



## *What Lies Beneath. . .*

# Garland topsoil covers millions-years history

**By James Barnes**

The expression “older than dirt” is a poor analogy. Dirt, as topsoil, is not that old, because it is constantly eroded away, washed into the ocean, blown into the air, and formed anew from bits of organic material, minerals, and microbes. Rocks are different. Rocks stick around. Rocks can tell stories, sometimes very old stories.

Sedimentary rock forms on the bottom of oceans over millions of years. The chalk that underlies Garland and much of Texas is sedimentary rock, easily visible to anyone who might cross Duck Creek or Spring Creek. Over thousands of years, these waterways wore through the topsoil and through the rock below up to 35 feet deep.

Uncountable numbers of tiny planktonic organisms with their calcium carbonate shells had to die and settle to the bottom of the sea to be compacted into this chalky sedimentary rock. Similar organisms also produced the over 300-foot white cliffs of Dover, visible from mainland

Europe, and the Monument Rocks in Kansas, rising 70 feet above the prairie. Limestone forms in a similar process.

This plankton was part of the sea life that thrived in the Western Interior Seaway, a warm shallow ocean that once extended from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Ocean. Tectonic

movement caused the collapse of the center of North America, allowing an ocean to form that separated North America into an eastern landmass, called Appalachia, and a western part called Laramidia. The south-western edge of Appalachia was about where the Red River is today, and the sea sometimes covered all of Texas for almost 100 million years.

The sea formed in the late Cretaceous Period of the Mesozoic Era and finally disappeared in the early Paleogene Period of the Cenozoic Era, a little over 50 million years ago as plate tectonics re-elevated the central part of North America.



**Landmark Photo.**  
**Fossilized shells of juvenile oysters found in the bed of Spring Creek between Holford Road and N. Garland Avenue. Dime, top right, offers size comparison.**

# Creek bed hides oyster fossils

**(Continued from Page 1)**

The sedimentary rock once on the ocean bottom is under the topsoil we now live on.

These sedimentary deposits provide a foundation for the stores along North Garland Ave, just north of Spring Creek. This is the area (a Target store is located there today) where an ancestor of Garland historian and Landmark Society president Mike Hayslip, established a farm in the 1850's. If W. T. Olinger had wanted to install a swimming pool behind his farm house, these chalk deposits may have been a formidable barrier to digging the deep end.

The photograph on Page 1 shows fossilized shells of juvenile oysters found in the bed of Spring Creek between Holford Road and N. Garland Ave. just south of Olinger's farm. The fossil predates the farm a bit; it is 86 million years old, which is about the time the progenitors of primates diverged from primitive mammals. Other shells, teeth, and larger fossils, such as ammonites, are occasionally uncovered in the creek bed. As the calcareous organisms settled to the sea floor, they became compacted into rock along with the shells of these baby oysters and remained so until the flow of Spring Creek uncovered them a few years ago.

The earth's last mass extinction was 65 million years ago. Oysters survived this event; dinosaurs, as such, did not. Birds, the direct descendants of dinosaurs, exist in a plethora of forms, many of which are denizens of the Spring Creek Forest Preserve.

Oysters may be found today at Firewheel Mall, reasonably close to where these baby ones once lived, but the oysters at Fish City Grill are incorporated into nachos, not sedimentary rock.

## Spring Creek Preserve protects ecosystem

The Spring Creek Forest Preserve, established to protect the relic old-growth bottomland hardwood forest around the creek, consists of a 200-acre park that extends from northwest of Holford Road to North Garland Ave. This preserved ecosystem is not commonly found in such a natural state. The Preservation Society for Spring Creek Forest promotes and protects this preserve as a cultural and natural resource, facilitating scientific and educational pursuits. Visitors are welcome.

<https://springcreekforest.wordpress.com/location/>

## Ancient axe added to Landmark collection



### Landmark Photos.

**Photo at left shows how implement might have been used, probably as a scraper to clean animal hides. At right, tool is shown in the hand, fingers fitted around smooth end and sharper lower end exposed to use as scraper.**

This is a hand axe. A private collector found it several years ago in the “Garland vicinity” before the Garland Landmark Society procured it. It was flaked and sharpened on its smaller cutting/scraping end, and the large end provided a place to hold it, along with the indentation for the base of the thumb.

The term “hand axe” is generic; this one pictured was a bit small to hew wood. It seems plausible it was a “household appliance,” a scraper used to prepare animal hides for clothing and other uses.

The exact age of the implement is undetermined, but it is an artifact of Stone Age Native Americans who were here for 11,000 years before the Spanish in the 1500’s brought with them their diseases, their religion, and their iron. The axe, at least 500 years old, is now in the Landmark museum collection waiting to tell us its history.

