

Learning

→ the Land

Walking

→ Tour

TEXAS WOMAN'S
UNIVERSITY

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BARLEY & BOARD BUILDING

Ethan McClure, one of the owners of Barley and Board, states, “its central location and high visibility from the street makes it stand out as a gathering place for the community where all are welcome.” In 1858, this building was known as the Lacy Hotel and was famous for its great accommodations, delicious home-cooked meals, and for employing the notorious outlaw Sam Bass who died seven years after a fire burned down the hotel. Rebuilt in 1924 and renamed the Texas Building, it became home to many businesses including a post office and a drugstore. Ethan believes that even though the building has been remodeled radically, the owners feel that they have kept the history through the remodeling process (for example, by accenting its chipped brick). They have also worked hard to educate the employees about the history of the building.

Reyna Mondragon and Ashlea Sovetts with Ethan McClure

QUAKERTOWN PARK

We interviewed Professor Sarah Gamblin at Texas Woman’s University about Quakertown Park and its connection to Denton, Texas. In this interview, Gamblin described Quakertown Park as a “beautiful landscape and site of relaxation.” However, she also described the attempted erasure of a black community that established Quakertown in the late 1800s. The demise of the Quakertown community was due to the racial tensions of the Jim Crow era in the City of Denton. At that time the Denton City Council and representatives from the College of Industrial Arts (now known today as Texas Woman’s University) proposed the removal of the Quakertown community due to the proximity to the College. Everything within the boundaries of Quakertown, the families and their homes, schools, churches, stores, and other businesses, were forced to evacuate their property and leave the legacy of their pasts behind.

Kamali Hill and Randrea Singleton with Sarah Gamblin

ETHEL’S GARDEN

The first thing that Kim McKibben noticed about her neighbor, Ethel, was that she wore socks without shoes when she tended her garden. They first met in February 1982, after Ethel noticed Kim preparing a garden. Ethel wore an 1890’s style prairie bonnet outside on sunny days. She told Kim stories about traveling to Denton with her family in a covered wagon from Louisiana. When Ethel shared plants with Kim, she would stop Kim from thanking her or Ethel believed the plants would not grow. When Ethel shared plants with Kim, she made space in her own garden while filling the empty space of Kim’s. In this exchange, Ethel helped young Kim develop her Texas roots after her move from Tennessee. Today, Kim continues to garden at her house in Denton and remembers what Ethel taught her about Texas dirt. Some of the bulbs that Kim planted remain in the yard today.

Adrienne Schrag with Kim McKibben

PLUGGED GAS WELL

This gas well was drilled in 2003 and plugged in 2014. Dr. Briggie, an Associate Professor of Environmental Philosophy at UNT, saw this well as a model for land being viewed as real estate as well as an abuse of the land’s resources. Dr. Briggie shared his experience about how he took action toward this mistreatment of the land, lack of consent from Denton residents, and having little knowledge in regards to land usage. His experiences included peaceful protesting, getting arrested (which he described as “visceral” and rooted in concern for his family), grassroots organizing, researching, and writing articles and books. He and other members of the community contributed to movements like *OUR DENTON*, which informed Denton residents about the fracking in *their* neighborhood. This has allowed the community to feel more responsibility in terms of land use and how it affects the local resources and overall community health.

Morgan Fowler and Maria Villanueva with Dr. Adam Briggie

JONES HALL

Jones Hall is a traditional residential building characterized by having community bathrooms and a single check-in point. While Jones Hall offers affordable prices and is located at the heart of TWU, it has suffered considerable changes. Mrs. Gilbeaux, a former resident, explains that these changes were due to wearing, demographic variation, and spatial needs. Jones Hall’s structures such as wings, stairs, and bridges have disappeared from its original design. The enrollment growth has caused the need for bigger halls. Offices and university services have been transferred to this location, and only a few housing areas continue functioning there. This building will become a temporary facility due to its age. The land use is ruled by economic and social factors, such as the growth of the student population, the need for space, and maintenance costs. The economic value of space has slowly transgressed the historical and traditional significance of this site.

Claudia Pacheco Orcasitas with Tonya Gilbeaux

SHE GAVE US WINGS

This site used to be the Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (HPERD) complex. Modern Dance pioneers such as Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, and Erick Hawkins taught TWU students in the HPERD gym, while the Modern Dance Group (later named the Dance Repertory Theatre) was housed in separate dance studios next to HPERD. Professor Emerita Gladys Keeton joined TWU in 1969—leading classes, directing performances, and establishing the TWU Folk Dance Company. Keeton and Adrienne Fisk developed a new Dance degree plan in the 70s that required more studio space due to the increasing number of students and classes offered. Without a building dedicated to the change, Keeton and Fisk had to teach classes in the Student Union (now the dance building) while still using the HPERD complex studios. The demolition of the HPERD complex came sometime after Pioneer Hall opened in 1998.

Jonathan Pattiwael and Najwa Seyedmorteza with Gladys Keeton

TENT CITY

It was “like a quilt that we had sewn together.” Sharon Snow used these words to describe the grassy area between Blagg-Huey Library and Bell Avenue when it was filled with about two dozen tents. For two weeks spanning January–February 1995, Snow and around 30 other people—TWU and UNT students and women from the community who had read about them in the newspaper—occupied this public space on campus to protest the university’s move to become fully coeducational. They received pushback: Snow remembers the young men who drove along Bell Avenue at night, mooning them and yelling slurs in their direction; and the doors to the university bookstore that had previously been open 24 hours were suddenly locked at 10:00 p.m., denying the tenters access to a restroom at night. At the same time, supportive faculty brought them coffee in the mornings, gave them copy cards to Xerox flyers, and generously allowed them extensions for coursework. Being a part of this action, involved great joy and sisterhood for Snow: the group called themselves “the tribe” and have gathered regularly during the past two decades. “We’ve carried that space with us,” she explains, marking that expanse of lawn as sacred, as a site of ideas, learning, grieving, and celebrating.

Agatha Beins with Sharon Snow

Project and design by Molly Sherman

Thanks to the TWU School of the Arts faculty, staff and students. In particular, TWU Dance MFA student collaborators: Morgan Fowler, Kamali Hill, Reyna Mondragon, Claudia Pacheco Orcasitas, Jonathan Pattiwael, Adrienne Schrag, Najwa Seyedmorteza, Randrea Singleton, Ashlea Sovetts, and Visual Art MFA students Michael Mulvey and Maria Villanueva, and all the community partners for their creativity and dedication. Special thanks to Dr. Agatha Beins from the Department of Multicultural Women’s and Gender Studies for joining us here in the School of the Arts to bridge artistic practice and social action.

Learning the Land Walking Tour explores land use stories on the Texas Woman's University campus and in the surrounding area through a collection of sites that were selected and researched by TWU students and faculty in conversation with local community members. The tour is inspired by a range of past, present, and future land use topics—from Quakertown to the TWU Golf Course—and invites people to develop a deepened understanding and awareness of their surroundings.

