2 | Initial Settlement and Development: Mid-Nineteenth Century–1899

The 50-year period between the creation of the military outpost on the Trinity River in 1849 and the end of the nineteenth century was one of significant growth for Fort Worth. From its military beginnings, the city of Fort Worth became a county seat, a cattle drive stop, a railroad hub, and a regional center of commerce and trade in just five decades. By the end of the nineteenth century, Fort Worth was on the precipice of major economic and developmental expansion thanks to the foundation laid by the events of the nineteenth century.

National Register Eligibility of Resources

Various themes associated with this period in Fort Worth's history include: Initial Settlement, Early Government and Public Institutional Development, Agriculture, Economic and Commercial Development, Suburbanization and Residential Development, and Cultural and Social Development. Many of these themes can further be broken down into subthemes, such as Military Development and Cattle Drives. These themes played out simultaneously during the period and each played a role in the development of Fort Worth. Because this period of history took place over a century ago, many of the resources associated with these themes are no longer extant. Among the resources from this period that likely may be extant include: cemeteries, government buildings, public utility buildings, parks, farmsteads, houses, commercial buildings, railroad depots, and churches. These resources are most likely located within the city limits that existed in 1899 (fig. 2-1). Historic districts associated with this period may include residential areas, such as streetcar suburbs and exurban agricultural communities that developed outside of Fort Worth city limits during the period but were eventually incorporated. Resources from this period may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A under the following Areas of Significance: Agriculture, Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Education, Ethnic Heritage, Exploration/Settlement, Politics/Government, Social History, and Transportation. Extant resources may also have significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. See the one-page examples of statements of significance throughout this section, which explain how extant resources meet, or may meet, designation criteria under certain themes.
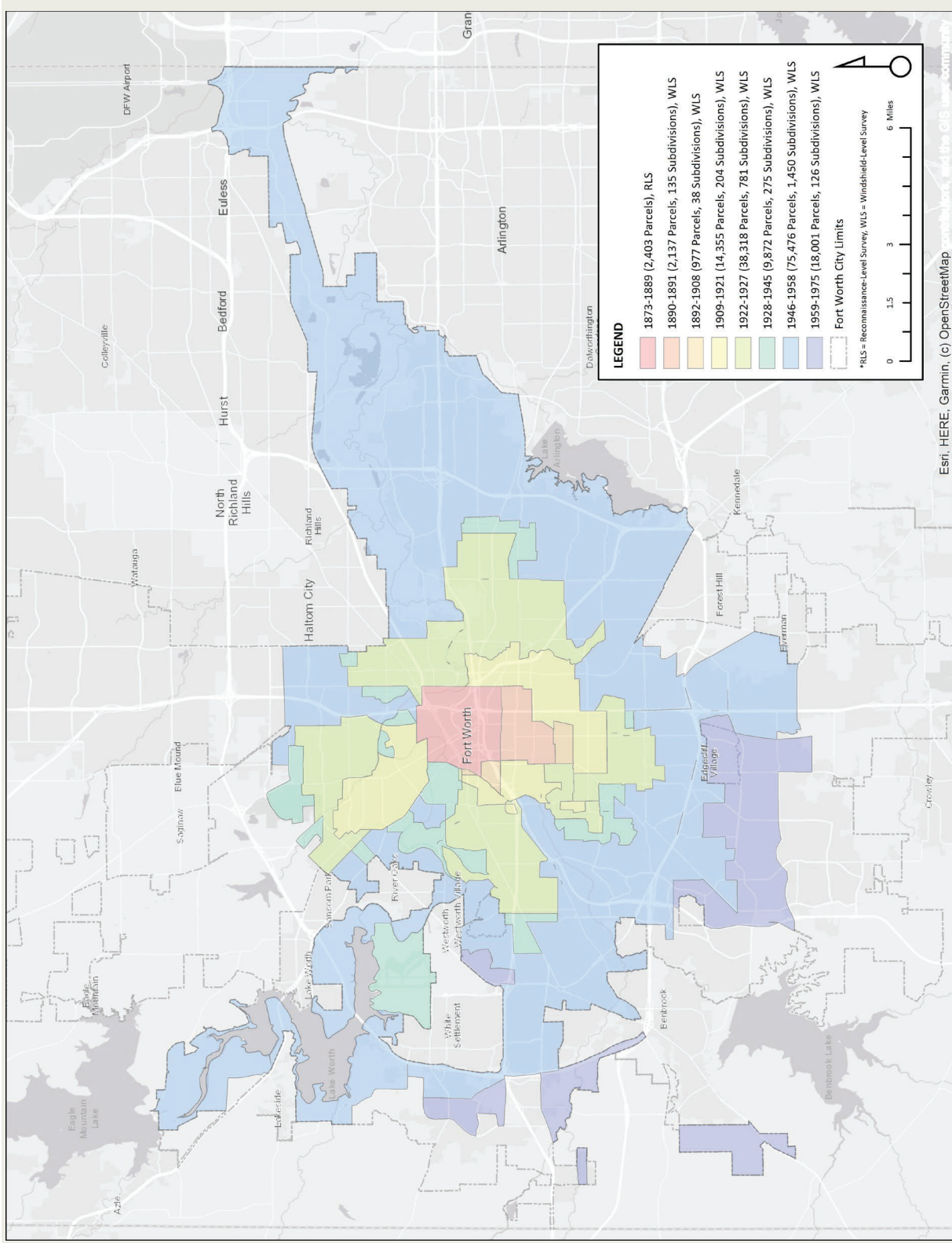
INITIAL SETTLEMENT

