

Anderson and Eliza Bonner Family



Anderson Bonner, c 1870 (Bonner Family Collection)

The amazing accomplishments of Anderson Bonner (c. 1835 – c. 1920) as a farmer and owner of extensive and holdings north of Dallas along White Rock Creek and Cottonwood Branch, have not been fully credited. A former slave, Anderson Bonner signed his name with an X on deeds for hundreds of acres of land. He purchased the property with funds earned from his farm products and houses he leased to sharecroppers. The fact that all of his business transactions were handled with legal consultation and documentation tends to verify his brilliant business sense and knowledge of measures needed to secure his massive holdings. Records indicate that the warranty deed for one of his earliest land purchases (over sixty acres) was filed in Dallas County August 10, 1874.

According to members of the family, it is not known how Anderson Bonner, his brother, Louis and sister, Caroline, came from Alabama to the farm area North of White Rock Creek. There are indications that they may have lived in Arkansas for a while. Also, it was reported that at some point Anderson was given to a white family as a wedding gift.

Anderson Bonner married Eliza and nine known children were borne to that union; Newton, William, Ed, John, Andy, Mary, Martha, Charlie and Nash. Eliza was originally from Arkansas. The children helped work the farm. He grew cotton, corn, and fruit, along with other types of crops.

Eliza died as the result of a lamp explosion and fire in their home. Those who saw the explosion said she placed her hands over her head when the lamp blew up in her face and caught fire. Later on Anderson Bonner married Lacinda from Waxahachie, Texas.

The First school for black children in the North Dallas area was the Vickery and Hillcrest School. It was re-named to the Anderson Bonner School. The school was closed by the Richardson ISD when Hamilton Park School opened in 1955.

Prior to World War II many black groups held picnics on a section of the farm on Forest Lane, including the property where Medical City Hospital is now located (Forest Lane and Central Expressway). Central Expressway was cut through the farm. The City of Dallas officially named the park west of Medical City Hospital, Anderson Bonner Park. The park runs along White Rock Creek and is complete with bicycle trails and recreation areas. This area was also a part of the original farm.

Anderson Bonner had four surviving grandchildren, the offspring of Charlie and Hallie Bonner; Eunice Bonner-Turner, Henry Andersonson Bonner, and Marie Bonner and one child of John and Pearl Turner Bonner; Odessa Bonner-Hill. Odessa was the only surviving child of John and Pearl Bonner.

The sister of Anderson Bonner, Caroline, married Ed Fields, Pearl Turner-Bonner, Wife of John Bonner, was From the Turner Family. One of the Fields descendants married a Giddings. This established linkage among several of the pioneer African American families who migrated to the farm lands along White Rock Creek in settlements known as the Upper and Lower White Rock Creek areas. These families, along with others, had extensive land holdings along a line between Dallas and Richardson and from Garland to Carrollton.