

2490

18" x 28" Official Texas Historical Marker
Jefferson County - 11-26-68 - at site, at end of
Pine Street, Beaumont

SITE OF
COLLIER'S FERRY

MAIN CROSSING ON OLD JASPER
ROAD AND ALTERNATE CROSSING ON
OPELOUSAS TRAIL FROM LIBERTY
THROUGH BEAUMONT TO LOUISIANA.

USED AS EARLY AS 1750, ROUTE
FOLLOWED INDIAN TRACES AND WAS
HIGHWAY FOR EXPLORER-SETTLERS,
PRIESTS, SOLDIERS, TRADERS FROM
SPAIN, FRANCE AND ANGLO-AMERICA.

FERRY'S MOST IMPORTANT USE
WAS AS CATTLE CROSSING ON FAMOUS
OPELOUSAS TRAIL FROM 1820'S TO
1900. HERDS CAME THIS WAY TO
BYPASS THE STREETS OF BEAUMONT.

ALTHOUGH OTHERS RAN IT DURING
1831-1950 CAREER, FERRY TOOK ITS
NAME FROM JOHN COLLIER FAMILY,
WHO OPERATED IT FOR 50 YEARS.

(1968)

2490

APPLICATION FORM
OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER

County Jefferson Town Beaumont Date June 28, 1968

This marker is for (Title or Subject) SITE OF OLD COLLIER'S FERRY

Marker is to be located End of Pine Street (Collier's Ferry Road.)
(BE SPECIFIC AS TO ADDRESS, LOCATION OF SITE)

Present Owner of Property Jefferson County

Address County Court House, Beaumont Texas

Who is responsible for Marker erection, Property maintenance? Jefferson County

Who prepared the history? Mrs. Will E. Wilson

Address 140 N. Caldwood Drive - Beaumont, Texas 77707

Attach History with Reference Data for Authenticating this Subject (2-3 Pages)

Attach the Suggested Inscription for the Marker

(Copy must meet State requirements; the Texas State Historical Survey Committee reserves the right to change the suggested inscription.)

If this is an Application for a Building Medallion, enclose Picture of structure.

Do you desire to be contacted Re Final Inscription: Yes No

RECEIVED
JUL 24 1968

Who is to be recognized as the Sponsor of this marker?

TEXAS STATE HISTORICAL SURVEY
COMMITTEE

Name Jefferson County Commissioner's Court

Address _____

This application has been submitted by:

RECEIVED
JUL 23 1968
HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

Name Mrs. Will E. Wilson

140 N. Caldwood Drive - Beaumont,

Address _____

Date _____

COLLIER'S FERRY

Beaumont, Texas
(Jefferson County)

2490

Collier's Ferry across the Neches River at Beaumont, Texas dates back to 1831, according to Florence Stratton in The Story of Beaumont, p. 53 (1926).

Early records are scarce as Jefferson County was not organized until 1837, and many of the records are incomplete. The ferry site is "about five miles above the Town of Beaumont", according to an old license issued to John Collier in May, 1852. The site is located in the Hezekiah Williams survey on the west bank of the Neches not far from the mouth of Pine Island Bayou, and on the east bank in the John Breece (Orange Co.) Survey. This site is called by various names in the various ferry licenses granted through the years: Pine Bluff, Grigsby's Pine Bluff and Grigsby Bluff (not the bluff officially known in Jefferson County as Grigsby's Bluff which is south of Beaumont. Joseph Grigsby lived first in Jasper County and received a grant in 1834 south of Beaumont where he moved, between 1834 and 1837, and this is the present Grigsby's Bluff. I do not know why the bluff at Collier's Ferry carried the name Grigsby for some years, except that Grigsby was commissioner for the land office in 1837, and may have given that spot his name.) It also is called Monte's Old Crossing.

First mention of a ferry at the site is in Vol A. p. 50 of the Jefferson County Commissioner's Court (first minutes book) when on April 4, 1842, Henry Millard was granted a license for a "ferry across the Neches River at or near Pine Bluff about 5 miles above the town of Beaumont".

Rates allowed:

Man & Horse	25¢
Pack Horse	25¢
Lead Horse	12 ¹ / ₂ ¢
Foot man	12 ¹ / ₂ ¢
Wheel carriages	50¢ per wheel
Swimming cattle, mules, or horses	3¢ per head
Ferrying sheep	5¢ per head
Swimming hogs	3¢ per head

Next mention is for January 7, 1845, when James Armstrong is released from the ferry bond of the Montes and given license to run a ferry at Grigsby's Bluff. In this year John and Augustine Monte were granted a license to run a ferry "at the place where they now reside". Because the site of Collier's Ferry is referred to several times as "Monte's old crossing" (e.g. Vol A. p. 89 Com. Cr. Minutes called for a review of "road leading from Beaumont to Jasper as far as the county line to cross the river at the place called Monte's Ferry" and on p. 97 issued one James Robbins a permit to run a ferry "across the Neches River in the County of Jefferson at what is known as Grigsby's Pine Bluff, at Monte's old crossing"), the place where the Montes "now reside" described above is across the mouth of Allen's Bayou which is about

8 or 10 miles south of Collier's Ferry, and where J. & A. Monte received a land patent from Rep. of Texas next to the William Allen survey in Orange County and touching Smith's Bluff in Jefferson County, I think it possible that sometime prior to 1842 the Montes ran a ferry across Colliers, and then received their land grant south of Beaumont, moved there, and began a new ferry again, the first official mention of which is in Jan 1845 Com. Court Minutes.