PRE-ANGLO POPULATIONS

Native American tribes lived in north central Texas for centuries before the area was settled in the mid-nineteenth century by Anglo Americans. The Wichita, Comanche, Caddo, Waco, Tonkawa, and Cherokee Tribes camped and roamed the region, as did smaller tribes including the Kiowa.[1] The tribes were largely migratory and used a network of trails to travel from region to region. The myriad waterways and springs in the area provided ideal camping locations for the roaming tribes.

Beginning in the sixteenth century, Europeans began expeditions in what would later become Texas. Colonization attempts under both French (1684 to 1689) and Spanish (1690 to 1821) rule were primarily focused to the south. North Texas was largely above the colonization line, and the Spanish are not known to have built any presidios or missions in the area. As such, the Native American tribes in the region encountered little conflict until the arrival of Anglo settlers in the nineteenth century.

Figure 2-1. Map showing Fort Worth's successive stages of annexation. Original city limits in pink. Note the large areas annexed between 1946 and 1975 in blue and purple. Source: HHM, 2021.

LEGEND

- 1873-1889 (2,403 Parcels), RLS
- 1890-1891 (2,137 Parcels, 135 Subdivisions), WLS
- 1892-1908 (977 Parcels, 38 Subdivisions), WLS
- 1909-1921 (14,355 Parcels, 204 Subdivisions), WLS
- 1922-1927 (38,318 Parcels, 781 Subdivisions), WLS
- 1928-1945 (9,872 Parcels, 275 Subdivisions), WLS
- 1946-1958 (75,476 Parcels, 1,450 Subdivisions), WLS
- 1959-1975 (18,001 Parcels, 126 Subdivisions), WLS
- Fort Worth City Limits

