—and with the city’s announcement of White Rock Lake being turned into a pleasure lake upon the completion of the Garza project, assures you all the advantages at your front door.”

At that time, Forest Hills was truly in the country and was one of the few wooded areas around the lake, which



**FOREST HILLS**  
 along the shores of White Rock Lake

*Your home in a forest!*

Your home built among massive oak, elm and pecan trees—built within a stone's throw of beautiful White Rock Lake—is possible in only one addition—

**Forest Hills**

—and with the city's announcement of White Rock Lake being turned into a pleasure lake upon the completion of the Garza project, assures you all the advantages at your front door.



H.W. Brouse  
 exclusive agent  
 and developer  
 Magnolia Bldg

already has been spent on residential construction and a quarter-million more is in view, according to H.W. Brouse, developer.”



**Fast Forward 100 Years**

One hundred years later Forest Hills is a quiet, tree-shaded area of homes without the feeling of being within the large bustling city of Dallas. Its residents can be seen throughout the neighborhood, walking, running and bicycling along White Rock Lake and generally enjoying this unique oasis of calm in the city.



lured the first local home builders. Forest Hills was officially annexed into Dallas in May 1945.

Another news article boasted, “One of the most beautiful scenic home spots, Forest Hills addition, owned by Leon L. Fechenbach is a thickly wooded hill overlooking White Rock Lake. Like the additions on the other sides, this has been completely paved and improved and the Dallas Gas company is now laying 6,000 feet of high-pressure gas mains to connect it with the city fuel system. Forest Hills has its own water supply, a 1,200-foot artesian well with a high-pressure pumping plant. More than \$50,000