

LONE STAR BOOSTER: THE LIFE OF AMON G. CARTER

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Though a very influential Texan during the first half of the twentieth century, Amon Carter has yet to receive a full scholarly treatment, a problem which this dissertation attempts to rectify by investigating the narrative of Carter's life to see how and why he was able to rise from humble beginnings to become a powerful publisher who symbolized boosterish trends within Texas and the New South. Publisher of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, philanthropist, oilman, and aviation supporter, Carter used his power and influence to become a leading booster of his city and region seamlessly making the transition from being a business progressive to New Deal supporter to an Eisenhower Democrat.

His connections with corporations like American Airlines and General Motors helped bring aviation and industry to his region, and his ability to work with public and private entities helped inspire his failed attempt to make the Trinity River navigable up to Fort Worth. His own success at building the Star-Telegram into the largest circulating newspaper in Texas encouraged him to expand his media empire into radio and television, while the wealth he gained from his oil activities enabled him to form a philanthropic foundation that would provide support for Fort Worth's medical, cultural, and educational needs for the future. Possessing a life marked by both success and failure, it is clear throughout this dissertation that Carter embodied the idea of the New South civic booster, a figure who at once promoted his goals for his city and region while understanding how this fit within the larger national context.

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## CHAPTER 1

### AMON CARTER: A BRIEF HISTORIOGRAPHY

As a blizzard swept across the North Texas plains near the Wise County community of Crafton on December 10, 1879, nineteen-year old Josephine Ream Carter gave birth to a healthy baby boy. Named Giles Amon after his father William's younger brother; he would grow to become one of the more influential Texans of his time, a fact not foreshadowed by his humble beginnings in a one-room log cabin. When Carter died on June 23, 1955, condolences poured into the city of Fort Worth from politicians, businessmen, and celebrities. Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson delivered a special address on the floor of the Senate chamber in his honor, calling him, "one of the great moving forces of our time . . . a towering figure in the daily life of our citizens." Fifteen thousand people paid tribute at his grave the day after his burial. Widely recognized around the nation as "Mr. Fort Worth," Carter left behind a city and state changed in numerous ways. These political, social, and economic changes resulted from the successful relationships Carter cultivated among local, state, and national politicians and businessmen.<sup>1</sup>

Carter consciously developed his bonds with what can best be described as the "establishment." His early background as a travelling salesman and in advertising on the West Coast gave him a national network of contacts upon which he could build. Though he had little knowledge of the city's elite when he arrived in Fort Worth in 1905, he used his position at the fledgling Fort Worth Star-Telegram to gain influence among

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<sup>1</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, June 24-25, 1956.

the city fathers. By 1920, he had established himself as a prominent civic booster within his adopted hometown and moved into the next stage of his development. During the 1920s, Carter began exercising more statewide influence as evidenced by his role in the founding of Texas Technological College (now Texas Tech University) as well as using his position as publisher of the Star-Telegram to increase his political influence.

By the time Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected in 1932, Carter was the head of the largest media empire in Texas (he founded WBAP, one of the first radio stations in Texas in 1922) and a friend to countless national politicians, businessmen, and celebrities. Using the relationships he had crafted over the years, he wielded his influence to ensure that Fort Worth would receive the benefits of federal largess during the New Deal. As vice-president John Nance Garner said, Carter wanted “the whole Government of the United States to be run for the exclusive benefit of Fort Worth.” This was not due to any small-minded provincialism on Carter’s part. After all, he spent a large portion of his adult life meeting with business and political associates in cities like Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C. and enjoying the limelight on these visits if at all possible. Still, it must be kept in mind that his underlying desire on many of these trips was “to get Wall Street and the industrial centers to move into Fort Worth.” What is clear is that his actions for most of his life were based on a firm recognition of the need for Fort Worth to integrate with the state and national economic and political networks.<sup>2</sup>

The image Carter developed as “Mr. Fort Worth” was a reflection of what historian Blaine Brownell called the urban “ethos,” which he defined as “a general overarching concept of the city which stressed the desirability-indeed the necessity-of

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<sup>2</sup> Alva Johnston, “Colonel Carter of Cartersville,” Saturday Evening Post, November 26, 1938, p. 8.

both urban growth and social order in such a way that they would be mutually reinforcing.” The urban boosterism that Carter was so famous for (in 1952, Time magazine called him “a civic monument, which unlike San Antonio’s Alamo, Houston’s Shamrock, and Dallas’ Cotton Bowl, can walk and talk at incredible speed”) was “actually an expression of the urban ethos . . . a rhetorical effort to achieve the realization of the corporate-expansive city by promoting urban unity, growth, and commercial-civic opportunities.” Carter devoted much of his time and a good portion of newspaper space trying to promote these goals for Fort Worth, a reflection of his role as one of the “first Texas news barons,” as historian Patrick Cox argues. Like other Texas media moguls of his day, Carter influenced “public opinion and policy making” while maintaining “ties with the growing commercial concerns of the state and its dominant political class.”<sup>3</sup>

Never the philosophizer, Carter in no way articulated his motives for his persistent promotion of Fort Worth. His communications with friends and colleagues lauded Fort Worth but offered no explanation for why he chose that city upon which to lavish his attentions. This leaves scholars the task of parsing through archival material to assess what his motives might have been. Carter’s correspondence reveals a man possessing a rather large ego, an insatiable appetite for success, and a penchant for sales. Fort Worth was small enough to lack an entrenched political and economic elite, yet, like Brownell’s southern city, large enough to provide a man of his ambition and

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<sup>3</sup> Blaine Brownell, The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 1975, xix; “Personality,” Time, February 25, 1952, 45; Patrick Cox, The First Texas News Barons (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 3.

talent with potential for “promoting urban unity, growth, and commercial-civic opportunities.”<sup>4</sup>

Born into a poor rural family, Carter had to work hard to develop an economic foundation for success. Despite the obvious shortcomings of his background, he successfully maneuvered his way through life, beginning first as a “chicken and bread boy” selling sandwiches to train passengers in his hometown of Bowie, Texas. After spending his late teens and early twenties as a travelling salesman, he settled briefly in San Francisco to work in advertising. Despite a promising future in San Francisco, Carter decided to move back to Texas, where he connected with investors looking to start their own newspaper. By 1909, this newspaper had become the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. Much of Carter’s widespread influence sprang from his position as the founder and publisher of the Star-Telegram, turning it into one of the most widely circulated newspapers in Texas during the mid-twentieth century. Under his watchful eye, Fort Worth was transformed from a large cattle town into a thriving city of commerce and industry. Due to Carter’s presence and power, Fort Worth was able to attract many major businesses and construction projects that attested not only to the dynamism of the city but also to the drive he possessed. His political and commercial influence, felt beyond the city’s borders, left a legacy that remains visible decades after his death.<sup>5</sup>

Carter diversified his contributions to the city of Fort Worth and the state of Texas during his time as Star-Telegram publisher. He is perhaps most famous for the

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<sup>4</sup> Brownell, The Urban Ethos in the South, xix.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Proctor, “Amon Carter,” in Ron Tyler, ed. The New Handbook of Texas, 6 vols., (Austin: Texas State Historical Association 1996), 1: 998.



American/Western art museum in Fort Worth that bears his name (he collected the art of Frederic Remington and Charles Russell, two of the most prominent Western artists of the late nineteenth century), but he made many other contributions to Texas and Fort Worth. Using the newspaper as his personal sounding board, Carter pushed for a variety of projects that he believed would benefit his city and state. The projects and causes that Carter promoted were varied in nature. He understood that expanding his communications empire meant pursuing new technologies such as radio and television; this resulted in his founding of WBAP radio and television stations in 1922 and 1948 respectively. Having lacked much of a formal education, Carter successfully lobbied for a state university for West Texas and was rewarded when Texas Technological College opened in Lubbock in 1925. Early in his career, he actively sought to make Fort Worth an aviation hub and was one of the founding members of American Airlines. When the Great Depression and World War II pulled Fort Worth more into national affairs, Carter leveraged his rising influence with the Roosevelt administration to gain New Deal dollars for construction projects in the city as well as a Consolidated Aircraft plant that churned out thousands of B-24 Liberator bombers for the war effort. By striking oil in the 1930s, he became a millionaire and was thus able to contribute even more to his philanthropic efforts through the Amon Carter Foundation.<sup>6</sup>

Despite Carter's influence on Texas and Fort Worth, very little has been written about him. The first scholarly work was a thesis written by Samuel Kinch in 1965 entitled "Amon Carter: Publisher-Salesman". The focus of the thesis is Carter's work in running the Star-Telegram, so while it does cover some of the basics of Carter's

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

background, its purpose is not purely biographical. In 1978, Jerry Flemmons, formerly a reporter for the Star-Telegram, wrote the first of two books on Carter: Amon: The Life of Amon Carter, Sr. of Texas. In 1998, he published Amon: The Texan who Played Cowboy for America. While these two books have a good narrative and humorous anecdotes, they also possess some glaring weaknesses such as lack of citations, poor organization, and little analysis of Carter's character. In addition, Flemmons' s books have a dearth of historical context, and he fails to place Carter within the framework of urban boosters so prominent in New South cities. While Flemmons does admit that the cowboy character that Carter loved to play in public was purely an act, he contributes to this buffoonish image by regaling the reader with numerous stories that reinforce this representation. Beyond these two works, Carter was featured in a variety of magazines while he was alive. Reader's Digest, Saturday Evening Post, and Time all ran biographical sketches of Carter during his lifetime, and these articles possess varying levels of information on Carter's background.<sup>7</sup>

What is missing in these works on Carter is an analysis not just of his accomplishments but also of his motives, desires, and historical context. To understand his actions, his life must be analyzed as one of a typical New South booster. Carter successfully preached a message of business progressivism in the tradition of New South boosterism as begun by fellow newspaper publishers such as Henry Grady of the Atlanta Journal Constitution and Richard Hathaway Edmonds of the Baltimore

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<sup>7</sup> Samuel Kinch "Amon Carter: Publisher/Salesman" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1965); Jerry Flemmons, Amon: The Life of Amon Carter, Sr. of Texas (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1978); Jerry Flemmons, Amon: the Texan who Played Cowboy for America (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1998).

Manufacturers' Record during the 1880s and continued throughout Texas and other southern states. He was part of a wave of urban southern boosters, individuals who were, “newcomers on the make . . . willing to take financial risks and to embrace modern technologies and economic associations.” Like other civic-minded southerners, Carter, “merged with national elites,” and “believed that progressive reforms were good for business.” By the latter part of his life, he had become a member of what historian George Green called the Texas ‘establishment,’ a group of conservative, “loosely-knit plutocracy of the Anglo upper classes,” who regularly involved himself in state and national politics.<sup>8</sup>

A study of his life demonstrates that Carter’s strength was the ability to do more than survive; rather, he thrived mainly because he possessed the persistence and stubbornness necessary to ensure success. Simultaneously, this characteristic damaged his personal life as his devotion to business and politics often kept him away from home and family. While it is relatively easy to list his numerous achievements, it is much more difficult to explain how Carter was able to rise from obscure humble beginnings and build a regional media empire with widespread influence. Carter’s career seems to embody the “Texas Myth” described by historian Randolph Campbell; this myth “depends on a generalized belief in the Lone Star State as an exceptional

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<sup>8</sup> Edward Haas, “Review of New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910, by Don Doyle,” The Journal of Southern History 77 (Mar. 1991): 1370-1371; George Green, The Establishment in Texas Politics: The Primitive Years, 1938-1957 (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1979), xi. The most recent biography of the father of the New South movement, Henry Grady, is Harold Davis’ Henry Grady’s New South: Atlanta, a Brave and Beautiful City (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990). For information on Richard Hathaway Edmonds, refer to Yoshimitsu Ide’s dissertation, “The Significance of Richard Hathaway Edmonds and his Manufactures' Record in the New South” (Ph.D. Diss., Univ. of Florida, 1959).

place in the world, the home of self-reliant individuals who take advantage of the bountiful opportunities provided by a new American Eden.” And while his upbringing could not have been more detrimental to an individual looking for successful integration with the political and business establishment, circumstances conspired to point Carter toward an extraordinary career full of trials and triumphs.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Randolph B. Campbell, “History and Collective Memory in Texas: The Entangled Stories of the Lone Star State,” in Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas eds. Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2007), 271.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF AMON CARTER, 1879-1909

At the time of Carter's birth in 1879, his parents, William and Josephine Ream Carter, lived in a poorly insulated log cabin with William's younger brother, Giles. Because of the pitiable condition of the cabin, both mother and child were forced to move in with a neighbor temporarily in order to stay warm. The twenty-six-year old William and nineteen-year old Josephine were recent settlers in the area as were most whites who lived in Wise County at that time. Wise County was first settled by whites in 1854 after the previous residents, the Kichai Indians, a Caddoan tribe, had been defeated by the United States Army and removed to the Brazos Indian reservation. The county's population quickly grew to over three thousand mainly through immigration from southern states, but the onset of the Civil War hampered further growth. When federal troops were withdrawn from the frontier upon Texas' secession, Comanche Indians renewed their attacks on Wise County whites. The number of residents dropped to 1,450 by 1870 but began to climb again as the Indian threat had subsided by 1875. This renewed surge of whites included the Carters who settled near the new community of Crafton, named after George Craft upon whose land the town was laid out.<sup>10</sup>

William Carter was a nondescript farmer with a personality allegedly as hard as the soil that he tried to farm. On the other hand, Josephine was a relatively cultured woman who had reportedly spent some time as a child living at La Reunion, a French

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<sup>10</sup>Dallas Morning News, May 16, 1955.

utopian commune near Dallas. William and his brother Giles were farm laborers at the time of Amon's birth, and William remained in agriculture for the rest of his life.

Throughout the census records he appears as a farm laborer (apparently working for someone else). He was initially a renter, but, by 1910, he owned his own farm. At some point in young Amon's life, his father also purchased a peach orchard called Bank Farm just west of Montague. In a 1952 Time magazine interview, Amon claimed that that his father worked as a blacksmith, a statement substantiated in Amon's obituary and by Nenetta Burton, Amon Carter's second wife. William Carter also turned to raising chickens, as mentioned in The State of Texas Book: One Hundred Years of Progress. The chapter on the Texas poultry industry mentions William Carter as one of the few poultry men in Bowie where he raised Plymouth Rock chickens and won prizes in Texas and Oklahoma.<sup>11</sup>

While William Carter toiled to make a living, Josephine devoted herself to raising Amon. In letters to her cousin Mary Bondred, Josephine bragged about her baby boy, Amon, saying, "I have the finest boy you ever saw." His relentless curiosity and restlessness were apparent from the beginning as Josephine had problems keeping him

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<sup>11</sup> "Personality," Time, February 25, 1952, 45; Amon Carter, to Mrs. J.P. Hagler, Nov. 29, 1937, Box 36, Amon Carter Personal Activities, 1937, Amon G. Carter Collection, Mary Coats Burnett Library, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas (cited hereafter as AGC Collection); Victor J. Smith, The State of Texas Book: One Hundred Years of Progress, (Austin: Bureau of Research and Publicity, 1937), 247; Flemmons, Amon, 39; Rondel V. Davidson, "La Reunion," in The New Handbook of Texas, 4: 78-79. Further research on Josephine Ream Carter indicates that reports of her past at La Reunion may not be accurate. According to the New Handbook of Texas, the colony at La Reunion was dissolved in the late 1850s and was completely broken up by 1860. Josephine was born in 1859 in Arkansas and still lived there when the 1860 census was gathered.

“on’na palet nor hardly in the house. He is the worst rouda I ever saw.” Still, she boasted, “Amon is the sweetest boy you ever saw.”<sup>12</sup>

Despite spending only a few years of his life in Crafton, Amon fondly remembered his days there and even returned there during the 1930s for a town reunion. While there, Amon noticed that his deceased mother’s Presbyterian church was in shambles and that the church bells she had loved listening to so much were lying in disrepair in the church yard. While attending the reunion Carter remarked, “See that bell lying in the Presbyterian churchyard? My mother used to hear that bell in the 1870s and 1880s when she went to church. I’d like to have that bell.” Will Warren, a friend of Amon’s and longtime Crafton resident, approached the church’s deacons soon after to request the bells for him and was told “We’re not giving him that bell.” Despite his pleas, he was unsuccessful; he decided to send Amon the unused bell from the Baptist church next door saying, “It was just as old as the Presbyterian bell. And Mrs. Carter heard it too, when she went to church on Sunday.”<sup>13</sup>

The Carters did not stay long in Crafton; sometime after a daughter, Addie, was born in 1887, William moved his family to a peach farm at Nocona, Texas, in Montague County. Nocona was a relatively new settlement when Amon and his family arrived in the late 1880s. While white settlers had moved into the area in the 1870s, the town was not incorporated until 1887. Named after the Comanche chief Peta Nocona, the town grew steadily over the next few years thanks to the presence of a line of the Missouri and Pacific Railroad as well as Herman J. Justin’s boot factory. The hustle and bustle

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<sup>12</sup> Josephine Carter to Mary Bondred, June 20, 1880, Box 45, Josephine Carter File, AGC Collection.

<sup>13</sup>Alva Johnston, “Colonel Carter of Cartersville,” Saturday Evening Post, 26 Nov. 1938, p. 31; Dallas Morning News, May 16, 1955.

of the town proved to be the perfect place for young Amon to begin honing his skills as a salesman.<sup>14</sup>

Sometime after William moved his family to Montague County, he began blacksmithing, a craft he unsuccessfully tried to teach Amon. During one training session, Carter was kicked unconscious by a horse and suffered three broken ribs. Disenchanted with blacksmithing, young Amon found other ways to make a little money, including gathering empty half-pint flasks from outside saloons and selling them back to the saloon keepers for twenty cents a dozen. It is not clear if Carter began his enterprising career due to financial pressure from his family or because he simply enjoyed the thrill of making money; one suspects that with his family struggling financially this was something that he was in some way forced to do. Whatever the reason, it is clear that life would have been much different for Amon if he had found blacksmithing to be more rewarding.<sup>15</sup>

Disaster struck the Carter family on March 7, 1892, when, for unknown reasons, Josephine died. The Ream family Bible merely reads, "Josie Carter departed this life," with no explanation for the cause of death. Soon after her death, William married a much younger woman named Ella Patterson and moved to the town of Sunset in southern Montague County. Amon did not approve of this new marriage, possibly because of the close attachment that he had for his mother. At the age of thirteen, Amon left his father's house and moved in with his grandmother in Nocona. After living with his grandmother for some time, he decided to strike out for Montana, though by his

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.; The Historical Committee of the Fort Worth Petroleum Club, Oil Legends of Fort Worth (Fort Worth: Taylor Publishing, 1993), 93.



own account he was unaware of where exactly that might be located. He boarded a Missouri, Kansas, and Texas train with only forty cents in his pocket. After the conductor escorted him off the train near Belcherville, Texas, Amon walked the twenty miles to Bowie, Texas. Without a family to support him, Carter was forced to earn his living in a variety of ways, with varying degrees of honesty.<sup>16</sup>

Finding himself in a town with no relatives, twelve-year-old Carter made his way to the Jarrott Hotel, a place he was familiar with since the owner, Millie Jarrott, bought peaches from his father. Carter asked her for work, and she noted his willingness to do whatever chores she might have for him. She replied in the affirmative and that was the beginning of his first steady job. The kindly Jarrott paid him \$1.50 a week plus room and board to wash dishes, wait tables, clean rooms, and carry luggage for customers. Carter had pleasant memories from his days working for Jarrott, and when he had the money to do so, he bought the hotel from her and ran it in her behalf. When she died, he also paid for her funeral expenses.<sup>17</sup>

Though Carter already had a semblance of security by working for Jarrott, he also sold peaches, ice cream, and bottled soda-pop for a local bottling plant. The ever-resourceful Carter discovered that there was money to be made during the summers by travelling seven or eight miles away to Queen's Peak, the highest point in Montague County, where locals watched and bet on horse races. Desperate for a rider for his horse, Baldy, Bowie resident Horace Woods persuaded Carter to be his rider, despite

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<sup>16</sup> Carter to Hagler, Nov. 29, 1937, Box 36, Amon Carter Personal Activities 1937, AGC Collection; Ream Family Bible, AGC Collection; "Montague Cemetery Listing," <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~txmontag/CemMontague.txt>. (Accessed April 22, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Carter to Hagler, Nov. 29, 1937, Box 36, AGC Personal Activities 1937, AGC Collection; Kinch, "Amon Carter," 8; "Personality," 45.

the youth's lack of racing experience. Carter worried he would fall so Woods tied him onto the horse's back; nevertheless, he slid off near the end as his horse was galloping to victory. Though his opponent argued that Carter had lost the race since he had fallen off his horse, Woods settled the issue by brandishing his .45 Colt revolver. Carter received five dollars for his pains, as well as a reputation for hardiness.<sup>18</sup>

While still a relative newcomer to Bowie and hoping to pay his way through the eighth grade, he briefly worked for Z.T. Lowry's Grocery Store, hauling buckets of drinking water into the store. These trips through the store took him down the snuff aisle where Levi P. Garrett's Scotch snuff was sold next to prime competitor Railroad Snuff. In a marketing gimmick, Levi Garrett Snuff began inserting nickels under the cork as a rebate. When Lowry's Grocery burned, Carter remembered these rebates, and asked Lowry, if he could keep whatever items he found in the ruins of the store. Lowry agreed and the barefoot Carter promptly strode to the back of S. Daube & Company, a local general store, to pick out some old shoes so his feet would not be burned. Customers buying new shoes typically left their old shoes in a discard pile at the back, so Carter found a pair (much too large) and tied them onto his feet. Armed with "new" shoes, and a small iron rod to poke through the ashes, Amon poked through the rubble and dug out six dollars worth of nickels before other boys showed up as competition.<sup>19</sup>

The most enduring image from Carter's time in Bowie is his reputation as the "chicken and bread boy" who sold fried chicken and biscuits to hungry train passengers

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<sup>18</sup> Melvin Fenoglio, ed. Story of Montague County, Texas: Its Past and Present, (Montague County, TX: Curtis Media, 1989), 52; "Queen's Peak," New Handbook of Texas, 5, 384; "Race Rider", unpublished manuscript, no date, Box 36, AGC Personal Activities, 1938 File, AGC Collection.

<sup>19</sup> Johnston, "Colonel Carter," 38; Flemmons, Amon, 40.

as they stopped in the town. While working as a roustabout in a wagon yard, he killed a chicken (apparently by accident). He persuaded a widow named Brodie that he worked for and sometimes stayed with to cut it up and fry it for him to sell. Soon after, he struck a deal with Brodie in which he would pay \$2.50 weekly for room and board and she would cook him a chicken daily. He was able to buy chickens for twenty-five cents apiece and sell the resulting meals for ten cents each. Before long, he was making two dollars a day. If Carter was short of money or there were no chickens available to buy, he apparently either raided local henhouses or substituted rabbit meat. It really did not matter what kind of meat it was, for, as Carter later admitted, "We fried the chickens in a thick batter and you couldn't tell the drumstick from the gizzard." During the 1930s, President Roosevelt heard stories of Carter's days as a "chicken and bread boy" and when his train stopped in Bowie on a cross-country journey, Carter boarded the train to sell the president one of his famous "chicken and bread" sandwiches.<sup>20</sup>

Once he reached his mid-teens, Carter began branching out into other job ventures that were even less reputable. Having quit school after completing the eighth grade, he had more time to devote to various business ventures. One of his more notorious money-making schemes involved the purchase of a knife-board game he operated out of a Bowie saloon owned by John and Tam Lindsay, boarders at the Jarrott Hotel where Amon was employed. With his partner, M.M. Hurdleston, a Fort Worth and Denver Railroad yardmaster currently on strike, Carter rented out the space for ten dollars a month, a price they quickly recovered as their knife-board game grew in popularity. Carter covered a board in black alpaca cloth, and glued corks of various

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<sup>20</sup> Fenoglio, Montague County, 52; Flemmons, Amon, 41; Johnston, "Colonel Carter," 31; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, June 24, 1955.

sizes (borrowed from the saloon owners) onto it along with a knife. Coins of different values were added to the corks, and customers would pay Carter and Hurdleston money to try to toss wooden rings on the corks to win the money attached to them, or toss them onto the handle of the knife in order to win the knife. Carter developed an idea early on to encourage more people to play the game; he placed a five-dollar bill through the knife handle as a prize and tilted the knife in such a way as to make it easier to ring. Bowie farmer Adolph Fincher was the first to win the five dollars and word spread of his amazing luck. Amon's next move was to push the knife back into its original position so that future players would spend countless dollars attempting to replicate Fincher's good fortune.<sup>21</sup>

Business went so well for Carter that he moved out of his previous quarters and rented a room with Hurdleston (ten years his senior) just off the gambling hall above the saloon. Around this time, Carter encountered a lanky painter known by the nickname of "Shadow", a man who turned out to be an excellent player of the knife-board game (as well as something of a pool shark). Ever resourceful, young Amon decided to pay Shadow five dollars a week to show up a few times a week to show other customers how to beat the game, thus enticing more to keep playing. He found other ways to capitalize on Shadow's skillfulness such as going with him to Dallas during the Texas State Fair and placing bets on pool games played with Dallas pool sharks who assumed they could beat the rural visitors.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "Knife Board", unpublished manuscript, n.d., Box 37, Amon Carter Personal File 1938, AGC Collection.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1900 Census, ;Johnston, "Colonel Carter," 31.