*RLS = Reconnaissance-Level Survey, WLS = Windshield-Level Survey

Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap

MILITARY DEVELOPMENT

Anglo American colonization in Texas generally began in 1820 under Spanish rule and continued under Mexican rule (1821–1835) and Texan rule (1836–1845) in the mid-nineteenth century. It was during these periods of various rule that north Texas saw its first permanent white settlers.[2] Enticed by the availability of free land grants offered by the various governments of Texas, more settlers ventured further west into the unsettled frontier in the nineteenth century. Under Mexican rule, the land grant policy included individual grants of approximately 4,600 acres and larger "empresario" grants to entities colonizing at least 100 families, who typically received 230 acres each.[3] The Republic of Texas initially offered "headright grants" worth 1,476.1 acres for existing settlers, though the size of grants decreased gradually between 1837 and 1842 and ranged from 320 to 1,240 acres. The Republic of Texas also gave land grants to veterans of the Texas War for Independence.[4] Around 3,000 Anglo American, English, and European American settlers came to north central Texas as part of the Peters Colony in the early 1840s. Spread out over approximately 2,500 square miles, some of the families settled in what would become Tarrant County and Fort Worth.[5] Other land grants in what became Fort Worth belonged to absentee landowners, who would later sell their lands to settlers, including John Peter Smith. Not all land grant recipients were absentee though and, some of the area's earliest settlers and city founders, including the York and Gilmore families and Ephraim Merrell Daggett and Charles Biggers Daggett, moved to the area upon receiving land (fig. 2-2).[6]
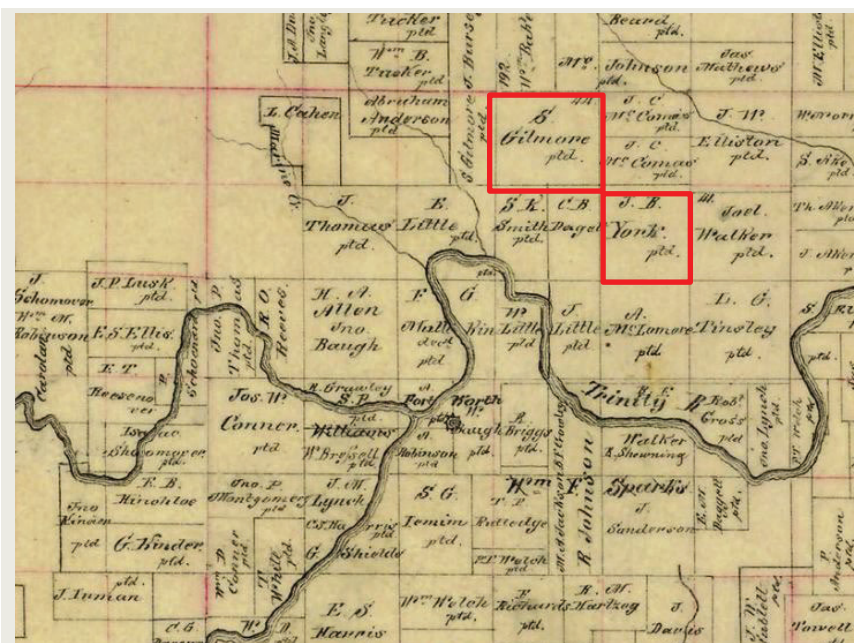

Figure 2-2. Inset of the 1856 Cadastral map of Tarrant County. Note the land grant location of some of Fort Worth's earliest settlers and founders, including C. B. Daggett, J. B. York, and S. Gilmore, outlined in red. Source: F. H. Arlitt, Tarrant County, November 1856, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting Texas General Land Office, accessed May 24, 2021, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth88999/.

As more settlers entered into north central Texas, the Republic of Texas sponsored militia-led expeditions into the territory to clear it of the perceived Native American threat. The encroachment of white settlers and militia expeditions created tension between the Native American tribes and settlers, resulting in raids on both Anglo and tribal settlements. Such was the case along Village Creek, a tributary of the Trinity River that now forms the city limits of Fort Worth and Arlington, where several Native American tribes—including Caddo, Cherokee, and Tonkawa—had settlements.[7] In response to the tensions in the area, a company of around 70 volunteers led by General Edward H. Tarrant raided the Native American camps on Village Creek in 1841. The militia burned several villages, and the subsequent clash between the tribes and Texas militia, known as the Battle of Village Creek, reportedly led to the death of 12 Native Americans and the confirmed death of one soldier, Captain John B. Denton, for whom neighboring Denton County is named.[8]

After the skirmish between Native Americans and white settlers in 1841, General Edward H. Tarrant ordered the construction of a fort near the battle site to further protect the area for white settlers. The Texas militia, under Major Jonathan Bird, constructed several buildings at Fort Bird (or Bird's Fort) on the Trinity River in late 1841, but by March 1842, once the militiamen's terms of enlistment expired, the fort was abandoned.[9] With the fort uninhabited, tensions and violence between Native Americans and settlers in the area persisted. In an effort to establish peace in the region, representatives for the Republic of Texas, including General Tarrant, met nine Native American tribes at the fort in 1843.[i] On September 29, 1843, the representatives signed the Treaty of Bird's Fort, one of the only Native American treaties ratified by the Republic of Texas.[10] The treaty, in which both sides pledged cooperation and peace, also established a line, running roughly from present-day Fort Worth southwest to Menard County, separating Native American territory to the west from white settlement to the east.

