



Newsletter

February 2026

February 19, 2026 — GPHO General Meeting

11:00 a.m. at the Grand Prairie Historical Museum

Cattle Drives, Indian Graveyards, and the Interesting Stories on the “Little Gravel Road”

By Jan Barrett

We are delighted to welcome our very own Jan Barrett as the speaker for our February General Meeting on February 19th at 11:00 a.m.

Jan was born on September 18th to Jimmie and Etta Jane Duvall and has deep roots in Grand Prairie. She attended Robert E. Lee Jr. High School, where she proudly served as homeroom secretary for her eighth-grade English class, and later Grand Prairie High School. Jan graduated from GPHS in 1960 and, later that same year on August 27th, married her high school sweetheart, Marlon Barrett.



Jan's family history in this area reaches back to the mid-1800s, and her story is filled with memories, connections, and a love for Grand Prairie that spans generations. She has been an important part of our Grand Prairie Historical Organization, serving as President for 10 years and in nearly every other capacity over the many years she's been a member. She's also served as President of the Grand Prairie Historical Commission and represented Grand Prairie on the Dallas County Historical Commission. To hear the rest of her fascinating journey, you'll just have to join us at the meeting. I promise—you will not be bored!

NO MEAL WILL BE SERVED AT THIS MEETING, SO RESERVATIONS ARE NOT NEEDED

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Hello everyone,

February: A Month of Meaning, Not Just a Day of Romance

As a child, I always wondered why February felt different. Many say it's because of Valentine's Day, but my mother taught me that love should be shown every day – not just once a year. That belief has stayed with me.

February's uniqueness goes far beyond romance. From Leap Year traditions to rare February 29 birthdays, it is a month rooted in history and curiosity. And it's also a perfect time to get out and enjoy life:

- Laredo Birding Festival - February 4-7, 2026
- Texas-Tulips in Pilot Point -This 6-acre tulip farm opens late February to early March 2026
- Mardi Gras! Galveston - My favorite! February 6-17, 2026. It is the 3rd largest Mardi Gras celebration in the country. Make sure you bring a coat just in case we have crazy weather that week!



February reminds us that love isn't limited to one holiday. It's found in shared experiences, learning something new, enjoying nature, and making memories. Short as it may be, February invites us to slow down and savor what truly matters.

And don't forget to stop by the Museum and see the new exhibits that we have and we are opening a store with cute Grand Prairie T-Shirts. It is a must to stop by and get a t-shirt to show you are a true Grand Prairian!

Warm regards,

Kay Dunbar

2025-2026 GPHO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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You can't miss the Grand Prairie Historical Museum with its new sign on Main Street! The City of Grand Prairie designed and built it to resemble the original sign installed for the Texas State Junior Chamber of Commerce (known as Jaycees) headquarters, using historic photographs from the Museum's collection.

GPHO INTERNS

Mia Perez served as an intern with GPHO at the Museum during her Fall 2025 college semester. At the completion of her internship, she sent this reflection on her experience.

A Reflection On My Time at the GPHO Museum



My freshman year of college, I was required to take a class called "Dialogue Across Differences." Honestly at first I thought it was hippy-dippy nonsense, but I did choose to go to a notoriously hippy-dippy school, so I didn't complain. I soon found out that I would come to really love that class. As the name suggested, the class was all about learning to have open dialogues and discussions with people who are different and disagree with you. I came to really understand the people in that class; it was fascinating to hear their stories and tell my own. While I enjoyed that class, at the time I felt it didn't really accomplish what it set out to do. After all, we were all college freshmen; our dialogue wasn't across many differences because we were all in the same demographic. We had more in common than we had differences.

When I chose to intern at the GPHO museum as part of my school's CO-OP program, I really only had one reason in mind: proximity to my parents' home. Having done two other CO-OPs before, I find the hardest part of the whole process is finding a place to stay. That's why all my previous CO-OPs had been in Texas, where all my family lives. I was elated to find a museum so close to home; I could bike there (and bike I did, at least until it got stolen). Little did I know that the "hippy-dippy" class I took my freshman year would prime me to have an absolutely wonderful experience here at this museum.