In 1897, searching for greater business opportunities and eager to see more of the world (after all, he had missed out on making it to Montana), Carter left Texas for Indian Territory where his cousin's husband, Michael McGinley, owned a grocery store in Norman. For awhile, he worked for \$30 a month at the Davis Confectionery, making ice cream and selling candy. Long hours, high rent at the Grand Central Hotel, and restlessness soon got the better of Carter. Hearing of an opportunity to be a travelling salesman with the American Copying Company (ACC), an organization that sold enlarged portraits and frames, he quit his job at the confectionery. While not quite as blatantly fraudulent as the knife board game, the selling practices of the ACC did go beyond what can be considered ethical business practices. Salesman would go door to door in small towns and cities through the West and Midwest selling pictures. More specifically, the salesman sold a process by which an oversized oil painting could be made of an existing photograph. While this was often times an attractive offer to customers, the problem was that the new portrait did not fit any frames but those sold by the ACC.<sup>23</sup>

Carter's travels took him throughout the United States, particularly the western half. He seemed to relish the success his travels brought him; he bought a flashy diamond ring, boots, spurs, and a six-shooter, finally made it to Montana (where he reportedly broke up a light opera performance) and wrote that he was "having a time with an old girl" during a brief stay in Galena, Kansas. Though never one to shy away from having a good time, Carter rose swiftly through the ranks of the company; by 1901 he was promoted to a sales manager position. While at this position, he imparted much

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<sup>23</sup> Oliver Knight, Fort Worth: Outpost on the Trinity (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1953), 218; "Personality," 45.

of his knowledge of sales to his underlings. In a typed document titled "Carter's Talk", Carter laid out his philosophy of salesmanship. "To do business with a man," he states, "you must first win his confidence...It is not what you say to a man that impresses him, but how you say it." He continued by saying, "Never get discouraged. Do not expect to sell everybody."<sup>24</sup>

Much of his talk centered on recruiting storeowners into the business with a shrewd blend of advertising and sales. One method the ACC used in selling frames door to door was to deliver merchant directories to homes in the area. Inside the directory was room for tickets denoting the cash spent at each merchant. If a customer purchased twenty-five dollars from local merchants that signed up with the ACC, then he/she would get a free portrait as long as they redeemed the tickets inside the directory. Unfortunately for the customer, the frames were stocked at the stores of merchants who had signed on with the ACC; they were available for purchase for \$2.98. On top of the money made for each frame sold, the merchant would pay the ACC a half cent for each ticket inside a customer's book.<sup>25</sup>

Carter expected that a business deal of this nature would arouse suspicion, especially on the part of the merchant. Knowing that rejection could cause further failures on the part of young salesmen, Carter told his employees, "If you go into a store and a man calls you down good and proper, never leave the store until you have repaid the compliment, if you have to stay there an hour. Tell him what you think of him with a smile on your face, and walk out saying, 'Well, I had the last word, and he didn't get the

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<sup>24</sup>Amon Carter to W.W. Ince, June 28, 1899, Box 108, W.W. Ince File, AGC Collection; "Personality," 45; "Carter's Talk", July 3, 1903, Box 35, File 18, AGC Collection.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

best of me'." Carter proved throughout the rest of his life that this statement was more than a word of advice for young salesmen; rarely would he ever let others have the last word with him in any dispute.<sup>26</sup>

In the midst of his cross-country travels, Carter found the time to woo and marry Zetta Thomas, daughter of Bowie rancher Giles D. Thomas, in 1902. Little is known about their relationship due to the dearth of existing correspondence between the couple or discussions of their marriage in letters to and from friends and family. In one letter to colleague and friend William Ince, Amon hinted that Zetta accompanied him when he was temporarily headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah; otherwise, Zetta remained in Bowie while he travelled and managed lower-ranking salesmen within the company. Undoubtedly, Zetta had a hard time dealing with her husband's frequent absences from home and the extant letters reveal a woman who desired a more present husband or at least one who stayed in contact with his family when gone. Over the years this would cause an irreparable rift in their relationship. Three years into their marriage, Zetta gave birth to a daughter Bertice; she would be their only offspring. Though often busy and away from home during her childhood, Amon tried to instill in Bertice the same industrious, hard-working spirit that he had shown in his life. The few letters that exist from her childhood are full of exhortations to hard work and thriftiness. Despite his best efforts to be available for his wife and daughter, Carter would find that

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

his devotion to his work for the next decade and a half would undermine the home that he had established.<sup>27</sup>

In 1903, after over five years with the ACC, Carter left for a new career in advertising. In his travels as a salesman, he met Edgar Swasey of Barnhart and Swasey Advertising Company in San Francisco. Armed with a strong letter of recommendation from W.J. Graham and A.L. Utz of the ACC, Carter traveled to San Francisco to a new position with Barnhart and Swasey. Evidently his work at the ACC was considered priceless for by the next year, Graham and Utz sent him a letter in San Francisco begging him to come back for a salary of one hundred dollars a week plus expenses. While little is known about Carter's time at Barnhart and Swasey, it is clear that he must have continued to make a good impression on Swasey. In 1905, soon after Carter had submitted a resignation notice, he was contacted and offered employment by Swasey, who had just started his own independent advertising agency in San Francisco. By this time, however, Carter had already made up his mind to transfer to Fort Worth, Texas, to pursue independence in his own advertising career.<sup>28</sup>

Carter's adolescence and early adulthood may have lacked stability, but his experiences certainly provided him with training in survival, salesmanship, and networking. These skills enabled him to become one of Fort Worth's elite at a rapid pace. Why Carter chose Fort Worth as his new home is not quite certain from the extant

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<sup>27</sup> Zetta Carter/Amon Carter Divorce Petition, Box 35, Amon Carter Personal Activities 1920-1923; Amon Carter to W.W. Ince, Sept. 29, 1901, Box 108, W.W. Ince File, AGC Collection.

<sup>28</sup> Flemmons, Amon, 44; W.J. Graham and A.L. Utz, to Amon Carter, Sept. 1, 1903, Box 35, File 18, AGC Collection; Graham and Utz, to Carter, Dec. 27, 1904, Box 35, File 18, AGC Collection; Carter, to J. Eppinger, May 13, 1905, Box 35, File 18, AGC Collection; Edgar Swasey, to Carter, May 35, 1905, Box 35, File 18, AGC Collection.



documents. It could have been the desire to be in a city closer to his boyhood home and Zetta's family. It is also quite possible that he desired to make his way in a city that offered greater upward mobility and independence for a young man. By locating himself in Fort Worth, he had an easier path to becoming a prominent publisher and booster. Whatever the motivation, there is nothing in his letters that reveal his line of thinking as he led his family from the bustling port city of San Francisco with 300,000 people to Fort Worth, whose packing plants and stockyards were the only symbols of prosperity in the large town of barely 30,000.<sup>29</sup>

While technically a southern city, Fort Worth did not quite fit into the image of typical New South cities of the time. Southern cities from Dallas to Atlanta arose from the cotton fields as centers of the cotton industry and continued to reflect this heritage even as they grew into the twentieth century. While Dallas capitalized on its position near the cotton growing regions of Texas, Fort Worth was perched near the frontier, a place Carter would later describe as "Where the West Begins." This does not mean, of course, that Fort Worth was exceptional. David Goldfield writes that "Cities in the New South performed the same agricultural functions as they had in the Old South: they were primarily agricultural marketplaces." Fort Worth soon became a major center of the cattle industry and the packing plants that arose to take advantage of this fact were funded by outside capital. Fort Worth's growth was not isolated; cities across Texas

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<sup>29</sup> Harold Rich, "Beyond Outpost: Fort Worth, 1880-1918" (Ph.D. Diss., Texas Christian University, 2006), 130-135.

and the New South were witnessing rapid growth in population as the region struggled to emerge from its agricultural past toward a more diversified economy.<sup>30</sup>

Fort Worth at the turn of the century offered no hints of what the city would become over the next half a century with Carter as the leading booster. While it had certainly grown since the Texas and Pacific Railroad had arrived in 1876, the city was still firmly attached to its image as a cattle town. The city was named for the fort that had been established on some high bluffs overlooking the West Fork of the Trinity River on June 6, 1849, by Major Ripley Arnold. It was named for his recently deceased commanding officer, Major General William Worth. Its original purpose was to protect the settlers of the nearby settlements of Dallas and Peters Colony from Comanche attacks. Civilians quickly moved to the protection of the fort, but the fort was abandoned after four years as the settlement line moved westward.<sup>31</sup>

Fort Worth struggled, arguably surviving only by stealing the county seat from the nearby community of Birdville through apparent voter fraud. Fortunately for Fort Worth, the post-Civil War United States had a had a great appetite for beef, and cowboys began driving thousands of cattle from South Texas to Kansas through Fort Worth, which had several good Trinity River crossings. Regardless of the business that the cattle brought to Fort Worth, however, the town still had a sleepy reputation only aggravated by a Dallas newspaper editor's accusation that once a panther was found

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<sup>30</sup> David Goldfield, Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 90.

<sup>31</sup> Oliver Knight, Fort Worth, 25.

asleep in the street. By 1876, however, the town fathers had persuaded the Texas and Pacific Railroads to build through Fort Worth.<sup>32</sup>

During the 1880s and 1890s, several more railroads such as the Fort Worth and Denver City, the Fort Worth and New Orleans, and the Rock Island either began in Fort Worth or passed through the town. Fort Worth capitalized on the railroad's presence by pressing for the construction of meatpacking plants in the town. After several failed attempts by various local businessmen to form a successful meatpacking company, both Armour and Swift had located in Fort Worth by 1902. By the time of Carter's arrival in 1905, both meatpacking plants were booming, the stockyards were bustling, and the frontier fort had become a city.<sup>33</sup>

By the time Carter arrived in the city, Fort Worth was clearly the gateway to West Texas and points north because of the presence of the livestock industry, meatpacking plants, and railroads. A growing population needed urban amenities to keep them there, and Fort Worth modernized in response. Electrical companies wired the towns, and the discovery of natural gas in surrounding regions brought in gas plants. Citizens voted in a commission form of city government that funded proper roads and created city parks. The first decade of the twentieth century heralded great accomplishments for Fort Worth, and Carter saw great potential in this former frontier outpost.<sup>34</sup>

Carter arrived in Fort Worth with a patented indexing telephone directory he had acquired in San Francisco. As a growing city, Fort Worth would provide the necessary capital that Carter needed to exploit this invention. He rented an office in the Fort Worth

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 82-86.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 123-127; J'Nell Pate, Livestock Legacy: The Fort Worth Stockyards 1887-1987 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1988), 21,42.

<sup>34</sup> Knight, Fort Worth, 174-183.

National Bank, rented a typewriter for fifty cents a month, and printed business cards with the name “Texas Advertising and Manufacturing Company.” To supplement his patent work, Carter promoted advertising cards on local streetcars. However, he was soon distracted from his mission regarding the directory because of the financial opportunities Fort Worth provided. He encountered a man who told him of a method of creating fuel by combining crude oil with the cow manure abundant in the Fort Worth stockyards. His interest piqued, Carter went to the stockyards for a demonstration where he met two men, A.G. Record and D.C. McCaleb, who were interested in starting a newspaper. He traded his rights to the telephone directory for a peach orchard in Arlington, Texas, halfway between Fort Worth and Dallas, and joined the staff of the brand-new Fort Worth Star.<sup>35</sup>

The Fort Worth Star, with Carter at the head of the advertising department, set its sights on overtaking the largest newspaper in Fort Worth, the Telegram. The Star used the much smaller United Press wire services as opposed to the Associated Press wire used by the Telegram. This put the fledgling newspaper at a serious disadvantage. The Star was able to overcome this handicap in 1906, however, when the San Francisco earthquake occurred. While visiting a commodities office, Carter read over a business wire about the earthquake before news of the tragedy came over either the United Press or Associated Press wires. Carter remembered the map of San Francisco that he had placed in his wallet and used it to locate destroyed buildings for insertion in an extra edition of the Star. Before the Telegram was able to react, Carter had already sold numerous copies in Fort Worth and was headed to Dallas to sell even more. This

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<sup>35</sup> “Personality,” 45; Johnston, “Colonel Carter”, 32.

scoop boosted the newspaper's circulation but was not enough to bring the publication out of the red.<sup>36</sup>

The primary funding for the newspaper came from Colonel Paul Waples, the head of the Star Publishing Company, but Carter's business expertise was needed to keep the Star afloat. Carter came on board with a negotiated salary of thirty-five dollars a week, but soon had to accept a cut by fifteen dollars per week. Facing a financial crisis, Carter was forced to undertake an even more drastic measure: buying the rival Fort Worth Telegram.<sup>37</sup>

Purchasing the successful Telegram appeared to be a laughable solution in early 1908 but even at this early stage in life, Carter learned the value of exercising his network of acquaintances and friends. Working through his friend, O.P. Thomas, secretary of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce, Carter offered to buy the newspaper for \$100,000 with \$2,500 due at signing and the balance within ten days. To acquire the \$2,500, Carter left three diamond rings and a diamond and pearl scarf pin as collateral with the Fort Worth National Bank. With an offer from the advertising behemoth Barron Collier of New York waiting for him, Carter knew that if he failed to secure the balance within ten days, he would have to leave his newly adopted home of Fort Worth for greener pastures. With the help of Paul Waples's friendships with local businessmen W.G. Burton, H.C. Meacham, and W.C. Stripling, Carter obtained enough money to purchase the Telegram. Both newspapers shut down operations and emerged as the Fort Worth Star-Telegram as the new year of 1909 dawned. Amon

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<sup>36</sup> Samuel E. Kinch, "Amon Carter," 20-21.

<sup>37</sup> Johnston, "Colonel Carter", 32; Knight, Fort Worth, 186-187.

Carter was well on his way to becoming one of the most successful newspaper magnates in the United States.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Flemmons, Amon, 46-48; "Personality," 45; Johnston, "Colonel Carter," 32.

## CHAPTER 3

### “WHERE THE WEST BEGINS”: BUILDING A MEDIA EMPIRE, 1909-1925

By the time he reached middle-age, Amon Carter emerged as one of the leading citizens of Fort Worth by demonstrating his commitment to boosting the growth and development of the city as well as expanding his media empire by growing the Star-Telegram and establishing radio station WBAP. The civic-minded Carter believed that the Star-Telegram, Fort Worth, and West Texas would be best served by a newspaper that promoted the interests of all three. Though not yet involved in state or national politics as he would be by the mid-1920s, Carter used the newspaper to endorse projects that would encourage growth in the region. His civic leadership reflected his growing role as a typical southern, business-oriented Progressive.

Esteemed historian C. Vann Woodward writes that, “Southern Progressivism was essentially urban and middle class in nature, and the typical leader was a city professional man or businessman, rather than a farmer.” Carter, with a position on Fort Worth’s Board of Trade, membership in organizations like the Elks Club and the prestigious Fort Worth Club, and involvement in causes such as public parks and highway construction, exemplified Southern Progressivism and the urban ethos. This type of civic involvement could be seen across the South at this time: “The activities of the civic-commercial elite were evident on every hand, but perhaps the most notable was the impressive array of voluntary civic organizations that cropped up throughout the urban South, the type of association which Oscar Handlin termed, ‘the characteristic social unit of the modern city’.” As Patrick Cox states in The First Texas News Barons,

“Individual newspaper publishers knew that their publications would rise or fall in part to the degree their home cities grew or declined. Like many southern Progressives of their time, Texas’ metropolitan publishers believed the key to their state’s economic future lay with expanded industrialization and urbanization-developments that would, fortuitously, directly benefit newspapers by providing an increased readership and advertising base.” Carter’s tenure at the helm of the Star-Telegram reflects these key beliefs and practices of Texas Progressive publishers.<sup>39</sup>

Carter also began to indulge his desire for philanthropy during this time, though in much smaller doses than later and usually under the auspices of the Star-Telegram. While Carter’s penchant for giving stemmed from his genuine willingness to help others in need, it also reflected his recognition that Fort Worth citizens would be more willing to subscribe to a newspaper that cared for the city’s citizens. During the 1910s and early 1920s, the Star-Telegram battled with the Fort Worth Record, the city’s morning newspaper since 1903, for supremacy and the loyalty of Fort Worth’s newspaper readers. This battle would ultimately pit Carter against none other than William Randolph Hearst, with the result that Carter dominated of the Fort Worth news market by 1925. Armed with an expanded readership and a foothold in the new technology of radio, Carter was well-equipped to begin asserting more influence on a state and national level by the mid-1920s. As a civic booster with an “urban ethos,” he was able to use this wider influence to leverage the expansion of his adopted city.

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<sup>39</sup> C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 371; Kinch, “Amon Carter,” 33; Brownell, The Urban Ethos in the South, 47-48; Cox, First Texas News Barons, 6.



Despite a slow rate of growth during the first part of the 1910s, Fort Worth continued to develop during this sixteen-year period. City leaders worked to modernize Fort Worth as well as attract industry to the city through organizations like the Board of Trade (which became the Chamber of Commerce in 1912). Oil companies and wildcatters were attracted to the city after the discovery of oil fields in North Central Texas; the military found the climate to be suitable for their operations beginning with America's entry into World War I. Bolstered by these changes to the city's structure and economy and reflecting a general urbanizing trend in Texas, Fort Worth's population grew from 73,312 in 1910 to a respectable 106,482 by 1920.<sup>40</sup>

Reflecting the progressive attitudes of the day, Fort Worth officials worked to modernize their city's political structure and infrastructure while simultaneously using civic organizations to promote industrial growth. Politically, Fort Worth underwent two transformations in fewer than twenty years. In 1907, with the commission form of government rising in popularity after Galveston adopted it in the wake of the devastating Hurricane of 1900, Fort Worth voters voted to replace their ward-based aldermen with 4 commissioners and a ceremonial mayoral position. Progressive views on efficient, business-like city government influenced Fort Worth in 1925 to eliminate its commissioners and replace them with a council/manager form of government. The city's services and infrastructure were greatly improved as well. By the beginning of World War I in 1914, the city was served by natural gas pipelines and electricity, better sewage treatment, a more reliable water supply, a thriving streetcar operation, and an interurban line to Dallas. Though industrial growth was limited for the first half of the

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<sup>40</sup> Richard Selcer, Fort Worth (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2004), 58-63; United States Census, 1920.

1910s, the onset of World War I and the discovery of oil in West Texas ushered in a new period of growth for Fort Worth.<sup>41</sup>

Though Fort Worth began as a military outpost in 1849, there had been no military presence since the United States Army left in 1853. The United States' entry into World War I in 1917 brought great changes to the city, though not yet a permanent military presence. Fort Worth already had a small attachment to the Allied war effort before 1917 as the Royal Canadian Flying Corps trained its pilots at three fields near the city-Hicks, Everman, and Benbrook air fields from 1915 to 1917. The same clear weather and mild climate that attracted the Canadians influenced the U.S. Army's choice in 1917 to locate Camp Bowie in western Fort Worth, where the Thirty-Sixth Infantry Division trained before going to France in June 1918. Camp Bowie closed officially in 1920, but not before military engineers improved the roads and sewage system. It would be another two decades before the military and related industries made it back to Fort Worth and when it happened, it was with the assistance of Amon Carter's national influence.<sup>42</sup>

The oil boom in North Central Texas did even more for Fort Worth than the temporary location of Camp Bowie within the city limits. It was known for some time that there was oil in the region but few efforts were made to exploit this resource until World War I drove oil prices higher. W.T. Waggoner, a wealthy rancher and later oilman who made his home in Fort Worth, expressed disgust when, in 1902, oil was discovered while drilling a water well on his Wichita County ranch: "I wanted water, and they got me oil. I tell you, I was mad, mad clean through. We needed water for

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<sup>41</sup> Selcer, Fort Worth, 57; Knight, Fort Worth, 165-170; Rich, "Beyond Outpost," 201.

<sup>42</sup> Selcer, Fort Worth, 61; Knight, Fort Worth, 184.

ourselves and for our cattle to drink. I said damn the oil, I want water.” Though he was a reluctant convert to the oil gospel, others hoped that North Texas would yield gushers similar to those along the Texas Gulf Coast or in Oklahoma. Until 1917, wildcatters in North Texas struck oil in limited quantities in places like Petrolia in Clay County and Burkburnett in Wichita County.<sup>43</sup>

For Fort Worth and the North Texas region, this changed on October 25, 1917, when workers drilling for the Texas Pacific Coal Company struck oil while searching for coal near Ranger in Eastland County. This gusher sparked an oil boom when thousands rushed to the area hoping to replicate the success of the Texas Pacific. Oil was soon found on cotton farmer S.K. Fowler’s land near Burkburnett, where previous strikes had failed to produce much, and in Electra near the famed Waggoner Ranch. The Ranger strike in particular positively affected Fort Worth’s developing economy due to the fact that the city was a railroad hub for four railroads as well as the regional capital for West Texas banking and cattle. Soon, oil companies such as Gulf, Marland, Texas Pacific Coal & Oil, and Phillips “set up divisional offices in town to handle land and lease work, geology and production.” In addition, “The presence of these larger company offices, as well as ready rail access to opening areas for exploration and development, also made Fort Worth a highly desirable base of operations for smaller independents.” Among those who would ultimately profit from oil and would do his part to boost Fort Worth in the midst of this oil boom was Amon Carter.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Roger Olien and Olien, Diana Davids, Oil in Texas: The Gusher Age, 1895-1945 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 75-79.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 79-90; Bryan Burroughs, The Big Rich: The Rise and Fall of the Greatest Texas Oil Fortunes (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 17.

Against this backdrop of an evolving Fort Worth, Carter's entrepreneurial talent continued to evolve. By combining an engaging personality with his early success as a salesman, Carter was able to successfully navigate the Star-Telegram through its early years. Much of this was due to his willingness to sell not just advertising, but in some instances, to actually sell newspapers during special circumstances. One example combines Carter's salesmanship with an insight on the poor state of racial affairs in Texas. On March 3, 1910, a Dallas lynch mob stormed the Dallas County courthouse where Allan Brooks, an elderly black man, was about to stand trial for molesting a three-year-old white girl. Having broken into the courthouse, the mob grabbed Brooks and threw him out of a second story window into the street below where he was subsequently kicked and stomped and dragged behind a car. The mob then grabbed his body and hanged him from a telephone pole underneath the Elks Arch, a Dallas landmark. By 12:30 that afternoon, the Star-Telegram had printed a special edition and Carter and two newsboys, armed with 1,000 copies of the extra, took the interurban to Dallas, where they sold out within thirty minutes. At the end of the day, Carter and his two newsboys had sold over 5,000 copies in Dallas with another 1,000 sent north to the cities of Sherman and Denison where they were quickly snapped up by an eager public.<sup>45</sup>

Events like this, fortunately, were few and far between in Dallas and Fort Worth, and Carter spent most of his time ensuring that Fort Worth citizens would welcome the

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<sup>45</sup> Michael Phillips, White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 77; Herbert Shapiro, White Violence and Black Response: from Reconstruction to Montgomery, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 113; Memphis Commercial Appeal, no date, clipping in Box 240, Amon Carter Personal File, AGC Collection.

upstart newspaper as part of the community. Part of his strategy included extending the helping hand of philanthropy through two long-lasting programs designed to help Fort Worth's needy: the Free Milk and Ice Fund and the Goodfellows Fund. The Free Milk and Ice Fund began in 1912 and provided those two products during the sweltering months of June, July, and August to Fort Worth's needy citizens. Three years later, Carter's paper reported that nearly 400 families received free ice and milk that summer along with a "district nurse to administer to their needs." After World War I, the program was in effect year round and "the scope was broadened to include education in the care and use of milk and ice and to secure ice boxes for the indigent."<sup>46</sup>

The Goodfellows Fund collected community donations to give gifts to poor children at Christmas, and has remained an integral part of the newspaper's Fort Worth outreach during the Christmas season. The Goodfellows program began as a men's only fund designed to assist Fort Worth's needy families but was opened to women after an anonymous woman insisted on donating money in 1912. The 1912 gift basket was made up of coal or wood, food, and toys but changed in subsequent years. During the early years of the fund, typical gifts given by the Goodfellows generally included food, toys and clothes for each family. Money was raised by soliciting donations from the local business community and through ad campaigns urging citizens to "Kick in a penny or two." In 1915, Carter's newspaper reported that "many children know no Santa Claus but him they call Mr. Goodfellow." As Leonard Sanders writes in his history, How Fort

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<sup>46</sup> Kinch, "Amon Carter," 31.

Worth Became the Texasmost City, Carter had learned how to combine “business promotion, civic need, and an unabashed personal empathy.”<sup>47</sup>

The Free Milk and Ice and Goodfellows Funds reflected Carter’s lifelong desire to help those in need. While Carter was certainly motivated by what charity drives could accomplish for his newspaper, one cannot deny that a strong part of him simply enjoyed helping others. Philanthropy would become integral to his life, first undertaken in an unorganized, haphazard fashion (but helpful nonetheless), only to become transformed into the Amon Carter Foundation after becoming wealthy through oil interests. Of course, one can and must expand beyond Texas in order to place Carter’s philanthropy in its proper context. Philanthropic historian Robert Bremner writes in his work Giving: Charity and Philanthropy in History that Greek mythology introduced Prometheus, of the fabled Titan race, as the “first philanthropist” for his act of giving fire to the human race. The Greek word *philanthropos*, used to describe Prometheus’ actions, is often translated as philanthropy, human charity, championing mankind, and helping men. Religious texts such as the Bible and the Koran both speak favorably of charitable giving by teaching it as an essential part of Christianity and Islam. While charitable giving was considered an integral part of Western European society, much was given to support hospitals and the poor. During the nineteenth century, “philanthropy meant not the financial support for educational, charitable, and cultural institutions but advocacy of humanitarian causes such as improvement in prison conditions; abstinence or

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 31; Fort Worth Star Telegram, Jr., Jan. 6, 1915, Dec. 4, 1994; Leonard Sanders, How Fort Worth Became the Texasmost City (Fort Worth, Texas Christian University Press: 1973), 156.

temperance in use of alcohol, abolition of slavery, flogging , and capital punishment; and recognition of the rights of labor, women, and nonwhite people.”<sup>48</sup>

By the twentieth century, philanthropic activity had changed, due in part to the activity of men like Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller. Bremner writes that “Modern philanthropy took shape in the years between about 1885 and 1915,” when extremely wealthy men like Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller “favored giving to . . . education, research, and cultural institutions.” In his book American Philanthropy, Bremner notes the importance of Carnegie and Rockefeller to philanthropy extended beyond the mere act of giving away nearly nine hundred million dollars. He explains, “Rockefeller’s and Carnegie’s chief contribution to philanthropy was to found institutions capable of distributing private wealth with greater intelligence and vision than the donors themselves could hope to possess. The great philanthropic trusts they established climaxed the long effort to put large-scale giving on a businesslike basis.”<sup>49</sup>

Though the Amon Carter Foundation was not founded until 1945, well after Carter had begun his varied acts of charity and philanthropy, it marked the culmination of his efforts to maximize the giving that he had been doing and been a part of since the start of the Good Fellows Fund in 1912. The formation of benevolent trusts in no way started with Carter, but he was clearly a part of a trend that began in the late nineteenth century with industrial giants like Carnegie and Rockefeller. Until he became independently wealthy in 1937, however, Carter would be forced to indulge his philanthropic leanings by leading fundraising drives for his adopted causes either

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<sup>48</sup> Robert Bremner, Giving: Charity and Philanthropy in History (London: New Transaction Press, 2000), 121.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 159; Robert Bremner, American Philanthropy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 115.

through the pages of the Star-Telegram or by exploiting the network of industrialists and businessmen he had expanded over the years.