***Dr. James Barnes, a Garland periodontist, is a member of the Landmark Society.***

# Phil McMullen Built His Dream House, and Warren Ling has re-imagined it



**Landmark Photo.**

The Ling house, built by Phil McMullen in 1965, on Glenbrook Court in Garland.

Once upon a time about 50 years ago, Phil McMullen built his “dream house” on a perfect, peaceful piece of property hidden away on a heavily wooded lot fronting a short cul-de-sac street just off Glenbrook Drive, one of Garland’s loveliest residential streets.

He engaged Dallas architects Craycroft Lacy & Associates to design a unique house of 4,214 square feet centered around an indoor swimming pool. Architecturally, the style is known as Mid-Century Modern. Three roomy bedrooms and the family room all had entrances to the pool area. There was lots of glass, and sliding doors. From the outside it was rather boring. But inside, it was spectacular.

Two years ago, Warren Ling bought the McMullen house and began a careful restoration. He had never known McMullen, of course, but he used blueprints left behind to make it as nearly like the house McMullen moved into as was possible.

The newspaperman had been an eager participant in civic affairs from the time he arrived in Garland for his relatively brief stay. He came in the mid 1950s, already a successful publisher of several small newspapers. In 1958 he bought the old, established and respected Garland Daily News, and later added the Richardson News.

**(See CAREFUL on Page 5)**

## Careful restoration has been going on for a year

In 1963 McMullen and Staley McBrayer, publisher of a group of suburban newspapers in Irving, Grand Prairie, and Arlington, consolidated, merging their newspapers into the News-Texan Inc. with McMullen becoming president. Soon afterward, they sold a substantial interest in the group to A.H. Belo Corp., publisher of *The Dallas Morning News*. The group later added the *McKinney Daily Courier-Gazette*.

The News-Texan group later was sold to Belo, and in 1969 Belo sold the McKinney newspaper to McMullen.

McMullen coupled his publishing duties with his civic activities in Garland. In May, 1968, he was appointed to the City Plan Commission, and in August of that year, he was appointed to the City Council to fill the unexpired term of Floyd Klee, who had moved from Garland.

He also took part in state newspapers associations, serving in 1964 as president of the North and East Texas Press Association. He continued as publisher of the *McKinney Courier-Gazette* from 1969 until 1972 when he sold the newspaper.

Michael Hayslip, president of the Garland Landmark Society and a native Garlandite, remembers McMullen and his wife, Austa, entertaining at the home on Glenbrook Court. "They included the pool to use it, and entertain around it,

not just show it off," he remembers. "I recall his referring to contiguous lots on the street as 'sort of a closed corporation' among compatible people."

Other houses on the street are more traditional, though unique in style, and were occupied by several city leaders of that era.

"Phil convened with a local poker group," Hayslip recalled, "as well as the First National Bank board. Seems that he was possessed of a keen eye, subtle wit and a sage approach that suggested possible Indian heritage. He didn't jabber and when he spoke most listened. His forte had been buying and energizing small town papers, and I would suspect he negotiated well."

Ling and his wife, current owners of the former McMullen house, have been carefully restoring the place for the last year.

"We have almost completed renovation and restored the house complete with huge atrium and indoor pool, into the marvel it must have been in 1965."

The City of Garland recently featured the home in a video presentation that may be seen at:

<https://www.facebook.com/City-of-Garland-Texas-Government-156695281153814/?fref=ts>

On that page, click on **Videos** from list on left side of page, and the choose "Garland Mid Century Modern Home"



Landmark Photo.  
**Phil McMullen**  
(c.1965)

**Garland Landmark Society**  
**P.O. Box 462232 (Mail)**  
Garland TX 75046-2232  
303 N. Sixth Street  
Garland TX 75040  
[www.garlandhistorical.org](http://www.garlandhistorical.org)

**President: Michael Hayslip**  
[hayslip@onlinetoday.com](mailto:hayslip@onlinetoday.com)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b><u>Vice President (Development/Museum Affairs)</u></b>                               | <b><u>Vice President (Membership)</u></b>   |
| <b>John Swanson</b><br><a href="mailto:jlswany@hotmail.com">jlswany@hotmail.com</a>     | <b>Bill Dickson</b><br><a href="mailto:edickson@sbcglobal.net">edickson@sbcglobal.net</a>                 |
| <b><u>Secretary-Treasurer</u></b>   | <b><u>Curator</u></b>   |
| <b>Janice Black</b><br><a href="mailto:jfblack@yahoo.com">jfblack@yahoo.com</a>         | <b>Claude Doane</b><br><a href="mailto:claude.Doane@hcahealthcare.com">claude.Doane@hcahealthcare.com</a> |
| <b><u>Directors</u></b>   |   |
| <b>Bob Compton (Editor, ON TRACK), Jay Jones, Larry Kriv, Joann Nelson, Pete Nelson</b> |   |



Garland Landmark Society  
P.O. Box 462232  
Garland TX 75046