I didn't exactly have much previous experience with working with an older demographic (other than my grandparents or the occasional professor). I was a bit nervous at first; I was afraid everyone would think I was a dumb kid. After all, the media likes to portray older people as close-minded jerks who yell at kids to "get off their lawn" and want everyone to go back to how things were in "the good old days." Thankfully for me, when it came to all the volunteers, we had more in common than we had differences.

The experience that sticks out to me the most as a moment that really exemplifies this is when one of the volunteers was playing music, and I recognized the song. The song he was playing was called "I Like Bananas (Because They Have No Bones)." I recognized it because it had recently gone viral on TikTok. He was really surprised and excited that I recognized it, and laughed when I showed him the corresponding TikTok trend. This particular volunteer was super passionate about music; he talked about it almost as much as I talk about comics. I didn't mind at all. I've always said the best way to bond with someone is to info-dump about your passions, and I did my fair share of info-dumping.

Lots of people at the museum talked about getting the youth more involved and interested in the museum. I did my best to help by making TikToks promoting the museum and talking to my friends about it. Hopefully, I was able to plant a seed of interest. My time here has really solidified in my mind the importance of intergenerational friendships. I am forever grateful for the exchange of knowledge and experience, as well as the broadened perspectives I was able to get. I loved my time here, and I'm sad to say goodbye.

Mia Perez

THE GRAND PRAIRIE HISTORICAL ORGANIZATION

Will be celebrating Grand Prairie's 117th Birthday
on Saturday, March 14th.

We'll be gathering at the GPHO Museum
1516 W. Main St., Grand Prairie 75050

- 1:00pm - Museum opens with visiting
- 1:20pm - GP citizens will share their memories
- 2:30pm (or so) - wind up the memories and have refreshments
- 3:00pm to 4:00pm -visiting, & viewing the museum

We NEED long-time Grand Prairie residents to share your memories
of a decade that was meaningful to you.

- 1940s - 2 volunteers
- 1950s - 2 volunteers
- 1960s-1970s - 2 volunteers
- 1980s-1990s - 2 volunteers

Volunteers will reminisce about family, school activities, favorite hangouts, beloved restaurants, and music and dances of the day in Grand Prairie. PLEASE Bring photos or memorabilia.

**PLEASE consider volunteering to share your GP memories.
This will be recorded for posterity.**

Since there are ONLY 2 volunteers in each section,
CONTACT Kay.dunbar@gphotx.org BEFORE March 6th.

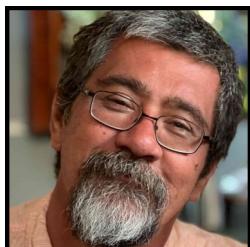
We promise tons of memories, laughter, and celebration! And, we will have CAKE!

G.P.'S 117th BIRTHDAY

Help GPHO celebrate the 117th birthday of the incorporation of the City of Grand Prairie! On Saturday, March 14th GPHO will be hosting an event at the Grand Prairie Historical Museum. Please consider participating by volunteering to share your memories of growing up or living in Grand Prairie. We are looking for volunteers to represent different decades from the 1940s through the 1990s. No pressure to have a slide show or a prepared speech; we just want to hear about your Grand Prairie experiences — restaurants you loved, teachers you loved or hated, stores you shopped at, neighbors and friends, funny or sad experiences, any memories you want to share!