An excellent example of Carter heading a fundraising drive was his successful leadership in providing a new building for the Fort Worth YMCA. Building a large YMCA for downtown Fort Worth required the mobilization of the business community. The original Fort Worth YMCA building was, by all accounts, in sore need of repair. According to a national YMCA newsletter, Rabbi George Fox of Fort Worth remarked that “before he came to Fort Worth when he had the blues he went to the YMCA, but that in Fort Worth when he went to the YMCA it gave him the blues.” By 1922, Carter had taken the lead by chairing a new committee for a structure to replace the “incompetent, rheumatic old building.” Carter and other members of the Fort Worth business community had decided in March of that year to begin fundraising for a new YMCA building. Getting the building campaign running was quite a feat as the city in 1922 had just endured some of the worst flooding of the Trinity River, which caused over two million dollars in damage.<sup>50</sup>

Carter not only worked to raise some \$300,000 in donations for the building fund, but he also was able to secure a plot of land formerly owned by Mrs. Winfield Scott for the building. While Mrs. Scott did not receive any money as she was donating the land, Carter assured her that she would be given credit through a memorial tablet erected in her honor. In addition to negotiating a plot of land for the YMCA, Carter was instrumental in working with city officials for the proper permits and even pressured Southwestern Bell Telephone Company to install the proper telephone system as

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<sup>50</sup> Pacific Region Finance Newsletter, June 1922, Box 227, YMCA File, AGC Collection; Fort Worth Star Telegram, Apr. 15, 1924.



specified by the National Bureau of the YMCA. On April 12, 1924, a ceremony was held to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone with Carter speaking on behalf of the building committee. By spring 1925, when the new building was opened, it reportedly had some of the finest equipment of any YMCA in the United States.<sup>51</sup>

Carter and his colleagues at the Star-Telegram worked in these early years to modernize the paper's publishing facilities, sponsored promotional efforts, and used the newspaper to boost Fort Worth industry and West Texas agriculture to increase the Star-Telegram's circulation. The newspaper sponsored automobile endurance runs through West Texas and supported the Good Roads Association for highway construction and improvement. In 1909, the paper held a contest encouraging Fort Worth children to write letters explaining "Why Fort Worth Should Have More Parks," while simultaneously printing editorials calling for more city parks. And though Carter had not yet placed the famous slogan calling Fort Worth "Where the West Begins" on the newspaper's masthead, the Star-Telegram, "With one eye on the economy of West Texas and the other on its own image . . . advocated diversified farming and agricultural research." In 1912, the Star-Telegram published a special 250-page edition that "promoted business and commerce in Fort Worth and the region." When it became clear that the oil boom beginning in 1917 was going to positively shape Fort Worth's economy, Carter insisted that the newspaper develop its own oil and gas department with full-time writers to cover related events throughout West Texas. Clearly, Carter

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<sup>51</sup> Amon Carter to R.N. Watts, Sept. 20, 1922; Amon Carter to Mrs. Winfield Scott, Mar. 14, 1923, Box 227, YMCA File, AGC Collection; Fort Worth Star Telegram, Mar. 29, 1925.

understood from the beginning the importance of the growth of Fort Worth and West Texas to the fledgling newspaper.<sup>52</sup>

With 40,000 subscribers just four years after its inception, the Star-Telegram had the fourth largest circulation in Texas. In 1913, Paul Waples, the primary investor in the merger of the Star and the Telegram, resigned as president of the newspaper and was replaced by Louis Wortham. Carter became vice-president and general manager, reflecting his role as the driving force in the company and his rising role in the Fort Worth community. The national newspaper industry was beginning to take note of Carter and the success of the Star-Telegram. The Editor and Publisher told of how Carter had played an excellent host to visiting delegates from the Ad Club Convention held in Dallas in 1913 and remarked that “the Star-Telegram is making great progress under Mr. Carter’s administration and has already become one of the Southwest’s strongest newspapers.” The earlier financial difficulties of the Star-Telegram were a thing of the past by the mid-teens. A 1915 financial report revealed that the Fort Worth Publishing Company, which ran the paper, had assets worth over \$300,000. As of 1916, the newspaper boasted a larger circulation than its rival the Record, a position it would hold until Carter purchased the latter newspaper from William Randolph Hearst in 1925. That same year, 1916, Louis Wortham and Carter formed a partnership and created the Wortham-Carter Publishing Company to become the new publisher of the Star-Telegram; it would remain so named until Louis Wortham retired and sold his holdings to Carter in 1923.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Kinch, “Amon Carter,” 29, 33-35; Cox, First Texas News Barons, 96.

<sup>53</sup> Kinch, “Amon Carter,” 25; Cox, First Texas News Barons, 95; “Editorial Comment,” Editor and Publisher, Jan. 3, 1914.

Carter spent much of his time traveling the United States meeting with advertisers, and generally, drumming up support for Fort Worth from the national business community. This was instrumental to the continued growth of the newspaper and it provided Carter with an opportunity to expand the vast network of influential friends across the United States he had begun building in his earlier days as a travelling salesman and advertiser. There were times that Carter's long trips created animosity with Wortham, president of the Star-Telegram. Evidence seems to indicate that despite their generally amicable partnership, which had resulted in the creation of one of the most successful Texas newspapers, the two egos did not always work well together. Wortham accused Carter of going off on too many trips to Chicago and New York and simultaneously failing to keep him informed of business developments on these trips. One of the worse explosions between Carter and Wortham came in 1916 over Carter authorizing the running of an ad for the Reverend J. Frank Norris, the controversial fundamentalist pastor at the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, after Carter had made an agreement had been made with Wortham that no Norris ads would be accepted.

In a series of letters sent discussing this squabble, Wortham made statements that reveal his thoughts about Carter's personality. "You are not a rational man," Wortham fumed. "You haven't been for months." He also remarked that, "From the very first, I have known that you were self-willed, imperious, and arbitrary. During all this time I have recognized your ability with pride in you, but your fault has been that you have recognized ability in no one else but yourself." Interestingly, his comments are similar to ones Zetta made later upon divorcing Carter. In his response to Wortham, Carter revealed his skill in avoiding outright conflict. He wrote, "If this matter has

caused you any embarrassment, I naturally regret it very much, as regardless of the outcome of our business relations, I have no desire to incur your ill will, or to cause you to work yourself into an unhappy frame of mind." Despite these occasional power struggles, Wortham served the paper until 1923, just four years before his death at the age of sixty-nine.<sup>54</sup>

During the early 1920s, Carter moved to consolidate his paper's position within the Fort Worth market. As long as there was serious competition to the Star-Telegram, his role as unofficial spokesperson for Fort Worth could be limited. To achieve this dominance, Carter accomplished two feats: staving off an onslaught from media magnate William Randolph Hearst and launching a radio station as a partner to the newspaper.

Carter and Hearst were acquainted with one another for some time as newspaper publishers but how well they knew one another before 1917 is unclear. At some point in their professional relationship Carter must have made a favorable impression on Hearst because from 1917-1921, he desperately tried to get Carter to work for him. In 1918, Carter sent a letter to Hearst congratulating him on his new partnership with Carter's former advertising associate from San Francisco, Edgar M. Swasey. This was not long after Carter had turned down an initial proposal from Hearst's company to join forces with him. Discussing the possibilities of running a

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<sup>54</sup> Louis J. Wortham to Amon Carter, Oct. 2, 1916; Amon Carter to Wortham, Oct. 5, 1916, Box 35, Amon G. Carter Personal File 1916-1919, AGC Collection. J. Frank Norris was possibly the most controversial American fundamentalist preacher in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1912, he was accused of setting his own church (First Baptist Church of Fort Worth) on fire. In the 1920s, he stood trial for murder and was acquitted. For more information on Norris, see Barry Hankins God's Rascal: J. Frank Norris and the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996).

Hearst newspaper, Carter informed Swasey in 1917 that this would be a problem for him because, "As a rule a man in the Hearst organization has too many bosses. Knowing my disposition as you do you can see that I would not prosper under these conditions."<sup>55</sup>

Still, this did not stop Carter from entertaining offers from Hearst's magazine division editor and soon-to-be chief treasurer, Joseph A. Moore. In January 1918, Moore offered Carter a position running the Hearst newspaper in Atlanta, the Georgian. Carter responded by saying that in order to consider this proposal, he would have to have "absolute charge of editorial and business affairs including all employees and be subject only to Mr. Hearst[s] orders." Furthermore, he required a salary of at least \$36,000 a year and he would have to "dispose of my interest in Texas." Moore refused to conduct further negotiations by correspondence and told Carter he would have to come to New York to discuss matters with Hearst. Carter was unable (or unwilling) to travel to New York and the matter was dropped temporarily. Carter's friend Swasey met with Hearst several times over the first few months of that same year to discuss advertising management positions, and during these discussions, Swasey suggested that Carter would be the perfect man to resurrect the languishing Chicago Examiner. He informed Carter, "I told him most enthusiastically with all the emphasis I could muster that you were the one man in this country that could put that paper ahead of the Tribune in five years and that he ought to get you no matter what he has to pay you, so

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<sup>55</sup> Amon Carter to William Randolph Hearst, Dec. 31, 1918, Hearst File, Box 100, AGC Collection; Amon Carter to E.M. Swasey, Mar. 5, 1917, Correspondence File, Box 303, AGC Collection

he is going to try for you again.” Hearst did try again and he was about to offer Carter a position that would have propelled Carter to the top of the publishing world.<sup>56</sup>

In 1919, Hearst again sent feelers out to Carter through Moore to gauge his interest in working for him, this time in New York City. In February 1919, Moore wrote Carter telling him that, “there is a big development brewing here in New York in connection with one of the Hearst newspapers, and the opportunity, I believe, is big enough to interest you.” He asked him, “Are you ever going to be in a position to cash in on your wonderful work in Fort Worth and move on into the big tent?” Moore kept quiet on what changes might be coming but encouraged Carter to come to New York to discuss the matter further.<sup>57</sup>

After a second letter coaxing Carter to leave Fort Worth and come to New York to work for Hearst, Carter replied by sending a sack of pecans to Hearst as a token of appreciation for his consideration. Moore responded to Carter telling him of Hearst’s feelings on the matter. “While it is very sweet of you to send these nuts to him,” he wrote, “he would have preferred very much to have you present yourself in full readiness to take charge of the great big proposition which he has in mind for you here in New York.” Moore was more detailed in his job offer this time around writing that Carter could “fix up a deal with Colonel Wortham whereby you could come up to New York for W.R. and take full charge in the New York American, leaving your interest in Fort Worth as it is.” He also appealed to Carter’s ego, telling him that running a

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<sup>56</sup> Amon Carter to Joseph A. Moore, Jan. 27 and 30, 1918; Moore to Amon Carter, Jan. 29 and 30, 1918; Amon Carter to Swasey, Apr. 15, 1918, Correspondence File, Box 303, AGC Collection.

<sup>57</sup> Moore to Amon Carter, Feb. 8, 1919, Hearst File, Box 100, AGC Collection; David Nasaw, The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 257, 281.

newspaper with the largest morning circulation in New York required someone with Carter's talent. As further encouragement, Moore suggested that Hearst would probably "agree to let you write your own ticket" in regards to salary. Moore impressed upon Carter the magnitude of him deciding to stay in the relatively small city of Fort Worth and eschewing the limitless possibilities of New York. Moore wired Carter the next day, begging him to join Hearst's empire; "How would fifty thousand do for a starter?" he enticed. Despite the fact that Carter was not yet a wealthy man, the offer was to no avail and Carter firmly insisted on staying in Fort Worth. Carter's response to Hearst is unknown but his rebuttal to Hearst's final offer two years later provides some insight as to why Carter turned down such a lucrative proposition.<sup>58</sup>

In December 1921, Moore had a new offer for Carter to consider, saying that "Mr. Hearst seems determined to get you into this organization and he brings it up several times a month." Moore proposed that Carter sell his newspaper to Hearst in exchange for "establishing a chain of papers for him in Texas and the Southwest." Carter's response was similar to his previous ones but provided more explanation for his refusal to leave Fort Worth for the Hearst empire. He detailed for Moore the recent improvements made to the Star-Telegram's plant as well as the dominance the paper enjoyed not only of Fort Worth but also Texas. Carter bragged, "There was a time in which the Dallas News absolutely predominated the newspaper business in Texas," yet by "providing the reading public with the kind of paper they want . . . the Star-Telegram has in sixteen years, without any money to start with, built up the largest circulation of any newspaper in Texas, exceeding the Dallas News approximately 14,000 daily,

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<sup>58</sup> Moore to Amon Carter, Mar. 11, 1919, Box 100, William Randolph Hearst File, AGC Collection.

notwithstanding the fact that Fort Worth is the fourth largest city in Texas.” While Carter promised that on his next trip to New York he would speak with Hearst, the issue appeared to be dead. Carter would stay in Fort Worth to preside over his own kingdom with no one to answer to but himself.<sup>59</sup>

On the surface, one could look at the Carter/Hearst interactions of 1917-1921 and interpret them as Carter refusing a cosmopolitan lifestyle due to some provincial connection with Texas, like a cowboy turning his back on the bright city lights to pursue his own rugged way of life. But what seems clear upon further review is that Carter understood that though he could become financially comfortable working for Hearst, he would not be his own boss. Carter’s personality was too prideful to work for someone like Hearst, and while his power and influence might be limited to Texas, he would enjoy reigning over his own realm. In hindsight, it appears that Carter made the correct choice by maintaining his position in Fort Worth because this gave him greater opportunities to wield influence on a much larger scale. If he had left to work for Hearst, his independence would have been greatly curtailed and his work as a booster for Fort Worth and Texas limited in scope.

After having been repeatedly rebuffed by Carter, Hearst decided on a new tactic: a head-to-head showdown with the Star-Telegram through ownership of the Fort Worth Record. The Record was the morning paper for Fort Worth and had been since 1903 when former Houston Post managing editor Clarence Ousley and a group of investors purchased the Fort Worth Gazette and began printing it as the Record. Ousley sold the newspaper in 1913 to Fort Worth attorney William Capps, and the newspaper changed

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<sup>59</sup> Moore to Amon Carter, Dec. 16, 1921; Amon Carter to Moore, Dec. 22, 1921, Box 100, William Randolph Hearst File, AGC Collection.



hands two more times until 1923. The Record and the Star-Telegram competed closely until 1913 but over the next ten years, Carter's newspaper easily surpassed the Record's circulation. Hearst, who had been engaged in a buying spree since the end of the post-World War I recession, added the Record to the long list of recently purchased newspapers such as the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, the Washington Herald, and the Boston Record. Though Joseph Moore, by now Hearst's chief treasurer, warned his new employer that funds were limited, Hearst added two Baltimore newspapers and the Fort Worth Record to his national newspaper stable.<sup>60</sup>

Hearst's motivation for buying the Record is not explicitly stated, but it appears that the reasons are threefold. First, he was in the middle of an expansive phase in his career in which he was purchasing newspapers and producing films. Second, he owned no newspapers in Texas, and ownership of the Record would open the growing Texas market for him. Finally, he had just engaged in a long struggle to obtain Carter; possibly Carter might sell the Star-Telegram to Hearst or jump ship to join with Hearst if things went well for the Record. Carter warmly greeted the Record, publishing a front page editorial welcoming Hearst and lauding Hearst columnist Arthur Brisbane as "the world's greatest journalist." This reaction caused journalist Alva Johnston to comment, "It was the only time a competitor ever smothered a Hearst newspaper with kindness."<sup>61</sup>

Carter may have received the Record's new ownership with kindness, but Star-Telegram editor James Record credited Carter's ultimate victory to Hearst's failure to overcome local obstacles to competing with Carter in Fort Worth and West Texas. To

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<sup>60</sup> Cox, First Texas News Barons, 95; Kinch, "Amon Carter," 37-39; Nasaw, The Chief, 315-316.

<sup>61</sup> Johnston, "Colonel Carter," 34.

begin with, Hearst did not enjoy a great reputation in Fort Worth and West Texas. The fact that Hearst newspapers covered national and international news rather heavily did not fulfill the needs of the region and while Hearst was nationally recognized, local allegiance to Carter remained strong. Finally, Hearst reporters and executives were often from out-of-state and were unfamiliar with local attitudes in a variety of areas. Early biographer Samuel Kinch revealed that part of this included the issue of race; under Hearst, the Record used “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” and “Miss” when referring to African-Americans while the Star-Telegram used first names in accordance with Southern tradition. In any case, though its circulation increased, the Record ran a deficit during the Hearst years and was never able to close the gap with its competitor.<sup>62</sup>

By 1925, Hearst was ready to make yet another offer to Carter. Carter travelled to California in October 1925 to meet with Hearst who immediately offered to purchase the Star-Telegram while allowing Carter to manage it for \$100,000 a year. Carter refused this offer but was ready with his own proposal: the Star-Telegram would buy the Record and subscribe to the Hearst news service and syndicated features. The Record would then become the Record-Telegram, in effect, a morning edition of the Star-Telegram. Hearst agreed to sell for \$300,000 and his nearly decade-long effort to secure Carter’s services ended in failure. Despite that fact, the professional relationship between Hearst and Carter remained intact. Carter was now without a serious rival in his own city and for the next thirty years worked to ensure his newspaper would retain its dominant position.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Kinch, “Amon Carter,” 43-44.

<sup>63</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Jun. 24, 1955, 3; Kinch, “Amon Carter,” 43-44.

In the meantime, Carter worked to ensure that the Star-Telegram was housed in a physical plant worthy of the burgeoning newspaper. The 1910s had been an unmitigated success for Carter and the Star-Telegram; by 1919, the newspaper had a clear lead over its rival the Record with respective circulations of 64,710 to 25,233. That same year the Wortham-Carter Publishing Company purchased land in the heart of Fort Worth's central business district at the intersection of Seventh and Taylor Streets in order to build an updated facility for the newspaper. Construction began in January 1920 and by December 5, the Star-Telegram moved into the \$1,000,000, four-story (plus two basement floors) building.<sup>64</sup>

The new headquarters reflected Carter's desire to modernize as well as his desire to provide a comfortable environment for his employees. To ensure that the Star-Telegram could keep up with growing demand, three presses churned out thousands of copies a day. To make the building more fireproof, little wood was used, and steel, concrete, marble and brick made up the bulk of the structure. Fire hoses and hydrants were placed on every floor, and unlike most publishing plants, numerous drinking fountains were scattered throughout. Even the carriers (or 'newsies' as they were called) had their own facilities complete with restrooms and congregating area. 250 windows provided natural light, employees had showers on every floor, and women had restrooms. While these details may sound mundane, in reality these features were considered somewhat revolutionary for contemporary newspaper plants. The Editor and Publisher, a national magazine covering the newspaper industry, praised it on the front page of its May 28, 1921 edition, calling it the "finest newspaper plant in [the]

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<sup>64</sup> Kinch, "Amon Carter," 40, 148; "Finest Newspaper Plant in Southwest Ready," Editor and Publisher, May 28, 1921.

Southwest” and declaring it to be “the great space that has been given to every department and the great investment that has been made in labor-saving devices.” Laudatory articles from around the nation were printed in the May 31, 1921, edition of the Star-Telegram and a three-day public reception was held to exhibit the new building.<sup>65</sup>

Other changes for the Star-Telegram were on the horizon. Always abreast of changes in technology, Carter was intrigued by the recent development of radio. While supporting radio may seem obvious in hindsight, at the time radio was seen as a fad, “nothing more than another craze that would, like a weak signal, eventually fade.” None other than humorist Will Rogers, future radio host and friend to Amon Carter, could not restrain from criticizing radio as “bunk.” Yet by 1922, radio was growing in popularity despite listeners’ hardships and frustrations due to the sporadic programming nature of early stations. President Warren G. Harding’s Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover, took the lead in standardizing and licensing the industry. Though he did not yet own his own radio set in 1922, Carter’s circulation manager Harold Hough did and he spoke with Carter about radio’s possibilities. The Record had also started its own station in March of that year therefore Carter had some motive in exploring this new technology if only to stay ahead of his competitor. At Hough’s urging, Carter agreed to invest \$300 in starting a radio station saying, “If this is going to be a menace to newspapers we had better own the menace.” Hough went to Washington, D.C. to visit the Department of Commerce and obtain approval for the new venture. Herbert Hoover reportedly named the station himself-WBAP, meaning “We Bring a Program,”- and in May 1922, WBAP

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., Fort Worth Star-Telegram, May 31, 1921.

began broadcasting. At first WBAP was housed in the Star-Telegram building but as it grew it soon had its own headquarters in the Medical Arts building south of Fort Worth's central business district.<sup>66</sup>

WBAP enabled Carter to expand his reach and obtain even greater loyalty from Fort Worth and West Texas. In 1922, the Fort Worth Cats, the local minor league baseball team, "became the first Texas team to enjoy play-by-play broadcasts," and West Texas ranchers benefited from early warning weather reports that enabled them to protect their livestock from incoming blizzards. In a further effort to maintain the loyalty of West Texas listeners, the station later began "broadcasting twice-daily market reports from its studios in the Livestock Exchange Building to remote areas which previously had to wait for newspapers to tell them how much their cattle and hogs might be worth."<sup>67</sup>

One year after beginning WBAP as the broadcasting arm of the Star-Telegram, Carter consolidated his position at the newspaper when Louis Wortham, president of Wortham-Carter Publishing Company and editor of the paper sold his company shares to Carter. Upon retiring from the newspaper business in 1923, Wortham went to work on his five-volume History of Texas from Wilderness to Commonwealth which was published the next year. By all accounts the partnership between him and Carter seemed solid, notwithstanding the occasional dispute. It seems that Wortham, while the titular head of the Star-Telegram, was content to give Carter the space he needed and

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<sup>66</sup> Knight, "Fort Worth," 194-195; Anthony Rudel, Hello, Everybody! The Dawn of American Radio (Orlando: Harcourt, 2008), 46-50; Johnston, "Colonel Carter," 32.

<sup>67</sup> Selcer, Fort Worth, 82; Knight, Fort Worth, 195; Clay Reynolds, A Hundred Years of Heroes: A History of the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1995), 126.

the freedom he desired to take the newspaper in the right direction. Now the sole president and publisher of the Star-Telegram, Carter was able to enjoy the accompanying benefits and even more freedom than he had previously possessed. That same year, in recognition of the Star-Telegram's importance to West Texas, as well as a kind of opening salvo in his rivalry with Dallas to the east, Carter had the phrase "Where the West Begins" placed on the newspaper's masthead.

While guiding the Star-Telegram toward greater circulation and local dominance through community involvement, civic boosterism, and improved facilities, Carter was also cultivating his role as a civic leader in his own right by getting involved in various social and business oriented associations. In 1911, the Board of Directors of the Fort Worth Board of Trade elected him president of the organization. He also was an active member of the Elks Lodge. As an Exalted Ruler of the Elks in Fort Worth, he presided over the drive to build a \$125,000 Elks Home in 1910, a building that the Fourth Estate called, "one of the handsomest and best appointed social clubs in the South." Even more important for forging connections with the local elite was Carter's membership in the Fort Worth Club, an organization he would lead for the last thirty-five years of his life.<sup>68</sup>

The Fort Worth Club had its start as the Commercial Club in 1885, an organization that, in the words of the Fort Worth Daily Gazette, "gives promise of great usefulness in the development of Fort Worth." This club of 180 of the town's wealthiest men was "not only a social organization," but also "the medium of advancing the

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<sup>68</sup> A.C. Best to Amon Carter, Feb. 6, 1911; Elks Lodge Tablet memo, n.d., Correspondence File 1902-1923, Box 303, AGC Collection; "Southwestern Progress," The Fourth Estate, April 26, 1913.

business interests of the city.” Combining the boosterism of a chamber of commerce (or in Fort Worth’s case, a Board of Trade) with the elite fraternizing of a social club, the Commercial Club quickly became one of the most respected organizations in Fort Worth. In 1906, Commercial Club members voted to change the name to the Fort Worth Club because, some argued, the former name sounded too much like a service club or chamber of commerce. “A place was needed,” members believed, “to entertain the ‘high and the mighty’ of the business and corporate world. A place was needed where the city’s best citizens could gather in comfortable surroundings, and where their wives and children could join them in enjoying the very best in cuisine, service and décor.” Carter’s role in the merger of the Star and the Telegram earned him a position in this exclusive club; within a few years he would be named to the Board of Governors, and, by 1920, president of the Fort Worth Club.<sup>69</sup>

From 1915 to 1926, Carter consolidated his position as a leader of the Fort Worth Club. For Carter, as it was for many other of the city’s luminaries, the Club was more than just a social club where Fort Worth’s elite gathered for dinner, cigars, and during Prohibition, illegal beverages. During Carter’s tenure, the Club became the unofficial headquarters of Fort Worth politics and business, and for Carter, the prime place to entertain visiting celebrities, politicians, and industrialists. Throughout his leadership of both the Star-Telegram and the Fort Worth Club, Carter proved to be a seasoned host, a skill that proved to be of great assistance when persuading others to do his bidding. Under Carter’s leadership, the Fort Worth Club was able to move into an extravagant

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<sup>69</sup> “The Commercial Club,” Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 5; Irvin Farman, The Fort Worth Club: A Centennial Story, (Fort Worth: Fort Worth Club, 1985), 36-37.

new building by 1926, and using the club's Suite 10-G as his own Oval Office, he presided over even greater expansion for his newspaper and his city.

During this formative period of his life, Carter dabbled in other passions, two of which would become great boons to the local economy. One example was the new technology of aviation. This obsession with flying stayed with him from the time he first saw an airplane in 1909 until his death, and ultimately lead him to successfully push for an international airport serving Fort Worth. In 1909, he and other Fort Worth businessmen formed the Southwestern Aviation Conference, later called the Southwestern Aero Club. In 1911, through the editorial page of the Star-Telegram, he persuaded Fort Worth to raise \$7,000 to bring to the city a group of French aviators called the International Aviators. That same year, he was instrumental in having the first piece of airmail delivered to Fort Worth by aviator Cal Rodgers. Rodgers was in the midst of attempting to fly across the United States in thirty days in order to claim a \$50,000 prize from William Randolph Hearst. When he landed in Fort Worth on October 17, a crowd of ten thousand people was on hand to meet him. He then delivered a piece of mail from Oklahoma to Carter and Star-Telegram editor James North. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, Carter assisted the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce in lobbying the government to locate airfields in the city to train pilots. As a result of his actions, the three airfields in Fort Worth formerly used by Canadian pilots were used by the Army, including Caruthers Field in Benbrook and Taliaferro Field on the north side of Fort Worth. Carter did not view these new contraptions as toys, but saw their potential in regards to transportation and their ability to transform Fort Worth into a great hub of industry and commerce. With this new



technology, Carter also believed that he could reach an even wider audience in the vast expanses of West Texas with his newspaper. By the late 1920s, Carter would be a full-fledged aviation enthusiast committed to bringing an airport and airlines to Fort Worth.<sup>70</sup>

Carter also recognized the importance of the oil industry to Fort Worth and West Texas. The West Texas oil boom that began in earnest in Ranger in 1917 was having a profound effect on Fort Worth's economy as oil companies and prospective oilmen began using the city as their unofficial headquarters. Some of these companies located in Fort Worth at the urging of Carter. For example, during a visit to the Sinclair Oil Company's offices in New York, Carter noticed a map with pins on it denoting the location of Sinclair's offices around the country. Carter picked up the pin marking the recently purchased Pierce Oil Company in Dallas and moved it to Fort Worth; soon after, Sinclair moved its regional offices to Fort Worth. He also persuaded the Southern Crude Oil Company to move from Shreveport, Louisiana, to Fort Worth in much the same way. In 1924, Carter convinced the American Petroleum Institute to hold its fifth annual convention in Fort Worth and then commenced to boost the city to the attendees. Never one to remain on the outside, he also began exploring for oil in his own right, though initially with little success; he was notorious in oil circles for sometime as "the only big oil producer who has never produced" due to drilling ninety straight dry

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<sup>70</sup> Sanders, How Fort Worth Became the Texasmost City, 153-163; Selcer, Fort Worth, 62; Darwin Payne and Fitzpatrick, Kathy, From Prairie to Planes: How Dallas and Fort Worth Overcame Politics and Personalities to Build One of the World's Biggest and Busiest Airports (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1999), 13-15. Cal Rodgers did successfully make it across the United States but it took him eighty-four days to do so thus he was unable to claim the prize. He died a few months later in a plane crash in California.

holes. His wells would remain relatively dry until the 1930s, yet astonishingly his enthusiasm never lagged.<sup>71</sup>

Carter's personal life did not cleanly mirror his meteoric rise through Fort Worth society. In 1917, after fifteen years of marriage, Zetta Carter filed for divorce. Problems had begun well before, however, as the two had been separated for at least a year before Zetta filed for divorce. Zetta cited numerous reasons for ending her marriage to Amon. She maintained that Amon had been a devoted husband and father early in the marriage, but as he became more successful he lost interest in maintaining the marriage. In her words, "With his success came his great desire for social preference, that in a large measure the effort of homebuilding was abandoned; in many respects, the home was without attraction for him." She added that Amon "has been for years past, guilty of excesses, cruel treatment, and outrages."<sup>72</sup>

The next year, Carter, age forty, married the twenty-three-year-old Nenetta Burton, daughter of Fort Worth businessman William G. Burton. Carter had worked with William Burton before as they had forged a partnership in some of Carter's first attempts to strike oil. It is unclear when Amon met Nenetta, but it is safe to say that they had known one another for some time due to the connection between him and her father. Though much sought after by young men in Virginia, where she attended Sweet Briar College, she chose to marry the much older and more established Amon. By 1919, this new relationship resulted in the birth of his only son, Amon Gary Carter, Jr., whom he would raise as the heir to his expanding fortune. This new relationship with the much younger Nenetta did not appeal to his daughter Bertice, who clashed with Nenetta. A

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<sup>71</sup> Selcer, Fort Worth, 60; Knight, Fort Worth, 220; Johnston, "Colonel Carter," 8, 34.

