

STREET NAMES IN SUGAR LAND

By Bettye Anhaiser, 2009

Have you ever wondered why some streets are named for people? This is a list of a few:

ALCORN STREET: Elijah Alcorn, an Old 300 settler between the S. M. Williams and William Stafford leagues, had a sugar mill on his property.

ALKIRE LAKE DRIVE: Alkire was the name of the boat captain who oversaw dredging the swampy areas and Oyster Creek in the 1920's. Alkire Lake is also named for him.

AUSTIN STREET, ETC.: Stephen Fuller Austin continued his father's contract with Mexico to bring 300 families into Texas. Fifty-three of those families settled in Fort Bend County.

BELKNAP STREET: Charles Belknap, an old 300 Settler above the Alcorn league, had a sugar mill on his property with his partner George Brown. This was one of the last four sugar mills in the Sugar Land area in the 1920s.

BORDEN STREET: Gail Borden, Jr., born 1801 in New York, came to Texas 1829 and farmed and raised stock in Fort Bend County. He surveyed for Stephen F. Austin and acted as secretary for Austin in the absence of S. M. Williams. At San Felipe he started the first newspaper in Texas in 1835; he prepared the first topographical map of Texas. In 1856 he had American and British patents for condensed milk. He died in Borden, Texas, in 1874.

BROOKS STREET: Capt. William McCan Brooks came to Sugar Land in 1914 from Brazoria County to manage the farms, tenants, cattle, and crops of potatoes, corn, and cotton for the Sugarland Industries. He had worked for the Clemens State Prison Farm in Brazoria. He and Eldridge had the first automobiles in Sugar Land. He died in 1932.

CLEVELAND LAKE DRIVE: W. D. Cleveland of Houston was a friend of E. H. Cunningham. Cleveland Lake is also named for him.

CORDES DRIVE: Roy Cordes, Sr. was elected to the city council in 1961. He served as mayor from 1973 to 1981. Roy owned Cordes Cleaners, a dry cleaning business. His son, Roy Cordes, Jr., served on city council, then as Fort Bend County Judge, and is presently the County Attorney.

CUNNINGHAM CREEK DRIVE: Edward H. Cunningham, a native of Arkansas, born 1834, settled in Bexar County, Texas in 1856, and raised livestock. He organized and equipped the Mustang Greys of Hood's Brigade during the Civil War. In 1875 he bought property in the area with his partner, L. A. Ellis. In 1882 he bought the sugar mill and plantation from the Terry and Kyle heirs. A second sugar mill was added in his time, and he constructed the refinery in the 1890's. He leased convict labor from Texas to maintain the cane fields as civilian labor was transient. He began importing raw sugar in 1902 so the refinery could operate year round. He organized the Sugar Land Railway Company in 1893 to reach sugar fields. He ran a commissary to provide the bare necessities for workers and began housing facilities for workers.

ELDRIDGE ROAD: William Thomas Eldridge (b.1862 Independence, TX—d.1932 Sugar Land) left home at the age of twelve and picked pecans

for income in the fall. In the spring and summer he was a fish merchant. He laid the first telephone line between Wharton and Colorado Counties. He bought a small railroad company in Bonus, Texas, to haul sugar cane to the sugar mill. He was eventually a merchant in Eagle Lake before coming to Sugar Land. As early as 1904 Eldridge saw an opportunity to buy the Cunningham and Ellis lands at Sugar Land. In 1906 he and I. H. Kempner, Sr., formed a partnership to buy the sugar refinery from E. H. Cunningham; Mr. Eldridge managed the sugar refinery and the company town of Sugar Land and Mr. Kempner provided the capital. Eldridge operated the Sugar Land Railway from Sugar Land to Duke, Texas, and sold the company in 1926 to Missouri Pacific. In 1908 he had the Ellis house moved to town for his home; it was raised in 1963. In 1928 he built his home that still exists on Lakeview Drive. He also oversaw the truck farm crops and introduced new crops such as celery.

ELLIS CREEK DRIVE: Littleberry Ambrose Ellis, born in Mississippi in 1827, came to Jefferson, Texas, in 1859. He served in the Confederate Army in Hood's Brigade. In 1875 he and E. H. Cunningham began buying property as a partnership in the Sugar Land area. Ellis named his plantation, Sartartia after his daughter. The Indian word means "potato patch". Ellis' home was moved to Sugar Land in 1908 and became known as the Eldridge house next to the refinery. His grandfather and uncle signed the Texas Declaration of Independence in 1835. He died in 1896 in Austin.

FIRST COLONY BLVD: The first settlers came up the Brazos River in 1822 to claim land in Austin's Colony. Stephen F. Austin chose five leagues for himself, and then released them in 1828; several of them are today Sugar Land.

FLANAGAN ROAD: Captain R. J. "Buck" Flanagan was with the Texas prison system about forty years. He was in charge of the Central Prison Unit farm complex outside Sugar Land. He retired in 1949. His two-story house was built in 1919 and was raised in 1997.

GLORIA COURT: Gloria Ross Hall graduated from Sugar Land High School and married Kenneth Hall. She was the city's secretary in the 1970's.

GUENTHER STREET: E. O. Guenther was the cashier and a director of the Imperial State Bank in 1908, the first bank in Sugar Land.

HALL LAKE (North Hall, South Hall, Ken Court) : Named for Kenneth Hall who played football in Sugar Land in the 1950s and set many high school records. Then he played for Texas A&M before turning professional and playing for the Green Bay Packers and the Houston Oilers. The Hightower High School football field is named for him. At one time he was an Imperial Sugar Company salesman. His father, Curtis Hall, served as a labor boss for the Sugarland Industries and then as the Sugar Land constable for thirty years.