Member News

Dorella Bond: GPHO lost one of our dear Life Members on December 15, 2025. **DORELLA MARKHAM BOND** passed away in Stephenville, Texas, at the age of 91. Dorella was born on Tuesday, September 18, 1934, in Grand Prairie to William Cay and Dorothy Lillian (Turner) Markham. She attended Grand Prairie High School, graduating in 1951. She married Sammy Charles Pollock with whom she had one child. Dorella worked as an Executive Assistant at Chance Vought/LTV/Lockheed Martin for more than 55 years. She is fondly remembered by all her co-workers, friends, family, and GPHO members who had the pleasure of knowing her. It was a comfort when she called you "Baby", "Sweetie", or (if you were really lucky) "Jackass". Her three sisters (Billie Kay Schneider, JoAnn Schneider and Dorothy Ballard) all preceded her in death.



John Wylie: Condolences once again go out to John Wylie who ended 2025 losing a son and a granddaughter. **JESSIKA MORGAN WYLIE**, John's granddaughter, died on December 5, 2025, of cancer. Just six days later, Jessika's father, **LAURENCE JOSEPH "JOE" WYLIE** died suddenly of a heart attack on December 11, 2025. Both lived in the Denver, Colorado, area.

THE OLD JOHNSON PLACE

The Ward Calvin Johnson family moved to Grand Prairie around the late 1920s, coming in a wooden wagon. At the time, their family consisted of the father, Ward Calvin Johnson, the mother, Elsie Marilla Lawhon Johnson, and three sons, Emery Olaf, Ward Calvin Jr., and James Roland. They lived various places in the area, but eventually purchased a farm on Iron Rock Road (which later became Arkansas Lane).



Ward Sr. (known as "Wardy" as a child) was born in Hill County, Texas, to Thomas Calvin and Sarah Catherine (Pope) Johnson on January 17, 1893. His father was born in Arkansas and his mother in Alabama. In 1910, Wardy was living with his family in Fort Worth and was working odd jobs to contribute to the family's income. According to one of his cousins, Ward Calvin would "hitchhike" on a freight train to Josephine, Texas, to visit his uncle. While there, he met Elsie Lawhon, the daughter of Richard Artis and Malinda Evelyn (Pannell) Lawhon. Ward married her in January 1913, reportedly five days before her 15th birthday, possibly on his 20th birthday. In the 1920s, they were a family of five. Ward was working for the B.F.Goodrich Company as a stock keeper and truck driver, while simultaneously farming in the Grand Prairie area.



Elsie and Ward Calvin purchased land from the Scheppeler family on Iron Rock Road / Arkansas Lane on the outskirts of Grand Prairie. In the next few years, they added three children to their family: Bobbie Ray "Bob", Bert Melvin, and Marlene Violone. The farm consisted of a two bedroom, one bathroom farmhouse, a milk barn, a workshop, and a huge barn on about 30 acres. There was even a gas tank with a pump. They raised cotton as well as various farm animals.



Sadly, Ward Calvin Sr. suffered a fatal heart attack on Christmas Day in 1949, just a couple of weeks shy of his 57th birthday, leaving Elsie to finish raising the youngest children and to manage the farm on her own with the help of her children that were still at home. She outlived him by nearly 40 years. Elsie sold half of her land when Texas State Highway Spur 303 was built in the mid-1950s. Later, she sold some



more, leaving three acres and the house, barn, and outbuildings, where she lived virtually the rest of her life. In the 1960s, Elsie remodeled the house, adding hot pink siding which was her favorite color. After Elsie died in 1986, the house remained for a few

years, but around the early 1990s everything was torn down. Many years later, the family sold the last three acres to Trammel Crow. Now the building at the far left in the photo on the right is exactly where the Johnson farmhouse originally was. (See page 6.)



THE OLD JOHNSON PLACE, continued

Elsie and Ward Calvin can be proud of the six children they raised during a particularly trying time which included two World Wars, years of drought, and a Great Depression.



Emery Olaf has been described as "a long tall Texan" who personified the Texas cowboy with his Stetson hat, cowboy boots, belt buckle, and cigar, and who was "tough as an anvil". During the depression, he dropped out of school in the eleventh grade to help support his family; he washed dishes at the Baker Hotel, busted concrete for the WPA, ran the service department at night for Ed Mahr Ford, and worked in the water-rub department at the Ford plant on East Grand. In 1952, he started his own company, Texas Rubber Supply, where he continued working until the age of 88. Throughout his life he was an avid supporter of "the little guy," helping numerous people start and develop new businesses or careers.