<sup>72</sup> Divorce Request, n.d., Box 35, Amon Carter Personal File, AGC Collection.

rather nasty spat arose in 1920 over sixteen year-old Bertice's attempt to spend time with Amon Carter, Jr. who had just been born to Amon and Nenetta. Nenetta took offense at this and Bertice's request for a picture of Amon. The bond between Bertice and Nenetta must have already been frayed when Nenetta sent Bertice a long, hastily written letter. How, Nenetta wondered, could Bertice ask Amon "for a picture of MY baby when you are ashamed to speak to me?"<sup>73</sup>

Bertice's cold shoulder toward Nenetta caused Nenetta to exclaim "I've done everything in my power to get along with you." From Bertice's point of view she had done nothing wrong, and she immediately appealed to her father. "You know how I have to act, dear, toward her on account of mother." She complained that "I feel so dubious of your love and yet you must have some affection for me...Sometimes it is unbearable and I wish I had never been born." She closed with the mournful line, "I'm pretty blue tonight over everything so had better stop before I start crying again."<sup>74</sup>

Understandably Carter rushed to mend the breach between Bertice and Nenetta and he attempted to avoid taking sides in the spat. Yet it is clear in his response to Bertice that he felt some frustration toward her. "It is unfortunate", he declared, "that things have developed as they have and I feel sure that it was started at the time you inadvertently declined to speak to Nenetta. In my position I am trying to avoid making either side unhappy." What is interesting in Carter's letter is his philosophy of dealing with life's obstacles. Much of it seems to stem from Carter's experiences rising from

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<sup>73</sup> Nenetta Carter to Bertice Carter, n.d., Box 35, Amon Carter Personal File, AGC Collection; Ruth McAdams, "Mudholes, Fairy Godmothers, and Choir Bells," in Grace and Gumption, ed. Katie Sherrod (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2007), 95.

<sup>74</sup> Bertice Carter to Amon Carter, n.d., Box 35, Amon Carter Personal File, AGC Collection.

nothing and becoming one of the most powerful men in Fort Worth. He told Bertice, "We all have much to live for and much happiness in store if we will only take advantage of our opportunity, make the best of things, and avoid the unpleasant things which bring about dissatisfaction and unhappiness." He closed by saying, "Let's drop it and both of us try and forget it and make ourselves happy over many other things."<sup>75</sup>

Despite the split with Zetta, Carter worked hard to maintain his status as a father to Bertice. Ever the doting (yet oftentimes absent) father, he continued his practice of showering her with gifts as he had done since she was very young. When she was as young as eight, he tried to instill in her a sense of financial responsibility, even going so far as to try to explain to her how the Star-Telegram stock he purchased for her eighth birthday would appreciate in value over time. As a teenager, she was sent away to school like so many other children of the elite; in her case, it was Lasell Seminary in Auburndale, Massachusetts. In addition to paying her tuition, he provided her with \$25 a month though, he argued, "you should be able to get along on \$15.00 a month." Though generous with his money, he did not extend this generosity toward granting her wishes to be employed as a society editor over the summer of 1922. "You've always thought me so useless always so now give me a chance to prove I'm not," she pleaded. She assured him it would be "on a strictly business basis as if I were an outside," apparently ignoring the fact that most eighteen-year old outsiders would not be given many chances at being a newspaper's society editor. Despite Bertice's coaxing tone, Amon remained firm stating that he was "somewhat averse to relatives working on the

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<sup>75</sup> Amon Carter to Bertice Carter, Nov. 5, 1920, Box 35, Amon Carter Personal File, AGC Collection.

paper.” This tone would change as Amon Jr. grew up and was groomed to become the heir to the Carter Publishing Company.

The evidence indicates that Amon Sr. maintained a business-like relationship with his father as he worked to develop his business in Fort Worth. The few letters from his father that exist discuss the details of raising chickens, maintaining the farm, and financial matters. In an attempt to help his father’s poultry business, Amon ran advertisements in the Star-Telegram. Though not as financially stable as he would become, Amon felt obligated to support his father monetarily. In 1909, William Carter wrote his son of some expenses incurred in improving his farm and Amon took this as a hint to send his father money and he promptly sent him \$145.00. With just a hint of pride and self-reliance, William wrote his son saying, "I did not aim to pull your leg for that \$145.00. I aim to pay it back and I still intend too [sic]." Yet Amon did not hesitate to lecture his father about the best way to handle his financial struggles.<sup>76</sup>

In December 1911, William wrote Amon that he owed \$189.00 to John Hunt of the First National Bank in Bowie but assured him, "I am not asking you to pay it. I am just telling you about it so you will not grumble." Knowing that his father had taken out the loan to help pay for his farm, Amon had settled the account without William’s knowledge. Furious at the high rate of interest his father had been charged, Amon declared, "While Mr. Hunt used to be my Sunday School teacher, I should not hesitate to take the matter up with him as he certainly has no right to take advantage of you on a matter of that kind." He then urged his father "for Heaven’s sake, pull yourself together

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<sup>76</sup> W.H. Carter, to Amon Carter, Jan. 27 and Oct. 2, 1909, Box 35, Amon Carter Personal File, 1906-1910, AGC Collection; W.H. Carter, to Amon Carter, Dec. 8, 1911, Box 35, Amon Carter Personal File, 1911-1915, AGC Collection;

and do not lose your nerve.” After all, Amon claimed, “Your troubles are small compared to mine,” making it rather disconcerting to him that his father had “practically given up the ghost.” “That is not the spirit that wins battles,” Amon scolded. “if I had displayed the same spirit in some of my past experiences, I would probably have been driving a delivery wagon for about \$25.00 a month.” Nevertheless, he continued to affirm his commitment to helping his father. “I have explained to you time and time again,” Amon wrote, “that it is my intention to help you, and sooner or later, I will be in position to pay the place out for you.”<sup>77</sup>

In 1915, Amon’s father developed a case of pneumonia. Amon rushed to his side, hoping that the doctor and two nurses he had brought with him from Fort Worth could nurse William back to health. There was little the doctor could do, and Amon spent what time his father had left talking with him before he passed. In a letter to his cousin Hettie Scott, Amon expressed his feelings upon the loss of his father, noting that “The only consolation I have is in feeling that I tried to do everything possible for him while he was living, saw that he was well taken care of and provided for.” Though Amon had not been happy with his father’s marriage to Ella Patterson after his mother’s death, he felt it necessary to maintain his connection with her after his father’s death. Carter continued his financial support of the family and often dispensed advice to his stepmother and half-brother Roy. While the relationship between Amon and his stepmother had improved since he had left home, the two maintained a sense of restraint in their correspondence. He called her “Mrs. Carter” in his letters to her, while she avoided the sentimentality that was often found between family members at this

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<sup>77</sup> W.H. Carter, to Amon Carter, Dec. 2, 1911; Amon Carter, to W.H. Carter, Dec. 6, 1911, Box 48, William H. Carter File, AGC Collection.

time. Throughout the rest of the 1910s, Ella Carter continued to rely on Amon for financial support, since her sons were too young to provide for the family. In 1919, after a brief stay with family in Macon, Georgia, Ella moved back to Texas to Bellevue between Wichita Falls and Bowie.<sup>78</sup>

Amon corresponded frequently with his half-brother Roy, nearly twenty years his junior, generally imploring him to go to college. He was somewhat discouraged to hear that Roy had chosen a life on the road selling stereoscopes for the Keystone View Company as opposed to opting to continue his education; “I was naturally somewhat disappointed to hear this,” he wrote, “and to think that you had made a change of this kind without letting me know anything about it.” After all, “you know I have been through all these road propositions myself.” He offered to arrange for his college education at either the University of Texas or Texas A&M University, noting that, “it would be a mistake to drop your schooling, as I have gone through the same experience, and while I have been able to survive without a good education, it has been a handicap a great many times.” Roy decided that it was in his best interest to go to school but chose not to attend UT or A&M for fear that it would be too much of a burden for Amon; instead he attended the much cheaper Bowie Commercial College to focus on bookkeeping. When Roy had finished his work in Bowie, he obtained a job with the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad in Wichita Falls. Upon learning of this, Amon began pressuring Roy to

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<sup>78</sup> Amon Carter to Hettie Scott, Mar. 30, 1916, Box 48, William H. Carter File, AGC Collection. The Carter Family Files in the AGC Collection contain this correspondence and provide excellent insights into the relationship between Amon and his stepmother.

support his mother so as to alleviate some of the financial burden that had fallen on his shoulders.<sup>79</sup>

Amon also continued to correspond with his sister Addie, who had married a man named Pete Brooks and lived in Henrietta, Texas, with their seven children. By 1916, tensions between Addie and her in-laws had reached a boiling point. Addie's mother-in-law and two sisters-in-law accused her of having children with other men as well as having killed her recently deceased infant. Stating that she would like to die if it was not for her children, Addie reached out to Amon for help. He aired some frustration with Pete for failing to keep his family away from her, saying that, "His first duty is to you and he should see that you are protected and not annoyed with a bunch of jealous people." Once their crop was brought in, he would move them away from Pete's family. He arranged for them to move to his father's vacant farm by mid-summer. In 1918, Addie and Pete moved to Arlington between Dallas and Fort Worth, and sadly, by 1919, had left her husband and children in Bellevue, Texas, to live in Dallas. Throughout these moves, and despite his disagreements, Amon continued to support his sister by sending her finer clothes from time to time as well as giving her \$150 to \$200 a month by the 1920s.<sup>80</sup>

Carter's attitude toward his family at this time reveals something about his character and approach to giving. Though his letters could be gruff at times, he never

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<sup>79</sup> Amon Carter to Roy Carter, May 24 and 29, July 22, 1916, May 21, 1918; Roy Carter to Amon Carter, Feb. 26, 1917 and May 25, 1918; Box 48, Carter Family File, AGC Collection.

<sup>80</sup> Addie Brooks, to Amon Carter, Sep. 29, 1912, Box 35, Amon Carter Personal File, AGC Collection; Addie Brooks to Amon Carter, May 16, 1916; Amon Carter to Addie Brooks, May 18, 1916; Amon Carter to Mrs. W.H. Carter, Nov. 3, 1919, Box 48, Carter Family File, AGC Collection.



failed to support his family during their times of need. None of them ever attained the level of prosperity and success that he had, yet he firmly believed that it was his duty to provide. He complained at times that he was being stretched thin; “I have Addie and her seven children to take care of,” he grumbled to his stepmother, “in addition to assisting my grandmother; have Bertice away at school; have an obligation of \$500 a month to Mrs. [Zetta] Carter, besides, I have to make a living for my own family so you can see what I’m up against.” His future years would demonstrate that when the opportunity arose, his generosity would stretch beyond his family and to the community at large.<sup>81</sup>

By the mid-1920s, Carter’s achievements were numerous, especially for a man in his early 40s. His leadership at the Fort Worth Star-Telegram had resulted in the largest newspaper in Texas giving him not only a profitable business venture, but also a position from which he could boost his adopted city of Fort Worth. While not incredibly wealthy, he was financially comfortable. In 1920, he left Nenetta a list of his assets before he went on a business trip to New York; listed were over \$250,000 in stock from a variety of local companies (the prime one, of course, being the Star-Telegram, with oil companies making up much of the rest). He had recently moved from a home just south of downtown Fort Worth to a mansion on the grounds of the wealthy Rivercrest Country Club. Clearly he had come a long way from selling picture frames around the country. Yet it was not in his personality simply to maintain his position. Having established the Star-Telegram as the largest newspaper in Texas by the 1920s and cemented his reputation as a generous, civic-minded citizen of his adopted city, he

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<sup>81</sup> Amon Carter to Mrs. W.H. Carter, Nov. 6, 1918, Box 48, Carter Family File, AGC Collection.

began to move to widen the reach of his influence at the state level as well as pursue national acclaim by circulating among national politicians and celebrities.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Amon Carter to Mrs. Amon Carter, Jun. 24, 1920, Box 35, Amon Carter Personal File, 1920-1923, AGC Collection; Tarrant County Tax Rolls, 1920.

## CHAPTER 4

### “RULE OR RUIN”: LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL SUCCESS, 1920-1928

By the early 1920s, Amon Carter had established himself as the premier booster for the city of Fort Worth and, by extension, West Texas. Many of his prior activities had been limited in scope, but ownership of the most widely circulated newspaper in Texas broadened his horizons. He could now exercise influence beyond Fort Worth city limits. Though he rarely wrote the editorials for his newspaper, the ideas and politicians promoted by the Star-Telegram reflected his views. Now he was sought after in political circles though at first, generally at the state level. Along with this greater political influence and activity came greater publicity, something Carter never avoided. Hollywood celebrities and star athletes found themselves enjoying the graciousness of his hospitality. With his publishing business expanding and influence growing, Carter seemed to be reaching the pinnacle of his career during the 1920s. When the Great Depression began to impact Texas and Fort Worth in 1930-1931, Carter discovered that while the economy may have collapsed, his fortunes had not. The 1930s and the age of Franklin D. Roosevelt would prove to be an enormous boost to his sway in Texas, and his political activity in the previous decade made this possible.

Carter's first years at the Star-Telegram were not full of political activism either through the newspaper or within his correspondence. The paper's stances reflect the typical Southern Progressive attitudes of the day: good government, good roads, better parks, etc. Though a Democrat like most other Texas voters, Carter was not as

politically involved as he would become. For example, in 1912 his main political contribution appears to be one dollar donated to the Woodrow Wilson-Thomas Marshall presidential campaign. By the late 1920s, however, he would be recognized as a leader within the Texas Democratic Party and active at national Democratic conventions. At the state level, Carter began to be more politically aware, possibly reflecting a certain level of comfort now that his newspaper had reached the peak in terms of Texas newspapers. At the same time, governors and senators had to be aware of the power of an endorsement or negative statement from a newspaper with the readership of the Star-Telegram. Since it was the newspaper of record for Fort Worth and much of West Texas, politicians could not fail to recognize the importance of winning Carter's support. The political power Carter began enjoying during the 1920s would not wane until the ascension of Carter opponent Jim Wright to the House of Representatives in 1954.<sup>83</sup>

During the 1920s, "business Progressives" reach the pinnacle of their power in Texas and throughout the South. Historian Randolph Campbell describes business Progressives as "Progressive in their willingness to support administrative reorganization, better roads, and improvements in education, but they favored business on matters of labor-management relations, the protection of women and children in industry, and worker's compensation." "Efficiency and order" were the watchwords of the day for business Progressives as they emphasized what historian Francis Simkins called the "trinity of Southern progress"-education, industry, and good roads. Carter, like many of the politicians he supported, was a business Progressive. Though he did not enjoy a warm relationship with every Texas governor or senator during the 1920s,

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<sup>83</sup> Contribution Receipt, Nov. 14, 1912, Correspondence File, Box 303, AGC Collection; Green, The Establishment in Texas Politics, 165.

this fact helped him to maintain open communication with important figures in Austin, and later, Washington.<sup>84</sup>

The swirling maelstrom of Texas politics proved irresistible to Carter. Never one to hunger after his own political seat, he nevertheless waded into the fray during the 1920s and beyond. He first used his leverage to rally support for a college in West Texas during Pat Neff's governorship. Having proved successful at this venture, he turned his sights on the duo of James and Miriam Ferguson, better known as 'Pa' and 'Ma'. The feud with the Fergusons that erupted in 1925 lasted well into the next decade as Carter, as a business Progressive, found himself at odds with their rural values. Carter, in an attempt to keep the Ferguson faction at bay, later threw his support behind business Progressive candidates like Dan Moody and Ross Sterling. By the end of the decade, Carter was comfortable enough to begin getting involved at the national level of politics such as when he served as a delegate to the 1928 Democratic convention in Houston. The 1920s clearly illustrate Carter's growth as a person of greater political influence, mainly at the state level, providing him with experience that would enable him to take advantage of the new opportunities of Roosevelt's New Deal during the next decade.

Neff was elected governor of Texas in 1920, having staved off a challenge within in his own party from former United States Senator Joseph Weldon Bailey. Since Texas was an overwhelmingly Democratic state at that time, elections were not so much between Democratic and Republican candidates as they were within the Democratic primary. While much of the rest of the nation had sworn off Wilson's style of

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<sup>84</sup> Randolph B. Campbell, Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 369; Tindall, Emergence of the New South, 232.

Progressivism by electing Republican Warren G. Harding over Democratic candidate James Cox, Texas continued to follow Wilsonism in choosing Neff over conservative Bailey. Bailey had served as a United States senator from Texas from 1901 to 1913 usually espousing an old-style of Texas conservatism against the rising tide of Progressivism. When he re-entered politics in 1920, his core message of fighting against Progressivism had not changed. During the 1920 campaign, he “denounced Prohibition, woman suffrage, labor unions, the League of Nations, the Woodrow Wilson administration, socialism, monopoly, class legislation, and class domination,” all the while promising to “lead Texas back into the straight-and-narrow path of the time-honored principles of the old ‘Bailey Democracy’.” Neff, on the other hand, supported Wilson’s Progressivism, was a prohibitionist, and a supporter of women’s suffrage. He campaigned on a typically business Progressive platform supporting “a huge highway building program, a system of state parks, and water conservation policy.” Neff’s re-election in 1922 confirmed the continuing popularity of Progressivism and prohibition among many Texas voters who supported the ideas of efficient and good government promised by Progressives.<sup>85</sup>

Neff did not always enjoy a smooth relationship with the Texas legislature and failed to push through many of his educational initiatives such as a “state board of education, larger appropriations for public schools, a nine-month school year, and a fixed amount of support for colleges and universities.” He was successful, however, in persuading the legislature to create a State Parks Board, and he did score a victory for higher education when, in 1923, he signed a measure that created Texas Technological

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<sup>85</sup> Norman D. Brown, Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1984), 16-17; Campbell, Gone to Texas, 344, 358-359.

College in Lubbock. Behind the push for the creation of Texas Technological College stood a variety of men, among whom was Carter.<sup>86</sup>

The creation of a college for West Texas came during a time when many of that region's citizens believed they were being ignored. Some West Texas lawyers and newspapermen went so far as to invoke a clause in the 1845 congressional joint resolution annexing Texas that stated that the state could spin off four new states. Concerned citizens formed a West Texas A & M campaign committee that proposed locating a branch of the Agriculture and Mechanical (A & M) College of Texas "west of the 98<sup>th</sup> meridian and north of the 30<sup>th</sup> parallel." Victory seemingly was achieved in 1917 when the state legislature passed a bill creating John Tarleton Agricultural College in Stephenville and setting aside \$500,000 for a future West Texas A & M College. The prospective site of West Texas A & M was to be decided by a five-man committee chaired by Governor James Ferguson; as often seemed to happen when he was around, "it appeared that chicanery was involved" since the committee voted to locate the college in Abilene and not Snyder where a majority of members reportedly wanted the college. Before an investigation could clear up the confusion, Ferguson was impeached and convicted for mishandling public funds; the Texas Senate later voted to bar him from holding any future state office.<sup>87</sup>

Ferguson was replaced by his Progressive lieutenant governor, William P. Hobby, former editor of the Houston Post. Hobby had been a member of the West Texas A & M site committee yet he refused to pursue the matter further. Instead, he

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<sup>86</sup> Campbell, Gone to Texas, 371.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Rutland, "The Beginnings of Texas Technological College," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 55 (October 1951): 231-233.

persuaded the legislature to repeal the bill, and supporters of West Texas A & M found themselves having to fight for a college once more. In spite of their best efforts, West Texans were unsuccessful in getting the Texas Democratic Convention of 1920 to include support for a West Texas college in its platform. Two West Texas legislators, Representative Richard Chitwood of Sweetwater and Senator William Bledsoe of Lubbock, crafted a bill appropriating \$50,000 for a college that passed the Texas House and Senate, but Governor Neff vetoed the bill on the grounds that there was no support for this in the 1920 Texas Democratic platform, and the recent post-war recession had left Texas financially strapped. Later, he mentioned in a speech in Lubbock celebrating the creation of Texas Technological College that he had also felt that such an appropriation was far too small, saying that, "If I had not vetoed it for any other reason, I would have vetoed it because it did not carry an adequate appropriation to build the foundations for a college that would adequately serve this great region of Texas." West Texas supporters reacted strongly, with some even raising, once again, the specter of secession.<sup>88</sup>

Carter and Louis Wortham, his business partner and Star-Telegram editor, entered the fray to dissuade secessionists with a 1921 editorial arguing that a "movement for a separate state is more likely to divide West Texas than to have any other result. But a movement to get justice for West Texas . . . will raise up friends for justice throughout the State." The secessionists failed to gain widespread support for their cause, while in 1922 Texas Democrats at the state convention succumbed to the West Texas delegation and voted to include a plank in their platform calling for a West

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 232-234; Brown, Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug, 142; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Aug. 29, 1923 and Nov. 9, 1924.



Texas college. When the Legislature convened in January 1923, several legislators from Lubbock to Dallas were ready with bills proposing some kind of college for West Texas. Neff let it be known that he would support a bill and urged lawmakers to ensure a large enough appropriation. With momentum moving in favor of a West Texas college, two hundred delegates from West Texas met on January 12 in Fort Worth with Carter and legislators R.A. Baldwin, Bledsoe, and Chitwood in order to resolve their conflicting proposals. Because the attending legislators failed to craft a compromise bill immediately, a more private meeting of the involved legislators was held in Austin on January 25. Present, in addition to Baldwin, Bledsoe, and Chitwood were Representatives Lewis Carpenter of Dallas and Burke Mathes of Hale, as well as Homer Wade of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce and, with the blessing of Carter, reporter Silliman Evans of the Star-Telegram. Once they had all entered the Senate reception room where they were meeting, “Wade closed the doors and said: ‘You have been invited into this room this morning for the purpose of reaching an agreement upon a West Texas college bill. I have the keys to the door in my pocket, and they will not be removed until such an agreement is reached.’” Within two hours, an agreement had been reached to craft a bill calling for a \$1,000,000 appropriation for Texas Technological College. Carpenter and Chitwood guided the bill through the House of Representatives, while Bledsoe and R.A. Stuart of Tarrant County took responsibility within the Senate. On February 10, Neff signed the bill and then set about naming members to the nine-person board of directors.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Rutland, “Beginnings of Texas Technological College,” 234-236; Brown, Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug, 142-144.

On February 19, Neff wrote Carter: "Knowing full well your interest in the educational life of Texas, and appreciating your ability to render services, I am today naming you as a member of the first Board of Directors of the Texas Technological College." Carter leaped at the chance, stating that "while I have never accepted a political appointment before, I really felt not only complimented but delighted to have an opportunity to serve on the board of an institution of this character." Carter was unanimously elected chairman of the board at the first board meeting in Sweetwater and promptly declared upon his election that the board would begin meeting the next month to further discuss the future of the college as well as decide who should be the first president of the college. Soon after, the board of directors chose Paul W. Horn, a Texas educator since 1892, as the first president of Texas Technological College. After visiting sixty proposed sites, the locating committee met in Fort Worth and voted to select Lubbock as the location. Carter's task on the board also included handling construction contracts, so he announced that "all contracts were let to the lowest bidders" which, on some occasions, happened to be Fort Worth companies. The board selected Acme Brick to provide the brick for the administration building and the president's residence and architectural firm Sanguinet, Staats, and Hedrick to design several buildings. By 1925, the new college was ready to open and Carter had helped score a victory for West Texas. In recognition of his efforts to begin the college, Texas Technological College awarded its first honorary degree of Doctor of Laws to Carter in 1930. While in the beginning, the wider public may have been unaware of his role as

chairman of the board of directors, a well-publicized clash with the Fergusons in 1925 brought Carter's presence on the board to the forefront of Texas politics.<sup>90</sup>

Carter hated James and Miriam Ferguson (more popularly known as "Pa" and "Ma"), who polarized Texas politics for twenty years. "Pa" Ferguson was elected governor in 1914 as a "Hogg Progressive Democrat" who appealed mainly to poor farmers by promising rent ceilings for tenant farmers and sharecroppers and improving public schools. In his survey of Texas, Gone to Texas, Randolph Campbell notes that Ferguson "practiced a far more personal than principled brand of politics," and that he "abused the powers of his office to such an extent that he became the only governor of Texas to be impeached and convicted." Though he made enemies with prohibitionists (for making liquor a non-issue) and the University of Texas (for demanding the firing of six faculty members who opposed him) during his first term, he was easily re-elected in 1916. He did not fare as well during his second term, since he continued to fight the University of Texas by vetoing the 1917 university appropriations bill saying, "I do not give a damn what becomes of the University." Sensing Ferguson's weakness, his prohibitionist enemies joined the fray and in July 1917, a Travis County grand jury indicted him for misusing public funds and embezzlement. His refusal to comply with the legislature's requests to disclose personal finance information only made matters worse; the House voted to impeach him and by September 22, the Senate convicted him of ten charges mainly dealing with his financial situation. In addition to removing him from office, the Senate disqualified him from ever again holding public office. The

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.; Pat Neff to Amon Carter, Feb. 19, 1923; Amon Carter to Neff, Feb. 23, 1923, Box 125, Pat Neff File, AGC Collection; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Mar. 3 and Aug. 29, 1923 Jun. 28, 1924, May 27, 1930.

wily Ferguson refused to stay down however, and later found a way to re-enter Texas politics.<sup>91</sup>

Ferguson found his way back into Texas politics in 1924 in the guise of his wife, Miriam. “Ma” was, by all accounts, an apolitical person for much of her life. Even while “Pa” was governor, she remained uninvolved. When asked about women’s suffrage in 1916, she said, “Personally, I prefer that men shall attend to all public matters.” Eight years later her stance had changed, with “Pa” barred from holding public office, she rose to stand in for him. During the 1924 campaign, she began campaign rallies with a short speech and then gave way to “Pa” for political discourse. In a close Democratic primary in which prohibition and the Ku Klux Klan were major issues, she emerged the winner due to the Fergusons’ popularity among rural Texans as well as their strong anti-Klan stance. Because of the polarizing nature of Ferguson’s presence, Republican gubernatorial candidate George Butte actually polled well that November. Still, it was not enough to stop the Ferguson duo, and in January 1925, Miriam Ferguson was inaugurated as the first woman governor in Texas. It must be stated, however, that “Mrs. Ferguson occupied the governor’s office, but Pa, who had his own office next door, ran her administration.”<sup>92</sup>

At this point, Carter had refrained from entering the political fray, but in less than a year, he found himself embroiled in a long dispute with the Fergusons. The Fergusons’ administration became enmeshed in a battle with the youthful State Attorney General Dan Moody over highway contracts given to Ferguson supporters, particularly those who bought advertising in Pa’s newspaper The Ferguson Forum. This clash

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<sup>91</sup> Campbell, Gone to Texas, 348-352.

