
Bear Creek Community Life



The community of Bear Creek was established along the banks of Bear Creek in the mid-nineteenth century. It is one of Dallas County's oldest African-American communities. After the Civil War, many freed slaves moved to the area. Share-cropping was the primary occupation of the residents. During the era of Jim Crow laws and segregation, Bear Creek was home to many of western Dallas County's African-American residents. Electricity was not available in the community until the mid-1940s. Basic utility services were not available until the area was annexed by the city of Irving in 1969. In the photo above, the children of the Morton family wait in the family wagon, c. 1925.



On the left is a photo of Sam Morton, a Bear Creek resident who married Mary Jane Dilworth. The Dilworth family were pioneers to the Bear Creek community. In this photo, Morton sits in front of a sign at the State Fair of Texas in 1929. In the photo on the right, Jackie Townsell poses at the Jackie Townsell Bear Creek Heritage Center. Ms. Townsell moved to the Bear Creek community with her family in 1949. In 1977, she was the first African-American elected to the Irving city council. She served on the council for 18 years.



On the left, four girls prepare for their eighth grade graduation ceremonies from Sowers School #2. Pictured on the right is the Townsell Grocery. It was owned by Jimmie and Jackie Townsell. The store served as a community center for the residents of Bear Creek during the 1950s and 1960s. Townsell Grocery was in business from the late 1950s until the late 1990s.