Ward Calvin Jr. was born in 1916 and graduated from Grand Prairie High School in 1934 which is when he married his high school sweetheart, Marjorie Wynn Williams. On January 23, 1942, he voluntarily enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He served until December 1, 1945. After the war, Ward worked as a sales consultant for T.B. Wood Company. He died of a heart attack at the age of 64 in 1981.



(James) Roland graduated as salutatorian of his Grand Prairie High School Class of 1939 and went on to earn his MBA and PhD of Education. He was described as "an outstanding Instructor, not only because of his knowledge, but because of his patience, compassion, and genuine interest in his students, often going the extra mile to ensure their success." Roland was married to Wilma Virginia Barton for 63 years, until her death which was only about a month before his own in 2009.



Bobbie "Bob" Ray is a beloved member of GPHO and the City of Grand Prairie. He's the oldest living retiree of the Grand Prairie Fire Department. He joined the GPFD in 1955 as the 8th paid Grand Prairie firefighter. He worked 31 years at GPFD, ending his career as a Captain and Fire Marshall. He married Patsy Sue Coulson in 1951 and raised his family here in Grand Prairie.



Bert Melvin was hailed as a war hero when he was wounded five times in September 1950, an even 50 days after his 18th birthday, becoming "Grand Prairie's first casualty in what is generally known as the 'Korean War'. After attending Grand Prairie High School, Bert enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1949 and served two years in Korea with the First Marine division. Described as a "handsome, easy-going youth," he wrote to his mom, "I really believe they were trying to kill me" after he was wounded. After returning home, he married Arlena Bryant.

Marlene was not only the baby of the family, but also the only girl, with five big brothers! She was born, raised, and lived most of her life in Grand Prairie. She graduated from Grand Prairie High School in 1953 and married Joe S. Parker that same year. Lucky for us she raised four sons: Jim, Mike, Joe, Jr., and John. Thanks go out to Jim Parker for his help with this article!



DO YOU KNOW???

Do YOU know . . . A Grand Prairian is Playing in the Super Bowl?

South Grand Prairie High School Class of 2019 alumnus, **CRAIG WOODSON** will be starting as a safety for the New England Patriots in Super Bowl LX on Sunday, February 8th. Born in Nashville, Tennessee, Woodson grew up in Grand Prairie. After his successful football career at SGPHS, he committed to play college football for the California Golden Bears where he became a full-time starter in his third and fourth seasons, after missing the entire 2021 season with a knee injury. He



graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, with a degree in film and media. He declared for the 2025 NFL draft during which he was selected by the New England Patriots in the fourth round with the 106th overall pick. In his rookie season he has played in every game, aligned on 98 percent of the Patriots snaps, and fairly quickly became entrenched as the Patriots starting free safety "due largely in part to a strong work ethic, as well as a rapid-learning approach to New England's defensive style." One article praised Woodson stating that "he plays with great athleticism, intelligence and physicality." The best performance of his young career came in the February 18th AFC Divisional Round win over the Houston Texans. If you plan to watch the Super Bowl, be sure to keep an eye on Patriots No. 31!