<sup>92</sup> Brown, Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug, 218-219, 250.

began in July 1925 when Star-Telegram reporter Silliman Evans informed Carter that Highway Commissioners Frank Lanham and Joe Burkett had granted contracts “without competitive bidding, without bonds, and at excessively high prices.” Later it was revealed that some contracting companies were using state-owned equipment to complete private jobs. The Star-Telegram began running a series of articles investigating such irregularities, putting the newspaper on a path toward a clash with the Fergusons. The next month, Evans’ source, Louis W. Kemp, secretary of the Texas Highway and Municipal Contractors Association, met with Moody and Assistant Attorneys General George Christian and Ernest May in Evans’ Austin hotel room to inform them of his belief that the State Highway Department needed to be investigated by the attorney general’s office for graft in the State Highway Department. As Moody pressed forward with investigations of state finances and various contractors, the Fergusons refused to cooperate claiming that allegations of wrongdoing should be ignored. When Moody’s findings caused him to file suit against the American Road Company for excessive profits of \$650,000, Governor Ferguson ordered the State Highway Commission to resist, arguing that “the attorney general had no authority to bring suit in the name of the state unless so directed by the governor. George Calhoun, the district judge hearing the case, denied Ferguson’s request, and ultimately the state was able to recover over \$600,000 from the American Road Company. The anti-Ferguson crowd, already smarting from her victory in the recent gubernatorial campaign, seized upon the highway scandal as a reason to pursue Ma Ferguson’s impeachment. Pa Ferguson, rising to her defense, accused Moody of wanting to be governor himself and claimed that the present scandal “was caused by ‘disgruntled

contractors, County commissioners who had lost their clabber on highway contracts, and men with political bees in their bonnets.”<sup>93</sup>

There was also the issue of Governor Ferguson’s lenient clemency record. Ma had promised to follow a more lenient pardon policy and from the beginning of her tenure in office had made good on this campaign promise. In 1925 alone, “the number of clemency proclamations had reached 1,201, including full pardon; conditional pardons; paroles; restorations of citizenship; commutations of death sentences to life imprisonment; and reprieves.” This practice aroused anger from all fronts; the Methodist Episcopal Church meeting in Dallas condemned this action as “a menace to law and order and good society.” Others viewed her actions with mistrust, suspecting that Pa’s alleged “wetness” on the Prohibition issue influenced his wife’s pardoning of violators of this law. Allegations of bribery abounded. The Star-Telegram began publishing her clemency totals daily as a constant reminder to readers of the lawless path their governor was taking.<sup>94</sup>

The skirmishing between Carter and the Fergusons, which so far had been limited to the pages of the Star-Telegram, garnered national attention after the November 1925 Thanksgiving Day football game between the University of Texas and Texas A&M University in College Station. Both Carter and the Fergusons attended the game, though obviously not together. Seated in a box not far from the Fergusons, Carter could not restrain himself from yelling, “Hurrah for A&M!” “Hurrah for Dan Moody!” He was escorted from his seat by a policeman, but “no sooner had he been escorted out of the grounds than he was ceremoniously escorted back in again.” In an

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 270-271, 284-285.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 292; Cox, First Texas News Barons, 168.

interview soon after the incident, Carter defended himself, saying that, “I was unaware that I was anywhere near the box occupied by the executive party. I had been pacing up and down the grandstand runway, following the position of the players on the gridiron and rooting for the A & M players. My enthusiasm kept mounting as the Aggies scored their first and then their second touchdowns. I was crying ‘Hurrah for A & M! Hurrah for Dan Moody!’” An obvious thought was that Carter was hinting at the current highway contract investigation, but he “asserted that nothing was said about the highway contracts in the course of his cheering.” As a matter of fact, it was only “by accident” that he passed the governor’s box, and the only reason he mentioned Dan Moody in his cheering was because his enthusiasm over the game and over Moody’s “exposure of the highway situation” was so strong. Or so he maintained. Upon being escorted out, he inquired of the policeman (who he identified as a colonel with the Ferguson party), “Is it against the law to cheer for A & M?” “No,” he answered. “Is it against the law to cheer for Dan Moody?” “No, Mr. Carter,” was the reply. “Then what’s all the shooting about anyway?” Carter asked. Despite the seeming frivolity of the event, the reaction from the Fergusons said otherwise.<sup>95</sup>

Pa Ferguson, furious at Carter’s outburst, struck back at Carter, as well as at the critics of his wife’s administration. Two days after the game, on November 28, the Fergusons issued a statement that included a veiled swipe at Carter for his recent public support of Attorney General Dan Moody, as well as those they accused of using their wealth to evade Prohibition laws. Governor Ferguson’s proclamation offered a “reward of \$500 for the arrest and conviction of any citizen of this State for violating the

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<sup>95</sup> Wichita Falls Record News, Nov. 28, 1925.

liquor laws, who is worth, in property or money, as much as \$5,000.” Though Carter was not specifically named in the statement, Ferguson did mention a “big newspaper publisher, in a North Texas city,” who “can dispense pints of liquor by the dozen, and, under the influence of liquor, display himself in a public place.” This unnamed millionaire was allegedly “drunk as a biled owl” at the recent football game and had, according to Pa, given a dinner for the ‘Oil Men’s Association’, actually the American Petroleum Institute, in 1924 where he had given away 600 pints of liquor inside of 300 imitation Bibles and 300 imitation canes. With an eye on their dwindling popularity, the Fergusons portrayed their actions not as revenge but as protection of the poor. Pa Ferguson compared this recent event hosted by Carter with a clemency case he had recently heard wherein a 19-year-old boy was imprisoned for a year for having a flask of liquor at a country dance. In the Ferguson’s eyes, because of this double-standard, “justice becomes a mockery, and the law becomes a stench in the nostrils of all law-abiding people.”

The attack from the Ferguson camp became even more public when Governor Ferguson wrote a letter to Carter, which he promptly published in the Star-Telegram. Though her letter contained statements considered to be libelous, he encouraged other newspapers to publish it in order to show his “good faith and sportsmanship.” In her letter, Ma Ferguson requested that Carter resign from his position on the board of Texas Tech for his alleged dispensing of liquor the year before and for his antics at the Thanksgiving Day game. She attributed his rigorous cheering to being under the influence of alcohol and stated that, “In your state it was but natural for you to have been unable to distinguish between a Colonel on my staff, dressed in khaki yellow, and



a town policeman, dressed in blue, who, under orders from the local authorities, ejected you from the grounds in the interest of public peace.” His actions, she continued, did not serve as good examples for young Texans and for that reason his resignation should be forthcoming. Her letter sparked even further fighting between Carter and the Fergusons, a battle that Carter, as a man who made a “business of writing,” seemed sure to win.<sup>96</sup>

In his response published the next day in local newspapers, and even the New York Times, Carter accused the Fergusons of creating a “smoke screen to divert the mind of the public from the real issues.” Responding to charges of serving liquor in hollowed-out Bibles and canes at the previous year’s American Petroleum Institute convention, Carter asserted that “there was no violation of the law and there could have been no such action as is charged, because present with this party were members of the law enforcement departments of both county and city.” He went on to wonder why, if this gathering was indulging in illegal beverages as Ferguson alleged, did he hold onto this information for almost a year. Could it have anything to do with trying to distract the people of Texas from the faults of the Ferguson administration? Carter denied having been drunk at the football game but asked, “Is it any more of an offense against law and morals to toss up one’s hat for Dan Moody than to obstruct the Attorney General in his suit against highway contractors?” He strongly insisted on retaining his post as chairman of the board of directors at Texas Tech arguing that the Ferguson’s charges were “malicious and without justification.” He could not let “sideline issues interfere” with the growth and development of the new college, he maintained. Echoing the

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<sup>96</sup> Dallas Morning News, Dec. 1, 1925.

popular sentiment that the 'real' Governor Ferguson was Pa, Carter asserted that he was like "a ventriloquist behind the scenes" who "puts his words and his words into the figure on the stage." The war of words had begun, and Carter's feud with the Fergusons was far from over.<sup>97</sup>

Support for Carter poured in from around the state and nation as many were aware of the dwindling Ferguson reputation thanks to constant media coverage. Sidney Hardin of Mission, Texas, governor of the South Texas Rotary Clubs, wrote saying he was "within ten feet" of Carter at the football game and urged him to continue voicing his support for Moody. Insurance agent H.M. Marks noted that it was "peculiar that the Governor should wait nearly a whole year in which to comment on the manner in which you were supposed to have entertained the delegates of the American Petroleum Institute." Carter should not resign his position, he added, and "the people of Texas would be fortunate to have a man for Governor who at times might dissipate personally rather than one who allows state funds to be dissipated without any regards for the tax payers." Edward Jordan of Cleveland asserted, "Ma Ferguson certainly made you a greater national character, if such a thing is possible" adding, "You already are a national institution." The Miami Tribune reported that the son of a Miamian who was at the University of Texas-Texas A & M football game witnessed the whole affair: in his eyes "Carter was innocent of the charges of drunkenness." Both former Governor Pat Neff and Texas Tech President Paul W. Horn wrote Carter assuring him of their support. Neff declared, "You were not appointed originally on the board of the Technological College with the thought that you would at this time tender your resignation." Having

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<sup>97</sup> Fort Worth Press, Dec. 1, 1925.

read Carter's response, Neff rallied behind him: "On with the battle!" he exhorted. President Horn thanked Carter for supporting the college through his newspaper as well as encouraged him to retain his position. Carter was grateful for the hundreds of letters and telegrams "insisting that I fight it out and set steady in the boat." Though he had no intentions of resigning, the widespread show of support stiffened his resolve.<sup>98</sup>

The fight carried on through the New Year with fresh volleys from both the Ferguson and Carter camps. James Ferguson, ever willing to raise the specter of Klan activity, charged Carter with being a Klan leader and supporter of Republican candidate George Butte in the recent gubernatorial contest, accusations that had no grounding in truth. Carter responded by publishing an editorial in the Star-Telegram that dubbed January 1926 "Laugh month" due to the antics of the Fergusons as they tried to maneuver their way out of the highway contract scandal. The editorial called these charges "ridiculous," pointing out the fact that the Star-Telegram had never supported any Klan candidates since the recent resurgence of the organization. The editorial noted that when the 1924 Texas Democratic gubernatorial primary came down to Miriam Ferguson and Klan-supported Felix Robertson, the newspaper failed to support either candidate. Finally, Carter and the Star-Telegram were both unwavering in their support of Attorney General Moody, a man who had gained fame as a staunch opponent of the Klan. The Fergusons' scattershot accusations failed to persuade Carter to apologize for his outburst, admit to serving alcohol, or resign his Texas Technological College board position. Ultimately, the Ferguson attacks solidified

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<sup>98</sup> Sidney Hardin to Amon Carter, Dec. 2, 1925; H.M. Marks to Amon Carter, Dec. 1, 1925; Edward Jordan to Amon Carter, Dec. 25, 1925;; Pat Neff to Amon Carter, Dec. 2, 1925; P.M. Horn to Amon Carter, Dec. 5, 1925, Ferguson File, Box 78, AGC Collection; The Miami Tribune, Dec. 12, 1925

Carter's opposition to them while showing their inability to respond to the corruption charges stemming from the State Highway Department.<sup>99</sup>

Throughout 1926, Moody's supporters grew more vocal in urging him to run for governor that year. Though Carter refused to air Moody's campaign opening speech on his radio station WBAP, he did urge support for Moody. When Moody formally announced the opening of his gubernatorial campaign in May 1926, Carter wired him congratulations, saying that, "Texas needs men such as you in public service and I sincerely believe the people of the state can render no better service for themselves than to elect you governor." Seemingly a shoo-in for the Democratic nomination that year due to the State Highway Department and clemency scandals and general Ferguson fatigue, Moody defeated Governor Ferguson twice that year: once in the initial primary in which he earned just under fifty percent of the vote, and in the run-off, when he defeated her resoundingly 495,273 to 270,595. In the initial primary, Moody faced Houston businessman Lynch Davidson as well as Governor Ferguson. Carter took some time to gloat when Moody emerged as the front runner over Ferguson and Davidson, even going so far as to send a mocking wire to Davidson. "For a man who has claimed credit for almost everything except building the Rocky Mountains," he scoffed, "it must be distressing to stop look and listen." Moody supporters wrote Carter thanking him for his support for their candidate through the pages of the Star-Telegram, lauding the power of the press to sway the vote of the people.

The thirty-three year old Moody took office as the youngest governor in Texas history in January 1927 riding a wave of reform and business Progressivism reminiscent

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<sup>99</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Jan. 26, 1926.

of former Governor Neff. Moody's 4-year tenure as governor (he was re-elected in 1928) offered "competent, business-oriented, Progressive leadership" and for the most part he delivered as promised by cutting waste in the State Highway Department, increasing fuel taxes to pay for more roads, halting the indiscriminate pardons of his predecessor, and working somewhat successfully to reform the state prison system. Though Carter and Moody had been friendly since the Carter-Ferguson feud had erupted in 1925, the two men were soon at odds with one another over Moody's failure to allow Carter widespread influence within his administration. The Star-Telegram soon became one of the most strident anti-Moody publications in the state and the onset of the Great Depression further exacerbated the widening rift between them.<sup>100</sup>

The Carter-Moody split began when Moody refused to name Carter-supported nominee Cato Sells of Fort Worth to the State Highway Commission after being advised by former attorney general Thomas Watt Gregory that such an appointment would be "deeply regretted in the future." Carter's wrath was unleashed, and Moody forever "incurred his endless enmity." The stunned governor was concerned by the sudden loss of Carter's support for both personal and political reasons. Carter and Moody had struck up a casual friendship through reporter Silliman Evans ever since the beginning of the Ferguson highway scandal and Carter had spent much of 1926 extolling Moody's virtues. Now, however, Carter's tendency to make all political denials personal damaged his friendship and cost Moody his support. When Moody embarked on a campaign to reform Texas prisons, he encountered widespread resistance especially from Carter and the Star-Telegram. Carter's paper took the position that Moody's

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<sup>100</sup> Campbell, Gone to Texas, 375.

reforms would lead to overcrowding as prisoners would have to be relocated while new prisons were being built. This would not be the only time his prickly personality could impact politics as throughout the rest of his life he feuded with politicians that refused to become his mouthpieces. Carter's actions bothered both the Governor and his wife Mildred. Writing in her diary, Mildred observed that Carter's attempt to "dictate to Dan" by practicing tactics of "rule or ruin" weighed heavily on her husband." For the next four years, the Star-Telegram took the anti-Moody route and criticized the governor for everything from his attempts at prison reform to his response to the Fergusons' attempt to re-enter politics in 1930. For example, part of his reform plan included opening a centralized prison complex near Austin; when the state Prison Board ordered that new prisoners would no longer be allowed at the existing prison at Huntsville, the Star-Telegram's editorial page excoriated the administration for the decision claiming that it was "designed to 'force the legislature to enact Mr. Moody's Prison Monument in Austin.'" In 1929, after having easily been re-elected in spite of Carter's best efforts, Moody complained that the Fort Worth newspaper unfairly and incorrectly reported on his positions by allowing editorial views to influence the news columns. Unfortunately for Moody, his second term marked the beginning of the Great Depression and the collapse of what had in many ways been a prosperous decade for the state. Carter, his newspaper unable to stem the Moody tide with consistently unfavorable coverage, railed from the sidelines, waiting for greater opportunities for political influence.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Brown, Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug, 354-355, 358; Paul Lucko, "A Missed Opportunity: Texas Prison Reform During the Dan Moody Administration, 1927-1931," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 96 (July 1992): 45.

Locally, Carter continued to pursue his desire to make Fort Worth a center of aviation and industry. As mentioned previously, Carter was entranced by flight since his first encounter with an airplane in 1911, but opportunity to begin seriously investing in the future of aviation was not possible until the late 1920s. The aviation industry was still in its fledgling years during the early 1920s, but Carter believed in its infinite potential. If at all possible, he wanted to see that Fort Worth stood to benefit from the strides made in commercial aviation. Still, “The condition of the American aircraft industry in the years immediately following World War I was definitely poor,” so it would be a few years before conditions were right. By the late 1920s, government legislation promoting civil aviation and allowing private carriers to carry mail combined with the general boom in financial markets to enable many investors to become serious about entering the aviation industry. As a result of these changes, “capital investment in aviation rose from \$10,000,000 in 1921 to, to \$125,000,000 in 1928, and twice that a year later.” Carter, as a budding aviation enthusiast, took part in this national trend as evidence by his role in the formative airline companies Southern Air Transport and Aviation Corporation.<sup>102</sup>

Carter’s first serious step toward greater interest in aviation is best demonstrated by his interactions, though somewhat limited in the 1920s compared to future decades, with regional aviation corporations that would later form the core of American Airlines by the middle of the next decade. When Fort Worth brothers Chester and Temple Bowen began Texas Air Transport (TAT) to provide air mail service within the state, Carter was asked to christen the original fleet and to serve as the master of ceremonies at the

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<sup>102</sup> John B. Rae, “Financial Problems of the American Aircraft Industry, 1906-1940,” The Business History Review 39 (Spring 1965): 106-107.

opening festivities in February 1928. The Bowen brothers did not retain control of the company for long; by November of that year, Fort Worth businessman A.P. Barrett had purchased the company. Barrett was already a wealthy man due to his work as chairman of the board for two large utility companies operating in Texas, Louisiana, and New York. A firm believer in Fort Worth's role as an aviation center, his decision to enter the industry reportedly came at the urging of his three-year old son Hunter. Hunter, playing in the backyard of his Fort Worth home, spotted a plane flying over and exclaimed, "Daddy, I want that airplane." Barrett took his son to Fort Worth's Meacham Field, the recently completed air field for the city, and discovered TAT owned planes at the hangar. Instead of buying a plane, he opted to purchase the entire company from the Bowens and began pursuing his vision of transforming Fort Worth into an aviation hub.<sup>103</sup>

Under Barrett's leadership, TAT expanded its operations to include a flight school, passenger service, and a radio station. Its rapid success gave Barrett the opportunity to expand his aviation empire, and he and his associates purchased a controlling interest in Southern Air Transport and merged the two corporations. This regional airline, which dominated commercial aviation in the South, was targeted by Aviation Corporation (Avco), a massive holding company worth over \$200,000,000 formed in 1929. Avco's origins were murky at best and company historians tasked with researching its past have concluded that there was not much to discover because of the twisted nature of the company's family tree. It was to have been a subsidiary for the Fairchild Manufacturing Company but through the numerous acquisitions made by the

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<sup>103</sup> Dallas Morning News, Feb. 6, 1928 and Nov. 1, 1928, Feb. 10, 1929;



new corporation their roles soon were reversed. Over the next several years, Avco purchased numerous airlines and airline holding companies until it became a bloated behemoth with little organization or central control. Carter officially entered the aviation industry in 1929 through Southern Air Transport and its parent company Avco. Upon the merging of Southern Air Transport with Avco, Carter was elected a director of the company. Over the course of the next decade, he would emerge as a leading figure within the company as it transformed into American Airlines, as well as a promoter of aviation in general around the nation.<sup>104</sup>

Though seemingly devoted to profit, politics, and promotion, Carter found time to indulge his appetite for wading into the emerging celebrity culture of the 1920s. He was not alone but part of a larger trend in American culture. In an article in the Organization of American Historians' Magazine of History, Amy Henderson observes that while early Americans tended to idolize "military heroes, romantic fictional protagonists, and eminent statesmen who embodied the ideals of virtue and self-reliance . . . by mid-twentieth century, the pedestal belonged not to politicians or generals, but to baseball players and movie stars." While Carter could point to his increasing wealth and influence as signs of success, "in a culture of personality, 'celebrity' became a measure of success" as well. This meant expanding his personal network beyond the usual core group of businessmen and politicians into the burgeoning ranks of radio, movie and sports stars. During the 1920s, Carter did not enjoy the high level of friendship and intimacy with as large a number of celebrities as he would later in life, but he did begin

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<sup>104</sup> Darwin Payne and Kathy Fitzpatrick, From Prairie to Planes, 40-41; Robert J. Serling, Eagle: The Story of American Airlines, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 11-12, 15-16.

to cultivate relationships with a variety of nationally known personalities. He began hosting his friends at his suite at the Fort Worth Club or at his newly acquired Shady Oaks Farm on the shores of Lake Worth on the outskirts of Fort Worth. While he typically conducted business at the Fort Worth Club, Shady Oaks Farm became the place where he began entertaining personalities as diverse as British newspaper mogul Harold Harmsworth (Lord Rothermere), New York City mayor Jimmie Walker, and actor/columnist Will Rogers.<sup>105</sup>

Carter and Will Rogers developed a deep friendship that lasted from 1922 until Rogers' death in a plane crash in 1935. The two men met while visiting mutual friend New York Giants manager John McGraw in New York City during the 1922 World Series, and over the next few years maintained close contact with one another. By the end of the decade, Rogers had become a frequent visitor to Shady Oaks Farm and the suite at the Fort Worth Club. Carter, already something of a national figure during the 1920s, gained further public exposure through his friendship with Rogers. Rogers had begun writing his own newspaper column "Daily Telegrams" in 1926, and Carter was soon a regular feature in Rogers' musings. According to Rogers' biographer Ben Yagoda, their friendship was "cemented" at the 1928 Democratic Convention in Houston, where Carter and Will Rogers shared a room and crossed paths with noted columnist H.L. Mencken. Carter's ensuing antics at the Convention seemed to reflect Rogers' Western image which he had so carefully honed in his movies.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Amy Henderson, "Media and the Rise of Celebrity Culture," OAHS Magazine of History 6 (Spring 1992): 49; "Shady Oak Fading After Shining Hours," The Nashville Tennessean, Mar. 11, 1965.

<sup>106</sup> Ben Yagoda, Will Rogers: A Biography (New York: Knopf, 1993), 276.

The 1928 Democratic Convention was an historical event since it was not only the first presidential convention held in Texas, but also the first held in a southern state since 1860. Due to his growing influence within the Democratic Party, Jesse Jones, prominent banker as well as publisher of the Houston Post, persuaded the national party to meet in Houston for that years Democratic National Convention. Though the perpetually controversial issue of Prohibition swirled around the convention hall, the wet governor of New York, Al Smith, was solidly entrenched as the frontrunner and sacrificial lamb for the Democrats as they sought a nominee to face the popular Herbert Hoover. With little drama surrounding the convention results, Carter decided to create his own, possibly influenced by a recent Rogers film, A Texas Steer.

While Carter and Rogers grew their friendship during the mid-1920s, Rogers was in the middle of transforming himself from a vaudeville performer into one of the most highly sought after actors of the silent era. One of his more famous roles came in the 1927 movie A Texas Steer, based on an 1890 play of the same name. In this film, Rogers plays brash rancher Maverick Brander from Red Dog, Texas who is elected to Congress. Accompanied by his wife, daughter, and “three rowdy Texas cronies” named Yell, Bragg, and Blow, Brander proceeds to proselytize his fellow Congressmen to Texas’ greatness. One Washington lobbyist, eager to gain Brander’s support for his particular project, claimed that “since Mr. Brander arrived, our eyes have been opened. We have learned to appreciate the greatness and future glory of Texas! He has taught us that Texas is the coming Empire State!” In another instance, Brander’s Texas triumvirate of Yell, Bragg and Blow start a riot at a dinner party after brandishing their pistols. Rogers received high praise for his performance, and the movie influenced

future representations of the comic Texan so common in many Westerns. Carter, who spent much of his later life trying to represent the archetypal Texan, could not have missed this performance by his friend, and some of his actions, especially in Houston in June 1928, appear to reflect this exposure.<sup>107</sup>

Before heading to Houston for the 1928 Democratic Convention, Carter waited in Fort Worth for the separate arrivals of Will Rogers and noted columnist and cultural commentator Mencken. By this time, Mencken had already gained a reputation as a severe critic of the South through the pages of magazines like The Smart Set and American Mercury. This evidently had no impact on Carter who, as a publisher, could not have been unaware of his caustic comments about the “Sahara of the Bozarts.” Mencken, unlike Rogers, had never met Carter, but had accepted an invitation by him to stay at the Fort Worth Club for a night. Upon reaching Fort Worth, he was greeted by Carter holding two hats as gifts: a Stetson cowboy hat and a Borsalino fedora. The Stetson had become Carter’s trademark gift to celebrities and politicians and was typically inscribed inside the hatband with the words “Shady Oak Farm, Fort Worth, Texas, Where the West Begins, The Latch String Always Hangs Outside, Amon Carter.” After posing for some publicity photographs for the Star-Telegram, Mencken and Carter spent the evening at the Fort Worth Club where they enjoyed cigars, whiskey, gin, and T-bone steaks. The next day, they met Rogers at the airport and spent the afternoon at Shady Oaks Farm. Though the acerbic Mencken appreciated Carter’s gestures of hospitality, he noted later that “The Texans were not my kind of people. . . Amon G.

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<sup>107</sup> Don Graham, State Fare: An Irreverent Guide to Texas Movies (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2008), 14-16.