The boundary between Anglo and Native American lands pushed westward as more settlers, motivated by the availability of land grants, made their way into the region after the signing of the peace treaty. With sustained tension in the region, the US government, which annexed Texas in 1845, ordered the construction of military posts along the boundary of the state's settled regions to protect white settlers from Native American attack (fig. 2-3). Tasked with establishing a new northern anchor for the line of posts was Major Ripley Arnold, a veteran of the Mexican War and head of Company F of the Second Dragoons.[11] Major Arnold chose a spot near the confluence of the Clear Fork and West Fork of the Trinity River during a May 1849 scouting expedition. The site, "a high, healthy locality surrounded by rich fertile land," overlooked the waterways and distant lands and provided the requisite vantage point to monitor and prevent potential attacks.[12] Arnold returned with his men in June and began construction of Fort Worth, named after the late General William Jenkins Worth, with whom Arnold fought during the Mexican War.
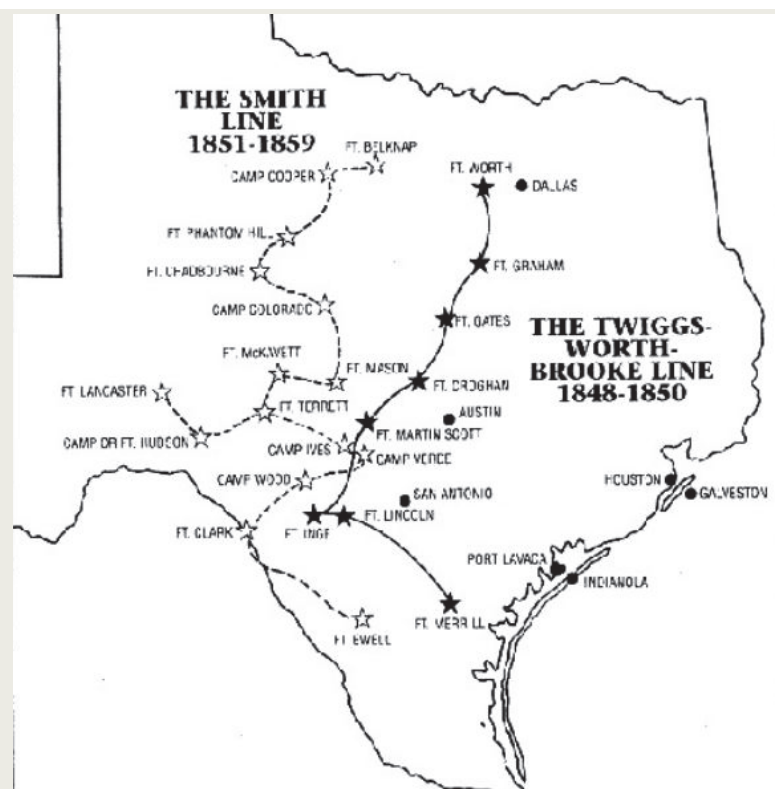

Figure 2-3. Map showing the first line of forts, including Fort Worth (named the Twiggs-Worth-Brooke Line on the map), and the second line (the Smith Line on the map). Source: Richard F. Selcer and W. B. Potter, The Fort That Became a City: An Illustrated Reconstruction of Fort Worth, Texas, 1849-1853 (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1995).

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[i] The nine tribes were: Delaware, Chickasaw, Waco, Tah-woc-cany, Keechi, Caddo, Ana-Dah-kah, Ionie, Bioloxi, and Cherokee.

Fort Worth occupied several acres atop the bluff at the approximate location of the present-day Tarrant County courthouse (fig. 2-4). A rope-line fence enclosed the post, which consisted of approximately 17 buildings constructed around a parade ground. The men used available materials—split logs, mud, handmade wooden pins, and sticks—in the construction of the buildings, which included living quarters, stables, offices, storerooms, and a guardhouse (fig. 2-5).[13] The men, of which fewer than 70 were stationed at the fort at one time, spent their time drilling, maintaining the fort, and occasionally hunting.[14] Because the fort was not located on a military road, like Fort Bliss and Fort Lancaster, its role was limited in regards to escorting settlers.[15] Additionally, the fort never came under attack, and interactions with the Native American tribes were limited to bartering and trading. Despite the lack of military engagement, a handful of deaths necessitated the need for a cemetery. The first burials at the new cemetery, located approximately one mile northeast of the fort on land owned by a local settler, were that of Major Arnold's two children, Willis and Sophia Arnold, who are said to have died of cholera in 1850.[16] Over the next three years, disease and accidents took the lives of 11 soldiers who were also laid to rest in the cemetery.[17]

