

## History of Glass Club Lake

by Jim Martin

The newly formed Republic of Texas created Red River County in 1837 which included all of present day Titus and Morris Counties. In 1875, a portion of Titus County was divided and became Morris County. During the Republic and early days of statehood, numerous land grants were made. The public land in the Sulphur-White Oak Creek region was given to settlers to populate the newly formed state. These grants are often referred to as "surveys" and bear the names of the original land owner. Among those surveys that make-up the boundaries surrounding Glass Club Lake are the William Smith Survey (1870), John Blakley Survey (1873), and the Maria Catalina Vela Survey (1853).

The end of the Civil War brought westward migration of individuals and families alike from the southern states to Northeast Texas. Among those included James W. Glass (1852-1920) who was born in Virginia and at age 23 found his way to what is now Omaha, Texas. In 1876, Glass married Alberta Farrier (1858-1916). Alberta was the daughter of Dr. Henry Farrier. The Farrier family was among the first settlers to arrive to the area in 1870 from Alabama. James W. Glass died on August 29, 1920 and is buried in the Omaha Cemetery.

James and Alberta Glass had several children including daughter, Ruby Glass (1882-1953) married in about 1906 to Lewis Edward Parham (1884-1936). Ruby Glass Parham died in 1953. The gravesites of the Parham's may be visited at the Omaha Cemetery.

Northeast Texas has always been a favorite hunting and fishing ground. In the early 1920s Ruby and Lewis Parham decided to build a "Club Lake" on the outskirts of Omaha. The lake was to be constructed with funds raised by the sale of stock and land to be leased to club members. Heirs of James W. Glass including H.M. Glass, J.M. Glass, Mrs. Pearl Fain, joined by her husband, Logan Fain, and Mary Bain joined by her husband Tom Bain sold 90 ½ acres to Mrs. Ruby Parham for one dollar. The next year, J.M. Glass sold 64 ¼ adjacent acres to Lewis Parham for six-thousand dollars.

During the summer of 1921, Glass Club Lake became a reality. A share of stock sold for one-hundred dollars with dues ranging from five to ten dollars yearly. The Parham's borrowed money from the Omaha Bank to complete the project and contracted with local laborers to build a dam across Village Creek by using mule teams and scrapers.

The Parham's leased the lake and surrounding land to the Club for a \$500 yearly fee. The lease was to run for a period of fifty years ending in 1971. The club members were

to have access rights to the lake and a “space for fifty feet on the outside of the water around the lake, and also a road or passage over other land” belonging to the Parham’s being used for pasture. In addition, it was agreed that land would be made available for a club house and other suitable structures. The lease further agreed to the “right to lay off a suitable ball ground in said pasture, and construct thereon suitable grand-stand for the purpose of baseball and other games, golf-links and things of that nature that might be used by the club”.

Pictured in an early photograph, twenty Canadian Geese were taken from Glass Club Lake in the fall of 1922. Of those participating in the hunt was the local Methodist Minister Rev. H.I. Robinson and Lewis Parham; also Marshall and Annie Farrier, Jim Towles, Dr. T.T. Towles and Don Beasley.

In Gunnar Brune’s book, *Springs of Texas* he states “in some woods on the east side of Glass Club Lake”... are springs “enclosed by a large semicircular stone wall, they formally flowed at a higher elevation”. Morris County “spring waters are usually of calcium or sodium bicarbonate type, quite fresh, soft and acid. The iron and manganese content is often high.”

By 1924, the first log cabin was built on the west side of the lake. The club’s trustees were J.P. Beasley, W.D. Berry, W.W. Bullington , J.D. Butller, A.J. Copellar, H.M. Farrier, R. Horn, R.D. Moore, O.C. Mulkey, T.A. Thigpen, W.F. Smith, and J.C. Robinson.

On December 2, 1932 the articles of incorporation were signed and Glass Club Lake, Inc. was granted a charter by the Texas Secretary of State on January 5, 1933. Under the Revised Statutes of the State of Texas 1925, Title 32, (p. 393), Corporations Private, Article 1302, Purposes Subsection 10 states “to establish and maintain a fishing, hunting and boating club, to protect, preserve and propagate fish and game; to purchase and own such lands and bodies of water as may be desirable in connection therewith; to erect suitable improvements thereon; and to raise such livestock for profit only as the preserves of the club will maintain”.

The officers for the first year under the new articles of incorporation were J.W. Martin, President; J.D. May, Vice-President; W.W. Bullington, Treasurer; and W.A. Giles, Secretary. The directors were H.C. Wallace, J.E. Parham, G.W. Connor, Dr. William Smith, J.M. Davis, Ted Matthews, and R.C. McMichael.