Carter's hospitality at Fort Worth, though it was earnest and lavish, was more of a nuisance than a joy." Unfortunately for Mencken, his time with Carter was not over.<sup>108</sup>

When Carter arrived in Houston, reportedly "with an immense stock of liquors," he booked a suite near Mencken's at the Rice Hotel. Mencken, already weary from his two days with Carter, was disturbed to discover that Carter was intent on barging into his room without invitation, "two or three times a day, usually accompanied by his friend and retainer, the sheriff of Fort Worth [Carl Smith] and the two of them wasted a great deal of my time." Carter did more at the hotel than bother Mencken; he mingled with the delegates, hoping that he could persuade them that Representative John Nance Garner of Uvalde, Texas, was the preferable presidential candidate. While failing at this venture, he did succeed in frightening hotel boarders when he fired a gun at a glass elevator door in frustration at waiting too long for the slow-moving, single passenger elevator to stop for him. Fortunately, wire mesh on the door prevented the glass from shattering. Bystanders intervened, preventing him from firing more shots; local law enforcement, seeing that no one had been hurt, released him with little more than a warning. Meanwhile, on the eleventh floor of the Rice Hotel, Mencken was in his suite recovering from his own encounter with Carter and his firearm.<sup>109</sup>

Earlier that day, while on one of his many forays into Mencken's room, Carter pulled out his six-shooter without warning and fired three shots out of the window; the bullets hit the hotel across the street near the room where the Ku Klux Klan was meeting. The shocked Mencken was sure Carter was drunk and was even more

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<sup>108</sup> Gary Clayton Andersen, Will Rogers and "His" America (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2011), 116-117; H.L. Mencken, Thirty-Five Years of Newspaper Work (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 171-175.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 174-175, 177-179.

amazed when Carter placed the weapon underneath the mattress and slipped out to avoid being found out by the Texas Rangers searching the building for the perpetrator. When the Rangers entered Mencken's room and found three bullet holes in his window, they proceeded to arrest him but were halted when Carter strode in to clear up the situation. Arresting Mencken, he argued, would make Texas look "ridiculous" to the rest of the nation; after all, the columnist was "known as a peaceable and virtuous character by millions of people." Carter explained that the shooting must have happened when Mencken was in the bathroom; some Klan enemy had clearly slipped in and fired the shots at the moment Mencken flushed the toilet. A local judge who accompanied the Rangers was unsure of his explanation and ordered a complete search of the room. The search revealed no weapon and the judge relented, convinced of Mencken's innocence. Once he and the Rangers were gone, Mencken "got Carter's pistol from under the mattress, handed it to him, and desired him to clear out at once." Mencken, analytical critic of Southern culture, explained Carter's behavior as being driven by his desire to be seen as a "West Texan, which connoted familiarity with firearms and a willingness to use them."<sup>110</sup>

Such an episode makes one wonder about Carter's motives in playing to the Texan stereotype in front of Mencken. Was he having fun at Mencken's expense? As he inebriated as Mencken alleged? Or was he intent on giving Mencken a sampling of what he seemed to expect from a Texan? It is possible that the answer can be found in the previously mentioned Rogers movie A Texas Steer. The boisterous maverick Brander and his trio of rowdies reveled in parading their "Texanness" in front of the

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 176-177.

urbane Washington crowd. During the 1920s, Mencken certainly represented what many Texans would have interpreted as typically snobbish Eastern attitudes, and Carter's actions in his hotel room can easily be construed as an attempt to give Mencken a taste of what he evidently expected. And while Mencken was not present in the Rice Hotel lobby when Carter fired at the elevator glass door, the national press certainly was, thus cementing his reputation as the type of Texan Hollywood presented to the nation.<sup>111</sup>

One might expect that events of this nature might prematurely ruin Carter's national reputation, but the "Houston Incident" as it was commonly called, was quickly forgotten. Mencken only mentioned the episode in posthumously published memoirs, and Rogers, Carter's companion to Houston, failed to discuss the controversy in his columns covering the Convention. As one might expect, Mencken and Carter failed to develop a long-lasting friendship though they would have another encounter four years later at the next Democratic Convention. Rogers and Carter, on the other hand, continued to forge ahead with their friendship, though it was to end in 1935 upon Rogers' premature death.

Carter's acquaintances and friendships during the 1920s extended well beyond the world of politics and Hollywood celebrities. An avid sports fan, Carter immersed himself as much as possible in the growing world of professional sports and modern fandom. Often this meant watching a sporting event, be it boxing, baseball, or bicycling. Ever the garrulous personality, he made friends in the sports world and of course never failed to use these connections to try to gain something for Fort Worth. Carter had

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<sup>111</sup> Graham, State Fare, 14-16.

loved baseball ever since playing as a young man in Nocona and Bowie, and his nationwide travels exposed him to the greater joys of watching major league baseball. In this way, he proved to be part of a larger trend since “Major League Baseball’s attendance expanded from 3.6 million to over nine million between 1900 and 1920.” Once he attained financial stability, he rarely missed a World Series and made the acquaintances of Hall of Famers like New York Giants manager John McGraw and Boston Red Sox center fielder Tris Speaker, and he counted fellow Texan Owen Wilson of the Pittsburgh Pirates as a good friend. Since there were no major league teams in Texas, Carter was forced to root for outside organizations like the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Chicago White Sox. When the short-lived Federal League began in 1914, Carter, possibly with the hope of securing a team for Fort Worth in the future, quickly moved to make himself known to James Gilmore, president of the league.<sup>112</sup>

As an ardent White Sox fan, Carter got to know team owner Charles Comiskey rather well and hoped to use this to his (and Fort Worth’s) advantage. In 1917, Carter attended a celebration honoring the World Series champion White Sox at Shanley’s Restaurant in New York where he entertained the rambunctious crowd with “witty sallies and good-natured raillery.” During a spring trip through Texas in 1918, the White Sox attended a dinner hosted by Carter for five hundred White Sox boosters in Texas. When the White Sox let it be known in 1919 that they were interested in moving their spring training from Florida to Texas, Carter let it be known that he would “guarantee one of the best diamonds in the south and the best of hotel accommodations.” Despite

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<sup>112</sup> Johnston, “Colonel Carter,” 8-9, 31; clip from Pittsburgh Post, n.d., Correspondence file, Box 303, AGC Collection; Claude S. Fisher, “Changes in Leisure Activity,” Journal of Social History 27 (Spring 1994): 455; James Gilmore to Amon Carter, Sept. 14, 1914; Amon Carter to Gilmore, Oct. 20, 1914, Correspondence file, Box 303, AGC Collection.



Carter's pressure, Comiskey decided that the White Sox would do some of their spring training in nearby Mineral Wells. This did not dampen Carter's enthusiasm for the White Sox, for later that year Carter hosted a dinner in honor of the team's American League pennant. As a token of their appreciation, the 1919 White Sox, soon tainted by the notorious "Black Sox" scandal, gave him a baseball autographed by all the team members.<sup>113</sup>

Though becoming more involved in political affairs during the 1920s, Carter found time in his hectic life to continue life as a sports fan on a local and national scale. Locally, this meant cheering for the Fort Worth Cats of the Texas League, one of the best minor league baseball teams in the country during the 1920s. Though a part of the Brooklyn Dodgers farm system by the 1940s, the Cats were independent during their formative years. From 1920-1925, they won six straight Texas League Championships, and as league champions, played in six consecutive Dixie Series against the Southern Association champion. Carter's affiliation with the Cats began in earnest during this time period. In 1919, Texas League president J. Walter Morris and Cats business manager Paul LaGrave persuaded him to help them arrange the Dixie Series with the Southern Association, a tradition that lasted until 1938. Later, he became vice-president of the Cats, though he generally left the day-to-day running of the organization to business partners W.C. Stripling, a boyhood friend, and Paul LaGrave. In 1923, when the team was at the height of its popularity, Carter chartered a private train, the "Dixie Special," to transport fans from Fort Worth to Mobile for the Dixie Series. That

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<sup>113</sup> Charles Comiskey to Amon Carter, Apr. 15, 1915, Correspondence file, Box 303, AGC Collection; George S. Robbins, "Texas Calls to Sox; Four Teams to Florida," Chicago Daily News, Feb. 4, 1919; Johnston, "Colonel Carter," 31.

same season, his radio station, WBAP, began airing Cats games. Carter's experiences with the Cats and his devotion to the team demonstrated the loyalty he held toward local institutions. Obviously this also helped boost his standing in the Fort Worth community, but just as with his future avid support for the Texas Christian University football team, his generosity and support outweighed whatever gains he might have made through this positive exposure.<sup>114</sup>

Carter's taste in sports extended well beyond baseball. Just as millions of Americans were embracing a diverse stable of spectator sports, he found himself following events as divergent as bicycling and boxing. Reflecting the bicycling craze of the 1920s known as six-day races, Carter accepted an invitation to fire the starting gun at a race at Madison Square Garden in December 1922. An avid boxing fan, he often accompanied Rogers to prizefights around the nation. Among the many friends he had in the athletic world was boxing promoter George "Tex" Rickard. The two had met while Rickard was the city marshal of Henrietta, Texas, during the 1890s. By the 1920s, Rickard had become nationally known for his role in arranging fights involving heavyweight champions such as Jack Johnson, Jack Dempsey, and Gene Tunney. In April 1926, Carter arranged for Rickard and Dempsey to meet in his suite at the Fort Worth Club to sign an agreement that ultimately pitted the fighter against Tunney for the heavyweight title. Sadly, Rickard died in 1929 after complications from an appendectomy; Carter served as an honorary pallbearer along with other notables such as Walter Chrysler, Jack Dempsey, and James Farley, a future campaign manager for Franklin D. Roosevelt. Clearly Carter's interest in sports was national; while supporting

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<sup>114</sup> Louis D. Rubin, "Review of The Texas League: A Century of Baseball, 1887-1987 by Bill O'Neal," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 92 (Oct. 1988) 383.

local teams, his national connections enabled him to become a well-traveled sports fan during the golden age of sports.<sup>115</sup>

Along with enjoying greater prestige in the business and political realms, Carter worked at settling once more into domestic life. His first wife, Zetta, no longer played any role in his life, but he devoted as much time as possible to ensuring that their daughter, Bertice, successfully transitioned from boarding school to college and into the professional world. After graduating from Lasell Seminary, an all-girls boarding school in Massachusetts, she began attending Northwestern University to focus on earning her degree in journalism. While Northwestern already enjoyed an excellent reputation as a journalism school, attending the university enabled Bertice to remain close to her mother Zetta who lived in nearby Winnetka, Illinois. While living in Chicago, Bertice met and married Harry Kay. Throughout their marriage, and for the rest of her life, Bertice often relied on her father for financial support. Through much cajoling and coaxing, she persuaded her father that he should use his influence within the oil industry to get Harry a job. Despite misgivings, Carter was able to find him a job with Sinclair Oil in Chicago. While her marriage with Harry did not last, her background in journalism enabled her to find work within the field as well as a second marriage.<sup>116</sup>

Closer to home, in 1923, Carter and Nenetta welcomed a new addition into their lives with the birth of Olive Ruth, named after Nenetta's sister. From the existing evidence, it appears that the Carter household was relatively calm and comfortable

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<sup>115</sup> Brian Hart, "George Lewis Rickard," New Handbook of Texas 5, 576-577; Dallas Morning News, Apr. 22, 1926, Jan. 9, 1929.

<sup>116</sup> Transcript of Amon Carter broadcast on WBAP radio, Feb. 1, 1923, Correspondence File, Box 303, AGC Collection; Harry Kay to Amon Carter, n.d., Box 45, Bertice Carter File, AGC Collection.

during the 1920s as the family settled into a routine typically expected of contemporary urban elites. While Amon busied himself expanding his network of business and political contacts, Nenetta became a Fort Worth socialite, hosting parties at their Rivercrest home and collecting what she called “pretties”: fine articles such as trees made of jade. While she spent many of her later years involved in philanthropic efforts, these activities were limited until the 1940s, when she began taking a more active role in organizing Amon’s burgeoning philanthropy.<sup>117</sup>

If Carter had remained content with his accomplishments by 1929, no one could have faulted him for lacking ambition. The Star-Telegram continued to have the highest circulation in the state, enabling him to bring in a substantial salary as president and publisher. By 1928, he earned \$60,000 a year plus profits from his investments in stocks and bonds. His 1928 portfolio, one of the few available to researchers, reveals that he owned stocks in a broad array of companies: Durant Motors, Warner Brothers, Paramount, and Humble Oil, for example. He also invested in commodities such as wheat and cotton through Fenner and Beane, a brokerage firm in New Orleans. Though not a man of considerable wealth, Carter was certainly more than able to provide a life of comfort and ease for himself and his family. The next decade of his life, a time of decline and despair for many Americans, would prove to be a decade of profit and prominence for Carter as he learned to exploit Roosevelt’s New Deal for the benefit of his region while also becoming independently wealthy through the discovery of oil. The urban booster was prepared for the national stage.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Ruth McAdams, “Mudholes, Fairy Godmothers, and Choir Bells,” 96.

<sup>118</sup> Individual Income Tax Return For Calendar Year 1928 including Schedule C, Income Tax File, Box 108, AGC Collection.

## CHAPTER 5

### “FOR THE EXCLUSIVE BENEFIT OF FORT WORTH”: THE GREAT DEPRESSION, NEW DEAL, AND AMON CARTER, 1929-1940

On November 1, 1935, the Chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), Jesse Jones, wired Amon Carter the simple statement, “Your cowshed has been approved.” Cryptic as it may appear, this telegram verified that the influence of the Texas publisher reached beyond the wide borders of his home state. At the height of the New Deal, Carter found ways to acquire government money for Fort Worth despite the fact that he held no elected office and was an entrepreneur of the same class that often clashed with President Franklin D. Roosevelt over certain parts of the New Deal. While the Great Depression presented challenges to many individuals across the nation, Carter discovered that the contacts he had cultivated among business executives and politicians could be exploited, especially during the New Deal. Roosevelt’s Texan vice-president John Nance Garner once commented wryly that “[Carter] wants the whole Government of the United States to be run for the exclusive benefit of Fort Worth and to the detriment of Dallas.” While something of an exaggeration, Garner’s comment reflected the attitude many in the Roosevelt administration had regarding Carter’s approach to the New Deal.<sup>119</sup>

For Carter, the road to being involved in the New Deal was a one. A lifelong Democrat, Carter had limited influence within the Republican administrations of the 1920s. The coming of the Great Depression wrought great changes to the national

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<sup>119</sup>Jesse Jones to Amon Carter, 1 Nov. 1935, Box 34, File 7, AGC Collection; Johnston, “Colonel Carter,” 8.

political landscape, and this allowed him to wield greater influence in Washington. Though certainly well-known during the 1920s, his unwavering support for Democratic candidates as well as his location within the “solid South” weakened whatever sway he could have held with Republican Presidents Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover. The Democratic domination of national politics for the next two decades provided fertile soil for Carter’s booster ethic. The first couple of years of the Depression found Carter continuing his interest in state gubernatorial politics as before, but once it was clear that Texas was not going to avoid this national calamity, his political activism expanded to the national scene. For a time, he did not view a more active, interventionist federal government as a menace, but he welcomed it. The “sweeping changes engendered” by the Great Depression and New Deal hastened the move of “traditional sources of power in local government and reoriented southern urbanites away from city halls and toward the nation’s capital,” and Carter used the Star-Telegram’s wide readership as leverage within the White House and Capitol. If the federal government was going to attempt to “prime the pump” of the economy with massive spending, he wanted to ensure that Fort Worth received its fair share of the benefits.<sup>120</sup>

The Great Depression did not descend on the nation with one swift stroke as is often imagined. The Stock Market Crash of 1929, while unwelcome, was not seen by many contemporaries as a harbinger of doom but rather a natural correction to the headiness of recent years. The Texas press, Carter’s Star-Telegram included, greeted the news of the crash with words of calm and comfort for the state’s citizens. On

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<sup>120</sup> Roger Biles, “The Urban South in the Great Depression,” The Journal of Southern History 56 (Feb. 1990): 72.

October 30, 1929, the Star-Telegram carried articles headlined “No Major Depression Seen in Plunge by U.S. Leaders” and “Note of Optimism is Heard Amid Market Crash Echoes.” On the editorial page, it was stated that the efforts of the banks and the Federal Reserve to limit the economic damage looked to be successful. Other newspapers echoed the sentiment. The Dallas Morning News surmised that “While the losses incurred will affect business to some extent, due to the intertwining of interests over the country, observations of several bankers and merchants indicate this will be slight and of no immediate consequence.” The San Antonio Express echoed the beliefs of many Texans that somehow the state was somehow insulated from Wall Street’s problems: “Here is no boom, no artificial inflation of values or fictitious prosperity based upon the shifting sands of rash speculation and unsound promotion.” Sadly for many Texans, the coming years would be all too horrible, eroding the proud sense of individualism many believed made Texas exceptional.<sup>121</sup>

Even during 1930, it seemed to many Texans that disaster had been averted. While the industrial Northeast was starting to feel the brunt of the Depression, the unemployment rate, though creeping upwards, was still relatively low in the state compared to other states around the country. As historian Lionel Patenaude writes, “Texans were reluctant to admit that something had gone wrong with the economy.” Governor Dan Moody, re-elected in 1928, faced little criticism from the public since the state’s economy had not yet begun to contract. The lack of awareness of worsening conditions combined with having eleven candidates in the Democratic primary, meant that the 1930 race for governor would be more about personality than anything else.

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<sup>121</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Oct. 30, 1929; Dallas Morning News, Oct. 30, 1929.

Moody was willing to run for an unprecedented third term, but chose not to run against Ross Sterling, chairman of the State Highway Commission, owner of the Houston Post, and former president of Humble Oil Company. Former governor James Ferguson futilely attempted to run but was unable to get his lifelong disqualification from state political office overturned. As in previous years, his wife Miriam ran in his stead, though James did the bulk of campaigning.

Carter, having made a break with the Moody administration, did not support Sterling, and obviously his past with the Fergusons precluded any support for Miriam. Instead, his support (and by extension, the Star-Telegram's) went to State Senator Clint Small from the tiny Panhandle town of Wellington. Small, with his "vision of business rather than politics, a vision of a growing state with happy contented people who are made prosperous by their industry and frugality," appealed to Carter's sense of individual achievement. Texas voters, presented with a choice of Ferguson or a Moody-affiliated candidate in Sterling, voted in large numbers for these candidates and Small did not make the run-off. In the initial primary campaign, the Star-Telegram's editorial page targeted Sterling "realizing, as the returns later justified, that [he was] the one candidate necessary for Senator Small to eliminate." The editorials questioned Sterling's choice to remain as chairman of the State Highway Commission during the race as well as his qualifications: "We know that he is a rich man and that he favors a state highway bond issue. Neither of these things necessarily qualifies a man to be Governor."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Dallas Morning News, Apr. 27, 1930; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Jul. 15, 1930.



When the Democratic primary became a race between Sterling and Ferguson, Carter chose to support Sterling's candidacy. Wishing to ease Sterling's mind about the recent editorial slant of the Star-Telegram, Carter wrote the candidate that he wanted to "assure you that we hope everything indicated in our campaign against your election in the first primary will prove to be a misconception on our part, and when you go in as Governor we want to assure you this newspaper and organization expects to accord you every cooperation possible." Texas voters, not yet feeling the brunt of the Depression, were more concerned by prospect of another two years of the Fergusons than on how either candidate was going to address economic issues; in the run-off, Sterling easily won with 55 percent of the vote.<sup>123</sup>

Unfortunately for Sterling, his term as governor was marred by Texas' continued downward slide into depression. Like many other political leaders, including President Hoover, Sterling continued to preach a message of optimism even in the midst of discouraging economic signs. Texas cities, less industrialized than their northern counterparts, did not feel a serious economic pinch until mid-1931, and in some cases, as late as 1932. This did not mean signs of economic distress were absent until those years. Texas farmers, a group that did not exactly share in the prosperity of the 1920s, were hit particularly hard from the beginning of the Depression just like farmers across the nation. Texas banks experienced some difficulties, reflecting the general lack of stability found in many other states of the union. The oil industry, an expanding sector of Texas' developing economy since Spindletop in 1901, neared a crisis due to

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<sup>123</sup> Amon Carter to Ross Sterling, Aug. 24, 1930, Box 195, Ross Sterling File, AGC Collection; Campbell, Gone to Texas, 380.

overproduction and plummeting prices. Meanwhile, Carter and his city struggled to maintain and then restore confidence amid the crumbling economy.<sup>124</sup>

Fort Worth was seemingly insulated from impending economic doom due to an extensive building program begun in the late 1920s as well as having a relatively stable banking industry. The recent recession of 1921-22 resulted in bank consolidations in the city; by 1927, three banks dominated Fort Worth: Fort Worth National, First National, and Continental National. This “consolidation reduced the number of incompetent managers and lessened competition between banks. Less competition encouraged Fort Worth banks to avoid risk in the boom times of 1927 to 1929.” In 1930, however, a run on the First National threatened to upset the stability of Fort Worth banking. The run on First National Bank appears to have been nothing more than a panic based on unfounded rumors; however, by three o’clock on February 18, 1930, the lobby of the bank was full of depositors desperate to withdraw their money from the allegedly failing bank. Fort Worth elites desiring to stem the panic emerged to calm the milling crowds clamoring for their money. Oilman W.T. Waggoner, a First National Bank board member, told the people, “I hereby pledge to you every cent that I own or possess in this world that you shall not lose a single dollar in this bank. I will sell every cow and every oil well if necessary to pay for any money you lose here.”<sup>125</sup>

Carter also chose to confront the bank run. He spent that evening at the bank lecturing the crowd from atop a desk, urging depositors to leave their money in the bank

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<sup>124</sup> Lionel Patenaude, Texans, Politics, and the New Deal, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1983): 2-4.

<sup>125</sup> Victoria Buenger and Walter Buenger, Texas Merchant: Marvin Leonard & Fort Worth, (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1998), 74; Paul Mason, The First: The Story of Fort Worth’s Oldest National Bank (New York: Newcomen Society in North America, 1977), 8.

and pointing out that Fort Worth would weather any financial crisis. Carter then supplied the crowd with sandwiches and coffee and brought in two bands which played enthusiastic songs such as “There’ll be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight,” and “Hail, Hail, the Gang’s All Here”. Satisfied that their money was safe and comforted by the sight of Federal Reserve men bringing \$5,000,000 from Dallas, the crowd began depositing their recently withdrawn money. As word of his successful effort to halt the panic spread, Carter received telegrams from as far away as New York, where one acquaintance of his, J.M. Davis, joked that “I now suggest you dispose of your newspaper interests and devote your entire time to banking.”<sup>126</sup>

The next day, Carter addressed the bank run in the Fort Worth Record-Telegram, the morning edition of the Star-Telegram. He condemned the run as a demonstration of what “idle gossip, unfounded rumors and a state of hysterical [sic] upon the part of merely a few hundred people can do.” He blamed the panic on “idle gossips, busybodies, and talkers”; According to Carter, the bank was financially stable and supported by some of the wealthiest men and companies in West Texas and Fort Worth, such as Waggoner, the Samuel Burk Burnett estate, and his very own Star-Telegram. If the bank was so unstable, these Texas luminaries would not keep their money there. Appealing to people’s civic pride, he reminded readers that “Fort Worth’s good name is at stake and finished his front-page editorial admonishing “sober-minded people” to “stop, look and listen” before jumping to any conclusions about the status of reputable Fort Worth banks. Carter and Waggoner were not alone in quashing the run as the bank issued a statement that showed the bank to “be in the best condition in its

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<sup>126</sup>Johnston, “Colonel Carter,”35; J.M. Davis to Amon Carter, Feb. 20, 1930, Box 78, First National Bank Run File, AGC Collection.

history, that it did not owe a penny to any individual or company, and that it has sufficient cash on hand to meet all possible demands.” The governor of the Dallas Federal Reserve Bank, Lynne Talley, assured depositors that the bank was “one of the strongest banks in the United States and that the resources of the Federal Reserve Bank were at the disposal of the institution.”<sup>127</sup>

With the panic stemmed and Fort Worth banks still secure, it appeared that the city had avoided the problems that were beginning to plague other American cities. Fort Worth was not the exception as other Texas cities also continued to show signs of strength. Neighboring Dallas reported an unemployment rate of only 4.7 percent in 1930 and hundreds of new businesses had opened up throughout the year. Austin’s economy was slow to decline as well because of the state government and the University of Texas. Houston, because it was more industrialized than other major Texas cities, suffered from a higher unemployment rate than the other cities with a staggering 23 percent unemployment rate by the beginning of 1931. By 1931, it was clear that Texas would not escape the Depression’s wrath. Fort Worth’s construction projects ended that year and Dallas construction slowed down that year as well. Texas farmers “faced steadily worsening conditions as the price of cotton fell from nine to ten cents a pound when the 1931 crop was planted to a little more than five cents at harvest time. Prices for corn and cattle were more than fifty percent lower than in 1929.” Clearly, the state had entered the throes of depression in 1931.<sup>128</sup>

By 1930, Carter had begun writing President Hoover with suggestions and advice, much of it unsolicited. In his communication with Hoover, one can begin to

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<sup>127</sup> Fort Worth Record Telegram, Feb. 19 1930; Dallas Morning News, Feb. 19, 1930.

<sup>128</sup> Campbell, Gone to Texas, 378.

formulate some ideas about Carter's approach to national politics and economics. Though Carter and Hoover were not close friends, the two men had been acquainted since Hoover's role in the establishment of WBAP radio in 1922. In June 1930, Congress, dominated by protectionist Republicans, passed the controversial Smoot-Hawley tariff, one of the highest tariffs in United States history. Though presented as a bill that would protect struggling American industry and agriculture, opposition to the bill was strong. Over one thousand economists signed a letter urging Hoover to veto the bill due to concerns about its impact on consumers as well as the possibility that many countries would retaliate with like-minded tariffs. Carter added his voice to the cacophony of protest, wiring Hoover that though himself a believer in protective tariffs, he feared the results would bring more harm than good. Concerned that other nations might engage in "direct reprisals" and noting that "some of our basic industries, among the largest employers of labor, are very fearful of its plot," he urged the president to veto the bill and thus "put an end to the disturbance to general business that it has created." President Hoover, driven by a firm belief in the merits of high tariffs, signed the bill into law in June 1930 against the outcries of the opposition. What is interesting to note in this incident is that Carter did not adopt the trade stance attributed to most southerners at the time. It is often assumed that southerners still held strong anti-protectionist tendencies as they had since the days of Jefferson and Jackson, yet by 1922, tariffs had started to enjoy considerable support from southerners in both agriculture and industry. Carter was therefore no different by voicing support for a moderate protectionism.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Amon Carter to Herbert Hoover, June 11, 1930, Box 104, Herbert Hoover File, AGC

In January of the next year, as Congress debated a drought relief bill, Carter contacted President Hoover, this time urging him to support direct relief to farmers hurt by a drought in the South, not just loans that would cover supplies and seed. He wired Hoover a copy of a Star-Telegram editorial explaining why farm relief was essential to the survival of those impacted by drought. While some argued that loans should be limited, “If aid in the form of loans is justified at all, inclusion of food loans is justified as well.” Addressing those who argued that these loans were little more than federal handouts, “To say that [the farmers] case is mainly one of charity dispensed by way of soup kitchens is to display a lack of appreciation of the quality of these sufferers.”<sup>130</sup>

Hoover, however, believed differently. In a letter marked “Purely Personal”, the defensiveness he had acquired as the economy crumbled around him made an appearance. “I have thought that it is about time we had a little old-fashioned Americanism and self-reliance in this country,” he wrote. “I regret that you cannot support me.” Detailing how he had intervened to make loans available to “rehabilitate agriculture” as well as coordinated with the Red Cross to “support the hungry”, Hoover argued that he was able to “cover the whole situation.” He closed with a nod to his decreasing popularity: “I presume, however, because I have disapproved government doles I shall now be a public enemy, and that those making politics out of human misery will score with the Southern people.” With a nod to Carter’s staunch Democratic credentials, he added, “You may be interested in a message of a great Democratic president upon this subject.” Whether Carter understood what must be a reference to

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Collection; Charles M. Dollar, “The South and the Fordney-McCumbey Tariff of 1922: A Study in Regional Politics,” The Journal of Southern History 39 (Feb. 1973): 45.