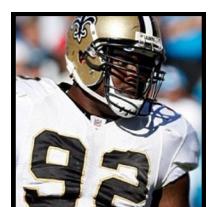
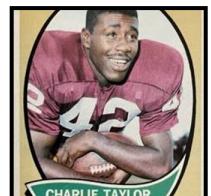
At least three other Grand Prairians have played in a Super Bowl. No surprise, our first was **CHARLEY TAYLOR**. The Pro Football Hall of Fame receiver played in one Super Bowl during his career with the Washington Redskins (1964-1977). He helped lead his team to Super Bowl VII following the 1972 season, where they lost 14-7 to



the undefeated Miami Dolphins. Another Grand Prairian who played in a Super Bowl is **MALCOLM WILLIAMS**. Born and raised in Grand Prairie, Williams played at South Grand Prairie High School for Coach Ken Graber where he also lettered in soccer and track and field. He was the 5A Defensive Player of the Year as a senior at SGPHS, as well as being named the District Most Valuable Player. A third football player born and raised in Grand Prairie is **REMI AYODELE**. He played as a defensive end at South Grand Prairie High School in the late 1990s/early 2000s. After his college career, he went undrafted in the 2006 draft, but signed as an undrafted free agent by the New England Patriots. Ayodele played for several NFL teams including the Dallas Cowboys, but it was with the New Orleans Saints in the 2009 season that he started in 13 games, scored his first touchdown, and was a part of the Super Bowl XLIV winning team.



There are a few other Grand Prairians currently playing in the NFL. We came close to having two players in Super Bowl XL. SGP alumnus **ESTEBAN "STEVE" AVILA** played in the NFC championship game as an offensive lineman for the Los Angeles Rams who lost to Seattle Seahawks. **JEFF OKUDAH** and **ROY ROBERTSON-HARRIS**, both SGP graduates are currently playing in the NFL. Okudah is a cornerback for the Minnesota Vikings and Robertson-Harris plays defensive end for the New York Giants. One last player you need to know about is **SKEET QUINLAN**. The 1946 GPHS graduate's actual name was Volney Ralph Quinlan, Jr. Born in 1928, he was the 49th overall pick in the 1952 draft. One of the first star running backs to emerge from Texas, Quinlan was a halfback for the LA Rams and the Cleveland Browns.



Coming Events

February

7 – A Tapestry of Tales Quilt Show – 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – Grand Prairie Historical Museum
19 – GPHO General Meeting – 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. – Grand Prairie Historical Museum
19 – Roots and Legacy: Celebrating Black History in Grand Prairie – 6:00 p.m. – Grand Prairie Historical Museum

March

14 – Grand Prairie 117th Birthday Celebration – 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. – Grand Prairie Historical Museum

28 – Texas Country Reporter Fest 2026 – 10:00 a.m. – Downtown Grand Prairie



April

May

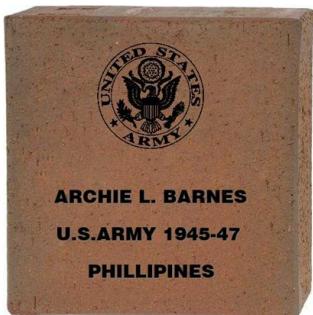
21 – GPHO General Meeting – 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. – Grand Prairie Historical Museum

UPDATE ON “WALKING THROUGH HISTORY” PROJECT

Thank you to all our friends that have ordered bricks for our fundraiser. We are happy to report that we are now receiving bids from contractors to begin the construction part of the project. We expect to select and approve the winning bid in February. Construction should be able to begin by early March. It is exciting to have reached this stage of the project. Stay tuned for more information to be coming soon. All the generous donations received so far are greatly appreciated, but if you are just learning about this project, donations are still being accepted. Here is a brief explanation of the project: The Grand Prairie Historical Organization has partnered with *That's My Brick!* to launch our **Commemorative Brick Walkway Project**. GPHO is dedicated to preserving and sharing Grand Prairie's rich heritage, and now YOU can become a lasting part of that story. By purchasing a personalized commemorative brick, you can showcase your civic pride, honor a loved one, or celebrate a special memory. These engraved bricks will form a beautiful walkway at the museum, serving as both a tribute and a permanent reminder of our community's history. All proceeds from this fundraiser will directly support the museum by:

- Expanding exhibit space
- Creating new and upgraded displays
- Enhancing the visitor experience

Since we are a nonprofit organization, every brick purchased helps us preserve the past and inspire future generations. **Contact James Barnes at 214-458-1840** if you have any questions.