Figure 2-4. Brevet Lieutenant Colonel W. G. Freeman's Inspection of the 8th Military Department, 1853, showing the site plan of Fort Worth. Source: Manuscript Collection, Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.
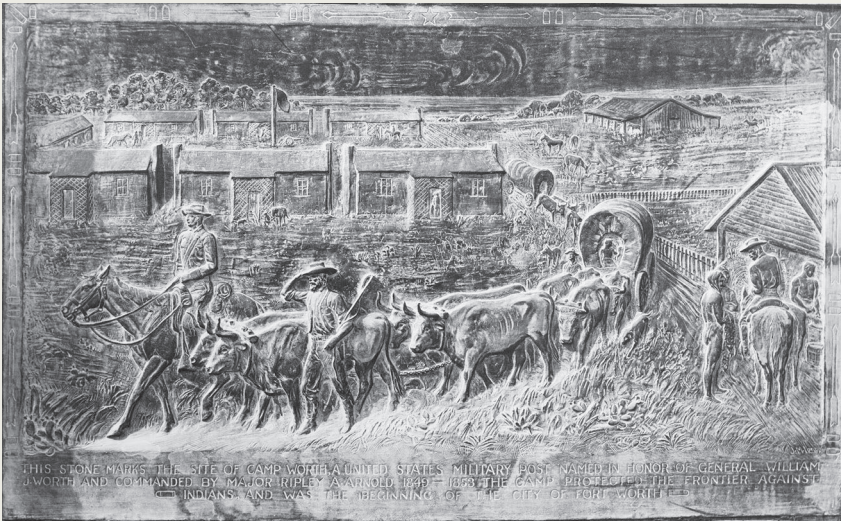
Figure 2-5. Stone marking showing Fort Worth in the mid-nineteenth century. Source: W.D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries, UTA Libraries Digital Gallery, accessed April 16, 2021, https://library.uta.edu /digitalgallery/img/20092469.

After only four years, the US military decommissioned Fort Worth in 1853. As the area grew safer, increased Anglo migration pushed westward into previously unsettled land, rendering Fort Worth obsolete. A new defense line ran from Fort Belknap to Fort Clark, and many of the men stationed at Fort Worth were reassigned to these new posts (see fig. 2-3). Major Arnold returned to his old post at Fort Graham on the Brazos River where he died in September 1853. The fort and its buildings were abandoned and left to nearby settlers who used the buildings and site as the nucleus of a new frontier town: Fort Worth.[18]

The only extant resource from this period of military history is the cemetery, renamed Pioneers Rest Cemetery in the twentieth century (fig. 2-6). Located at 600 Samuels Avenue, Pioneers Rest Cemetery was listed in the National Register in February 2021. Several important figures in Fort Worth's history are buried at the cemetery, including Major Arnold who was reinterred there in 1855, and General Tarrant, who was reinterred there in 1928.

Figure 2-6. View of Pioneers Rest Cemetery, entrance, ca. 1920s. Source: Genealogy, History and Archives Unit, Fort Worth Public Library, File E-0090.jpg.

See the next page for a sample statement of significance for resources associated with the theme: Initial Settlement.