Lewis Parham was the first caretaker also called the “Keeper”. Members were issued cards and according to early bylaws required to “present [the membership card] upon demand by the Keeper, President, or to any active members on Club property.” Guests

were also required to check in at the Keeper's house and sign a "guest book before they shall be allowed privileges of the lake."

In 1933 there were 100 members with the capital stock of the association valued at \$10,000. Three years later on May 12, 1936, two-thirds of the stockholders voted to decrease the capital stock to \$2,500. The charter was for 20 years and was extended for another 50 years in 1953. According to Title 32 Article 1308 (p. 401) Capital Stock; "Before the charter of a private corporation created for profit can be filed by the Secretary of State, the full amount of its authorized capital stock must be in good faith subscribed by its stockholders and fifty per cent thereof paid in cash, or its equivalent in other property or labor done, the product of which shall be worth to the company the actual value at which it was taken or which the property was received. The affidavit of those who executed the charter shall be furnished to the Secretary of State."

Bordering the south end of Glass Club Lake are train tracks first laid out by the St. Louis, Arkansas, and Texas Railroad. Steam locomotives traversed a narrow-gauge line from Gatesville, Texas to Decatur, Illinois and later became part of the Cotton Belt Route. A Depot was located in nearby Gavett [now Omaha] by 1870. In modern times the main line of the "Cotton Belt" continues to be an important part of the Union Pacific Railroad system connecting the Midwest with the Southwest.

In 1934 and 1935, Ruby and Lewis Parham deeded land adjacent to the railroad to the State of Texas for the building of a new state highway. The Parham's lived on the property and their house was moved a short distance north to accommodate the highway construction. (The Parham house has often been referred to as the "Caretaker's House" and is presently situated on Lot 9). State Highway 1 (SH1) was also known as the Texarkana, Dallas, Ft. Worth and El Paso Highway and had a split between Sulphur Springs and Texarkana, and a branch ran from the northern route at Naples east to State Highway 8 at Douglassville. SH1 was one of the original 26 state highways and became part of the transcontinental "Bankhead Highway". The U.S. numbering systems was in use during this time, but SH1 retained its number as well as the U.S. Highway 67 designation.

In 1936, two acres of land was "cut-out" of the original tract of lake property and was sold to J.E. Parham (1889-1962) for the sum of \$600.

In September of 1936, the local camp of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enjoyed a barbeque and dance at Glass Club Lake. The CCC was part of the "New Deal" program initiated by President Roosevelt and provided employment for young men who had difficulty finding jobs during the Great Depression. The *Mt. Pleasant Times* reported "the affair was arranged by the commanding officer, Captain William F. Cox, as

a reward to the company for their efforts in trying to win the district efficiency flag, a coveted honor among camps”.

In March of 1941, Glass Club Lake was recognized as a social and recreation club exempt from federal income tax under the Revenue Act of 1916. The exemption had been justified by Congress on the premise that “the practical effect of the exemption is to allow individuals to join together to provide themselves with recreational or social opportunities on a mutual basis without further tax consequences.”

In 1967, the Texas Legislature passed the Water Adjudication Act requiring landowners to secure permission from the state for the use of surface water. Prior to this time no “water right” was needed to build a dam on private property. In 1973, the Texas Water Rights Commission, predecessor agency to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), granted a permit to use State water for recreational purposes including swimming, boating, and fishing. Glass Club Lake, Inc. was given authorization to “maintain an existing dam and reservoir on an unnamed tributary of Village Creek having an impounding capacity of 500 acre-feet” (The volume of one acre of surface area to the depth of one foot.) or the equivalent of 162,925,713.5 gallons of water.

By 1971, the lease agreement with the Parham Family had run its course and their heirs wanted out of the contract. By this time sixty-seven houses had been built by club members around the Lake. According to court documents “No club house for common use of the members has ever been erected but a bath house for common use and six or seven boat houses for individual use have been built.” Three of the houses were full-time residences and one member “keeps some kind of livestock or chickens”. Two of the houses were reported in disrepair. Nancy Parham, May Benefield and Joe Marvin Parham, Jr. sued not to renew the lease and retain the property; however, in 1976 a Texas appellate court ruled that the Club was entitled to renew the lease for another fifty years.

Subsequently in 1977, the Parham heirs sold the property to Glass Club Lake, Inc. for \$60,000. Club members were assessed \$600 each to purchase a common interest in the land, issued stock certificates, and given limited rights to a real estate “lot” as well as shared use to common areas. In 1978, annual membership dues were \$50.

In 1978, the Gulf Interstate Exploration Company purchased oil, gas, and mineral rights to the lake property for \$160. The lease was for a five years period. Presumably, no oil or gas was ever found!

Today, membership to Glass Club Lake is primarily limited to homeowners of a residential community. Each year in June, “stockholders” (including some descendents of the club’s forefathers) and their families come together for an annual dinner followed by the annual business meeting.