8 X 8

\$200



4 X 8

\$100

FOUND IN THE MUSEUM

A new addition to the Grand Prairie Historical Museum is an electric Maytag Gyrator Electric Washing Machine complete with a wringer and agitator.



Preliminary research indicates these types of wringer washers were commonly produced during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Some sources state that the original turquoise color suggests it was a 1940s era machine. Don't bring your dirty laundry to the Museum, though, since its operating days are over.

Robert Minter, the son of Walter G. Minter better known as Walt of Walt's Appliance, donated the washing machine, along with a



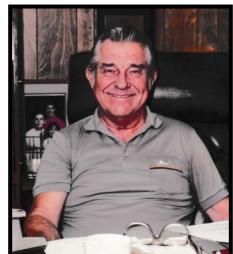
Maytag Parts & Services Manual, aerial photos of Walt's Appliance, and various other photos and plaques.

Walt was born in Denison, Texas. He married his best friend's sister, Gracie Austin, in Denison on December 7, 1941. A few months later, he joined the U.S. Air Force. He served for 10 1/2 years fighting in both World War II and the Korean War. After Walt was discharged, they lived in Fort Worth, then Arlington, and finally, Grand Prairie. Sources vary on when exactly Walt founded his appliance business at 2336/38 E. Main Street in Grand Prairie – possibly as early as 1954 or as late as 1961. Either

way, Walt's Appliance became an important addition to Grand Prairie with Grand Prairians relying on Walt for new and used appliances and expert repair services.

Gracie was in charge of the finances of the business. Besides operating his store, Walt participated in the Grand Prairie Chamber of Commerce, serving as its president in 1975-1976.

Sadly, Walt's Appliance is closing and will very soon be a pile of dust and metal. The Grand Prairie Historical Museum is fortunate to have a piece of the history of this iconic Grand Prairie business. Be sure to come check out this treasure and the many other memories residing at the Museum!!



ROOTS AND LEGACY

Everyone is invited to a powerful and meaningful Black History program at the Museum! Join us on Thursday, February 19, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. for a special presentation by Dr. Angela Luckey-Vaughn titled: ***Roots and Legacy:***

Celebrating Black History in Grand Prairie.



Dr. Luckey-Vaughn is seeking to connect with individuals who are descendants of Black families from Frogtown, Bear Creek, Mosier Valley, Dalworth, Dalworth High School alumni, as well as Native American

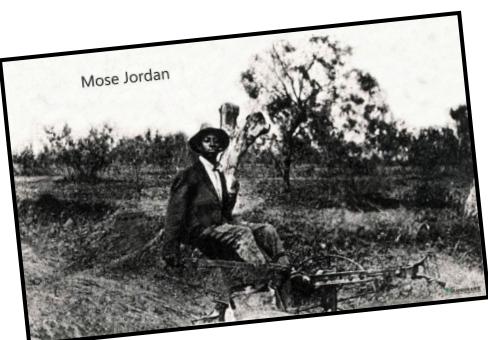
descendants from the Grand Prairie and Grapevine areas.

If you are—or know someone—connected to these communities and would like to attend, please contact Kay Dunbar at Kay.Dunbar@gphotx.org. She would truly love the opportunity to visit with

you and personally invite you to this special evening.



Following the program, Grand Prairie Historical Organization & Museum will host light refreshments. Come help us honor the stories, families, and legacies that helped shape our community. We look forward to seeing you there.



MUSEUM INFORMATION

HOURS

Monday – Saturday: 1 – 4 p.m.

LOCATION

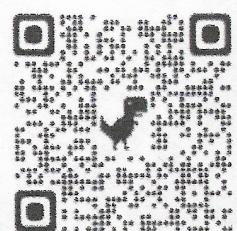
1516 W. Main Street
Grand Prairie, TX 75050

The Museum will be closed on major holidays (when the City of Grand Prairie closes). If you would like a private tour of the museum, please email museum@gphotx.org or call (972) 639-3388

Two ways to access the GPHO Website!