HARMAN DRIVE: T. E. Harman was the first mayor of Sugar Land in 1959 and served until 1961. Again he was mayor from 1965 to 1967. He lived on Brooks and Guenther Streets and had been the Sugarland Industries dry goods store manager. Harman Bridge that spans Oyster Creek to connect Mayfield Park and Main Street is named for him.

HODGE'S BEND DRIVE: Alexander Hodge a native of Pennsylvania and a soldier in the American Revolution received his land grant in 1828 when Stephen F. Austin gave up his five leagues. He was in the Runaway Scrape

in 1836, but returned to this area. He, his wife, and their descendants are buried in Hodge's Bend Cemetery on Old Richmond Road at Voss Road. His home was across the road from the cemetery on Old Richmond Road.

HULL LANE: Don Hull began Hull Air Field which is now the Sugar Land Airport.

JESS PIRTLE BLVD: Jess Pirtle was an engineer and a surveyor for the Sugarland Industries. He was elected to the first city council of Sugar Land in 1959. He was a supervisor of the Fort Bend County Coastal Plains Soil Conservation District in the early 1940's.

KEMPNER STREET: Isaac Herbert Kempner, Sr., and his family of Galveston became co-owners of the Cunningham Sugar Company in 1906. He named the sugar company for the Imperial Hotel in New York City. He died in 1967 in Galveston. His brother Dan Kempner was the first board chairman of the Imperial Sugar Company in 1906. Harris Kempner, son of I. H., Sr. was the second board chairman of the Imperial Sugar Company and the Sugarland Industries. After W. T. Eldridge, the next president was I. H. Kempner, Jr. who died in 1953; his son I. H. "Denny" Kempner III, worked for the sugar company as vice-president of raw sugar acquisition and was the chairman of the board and chairman of the Sugar Land Telephone Company.

KYLE STREET: William Jefferson Kyle, born in 1803 in Tennessee, was a planter in Brazoria County. He was in California in 1849 during the Gold Rush. Upon returning he bought the sugar plantation with B. F. Terry between 1853 and 1858. After Terry's death in 1861, Kyle managed the plantation until his death in 1864. His house was in the Covington Woods

area near the Terry house.

MATLAGE WAY: William T. Matlage had a degree in pharmacy and after working for the Imperial Sugar Company, became the resident pharmacist in Sugar Land.

NEAL DRIVE: Gideon L. Neal was a resident; he died in 1984.

OAKLAND COURT: Samuel May Williams named his place Oakland Plantation for the five varieties of oak trees in the area. B. F. Terry named "Oakland Plantation" in his will. The house was located in the vicinity of Covington Woods.

ROZELLE AVENUE: T. C. Rozelle was born at Sartartia Plantation and graduated from Sugar Land High School. He joined the U.S. Navy 1934-38 and was recalled for duty after the bombing of Pearl Harbor 1942-1945. He was elected to the city council in 1961 and served about 20 years. He was the paymaster for the Imperial Sugar Company in 1945 and eventually became the company's director of personnel.

STILES LANE: Lewis Stiles was a farmer in the area. He was one of the pallbearers at the funeral of W. T. Eldridge in 1932.

TERRY STREET: Benjamin Franklin Terry, born in 1821 in Kentucky, a Brazoria County planter, came to Brazoria County with his mother and siblings at a young age. In 1849 he went to California during the Gold Rush. Returning home, he and William Jefferson Kyle bought the sugar plantation from the Williams brothers in 1853—1858. He was elected to the Texas Secessionist Convention in 1861; Terry helped form the Terry's Texas Rangers Confederate group at that time. He was born in Kentucky

and died near his home town in 1861 in his first Civil War skirmish. When the first railroad in Texas between Houston and Stafford's Point was extended to Richmond, Kyle and Terry paid to have it go through their sugar lands in the later 1850's.

ULRICH STREET: Gus Ulrich, born 1880, came from the Schulenburg area in 1906 and first worked for the Ellis Plantation, then for the Cunningham Plantation, and later as the personal assistant to W. T. Eldridge. In 1919 he was named vice-president and general manager of the Sugarland Industries. He died in 1947. His wife, Minnie Ulrich, was elected to the first Sugar Land city council; she was the first woman elected official in Sugar Land.

VOSS ROAD: John Voss was a Confederate veteran and is buried in Hodge's Bend Cemetery located on Old Richmond Road at Voss Road.

WILLIAMS TRACE: Samuel May Williams, born 1795 in Rhode Island, came to Texas in 1822 and served as secretary and surveyor for Stephen F. Austin. He received his league in 1828 when Austin released his five leagues in what is today Fort Bend County. He sold the place in 1838 to his brother Nathaniel of Baltimore, Maryland. A third brother Matthew Reed Williams managed the plantation until his death in 1852. Samuel is also known as the father of the Texas Navy and the organizer of the Texas banking system. He served in the 1839 Republic of Texas Congress. He died in 1858 in Galveston. His Galveston house is open for tourists.

WOOD STREET: M. R. Wood came to Sugar Land in 1901 as chief chemist for the Cunningham Sugar Company; later he was the plant superintendent. His house is at the corner of Wood Street and Second Street. He served many years on the Fort Bend County School Board and

later on the Sugar Land Independent School Board; he was president of the Sugar Land school board many years. He designed the Sugar Land school complex as consulting engineer for Imperial Sugar Company and Sugarland Industries. The FBISD school building in Mayfield Park is named for him.

Article as seen in the Fort Bend Star

Money Magazine and CNNmoney.com rank Sugar Land as one of America's Best Places to Live.
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