

Next Meeting Scheduled for 8-18-05

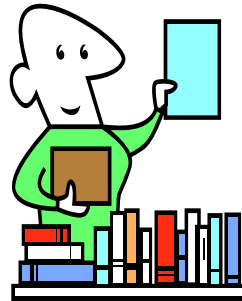
The next meeting of the GP Historical Organization is scheduled for

August 18th. Please call Angela Giessner for reservations at 262-5151. Kathy

Ritterhouse will describe how the Grand Prairie

Library has grown from a

suitcase of books to the large system of buildings, materials and services that exists today.



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Sam R. Hamilton Masonic Lodge Makes #51

The Sam R. Hamilton Lodge became Grand Prairie Historical Marker #51, Saturday July 30, 2005. The Lodge was named after the Grand Master of 1899 and chartered on December 10, 1910.

In 2003 the original neon sign was replaced with a new one, and last month an elevator was added. The downstairs portion of the building is leased and Lodge members meet upstairs.

The Lodge had 423 members in 1948 and numbers 290 strong today.

**Sam R. Hamilton
Masonic Lodge #1031
110 1/2 N. Center
Street
Grand Prairie, Texas
75050**

Worshipful Master

Worshipful Master Burnley Donaldson and Historical Commission Vice Chairperson Arvin Brown conducted the dedication ceremony. Ruthe Jackson was on hand as were many other dignitaries and Lodge supporters.

The Sam R. Hamilton Lodge is said to have the first gas-burner air conditioning system in Grand Prairie.

In 1946 Mr. E. Carlyle Smith designed the current structure and the cornerstone was laid. The building was built in 1948 by the Phillips Construction Company for \$38,500.



Special points of interest:

- **Next Meeting is August 18th**
- Elections are scheduled for this year.
- Purpose of Grand Prairie Historical Organization and Dues Payment.
- A history book of the First United Methodist Church can be purchased for \$35 if you order now.
- Next issue look for a story on Eddlemon's and their years of service to the people of Grand Prairie.





First United Methodist Church 125 years in the Heart of the Prairie

The First United Methodist Church is celebrating their 125 year anniversary. Throughout this year past preachers have been returning as guest speakers. A historic book has been developed and the original 1925 cast iron church Bell has been restored to become a wonderful and functional work of art.

The Church history book covers 125 years and would be a good book to have for anyone interested in the history of Grand Prairie. If you are interested in a copy, they are \$35. You can get your name on the list for one by mailing \$35

to the church office.
Copies are limited.

The first large Sanctuary building sat on the corner of Church and Center facing NW and was built in 1925. The bell that was restored was part of that structure and later mounted on that same corner after the original church was torn down in the 1960's. After receiving a few bullet holes in the clapper, and becoming a noise problem (due to unwanted rings), it was dismantled and stored until this year.

After a long restoration process, it now sits in the foyer of FUMC waiting for a permanent home in the



church. The clapper is now removable to prevent unwanted noise. The Bell Project was underwritten and coordinated by Benton Ford and Brian Bingham.



**First United
Methodist Church
122 N. Center St.
Grand Prairie, Texas
75050
972-264-6148**



Powers / Hight Birthday Extravaganza 2005

On July 3rd, about 100 guests honored Ewing Hight and Charles Powers to celebrate their 80th Birthdays,

Mr. Powers and Mr. Hight deserve our respect, and we wish them the best and many birthdays to come.

Mr. Powers wanted to give a special thanks to Ouida Lewis, Bobby Donaldson, Marion Cato, Helen Hines and James Marvin Bostick as well as everyone else that made this event possible.

There are 99 signatures in the guest book.



**Happy Birth-
day
Mr. Powers
and**

" Happiness does not come from doing what we like - it does come from doing what we must do ".

Emerson



**1516 W. Main St.
Grand Prairie, TX 75050**

(972) 237-0389

**Preserving the History of
Grand Prairie**



**Grand Prairie Historical
Friends and Members**

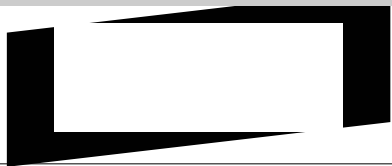
Newsletter Published by

Brian W. Bingham

4649 Vespesian Ln.

Grand Prairie, Texas 75052-1824

972-623-3965



The Grand Prairie Historical Organization's purpose is to search out, record, collate, preserve, and pass on to the next generation, the history of Grand Prairie, Texas, and its Southwest Dallas County environs, including the appropriate marking of authentic historical sites.

The dues year of the Organization shall be from January 1 in each year through Dec. 31 of the same year. The following classes of membership apply:

Regular Membership: The annual dues for single members shall be fifteen dollars (\$15.00) and twenty-five (\$25.00) for couples .

Life Membership: Any person 45 years or older who contributes \$200 shall be a member for life without further payment of dues.

Gold Star Membership: Payment of 10 years in advance, \$150 (no age limit).