<sup>130</sup> Amon Carter to Hoover, Jan. 15, 1931, Box 104, Herbert Hoover File, AGC Collection.

Grover Cleveland's stand against relief for Texas farmers is unknown. What is known, however, is that Carter was open to the concept of direct relief, a stance he would continue to have as the New Deal dawned.<sup>131</sup>

Despite Governor Sterling's effort to prevent Texas from descending further into depression, the state continued its downward slide well into 1932. In 1931, East Texas oil prices plummeted due to overproduction, and the legislature refused to grant the Railroad Commission sufficient powers to restrict output. Sterling responded in August by declaring martial law and sending National Guardsmen to halt production. In February 1932, the legislature passed a law reducing cotton production. In both cases, the state Supreme Court responded in the negative, claiming in the former, Sterling had overstepped his powers, and in the latter, the legislature had violated property rights. Things had gotten no better in Fort Worth. By 1932, the city's budget deficit stood at \$2.6 million and city leaders were faced with having to provide for the city's unemployed by operating a soup kitchen and putting men to work raking leaves in local parks. As the New Deal got under way in 1933, the city council asked for federal funds to build and improve various streets and bridges in the city. By the end of the New Deal, thanks to Carter, Fort Worth would have more than improved streets and bridges for which to thank the federal government.<sup>132</sup>

As the nation sank further into depression, Carter worked to hone his political skills at the national level. The connections he continued to make with leading Democrats only served to benefit himself, Fort Worth, and Texas during the

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<sup>131</sup> Hoover to Amon Carter, Jan. 16, 1931, Box 104, Herbert Hoover File, AGC Collection.

<sup>132</sup> Campbell, Gone to Texas, 381; Knight, Fort Worth: Outpost on the Trinity, 211; Selcer, Fort Worth, 77.

approaching New Deal. With the Depression virtually guaranteeing Democratic victories across the board in 1932, he was determined to ensure that he enjoyed a fair amount of influence within the administration of whichever Democratic candidate emerged victorious. His political activities that year caused Will Rogers to comment in his syndicated column, "I haven't heard from my good friend Amon Carter of Texas. I am afraid he is taking politics too serious, for he was awfully able and entertaining before." Carter's candidate of choice for the Democratic presidential nomination was John Nance Garner of Uvalde, Texas, nicknamed "Cactus Jack" by opponents and admirers alike. First elected to Congress in 1902, Garner had toiled for thirty years earning a reputation as a moderate Democrat with progressive tendencies with great ability to bridge the two parties. Elected House minority leader in 1928, he advocated items such as lower tariff rates and higher public works spending. Though Hoover was usually displeased with Garner's opposition to his policies, he once remarked that Garner was "a man of real statesmanship when he took off his political pistols." After the Democrats swept into power in the 1930 elections, he was elected Speaker of the House where he subsequently pushed across legislation including a \$ 1 billion public works bill and the creation of the RFC, a government agency designed to loan money to banks, corporations, states, and municipalities in need. By 1932, he was clearly a frontrunner for the Democratic nomination along with Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York. As Democratic Party delegates gathered in Chicago in June, Carter was among them. There would be no hotel antics this time around; as leader of the Garner delegation from Texas, he was determined that his man would win the nomination.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Patrick Cox, "John Nance Garner," in Profiles in Power: Twentieth-Century Texans in



As Garner emerged as a prominent Democratic leader, Carter began to court his support. Finding that his fellow Texan embraced the same brand of moderate political ideas, Carter felt that he had in Garner something of a kindred spirit. The first sign of Carter's full acceptance of Garner came in February 1932, when he rewarded him with one of his famous Stetsons with the words "Hooray for John Garner and West Texas" inscribed on the inside, a deliberate play on Carter's trademark yell, "Hooray for Fort Worth and West Texas!"<sup>134</sup>

When Garner, supported by William Randolph Hearst, and many House Republicans agreed that a sales tax on all items except food and clothing should be imposed to balance the budget, Carter informed Garner of his strong support for the tax. Simultaneously, Carter harangued Texas' two senators, Morris Sheppard and Tom Connally for opposing the proposal, claiming that their ideas of progressive taxation were merely schemes to "soak the rich" that would end up damaging the already fragile economy. Connally, the junior senator from Texas, worked with Robert La Follette Jr. of Wisconsin to lead the anti-sales tax coalition in the Senate believing that the proper revenue could be raised through higher income tax rates on individuals and business. The sales tax never materialized due to Garner's mishandling of the debate as well as overwhelming opposition from many fellow Democrats, including the rest of Texas' congressional delegation. Though Southern congressmen overwhelmingly voted against the sales tax, Carter's support for the plan reflected an odd reality: his views on

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Washington, ed. Kenneth Hendrickson, Jr., et al. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 42, 48-51; Will Rogers, Will Rogers' Daily Telegrams, Vol. 3 The Hoover Years 1931-1933, ed. James M. Smallwood and Steven K. Gragert (Stillwater: Oklahoma State University Press, 1979), 192.

<sup>134</sup> Amon Carter to John Nance Garner, Feb. 29, 1932, Box 92, John Nance Garner File, AGC Collection.

this issue were much more in line with Republicans and urban-oriented Democrats than with fellow Southerners.<sup>135</sup>

Though Garner did not go to Chicago as the frontrunner, he did have ninety delegates to his name from wins in the Texas and California primaries. He had done little to promote his own candidacy, yet support from Hearst in California and his being Texas' favorite son had given him the victories in those states. After the first ballot at the convention, Governor Roosevelt of New York was the clear frontrunner with 666 ¼ votes, but did not have the requisite two-thirds of the votes to win the nomination outright. Al Smith was a distant second with 201 ¾ votes, but Garner at 90 ¼ held enough sway among the anti-Roosevelt delegates to be a possible compromise candidate. Carter attended the Chicago convention as the head of the Texas delegation, determined Garner would become the Democratic nominee. A Garner win, improbable as it seemed, in what promised to be a poor year for Republicans would certainly create new political opportunities and influence for Carter though he did not seek any political appointment. If Carter could somehow persuade Texas and California delegates to stand firm in their allegiance to Garner, his candidate could emerge victorious.<sup>136</sup>

The first day of the convention ended with Roosevelt still shy of the two-thirds vote necessary for the nomination, and the third round of balloting on the morning of the second day still left him short. Louis Howe, longtime Roosevelt confidant and political adviser, believed that Carter's position as the head of the delegation was important to

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.; Jordan A. Schwarz, "John Nance Garner and the Sales Tax Rebellion of 1932," The Journal of Southern History 30 (May 1964): 162, 176.

<sup>136</sup> Russell M. Posner, "California's Role in the Nomination of Franklin D. Roosevelt," California Historical Society Quarterly 39 (Jun. 1960): 132.

keep in mind since he viewed him as a “powerful king-maker type’ who ‘breaks with everyone.’” James Farley, Roosevelt’s campaign manager, knew that the Texas delegation held the key to Roosevelt’s nomination and thus dangled the vice-presidency in front of Garner as a way of persuading him to withdraw his candidacy. Garner, learning of this offer through Representative Sam Rayburn and Senator Connally of Texas, replied that “no man, situated as he is, can decline the honor of the vice-presidential nomination.” Garner then authorized the California and Texas delegations to switch their support to Roosevelt, and Rayburn carried this information to where the Texas delegation was meeting. This recent turn of events caused the Texas delegation to be “thrown into confusion” and a fierce struggle among the delegates ensued. Senator Cordell Hull of Tennessee made an appearance and asked Connally to make a motion to switch the state’s support to Roosevelt, but he refused. Rayburn, presiding over the proceedings, handed the gavel to Carter and left the room with tears in his eyes “without expressing his wish as to how they should vote or for whom.”<sup>137</sup>

Carter was infuriated that Garner’s chance at the presidency was slipping away and worked hard to keep the delegation together in his favor. Unfortunately for his cause, only 105 of Texas’ 180 delegates were in the room; the rest were canvassing other state delegations for Garner votes. According to Rayburn’s recollections, Carter “was going to nominate Garner whether he had the votes or not.” As confusion reigned in the Texas caucus, “angry words flew thick and fast,” and “there were several near altercations,” with Carter in the thick of the verbal fray. Many in the delegation felt they had been betrayed for two reasons: quite a few had been under the impression Garner

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<sup>137</sup> Lionel V. Patenaude, “The Garner Vote Switch to Roosevelt: 1932 Democratic Convention,” Southwestern Historical Quarterly 79 (Oct. 1975): 193-195, 198.

would not accept second place, and many were angry they had been left out of the negotiations. One can safely assume that Carter, as the head of the Texas delegation, was one individual who was angry at being excluded from the Garner-Roosevelt discussions. When one delegate, W.A. Tarver of Austin, moved that the caucus switch from Garner to Roosevelt, "Carter urged his fellow Texans not to desert their state's top Democrat." Rayburn, who had returned, countered that this was not desertion, but a move that reflected Garner's wishes. When order was restored and a vote taken, the Roosevelt faction won 54-51. The possibility exists that if all Texas delegates had been present, Carter would have stood a better chance at achieving solidarity for Garner. Yet in the face of this crushing blow, Carter believed he had one last chance at giving victory to Garner. He would talk to William McAdoo, head of the California delegation.<sup>138</sup>

California, like Texas, had been holding out in favor of Garner. Hearst, the former Carter competitor and suitor, had begun a "Garner for President" campaign in his newspapers in January 1932, and in the California primary Garner had ridden this support to victory. McAdoo, longtime Democratic politician, onetime Treasury Secretary, and son-in law to Woodrow Wilson, headed his state's delegation, and for a time, was committed to supporting Garner's nomination. Once it became clear that Roosevelt appeared unstoppable, he began listening to appeals from Farley to swing California into the Roosevelt column. On the last day of the convention, Carter pleaded with McAdoo not to release the California delegation to vote for Roosevelt saying that if

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<sup>138</sup> Steve Neal, Happy Days Are Here Again: The 1932 Democratic Convention, the Emergence of FDR-and How America Was Changed Forever (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005): 280-282.

California stayed with Garner, then Texas most certainly would remain loyal to its favorite son. McAdoo claimed that Carter really “believed that Garner could eventually be nominated. Amon was very vigorous in stating his position but I told him that the strategic move to end the threatened deadlock was for California to switch to Roosevelt on the fourth ballot.” Once it became clear Roosevelt had sealed the nomination, Carter expressed his disappointment through comments that were later carried on the radio. “We quit too soon,” he grumbled. “We realized Garner’s only chance for nomination lay in a deadlock . . . We had a chance of a lifetime to nominate a President from Texas, but a few of our friends were a little weak-kneed.”<sup>139</sup>

Weak-kneed or not, Texas delegates had nothing to be ashamed of since Garner became Roosevelt’s running mate and then vice-president for the next eight years. This guaranteed that Texas politicians and boosters would have a friend and advocate in Washington, D.C. But for the short-term, Carter’s emotions gained control as he expressed frustration to H.L. Mencken. In Chicago covering the convention, Mencken found “Garner’s cool desertion of his Texas lieges . . . one of the most exhilarating episodes of the convention,” though Carter clearly disagreed. Once Carter saw Garner’s presidential chances slip away, he “came to the press-stand and unloaded his woe” to Mencken “with tears in his eyes.” Carter soon learned that it behooved him to forget his sadness as switching his loyalties toward Roosevelt proved to be a small price for the federal largesse given to Texas during the New Deal and World War II.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 289; Dallas Morning News, July 5, 1932.

<sup>140</sup> H. L. Mencken, Thirty-Five Years of Newspaper Work (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994): 219.

Staunch Democrat that he was, Carter had little problem pledging allegiance to Roosevelt. His Shady Oak Farms, once the “center of the Garner-for-President movement” began to play host to Roosevelt, Farley, “and other big New Dealers.” As the Roosevelt campaign heated up in the fall, Carter began fundraising for the campaign, collecting over \$9,000 from fellow Fort Worthians in September and October 1932. From his own coffers he added \$2,000, though half of that amount was given in his son’s name. After Roosevelt’s election, he worked with the Democratic National Committee to raise money to offset the deficit it had incurred from campaign expenses. As he had promised after the convention that summer, he was being a faithful Democrat, supporting the nominee regardless of who that might be. In January 1933, as Roosevelt’s inauguration neared, Will Rogers casually mentioned in his syndicated column that Carter would make a great secretary of war, stating that though he had no experience as a political appointee, the fact that he got along with all Democrats and “50 per cent of Republicans” would make him an excellent choice. Whether or not Rogers was serious, Carter would have none of it and said as much in the Star-Telegram with a note added at the end of Rogers’ column: “The publisher of this paper never has accepted political appointments of any character and has no intention of so doing.” While fellow Texas publishers Jesse Jones and Ross Sterling had recently entered politics, Carter had little desire to do so preferring instead to wield influence behind the scenes. A position as a power broker of sorts held more appeal than a political position in which he would be forced to respond to the requests of men like himself.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Dallas Morning News, Nov. 1, 1932; New York Times, Dec. 9, 1932.

Carter's political attention in 1932 was not just focused on placing Garner at the head of the Democratic ticket; to his dismay, the specter of Fergusonism once again reared its head in the form of Miriam Ferguson. Due to the depressed economy, the political climate in Texas was ripe for a Ferguson victory. Sensing the desperate mood of Texas voters, Carter attempted to head off what seemed to be sure disaster for Ross Sterling. Sterling, seeking a second term as governor, had defeated Ferguson two years earlier, and believed he could keep the forces of Fergusonism at bay. Carter subtly communicated to Sterling, in person and by letter, his belief that he should refrain from running for re-election. Arguing that he was "not altogether fearful of the result of the campaign," Carter did say that he did "fear its character." While Sterling was justified in seeking re-election, Carter believed that he would be better served by bowing out:

By no stretch of the imagination could your refusal to seek re-election be termed a sign of weakness, or a desire for vindication. It would be taken by the public merely as a case of a successful businessman of large affairs, who sacrificed his time and his means for the public good, desiring the opportunity to recoup his personal fortunes. Instead of criticizing you, I believe the public would commend you and if anything have a higher appreciation of your services and the sacrifice that you have made than is now the case.

Carter did assure Sterling that whatever his decision, he would have the support of the Star-Telegram. Hoping to assuage Sterling's fears that he was being nudged out in favor of another candidate, Carter declared that his suggestion came "merely because you have attained all the honor that can be attained out of the office."<sup>142</sup>

Sterling ignored Carter's request, causing Carter to turn to one of Sterling's former Humble Oil associates, Harry Wiess. Sterling, he complained, was in no shape

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<sup>142</sup> Campbell, Gone to Texas, 381; Amon Carter to Ross Sterling, Feb. 25, 1932, Box 78, Ferguson Controversy File 1930-1932, AGC Collection.

to run against the Fergusons. “The campaign is going to be an extremely nasty one and it will not only be embarrassing to the Governor, but it will be humiliating,” he fumed. Because the Depression had hit Sterling’s fortunes and those of his supporters particularly hard, Carter worried that he would not be able to mount an effective campaign against the Fergusons who, he claimed, “can operate one on a shoestring budget.” Carter’s pleas fell on deaf ears, and Sterling went ahead with his campaign. As promised, Carter supported Sterling, but to no avail. His defensiveness in support of Sterling during the primary was seen not only in the editorial page of the Star-Telegram but also in private letters written to Ferguson supporters, some of whom were complete strangers to Carter. One letter, to Mr. D.D. Grubb from the Central Texas hamlet of Ireland, reached an epic length of fifteen pages, each leaf filled with arguments for Sterling and examples of Ferguson nefariousness.<sup>143</sup>

The Ferguson’s campaign promised little more than tax reductions and focused on the unpopularity of Sterling’s declaration of martial law in East Texas oil fields. Sterling, due to the strong current of anti-Fergusonism, forced a runoff in the first primary but fell four thousand votes shy of winning the runoff. Allegations of Ferguson vote stealing abounded, yet no investigation was ever undertaken. When it became clear that Ferguson was slated for victory, Will Rogers humorously wrote in his column, “I would like to ask a favor of my friends, no matter where they be, if they have any flowers, old wreaths, or crepe bows, to please send ‘em to Amon G. Carter of Fort Worth Texas.” “He always staid [sic] clear of politics,” he continued, “but the summer heat got ‘em and he started to actively campaign against Jim Ferguson. One hundred

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<sup>143</sup> Amon Carter to Harry Wiess, Apr. 27, 1932; Amon Carter to D.D. Grubb, Aug. 1, 1932, Box 78, Ferguson Controversy File 1930-1932, AGC Collection.



and twenty millions, and he picks out Jim to argue politics with! It would be like me arguing lip rouge with Greta Garbo.” Carter therefore faced double political disappointment in 1932: Roosevelt, not Garner, in the White House and the Fergusons in the Governor’s Mansion. Fortunately for Carter, Roosevelt proved to be a much more valuable political asset than he could have imagined. For the rest of the 1930s, Carter found that, given that much more could be gained, the lure of national political bargaining was much more enticing than despairing over who was the governor of Texas.<sup>144</sup>

Carter welcomed the prospect of the New Deal with open arms because it seemed to hold the promise of relief for the unemployed and recovery for American industry. Texas was well-represented in Washington, and Carter understood that this fact could be used to ensure the free flow of federal aid and support to his pet projects. In October 1933, he hosted a political gathering at his Shady Oaks Farm; in attendance were Vice-President Garner, Postmaster General Farley, RFC Chairman Jesse Jones, and Will Rogers. He later accompanied the group to Arlington Downs to watch horse racing, and to Dallas for a fundraiser at the Adolphus Hotel, where Rogers regaled the crowd with praise for Farley and Garner and jokes about Carter’s feud with the Fergusons, also in attendance. Time covered the trip in great detail, alleging that Carter’s “generosity as a contributing Democrat is only equaled by his enthusiasm for the cause and, perhaps, by his ambition to hold office.” Carter took great offense at the magazine’s coverage of the trip, and voiced his complaints in a letter published in a later issue. Calling this allegation “ridiculous,” he stated that “I have never held public office

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<sup>144</sup> Campbell, Gone to Texas, 381; Rogers, Will Rogers’ Daily Telegrams, 185.

and have stated repeatedly . . . that I never expect to hold one.” Unabashed booster that he was, it does not seem accurate to portray Carter as someone who sought political office. His experiences peppering politicians and cabinet members with requests and demands could not have made holding office a desirable option.<sup>145</sup>

In December 1933, Carter wired Roosevelt a Christmas greeting filled with praise for the accomplishments of the last year. “You are [the nation’s] Santa Claus,” he gushed, “for through your inspiring leadership and the constructive and humanitarian policies you have inaugurated, the nation this year is enjoying its happiest and best Christmas in four years.” And why not be optimistic? With Garner as vice-president, Carter was ensured an open line into the heart of the Roosevelt administration. In addition to Garner, there were three other Texans in the nation’s capital with considerable influence: Jesse Jones, head of the RFC, and Senators Sheppard and Connally. Carter constantly communicated with these three men, as well as Representative Fritz Lanham of Fort Worth and Elliott Roosevelt, President Roosevelt’s Fort Worth-residing son, during the New Deal with hopes of winning support for his pet projects and ideas.<sup>146</sup>

The passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act in March 1933 gave Carter two opportunities to interact with the New Deal, though in very different ways. This act created two federal agencies designed to boost industrial recovery and confidence: the National Recovery Administration (NRA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA). The NRA’s goal was to spur industrial recovery by creating greater cooperation between

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<sup>145</sup> Time, Oct. 30, 1933, Nov. 20, 1933.

<sup>146</sup> Amon Carter to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Dec. 24, 1933, Box 269, Franklin D. Roosevelt File, AGC Collection.

business and government through the implementation of industrial codes setting wages and hours, while the PWA was designed to “prime the pump of recovery” by funding the building of large-scale construction projects. Through these two agencies, Carter attempted to increase his influence beyond the borders of Texas, sometimes to great effect. In addition, reviewing Carter’s work involving the NRA and PWA allows one to understand the internal machinations of New Deal agencies.<sup>147</sup>

General Hugh Johnson, head of the NRA, began creating committees to establish the codes of conduct for hundreds of American industries. Johnson had experience working with the government in a similar capacity when he served in the War Industries Board under Wall Street financier Bernard Baruch. During his tenure at the helm of the short-lived NRA, Johnson yearned to emulate the corporatist style of governance seen in fascist Italy. Law professor James Q. Whitman notes, “To supporters and critics alike, General Johnson’s NRA, a vast scheme for delegating governmental authority to private cartels, seemed akin to the ‘corporativism’ of Italian Fascism.” Carter spent much of 1933 working to establish what can be termed the newspaper cartel. Through his involvement with the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA), Carter was tapped to join Howard Davis, president of the ANPA, and John Stewart Bryan, publisher of the Richmond Times-Dispatch on the newspaper publishers’ code committee. The committee’s job was to formulate codes that were palatable to Johnson, but naturally the men wanted to retain some semblance of control over their industry. They hired Washington attorney Elisha Hanson to serve as legal counsel, a move criticized by the liberal magazine The Nation due to his work assisting

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<sup>147</sup> Anthony Badger, The New Deal: The Depression Years 1933-1940 (New York: The Noonday Press, 1989), 66, 74.

former Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon in his support for tax cuts for the wealthy. Magazine columnist Paul Y. Anderson, a friend of Johnson, sarcastically called Carter and his cohorts the “vaunted guardians of our liberty.”<sup>148</sup>

The committee’s main concerns were hours worked, wage levels, labor power, and press freedom. The publishers would accept no less than forty hours as the standard work week; this clashed with the proposed thirty-two hours written into the temporary code. The president of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Association, J. F. Young, complained to Carter that the existing code clause that called for a return to the 1929 prevailing wage would mean bankruptcy for many publishers. He believed that radical labor leaders were collaborating with the administration “in the hope of driving us to relinquish our clause on freedom of the press.” The clause he referred to stated that the publishers would only submit to the rules contained in the code and would not follow any rules imposed that might restrain their freedom of speech. It did not help Johnson’s case that the newspaper publishing industry was generally anti-labor; Section 7a of the NIRA guaranteed workers the right to organize and bargain collectively, and newspaper publishers like Carter were wary of granting much leverage to labor unions within their industry.<sup>149</sup>

The code committee wished to keep the discussion limited to wages and hours, thus addressing the explicit requests of President Roosevelt to assist with the

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<sup>148</sup> James Q. Whitman, “Of Corporatism, Fascism, and the First New Deal,” The American Journal of Comparative Law 39 (Autumn 1991), 747-748; “Text of Coded Offered by Daily Newspaper Publishers,” New York Times, Aug. 9, 1933; Paul Y. Anderson, “Johnson and the Freedom of the Press,” The Nation, 30 Aug. 1933, 234.

<sup>149</sup> J.F. Young to Amon Carter, 30 Nov. 1933, Box 26, File 14, AGC Collection; John Kennedy Ohl, Hugh S. Johnson and the New Deal (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985), 116.

employment situation. However, Johnson pressed for the newspaper publishers to discuss fair competition. Hanson expressed discontent with this request and suggested to Johnson that the “code was so drafted that its provisions deal exclusively with the problem of wages, hours and working conditions.” By mid-August, the committee and Johnson had reached some compromises regarding wages, with the new code establishing a “guaranteed minimum rate of pay” based on the 1929 prevailing wage, but there was still disagreement between the two parties regarding the “open shop” the committee desired as well as their insistence on a free speech clause.<sup>150</sup>

Johnson believed that the freedom of the press clause the newspaper publishers insisted on was merely their way of avoiding labor standards and Section 7A, and “contended that no act of Congress, not even an emergency measure such as the National Industrial Recovery Act, could nullify or restrict any part of the Constitution.” The committee “answered that if press freedom guarantees were to be considered so axiomatic, why should they not be expressed again in their industrial “Constitution?” In the end, Johnson appeased the publishers and approved phrases “guaranteeing the freedom of the press,” yet refused to budge on the “open shop” issue. President Roosevelt approved the final draft of the newspaper code in February 1934, but the code did not remain in place for long. The NRA lasted for a little over one year longer because the Supreme Court struck it down as unconstitutional in 1935 in *A.L.A. Schechter v. United States*. The court ruled that it violated the interstate commerce clause of the Constitution by giving the President power to interfere in intrastate

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<sup>150</sup> Hanson to Davis, Nov. 22, 1933, Box 26, File 14, AGC Collection.

business, and so the New Deal dream of a more centrally planned economy collapsed.<sup>151</sup>

Though one cannot tell from the existing evidence how large a role Carter played on the committee it is fairly easy to assume due to its small size that he must have been an active member and that he agreed with the stances it took. His staunch support for Hanson's pushing for a freedom of speech clause, as well as his approval of a code that limited labor power, revealed that his support for Roosevelt's New Deal had limits. As long as the government limited its activism to providing relief and promoting recovery through pump priming, Carter could support the New Deal. But like many southern businessmen who did not wish to expand the power of organized labor, he could go no further. Supporting a newspaper publishing code that pushed for more government regulation did not further his goals of greater prominence for Texas, Fort Worth, or himself. Acquiring federal funds for Fort Worth, however, was another matter.

When Roosevelt launched the New Deal upon his inauguration in March 1933, cities across the nation were in severe crisis. The Civil Works Administration (CWA) headed by Harry Hopkins was the first major federal works program initiated in Fort Worth. This temporary program, funded by the Public Works Administration (PWA), served as a successor to the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) a federal unemployment relief program seen by Roosevelt as merely a temporary measure. Unlike FERA, the CWA served as a work relief program and not as direct relief. It took men from the unemployed ranks and the relief rolls. Projects centered on roads,

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<sup>151</sup> New York Times, Dec. 23, 1933; Ohl, Hugh S. Johnson and the New Deal, 150; Ronald Edsforth, The New Deal: America's Response to the Great Depression (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 186.

schools, parks, and sewer lines. The CWA's success was demonstrated by the 4.2 million people nationwide put to work at its height in early 1934 before it was phased out later that year.<sup>152</sup>

Through the city council's efforts, Fort Worth received \$1.5 million in CWA funds and used the money to beautify parks and build golf courses, build and improve schools, and improve lighting at the local airport. All levels of labor were used, from the unskilled to craftsmen, and an average of 6,400 people were employed at rates ranging from forty cents an hour to \$1.12 for skilled laborers. Thus Fort Worth quickly made use of the federal money available for municipal projects. However, Carter's efforts and connections would boost the amount spent by the federal government in Fort Worth beyond what the CWA spent in the city in its short lifetime.<sup>153</sup>

Carter's crowning achievement in his efforts to obtain New Deal largesse lay in the acquisition of funds for Fort Worth's Will Rogers Complex in 1935. An active federal government, at least one active in giving money instead of taxing or regulating large businesses, was definitely a boon for Carter, a man who allegedly wanted "the whole Government to be run for the exclusive benefit of Fort Worth." Therefore, Carter seized this opportunity in 1935 as Texas and Fort Worth were gearing up for the Texas Centennial. To Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, Carter outlined his plan for a PWA grant to be given to the city to build a coliseum for the annual Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show in Fort Worth and an adjacent auditorium for practical use year round. The complex would be named in honor of his recently deceased friend,

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<sup>152</sup> David Kennedy, Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 175-176.

