

Attempting to get an authentic history of the Trinidad area has not been as easy task and takes much work, reading and chronologically lining up dates and names. But most agree the Cotton Belt Railroad and water had a lot to do with the making of the little town of Trinidad. It may not be the smallest town in Henderson County, but it most likely has the smallest school, complete with grades from kindergarten (or pre-school) to seniors.



It seems that the mid 1800s Huntsville did not want a railroad through its town. Officials having to reroute found a track laid in the Trinity River area would be feasible, even though flooding was a problem between Cedar Creek and the Trinity River many times during the year. The tracks came.

Limits for a community had to stay on the east side of the Trinity and the west limit of Cedar Creek. Today Highway 31 cuts through the community of Trinidad, which was once named Trinity, but another Trinity, Texas, existed and called for a name change.

Above Highway 31 Trinidad can expand, but the Cut-Off to the south, where the river and creek form an unusual barrier or waterway and the river on the west, the creek on the east, make the original Trinidad almost a giant cul-de-sac with one escape route going south, a dirt road that connects to the Cross Roads Highway.

Early names of residents include Spivey, Smith, Burton, Daniel, Wilson, Airheart, and names like John, Bill, and Elias and more. G.W. Wilson might have been the earliest of settlers, but more study may reveal otherwise. O.M. Airheart ran a ferry at the river for a time.

The town of Trinidad began to grow with a small school west of the present school, a Methodist Church with Roy Hopkins as the pastor and a Baptist church with Brother Blaylock. Businessmen like Daniel and Company, The Trotmans, McDonalds, R.D. King, Melars, Leggs, Millers, Johnston, Pulleys, Bradleys and others helped the area materialize. Farmers, possibly some of the above, found themselves joined by others in rapid fashion.

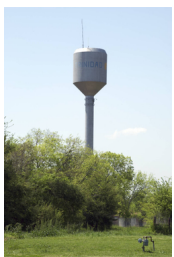
One name prominent before the 1900s was Airheart, Clarence Wesley. In fact, several families of Airhearts, most of them with big families, lived in the area soon, before or near the late

1800s. By 1900 other families were joining those here: Stanfields, Johnstons, Bradleys, Quinns. When Texas Power and Light, the largest plant of its kind in the United States to supply electricity from coal and other sources located in Trinidad in the early 1920s, new life came to the area, and history took over.

The main school, which has keep up with modern times and is still intact with more improvements, has seen three and four generations graduate from it. Four building programs have added to the original brick building, all behind the first complex which once housed all 12 grades.

Pete Airheart and his wife built a home near the present-day school with their land ownership originally reaching from McEntire to Leagueline and then quite a distance south, The Airhearts still living from this family include Nila Ruth, Donie, Harding, and Onslow, the World War II veteran who did everything the famed Audie Murphy did and shared foxholes with the soon-to-be Hollywood star, also from Texas.

Murphy, it is said, called Onslow to be in the movie "To Hell and Back" to play himself along with Audie as the main star, but the Trinidad hero turned the offer down and almost went into obscurity even though Life magazine and other national reporting institutions have been informed Onslow is still alive in Trinidad with all his medals, once stolen, restored by the Trinidad people.



An impressive gas plant also went up about two miles from the electric plant, and Trinidad was on its way. Then came technological changes, efficiency moves, and a town kept limited almost to TP&L employees, began to suffer in many ways, especially economically.

But it seems fitting there should be an Airheart Avenue somewhere as there are probably more of this surname living here than any other. Some teach in the schools or their spouses do. Much land is still owned by this name in the southern areas of town. One of the descendants of Collins Airheart may one day be Chancellor of Texas A&M, the highest office I've learned, since Jerry Collins Gaston (Alice & Jim Gaston's son) is now deputy-chancellor of this university, over ten presidents of the branches throughout the state.

Collins Airheart was a cousin to Pete, and he and Ira (or Irene) had ten children, most settling in Trinidad. Clarence, the oldest, is deceased, but still remaining are Pat, Buster, Alice, Bill, Frances, Edward know as Pete, Hildred, J.C. and Margaret.

J.C. (John Collins), the youngest of Collin's sons, served as Mayor of Trinidad. He wanted the small city to run without controversy while at the same time giving services to the slowly aging population of the town and improving what is here for the younger.

Meanwhile, J.C. tries to keep a steady hand and forward force, wishing some things could be different, changing those he can. He's a THS graduate and has grandchildren in the system. His wife Lorena is an aide in the Eustace ISD. Together they have been married 44 years and have three grown children. Laura Jean (Jenny) teaches first grade in Ft. Worth and battles M.S. Mary Louise lived in Trinidad. Kenneth Randall, his son, lives in Dallas.