QR Code for GPHO Website

~ Position the camera so the QR code is in frame. When GPHOTX.org appears, tap it and you will be taken to the GPHO Website



Or simply **CLICK HERE** gphotx.org
and go to the link!

A TAPESTRY OF TALES

GRAND PRAIRIE HISTORICAL ORGANIZATION
ANNUAL QUILT SHOW

When: January 24, 2026
Where: 1516 W. Main St.
Grand Prairie, Tx.
Time: 10 am - 2 pm



FOR APPLICATION, PLEASE
CONTACT:

Kay Dunbar at
Kay.dunbar@gphotx.org
OR
Kathy Ritterhouse at
kritterhouse@gmail.com

It is almost that time again when you
start putting together all of your
beautiful quilts that you want to show
at the GPHO show. We will have
ribbons for the winners and have lots
of fun telling stories of our quilts.

Drop by the
Grand Prairie Historical Museum
on Saturday, February 7th
to see a wide variety of beautiful quilts!

There will be
vintage quilts from the early 20th century
as well as newly made quilts!

Vote for your favorites!

Admire the seamstresses work!

No charge!

welcome

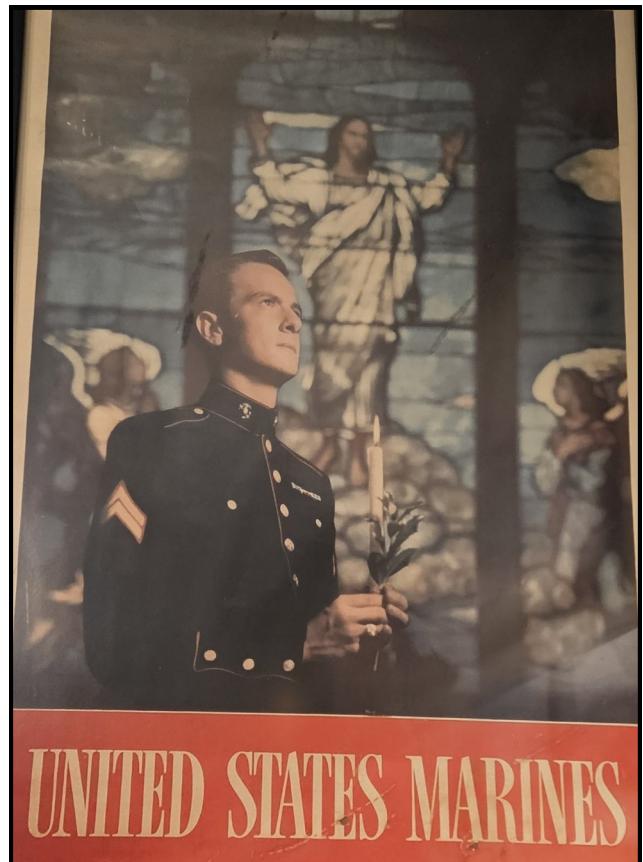
New Members

Carol Autry

Greg Autry

Jannette Autry

Val slight



*The 1951 Marine Corps Christmas poster
featuring Corporal Bert M. Johnson, of Grand
Prairie. (See pages 5-6.)*

GRAND PRAIRIE HISTORICAL ORGANIZATION
1516 W. MAIN ST.
GRAND PRAIRIE, TX 75050

Mission Statement

The mission of the Grand Prairie Historical Organization (GPHO) is to preserve and share the history of Grand Prairie, Texas, by researching, collecting, properly preserving, and archiving items that tell the history of Grand Prairie and its citizens. The Organization will share the history with others through avenues throughout the city by committed volunteers who will provide a standard of excellence in support of the organization.

Help the Grand Prairie Historical Organization preserve the PAST by joining for the FUTURE.