Statement of Significance*	
Theme:	**Initial Settlement**
Subthemes:	Pre-Anglo Populations, Military Development
Summary Statement of Significance:	Potential resources associated with this theme reflect the early history of the area and its early and migratory inhabitants, as well as the subsequent military response to these communities in the mid-nineteenth century. Any extant resources may be significant in the areas of Exploration/Settlement, Archeology, or Military. Resources; resources must retain sufficient integrity in order to convey their significance and association with this theme.
Period of Significance:	Pre-history to 1853.
Period of Significance Justification:	Native Americans lived in the area for centuries prior to Anglo settlement, and archeological remains may be present. Anglo American colonization generally began in 1820 and the military fort opened in 1849. The fort was decommissioned in 1853. Periods of significance may extend past 1853, particularly for cemeteries.
Geographic Location:	Citywide. Archeological evidence may be located near waterways.
Area(s) of Significance:	Exploration/Settlement, Archeology, Military, Community Planning and Development
Criteria:	**National Register:** A, D, Criteria Consideration D **Local:** 1, 6, 7
Associated Property Types:	Known extant resources include a cemetery. Other property types associated with this theme have largely been lost, but potentially may include archeological sites, religious sites, fort buildings, and cultural landscapes.
Example:	**Pioneers Rest Cemetery, 600 Samuels Avenue**

Pioneers Rest Cemetery was established in 1850 as the primary burial ground for the military fort. Military figures including Major Arnold and General Tarrant are buried at Pioneers Rest. Pioneers Rest was Fort Worth's only cemetery until 1879, though burials continued there throughout the twentieth century. The cemetery is listed in the National Register under Criteria A and C in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Art and meets Criteria Consideration D for cemeteries. The cemetery may also potentially be eligible under Exploration/Settlement and as a local landmark.

Entrance gate, looking east, at Pioneers Rest Cemetery at 600 Samuels Avenue. Source: Susan Allen Kline, "Pioneers Rest Cemetery," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Texas Historical Commission, December 6, 2020, 57, from the THC, https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/100006072/100006072.pdf

*This sample provides a framework for the identification of resources associated with significant themes in Fort Worth's history. Resources significant under one theme/subtheme may also be significant under one, or several other themes. Period of Significance dates are also just a guide, and resources may have periods of significance that start earlier or end later. Each resource needs to be evaluated individually for historical significance.

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Between the time of the establishment of the fort in 1849 and 1900, Fort Worth's population grew from less than 100 to 26,688 (see table 2-1). Population growth in the two decades after the establishment of the military outpost was slow, actually declining during the Civil War when men went off to fight. Prior to the Civil War, white farmers and ranchers from the American South and Midwest accounted for the majority of population growth. Some enslaved African Americans also migrated with the white settlers. Enslaved men and women accounted for a portion of Tarrant County's early growth. The countywide enslaved population grew from around 65 in 1850 to around 700 in 1860 and more than doubled during the Civil War.[19] The availability of land grants and agricultural opportunities drove population growth across Tarrant County during this period, while the growing trade and county seat designation in 1860 helped attract more settlers to Fort Worth. The opportunity to start afresh in a new city also drew settlers. Ephraim Merrell Daggett described the motivation for moving to Fort Worth in the early 1850s:

> I came, a young lawyer, to grow up with the country. The nearest railroad was over 200 miles distant. Owing to the liberal homestead provisions in the Constitution of 1845, since made more liberal and definite by the Constitution of 1876, a superior class of early settlers were attracted hither. Business men who had failed in other States came here with the remnants of their fortunes and secured homes and property free from the writ of scire facias.[20]

Table 2-1. Census population, Fort Worth, 1850 to 1900.[21]

Year	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
Total population	Less than 100	350	2,500	6,663	23,076	26,688
Percent increase	---	350%	614%	166.5%	246.3%	15.7%

A large population increase in Fort Worth occurred after the Civil War, between 1865 and 1900. During this time, Fort Worth's population increased over 7,000 percent, and for the first time, in 1890, the city became the fifth largest in Texas, with a population of 23,076 (following Dallas, San Antonio, Galveston, and Houston, in that order). The two primary factors for this dramatic population growth were the cattle drives and the arrival of the railroad. As in the pre-Civil War period, native-born Anglo- and European Americans accounted for the largest percentage of the city's population growth. By 1900, native-born residents accounted for 93 percent of the city's population.[22] Many native-born residents migrated from Southern states, while others moved from within Texas to Fort Worth for job opportunities.