Vol A

On January 10, 1848 (p. 97, Jefferson County Commissioner's Court Minutes) James Robbins was licensed "to keep and run a ferry across the Neches River in the County of Jefferson at what is known as Grigsby's Pine Bluff at Monte's Old Crossing at the place where James Robbins now resides". Rates were set as follows:

Wheel carriages	50¢ per wheel to include team and driver
Horse and rider	25¢
Lead horse	12 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢
Pack Horse	25¢
Footman	12 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢

Robbins is mentioned for renewal of license on p. 103 (minutes) and a tax of \$5.00 per year was charged him (in comparison with one for \$40 per year for Mrs. Nancy Tevis Hutchinson, \$10 per year for J. Chessher on Village Creek, and \$2.50 for the Monti's (sp.) on the lower Neches.) "Pine Bluff" was not as busy a crossing as Tevis' Bluff!

On May 17, 1852, John Collier was granted a license to run a ferry "across the Neches River about 5 miles above the Town Bluff of Beaumont at the place known as Grigsby Bluff". (Jeff. County Ct. Minutes Vol B., p. 53). His bond was secured by Worthy Patridge and Daniel Spillars. John Collier operated the ferry until his death in 1857, and in 1858 the license was granted to the "estate of John Collier". After that the ferry was run by John Collier's son, Parsons Collier until his death in 1867. From 1868 to her death in 1891 the ferry was run by Mrs. Ellen R. Collier, the widow of Parsons Collier. In her will, probated in 1891 (Dec. 17) she left the ferry to her two sons and two daughters still surviving her (4 children pre-deceased her), and from 1891 to 1894 the license was granted to her two daughters: Elizabeth Jane Dodd, Hayes Jenkins (3 marriages) and Nancy Rachel Adcock (wife of Richard Adcock)

From 1895 to 1911 the ferry license was granted to Richard Jenkins. In February of 1912 R. Jenkins was ordered by the court to put in a new ferry boat and and improve and maintain the premises in a safe condition within sixty days. Evidently he did not, because in August 1912 H. Bransford was appointed ferryman for Collier's Ferry, and as a salary was provided of \$50 per month, it would appear that the county had taken over the ferry.

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From 1912 to 1940's the ferry was operated by the county. Among the names of those employed to operate the ferry were the following (not a complete list): Frank Graham (1916-17) William White and Lon Crouth (1918-19) Albert Sieber (1920) Pete Woods, (1921), George Smith (1920, 1924) Lee Richardson (1922-23) J. B. Cope (1924-25), Gerald Loving (1925 - 1930's), R. E. Ligon (1933), and U. G. Bodin (1940's). After the county closed the ferry, U. G. Bodin in 1947 applied to the county to run the ferry "formerly operated by Jefferson County Precinct 1 .. on a toll basis for the convenience of the public travelling to and from Orange and Jefferson County". The following tolls were set:

Passenger car.....	50¢	one way
" with light trailer	75¢	" "
Truck	\$1.00	
6 wheel truck	\$2.00	
Bicycle and rider.....	.25	
Pedestrian10	
Livestock, each head....	.10	

The permit was for one year, and renewed for one year in 1948. In 1949 W. J. Dugue applied to run the ferry, and in August of that year D. Chester entered into an agreement with the county to run the ferry for five years - the county agreeing to turn over to D. Chester all cables, etc and "the old ferry now sunk on the river bottom". Chester operated the ferry for a time, but lost money on it and gave it up.

Collier's Ferry in the early days was the chief crossing between Beaumont and the Bevilport-Jasper Road. It was also an alternate route from Beaumont to Orange and Opelousas used when the low marshy area on the east bank of the Neches at Tevis's Ferry was impassable, and a long detour by Bunn's Bluff, and north Orange County was sometimes taken. This route was also used for the cattle drives which skirted across the north end of the town of Beaumont and crossed at Collier's Ferry, continuing across northern Orange County, sometimes crossing at Ballew's Ferry or turning northward into Newton county and crossing near present Deweyville.

The Farm Corner column of the Wednesday, June 26, 1968 Beaumont Enterprise quotes a letter from Mrs. Millie Franklin of Vidor, Texas whose grandfather William Williamson settled the Williamson Community in north Orange County: "When herds came through from the San Antonio region my grandfather would help as a trail rider from Welsh La. to New Orleans. The cattle were sold in New Orleans. He said that some of the plantations on the route would buy as many as 25 steers for their own use for beef. After my grandfather came to this region he would join the trail drivers when they came through from the Southwest, and went with them to New Orleans. The drovers usually camped near my grandfather's house, as he had large pens where the cattle could be held overnight. The herds crossed the Neches at Collier's Ferry, and I recall that a place on a creek about five miles from here was called the "Old Beef Crossing" because the trail herds always crossed the creek at that place." (Note: her grandfather died in 1900*) (I think I sent you a copy of this clipping in an earlier mailing)

[- Rosine Wilson]

MRS. WILL E. WILSON

140 NORTH CALDWOOD DRIVE

BEAUMONT, TEXAS

- Re: Site of Collier's Ferry Marker. End of Pine St. is the end of Old Collier's Ferry Road - I haven't been out with county commissioner yet, but I propose to place marker at exact ferry landing.
- 1.

- Re: State Committee meeting-restoration conference
2. Will your office make reservations for us at a motel? Will and I both plan to attend. Hope to have two others from Beaumont - would like name of motel to recommend to them.

Ross

Beaumont



Original Plat of
Beaumont



21 July 1887