Patron Membership: Any person who contributes five hundred dollars (\$500.00) or more to the Organization shall be a Life Member thereof and shall, in addition thereof be appropriately recognized as a Patron of the Grand Prairie Historical Organization.

Corporate Membership: Any small business that contributes \$250.00 shall be classified as a corporate member.

Dues should be mailed to :

Angela Sutton Giessner

Farmers Insurance

2509 S. Carrier

Grand Prairie, Texas 75052

972-262-5151

Don't Forget !

The next meeting of the Grand Prairie Historical Committee is scheduled for August 18th at 11:30 at 1516 W. Main Street, Grand Prairie.



My name is Brian Bingham, and I am your new Newsletter Chairman. When you think of the word “new”, think also of the words “green” and “inexperienced”. I am apprehensive about doing this job but willing to do my part. My knowledge about the history of Grand Prairie is limited, so I am relying on all of you to help me make this newsletter interesting and enjoyable. Please send me stories of your families and the happenings of Grand Prairie. But to start, I’ll tell you a little about my family—the Bingham’s.

My Grandfather, G.W. (George Wyatt) and Grandmother, Myra Bingham, moved to Grand Prairie in 1936 with their two young children, Barley (age 10) and Margaret (age 8). They had previously lived in Alvarado and most recently in Dallas. G.W. had been with a bank in Alvarado and had moved to Dallas to look for a small town bank to purchase. He debated between a bank in Garland and the Grand Prairie State Bank. People asked him in later years why he chose Grand Prairie. He said that they lived in Dallas at the time, and if he had chosen the bank in Garland he would have had the sun in his eyes driving to and from work. Selecting the bank in Grand Prairie would always allow him to have the sun at his back. (As you can tell, G.W. loved a good story)

My father, Barley, told me that he could hardly wait each day to come home and see what his father had brought home. The bank would often have to repossess vehicles. This made for excitement at home when G.W. brought home a hearse, a motorcycle, or various styles of automobiles.

Barley and his good friend, Benton Ford, worked at the bank some as janitors after school. They would empty the trash and sweep the floors. Barley said they would often find coins on the floor. G.W. told them that they could keep any coins they found. Barley realized later that his father put the change on the floor to entice the boys to work.

One of the young cashiers that GW hired around this time was a man named Durwood Sutton. Mr. Sutton got his start in the banking business with G.W. and continued on for many years as a well respected banker in Grand Prairie.

As a young boy, I would see Mr. Sutton around town. Every time he saw me he would say, ***“If it were not for your Grandfather giving me my first job, I may have never made it in the banking business”*** Even though my Grandfather died before I was born, it always made me so proud to hear Mr. Sutton say that.

G.W. was a real “horse trader”. He said that he would trade/sell anything for a good price—except his family. He sold many of the houses in which they lived. They would

move out, live at the lake house they owned in Lake Dallas for a few months, and then move into a new house. Myra said that in the 32 years they were married she had moved 33 times. And, when he would sell the house, he would often sell the furniture too.

In about 1943 G.W. had a heart attack and decided to sell the bank. He sold his majority interest to Turner and Gilbert, whose families owned the bank until it was sold to Republic Bank years later. After he sold Grand Prairie State Bank, G.W. opened a loan office (Bingham and Fields Finance Company) at 603 East Main. At one time he had a local man to come in and tell him that he was trying to get a loan at Grand Prairie State Bank. Mr. G. H. Turner had told him that if he would get GW to co-sign his note that Mr. Turner would loan him the money. GW told him that if he would get Mr. Turner to co-sign his note that GW would loan him the money. (Again, G.W. loved a good story.)

In the early 1950's, G.W. purchased an insurance business from Tiny Blackburn.. That is what got my father, Barley Bingham, started as an Independent Insurance Agent on Main Street. Grand Prairie Insurance Agency was operational for over 40 years. When my father died in 1988, I took over that Agency and merged with Tommy Wright and Jim Lawrence (Lawrence and Wright Insurance Agency). Tommy Wright has since moved on, and our Agency is now called Alliance Insurance Services. We specialize

exclusively in Commercial Property and Casualty Insurance. Alliance has grown to a well respected and profitable Agency with offices in Grand Prairie and Lubbock

G. W. Bingham died in 1954; Myra Bingham died in 1989; Barley Bingham died in 1988. My aunt, Margaret B. Hale, still lives in Grand Prairie and recently married William Crymes, who is also a long time Grand Prairie resident. My sister, Brenda Ward, and I both live south of I-20 in GP. Brenda and I were graduated from South Grand Prairie High School (1980 and 1979) as were our spouses, Sandra Sherrill (1988) and Robert G. Ward, Jr. (1978). My mother, Bebe Bingham, quite her job as a Stewardess for American Airlines and moved to Grand Prairie in 1959 when she and Barley got married. She retired as a Middle School Principal from Grand Prairie ISD and is now a member of the GPISD School Board.

Our Family owes a great deal to this city, and all enjoy the history behind it. At a time in our lives when we could all live most anywhere, we are all still proud to say we live in Grand Prairie, Texas.