Also included in the city's native-born population were African Americans. A large number of freedmen were said to have left Fort Worth after the Civil War, but with the arrival of the railroad, African Americans returned to the city. African Americans accounted for around 15 percent of Fort Worth's population from 1880 to 1900, growing from around 1,000 to around 4,200.[23] Most African Americans held jobs in the railroad and cattle industry, as well as a variety of service-related jobs including domestic servants, laborers, porters, and janitors.[24] By 1882, the city had at least one Black physician, Dr. Franklin Trabue, a former enslaved person, and by the late nineteenth century a small Black middle class began to emerge in the city.[25]

A small number of immigrants moved to Fort Worth during this period; by 1900 foreign-born residents accounted for less than seven percent of the city's population.[26] Europeans from across the continent represented the majority of the city's foreign-born population. The 1887 agricultural report for Tarrant County shows that German, Irish, and English immigrants were the largest groups in the county, but immigrants also came from Austria, Italy, Poland, Russia, and a dozen other European countries.[27] Some came directly to Fort Worth, while others migrated from other American cities or from rural areas where they had originally settled. The European immigrants worked skilled and unskilled jobs in a variety of

sectors, and some also opened their own businesses.[28] The O. B. Macaroni Company, founded by Italians Giovanni Laneri and Louis Bichocchi in 1899, remains in operation today.[29]

While most of Fort Worth's foreign-born population originated from Europe, small numbers of immigrants from Mexico and China also settled in the city. Though large-scale Mexican immigration to Texas and Fort Worth occurred in the twentieth century, around a hundred Mexicans likely settled in the city before 1900. Census records indicate fewer than 10 individuals born in, or born to a Mexican parent, lived in Fort Worth prior to 1880.[30] Using the city directory and US Census records, Kenneth N. Hopkins, former local historian and archivist at the Fort Worth Public Library, estimated that between 50 to 100 Mexican-born or second-generation Mexicans lived in Fort Worth by 1900.[31] Many were single men and laborers. A small number of Chinese men, who likely worked on the railroad, also settled in Fort Worth during this period. City directories from the 1880s and 1890s show around 10 Chinese-run laundries in the city, and census records show some Chinese cooks and domestic servants. Forty Chinese people lived in Fort Worth in 1890.[32] This number dropped to 22 by 1900.[33]

EARLY GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FORMATION OF TARRANT COUNTY

Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, Anglo settlers and enslaved African Americans slowly made their way to north central Texas. Though they were largely dispersed, separated from one another on large tracts of land, several small communities had emerged in the region by the late 1840s, including Dallas, Grapevine, Johnson's Station (present-day Arlington), and Lonesome Dove (in northeast Tarrant County) (fig. 2-7). With a population around 600 in the area encompassing present-day Tarrant County, and the anticipation of more settlers in the wake of Fort Worth's (the military fort) establishment, the Texas legislature created a new county in December 1849.[34] Tarrant County, named for General Edward Tarrant, covered nearly 900 square miles. The 1850 US Census recorded 664 inhabitants in the newly formed county.[35]

The first elections in Tarrant County occurred in 1850 at Traders Oak, a massive live oak tree and the site of Fort Worth's first trading post (present-day Traders Oak Park on Samuels Avenue, fig. 2-8).[36] Here, the first county officials were elected, and Birdville was designated the county seat. Chosen for its location in the geographic center of the new county, Birdville was a small farming and ranching community approximately 10 miles northeast of Fort Worth. By 1855 Fort Worth had become a small frontier community and several of its prominent citizens wanted to move the county seat from Birdville to Fort Worth; the men called for another election to determine the matter. Fort Worth won the 1856 vote in an election said to have been marred with voter fraud and bribery.[37] Birdville citizens subsequently protested the vote, and another election was held in 1860. Fort Worth again won the vote and was officially designated Tarrant County Seat in 1860.

Over the next three and half decades, Tarrant County oversaw the construction of three different courthouses. The first courthouse, a stone building, was completed around 1870, after the five-year interruption caused by the Civil War. Built east of the former fort buildings atop the Trinity River bluffs, the courthouse burned in 1876. The second courthouse was completed in 1877 in the same location. In 1893, the Tarrant County Commissioners Court voted to allocate $500,000 for a new courthouse that reflected the city and county's growing wealth and prominence.[38] Completed in 1895 and designed by Kansas City architects Gunn and Curtis and built by Probst Construction Company of Chicago, the new (extant) pink granite Renaissance Revival building atop the bluff became the focal point of the burgeoning city. The Tarrant County courthouse (100 East Weatherford Street, listed in the National