<sup>153</sup> H.J. Adams, "Fort Worth's \$1,500,000 CWA Program," American City (April 1934), 73-74.

Will Rogers, who had died in a plane crash in August 1935. Fort Worth had recently applied for a \$300,000 grant from the Texas Centennial Commission; therefore, Carter wanted a \$700,000 loan to complete the funding for what he estimated to be a \$1 million project. In addition to this, Carter hoped to receive funding for his proposed Frontier Centennial, a Fort Worth exclusive celebration.<sup>154</sup>

Ickes thought this grant required further scrutiny in order to determine if such a construction project would serve in the public interest and whether the PWA had the power to administer such a loan after the initial expiration of the National Industrial Recovery Act on June 16, 1935. Furthermore, similar loan applications had been made in the past and had all been rejected. Nevertheless, as vice-president of the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show, Carter and his fellow committee members submitted a formal application to Vice President Garner who was chair of the United States Centennial Commission for Texas. By this time Fort Worth had received \$250,000 from the state's Centennial fund and planned a \$1,250,000 bond election. Therefore, the committee asked for a \$250,000 allocation from the federal government to cover the remaining cost, which had been adjusted to \$1.5 million.<sup>155</sup>

Despite couching this proposal in terms of future benefit to Fort Worth and Texas as well as making a trip to Washington to plead with Ickes personally, Carter was unable to win his immediate approval. Earlier, Ickes had claimed that prior approved projects in Fort Worth, consisting of a school and a sanitarium, were much more important for social welfare than livestock buildings. However, he declared, "If Fort

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<sup>154</sup> Johnston, "Colonel Carter," 8; Amon Carter to Ickes, 9 May 1935, Box 34, File 7, AGC Collection.

<sup>155</sup> Application of Fort Worth for Federal Appropriations for a Livestock Centennial, n.d., Box 34, File 7, AGC Collection.



Worth wants the livestock pavilion rather than the projects we have designated, we will make the shift.” Evidently, Carter had made leeway in persuading the obstinate Ickes<sup>156</sup> Carter then decided to travel once more to Washington in order to visit Postmaster General Farley and President Roosevelt to discuss the need for “Amon’s Cowsheds,” as the politicians derisively labeled the buildings. After this visit and one more official application resubmission, Carter received word from Jones that “your cowshed has been approved.”<sup>157</sup>

By using his contacts in Washington, Carter was able to gather federal money for the Will Rogers Complex. It is doubtful that without his involvement Fort Worth would have been granted such generous amounts of money to construct the buildings. It is also worth noting that in the first formal application for federal funds, there was no mention of alleviating unemployment due to the construction of this Complex. Rather, the focus was on the benefits that Fort Worth and the local livestock industry would receive from this publicity. However, the Fort Worth Press noted the addition of 1,500 jobs due to the construction of the Complex. Fittingly, in his letters regarding the applications, Carter failed to note the immediate benefits that could be reaped by the city by putting more than a thousand people back to work. At the front of his mind was the bolstering of Fort Worth’s status as a city of great renown.<sup>158</sup>

Carter was not finished attempting to acquire federal funds for Fort Worth. In 1936, Texas celebrated its centennial, and many cities around the state celebrated it in different ways. Carter’s rivalry with nearby Dallas flared up as the city was awarded the

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<sup>156</sup> Harold Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 444; Ickes to Amon Carter, Sept. 27, 1935, Box 34, File 7, AGC Collection.

<sup>157</sup> Jones to Amon Carter, Nov. 1, 1935, Box 34, File 7, AGC Collection.

<sup>158</sup> Jan Jones, Billy Rose Presents...Casa Manana (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1999), 27.

site for the official Texas Centennial celebration. Since “Carter viewed the naming of Dallas as the site of the centennial exposition a gross miscarriage of justice,” he decided to back a new celebration in Fort Worth. The Frontier Centennial would focus on entertainment instead of educational and industrial exhibits. In order to attract visitors who would be in the region at the Texas Centennial in Dallas, Carter positioned a signs and billboards in Texas and in surrounding states that beckoned: “Dallas for education, Fort Worth for entertainment.” Offering a dazzling program developed by noted entertainer and promoter Billy Rose, the Frontier Centennial promised to deliver a rollicking good time for visitors drawn to the western-themed grounds.<sup>159</sup>

Carter decided that the Frontier Centennial would be held at the newly constructed Will Rogers Complex. Funds for the glitzy Centennial began shrinking as the original \$250,000 grant from the Texas Centennial Commission were spent and the local bond sales were slower than expected. By mid-summer 1936, the cost of opening the Centennial had soared to over \$1 million, well over the projected amount of \$911,000. Thus, Carter turned to his friend Jones of the RFC to loan additional money. President Hoover had originally formed the RFC in 1932 to give loans to banks, railroads, and agricultural stabilization corporations. Now Carter wanted it to breathe new life into the Frontier Centennial. He implored Jones that the money was needed quickly because of the shortage of funds and expressed confidence that Jones would “be fully justified” in waiving any restrictions on loaning the money. Carter believed that the inevitable success of the Centennial should clear Jones’s mind of any lingering doubts. Fortunately for Carter, President Roosevelt’s son Elliott was a close friend.

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 8, 34-35, 46.

Through this friendship he was able to exert more pressure on Jones to grant the loan. Finally, Jones informed Carter that the RFC would cooperate in the \$300,000 loan already given by local banks, and would underwrite half of another \$200,000 loan. Therefore, the RFC would commit \$200,000 to the Frontier Centennial.<sup>160</sup>

Despite the pressure exerted by Elliott Roosevelt to extend an extra \$75,000, the RFC would not be able to take on any more than that amount. Though he succeeded in getting \$200,000, Carter was not quite satisfied with the amount. Jones told him, “Unlike thousands of others during the past few years, you want the Directors of the RFC to make a loan on terms which you prescribe, and a loan the eligibility of which is not clear, and the security not very tangible.” It is clear that Jones was unsure of the practicality of the loan in the first place but approved it due to his friendship with Carter and Elliott Roosevelt. Carter’s ability to exploit the presence of Texans in the Roosevelt administration had paid off.<sup>161</sup>

Though supportive of the New Deal’s “pump-priming” programs, Carter remained critical of Roosevelt’s stance regarding labor unions. The 1935 passage of the National Labor Relations Act, better known as the Wagner Act after sponsor Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York, created the National Labor Relations Board and gave unions the right to organize and collectively bargain. The immediate effect was the strengthening of labor unions as American workers began joining unions in greater numbers than before. Though Roosevelt gave no encouragement to strikers, his administration was

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 53; Kennedy, Freedom From Fear, 84; Amon Carter to Jones, July 8, 1936; Jones to Amon Carter, July 10, 1936, Box 17, File 10a, AGC Collection; Jones, Billy Rose Presents, 55

<sup>161</sup> Jones to Elliott Roosevelt, July 12, 1936, Box 17, File 10a, AGC Collection ; Jones to Amon Carter, Jul. 16, 1936, Box 23, File 5, AGC Collection.

an unabashed supporter of labor. In a confidential letter to Garner, Carter called a recent April 1937 sit-down strike in Michigan “un-American,” and he condemned Governor Frank Murphy for not enforcing the law.<sup>162</sup> In March 1937, the United Automobile Workers (UAW), heady from a recent victory over General Motors, informed the Chrysler Corporation that it would be the sole bargaining representative. Chrysler executives were willing to negotiate with the UAW, but not on these terms. The UAW responded with a sit-down strike in nine Chrysler plants.<sup>163</sup>

In thinly veiled terms, Carter asked whether the administration was afraid of John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers because it made no efforts to halt the wave of strikes currently sweeping across the country. Also, he brought up a recent statement by the CIO that the President wanted everybody to join the CIO. Did the president really say this, and, if not, why was no denial made? Carter used his position as president and publisher of the Star-Telegram to clarify his feelings on labor and the sit-down strike. He congratulated Texas Governor James Allred for banning sit-down strikes in Texas. If Michigan Governor Murphy had reacted similarly to Allred, Carter claimed, business would not have been interrupted, and the country’s recovery would remain on track. Carter insisted that he was pro-labor, but the sit-down strike smacked of radical law breaking that undermined the very goals of organized labor.<sup>164</sup>

By Roosevelt’s second term, Carter began to disapprove of more and more of the New Deal’s goals. He was displeased with the proposed Child Labor Amendment,

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<sup>162</sup> Amon Carter to Garner, Apr. 7, 1937, Box 92, John Nance Garner File, AGC Collection.

<sup>163</sup> Irving Bernstein, Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker 1933-1941 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 553-554.

<sup>164</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Apr. 7, 1937.

recently ratified by Texas, which would have given Congress regulatory power over children under the age of 18. He informed President Roosevelt of his displeasure in a cordial tone and espoused the idea that this issue was best left for the states to tackle. Congress should not meddle in how children should be raised. He then reminded the President how he had begun work when he was eleven and then put his own son to work at about the same age. Without “child labor,” Carter claimed he would not have been able to become the self-made man that he was. Carter informed the president that his opinion on the Child Labor Amendment stemmed from his “boyhood experiences,” just as Roosevelt’s opinion sprang from his “great humanitarian spirit.”<sup>165</sup>

Carter noted that the term “child labor” was generally used in a negative connotation, but he believed a child should have the opportunity to work if the desire or necessity arose. “After all,” he said, “idleness has been the cause of many youngsters falling by the wayside.” On the other hand, Carter recognized the danger of sweatshops in which children were overworked and underpaid. However, he argued that even these problems did not require Congress to resolve them. Solving the child labor problem, he thought, “...should be purely a state matter” because “the raising of our children should not be left within the province of the whims of some particular Congress.” Despite Carter’s worries, the Child Labor Amendment stalled when only twenty-eight states ratifying the law.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Amon Carter to Roosevelt, Jan. 31, 1937, Box 32, File 2a, AGC Collection; “Proposed Amendments Not Ratified By the States,” GPO website; available from <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/constitution/pdf/con002.pdf>, accessed 9 Mar. 2005.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.; See also Jeremy P. Felt, “The Child Labor Provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act,” Labor History 11 (Fall 1970): 467-481.

Carter continued to oppose massive government spending unless it benefited Fort Worth and Texas. He candidly expressed these sentiments to Garner on several occasions, particularly concerning the “Roosevelt Recession” of 1937. The 1937 recession gave many conservative critics of the New Deal ample opportunity to criticize what was often perceived as Roosevelt’s anti-business policies. Carter charged that such heavy government spending would lead to higher taxes, which would then lead to laying burdens on the shoulders of business and industry. In a 1937 Star-Telegram editorial, Carter somewhat hypocritically chastised local governments for begging the federal government for money to spend on sidewalks, streets, and sewers. Projects like these, he claimed, should be financed by the state and local governments, not Washington. If this spending were to continue without raising taxes, the situation would be even worse by damaging the government’s credit. Carter suggested that the recovery effort should be shifted to private enterprise; for that to happen, Congress should remove what he perceived as anti-business legislation that was passed in Congress’s last session.<sup>167</sup>

Carter perceived the tax on undivided profits as an obstacle to recovery because it “penalizes the sound practice of plowing profits back into business, a practice which has made American business management effective.” Proposed by Roosevelt in 1936 and passed in the same year, the undivided profits tax was a way for the federal government to prevent the wealthy from leaving large sums in their corporate accounts, therefore avoiding any taxation on that accumulated wealth. In addition to this, the tax also sought to prevent corporations from retaining earnings for capital instead of relying

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<sup>167</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Apr. 16, 1937; Kennedy, Freedom From Fear, 351.

on the money market. Carter believed that not only was this law a bad idea, but that it also hindered recovery. In support of this, he cited a personal case in which the Star-Telegram was unable to expand its building because under this tax it would have been required to pay an additional 10 to 25 percent of the amount paid back of the borrowed money. Carter also informed Garner that the government had attempted to solve the nation's problems all at once, and that reform, as admirable a goal as it was, should be replaced by recovery as it was a much more pressing need.<sup>168</sup>

By 1937, with the financing for the Frontier Centennial and the Will Rogers Complex complete, Carter increased his opposition to the New Deal. The year 1937 also witnessed the Roosevelt administration pushing its agenda of reform while the country was slipping into another recession. Garner was also becoming disillusioned with the New Deal despite his support for earlier legislation. His disenchantment became evident in 1936 when Roosevelt refused to take any action regarding another outbreak of sit-down strikes. The split between Garner and Roosevelt widened further due to Garner's opposition to Roosevelt's court reform plan of 1937, or the "court packing" plan as the president's opponents called the legislation. To make matters worse, Garner vehemently opposed Roosevelt's request for further spending in 1937.<sup>169</sup>

Knowing that he had a sympathetic ear to turn to in Washington, Carter continued to complain to Garner. He asserted once more that the Roosevelt administration was meddling with the economy with its reformist tendencies, leading business and industry to be unsure of what to expect. The current recession would then

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<sup>168</sup> Amon Carter to Garner, Nov. 29, 1937, Box 92, John Nance Garner File, AGC Collection; Arthur Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), 505-506.

<sup>169</sup> Patenaude, Texans, Politics, and the New Deal, 43-48.

spiral into another depression of which the blame would have to be shouldered by Roosevelt. Carter advised that the government should revert to April 1933, when the focus was on recovery, not on reform like Roosevelt's second administration was doing. This idea was not his own, but stemmed from his initial beliefs as to what the government should do to alleviate the pain of the Depression. As early as April 1933, Carter told Garner what legislation the Roosevelt administration should focus on passing: the currency measure, the banking bill, the security bill, the relief bill, the public works bill, and the farm credit bill. If legislation like this passed, the American people would then be "provided with the tools with which to work their way out." Essentially, Carter wanted the government to give "----business and industry a chance to devote its industries to recovery and let reform take care of itself for awhile."<sup>170</sup>

As the New Deal slowly gave way to the massive militarization of American industry, Carter became embroiled in a war of words with Ickes that would capture the nations' attention. It began in March 1940, when the Star-Telegram published an editorial criticizing a movement in Texas supporting a third term for Roosevelt at the expense of Garner. As friendly as Carter was with Roosevelt, Garner was a favorite son of Texas, and for Carter, state ties were stronger than friendship. A third Roosevelt administration, he claimed, would ensure the continuation of a reform agenda, while Garner was assuredly a more conservative option. At a time when several conferences supporting Roosevelt were being held in the state, Ickes appeared in East Texas to visit new oil fields after an invitation had been extended to him in his capacity as Interior secretary. The editorial viewed Ickes's trip to the state with suspicion because of the

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<sup>170</sup> Amon Carter to Garner, Nov. 30, 1937, Box 92, John Nance Garner File, AGC Collection.



timing and the secretary's reputation as an ardent supporter for a Roosevelt third term. The editorial accused Ickes of wanting to "take production control out of the hands of the State into those of his own department" while simultaneously calling him a "hatchet man." However, the bulk of the editorial castigated Roosevelt supporters, mainly those who were traveling to Texas from other states. These people were "carpetbaggers" just the same as those Texans who refused to support Garner.<sup>171</sup>

Ickes responded to this editorial with a scathing letter that he made public. Though Ickes was only mentioned once in the long editorial, he took umbrage at the "carpetbagger" term. He accused Carter of sending his own "carpetbaggers" to Wisconsin and Illinois to skew the Democratic primaries in Garner's favor. Illinois politics, Ickes argued, were generally clean and open when compared to Texas, plus they had no "disfranchising poll tax." Carter's opposition to federal regulation of the oil industry reminded Ickes of "a boy in short pants, playing with tin soldiers, and pretending that he is Napoleon." Despite these shortcomings on Carter's part, Ickes admitted that Carter was "a pretty good fellow" when he allowed himself to "function as a normal human being" and did not print editorials "which reflect the Ku Klux spirit."<sup>172</sup>

Thus began the Carter-Ickes tiff, an argument between two very strong and very vocal personalities. The two men had had some disagreements in the past about PWA funding, but it seems at the heart of this clash lie disparate political views as well as disputed political territory. Carter promptly fired back at Ickes by publishing another editorial entitled "Mr. Ickes Irritates Easily and Quickly" while also printing another long letter that he had written the secretary. Carter defended his actions and denied that he

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<sup>171</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Mar. 27, 1940.

<sup>172</sup> Harold L. Ickes to Carter, Apr. 18, 1940, Box 107, File 13b, AGC Collection.

was even officially involved in the “Garner for President” campaign. On Ickes’s comment that Carter’s previous editorial was illogical, he quipped, “That is pretty phraseology, but, fortunately, you are not the sole arbiter of whether they make sense or not.”<sup>173</sup>

Word of this petty argument soon spread. The New York Herald Tribune reported that Ickes showed some naiveté in engaging the “hell-for-leather old frontiersman” publisher from Fort Worth. The paper observed that Carter did not possess a reputation for backing down, and it was also unwise for Ickes to become involved in any manner in Texas politics because “Texans may make fools of themselves...but they insist upon doing it their own way.” Dwight Marvin, editor of the Troy Record in Troy, New York, congratulated Carter for debating Ickes, and Joseph P. Cowan, a resident of Lubbock, defended Carter as the nominal leader of West Texas and claimed that Ickes had “figuratively evacuated” in his “mess kit.” The Carter-Ickes controversy screeched to a halt after Carter published all the correspondence between himself and Ickes, and Carter seemingly emerged from the wordy brawl unscathed, yet politically none the stronger. The Roosevelt machine rolled on as few Democrats desired to switch to the aging Garner in the midst of World War II, and Ickes remained a powerful figure within the Roosevelt administration. If anything, Carter demonstrated to the American public and to his readers that he could play the sauntering Texan defending his state from marauding know-it-all Yankees.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Apr. 29, 1940.

<sup>174</sup> New York Herald Tribune, Apr. 29, 1940; Dwight Marvin to Amon Carter, May 4, 1940; Joseph P. Cowan to Ickes, Apr. 29, 1940, Box 107, File 13b, AGC Collection.

As the United States transitioned from the New Deal to preparing for World War II, Carter could look back on the first eight years of the Roosevelt administration with satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. Like many other Southern, pro-business conservatives, there were limits to his support for Roosevelt's New Deal, due to his belief that the federal government's activities should be limited to stimulating economic recovery and growth. In step with this line of thinking, he was able to procure federal funding for two Fort Worth projects, and he emerged as a fairly influential Texan within Democratic politics. Yet his activities that decade involved more than trying to find ways to wrestle federal dollars from New Deal bureaucrats; a man of his varied interests had to find additional ways to occupy his valuable time.

## CHAPTER 6

### AIRWAYS, WATERWAYS, AND FATHERHOOD: AMON CARTER, 1930-1941

For Amon Carter, the 1930s was about more than learning to adjust to a new style of government in Washington, D.C. The decade marked the beginning of his pursuit of a dream that never came to fruition—the canalization of the Trinity River from the Gulf of Mexico to Fort Worth. His efforts involved the marshaling of local, state, and federal political support, as well as the support of the Dallas and Fort Worth business community. The cause of aviation, never far from his mind since the arrival of the first airplane in Fort Worth, also received greater attention from Carter than ever before as he continued to work with American Airways/American Airlines in hopes of promoting Fort Worth as a major aviation center. Finally, Carter’s dreams of achieving wealth through oil finally came to fruition in 1937 when he struck oil in West Texas. This subsequently allowed him to begin devoting more time and energy to philanthropic activities. On the domestic front, he continued to devote himself to his two children from Nenetta, Amon Jr. and Ruth. Yet not all remained peaceful for the publisher as on the eve of American entry into war, his marriage to Nenetta collapsed, threatening to upset the familial stability he enjoyed for nearly two decades.

For twenty-five years, visions of freighters docking in Fort Worth and transforming the city into an industrial powerhouse consumed Carter and drove him to push for the construction of a canal up the Trinity River from the Gulf of Mexico up to Fort Worth and Dallas. This was no one-man scheme, however; prestigious citizens of both cities joined the organization that worked tirelessly to create a canal that would

create economic benefits for North Texas. Though the name of this organization changed a few times throughout Carter's life, the goal remained the same. Whether it was called the Trinity River Navigation Association (TRNA), the Trinity River Canal Association (TRCA), or the Trinity Improvement Association (TIA), this group of businessmen lobbied the state and federal government to support the plan to make the Trinity navigable. At the front of this effort was Carter, the eternal optimist, promoting the idea to politicians, businessmen and his community. From his past years as a salesman, Carter learned to be ever mindful of his audience and accordingly shifted his emphasis. Depending on with whom he was speaking, he alternately stressed the industrial and commercial benefits of building the canal. Once Roosevelt embarked upon his New Deal, he learned to couch the proposal in terms palatable to the administration. Little did he know that his extensive efforts would fall short, leaving Fort Worth no closer to the Gulf than before he began his efforts.

Carter and his colleagues were not the first to foresee that a navigable Trinity River would benefit Texas. In a letter to Carter, Fort Worth oil operator George Hill wrote that he had stumbled upon Mexican correspondence in some Austin archives regarding making the Trinity navigable. Jose Francisco Madero, land commissioner of Texas in 1830, petitioned that the Trinity River be "navigable to steamboats, horse drawn vessels, sail boats, and boats propelled by oars from its mouth to Bull Hill." In a memo entitled "The Legislative History of the Trinity River," TRCA Executive Vice President Roy Miller outlined the historical discussion regarding the navigation of the Trinity. In the River and Harbor Act of June 18, 1878, Congress called for the deepening of the channel at the mouth of the Trinity for easier navigation and then

appropriated \$10,000 for the project. Congress earmarked additional funds for the improvement of the Trinity throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. The 1899 River and Harbors Act provided money for a survey of the Trinity from its mouth to Dallas while simultaneously approximating the cost of adding locks and dams along the way. Congress continued to appropriate hundreds of thousands of dollars until the project was abandoned in the River and Harbor Act of 1922. The only accomplishment of these various acts was the widening and deepening of the mouth of the Trinity, which had little impact on Fort Worth's economy. Fort Worth and Dallas both possessed political and business communities which did not want to see canalization abandoned, and were therefore hopeful when, in 1930, Congress began debating the passage of a new rivers and harbors bill that might include funding for deepening the Trinity. In February 1930, representatives from the two cities met with army engineers in Dallas to present their case for canalization. Optimistic as the representatives were, they understood that the cities must address the reasons given for prior abandonment of canalization.<sup>175</sup>

According to TRCA vice-president Miller, earlier projects were abandoned for two reasons: one, engineers doubted that the water supply would be sufficient enough to allow for consistent navigation; and, two, "the purely local character of the project. . . . limited its possible services to the area immediately contiguous to the river." Miller, however, did not believe that these reasons should halt any future Trinity projects. Reservoirs had been completed since the initial project came under scrutiny, and the completion of the Mississippi River System along with the Intracoastal Waterway in

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<sup>175</sup> Roy Miller, "The Legislative History of the Trinity River," n.d., Box 41, File 7, AGC Collection.

Louisiana and Texas changed the project from a local one to one of national importance. Since the hearing was for army engineers, the arguments presented focused mainly on the alleged feasibility of the project, though some speakers did discuss the economic benefits made possible by canalization. Through the efforts of Senators Morris Sheppard and Tom Connally of Texas, as well as Fort Worth Representative Fritz Lanham and Dallas Representative Hatton Sumners, Congress passed a rivers and harbors bill in July 1930 that included funding for a resurvey of the Trinity River.<sup>176</sup>

Carter's involvement with the canal began the summer of 1930 with the formation of the TRNA. At first he served the organization on the board of directors, but in this position he held little power in the association. He was simply one of many Fort Worth businessmen, such as department store owner William Monnig or oilman Ed Landreth, who were granted positions. His first assignment was to find a suitable young lady in Fort Worth to break a bottle of Gulf of Mexico water at the dedication of a hydraulic dredge in Dallas. This hydraulic dredge was to begin digging in preparation for a turning basin in the Trinity River. Carter found a young woman for this ceremony and then prepared to give a speech at the ceremony entitled "Trinity River Navigation and Its Relation to the Development of the Southwest". In this speech, one of many given on this momentous day, Carter discussed how the building of a canal would benefit not only Fort Worth and Dallas, but also the infinite stretches of West Texas with its vast

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.; Dallas Morning News, Feb. 4, 1930.

agricultural and oil resources. Dallas and Fort Worth would then become great inland industrial centers like Pittsburgh or Cleveland.<sup>177</sup>

It did not take long for Carter to begin exerting his power and influence over the association. The other members quickly recognized what an asset they had in Carter. His friendship with politicians in Texas and Washington, D.C., combined with having his own newspaper, was very attractive to the association. At an August 1930 meeting of the TRNA, Carter was named chair of a finance committee to raise \$60,000 a year for five years for an educational program to increase local awareness about the project. By August of the same year, the TRNA changed its name to the TRCA, moved its offices from Dallas to Fort Worth (presumably at Carter's urging), and named Carter to the executive committee. He also hosted a meeting with TRCA members, Senator Sheppard, and Representatives Sam Rayburn, Fritz Lanham, and Hatton Sumners at his Shady Oak Ranch in August that year to discuss the future of the project as well as assure the continued support of Texas' congressional delegation.<sup>178</sup>

The new TRCA added Intracoastal Waterway board member Roy Miller of Corpus Christi as the executive vice-president and selected Dallas businessmen John Carpenter as president and John Fouts as general manager. Miller was simultaneously involved in the planning of the Gulf Intracoastal Canal and was therefore valuable for his experience. Carpenter was a prominent Dallas businessman and the president of Texas Power and Light, and he often took the lead in civic affairs in much the same

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<sup>177</sup> Dallas Journal, July 14, 1930.

<sup>178</sup> Dallas Dispatch, July 14, 1930. The papers in the AGC Collection make no mention of the Trinity Canal until Carter was officially named to the board. However, the depth of Carter's correspondence makes it appear that Carter had thought through the possible benefits of the Canal before his involvement.



manner as Carter. In correspondence with Carter, Fouts detailed the move to Fort Worth and Carter's future role. With Carter's name on the official letterhead, Fouts hoped to capitalize on his presence, commenting that earning Carter's cooperation "moves mountains and canalizes rivers."<sup>179</sup>

Carter needed little persuasion to devote himself wholeheartedly to the project. Any operation that would boost Fort Worth and West Texas in the eyes of the nation was a worthy undertaking, even if it meant cooperating with Dallas. Later in 1930, at a meeting of the TRCA at the Fort Worth Club, Carter disclosed that he was already in talks with politicians regarding the Trinity. Having earned the cooperation of powerful politicians like Sheppard and Rayburn, Carter realized that the canal could become a real possibility. Later, Carter confessed that he had been reluctant to cooperate with Dallas because he doubted that it would commit to the project with the same fervor as Fort Worth. However, he was satisfied by the move of the offices to Fort Worth and the sincere cooperation of Carpenter and Fouts.<sup>180</sup>

As chair of the finance committee, Carter began sending letters to local businessmen so that money could be raised to fulfill Fort Worth's financial commitment. The TRCA planned to spend \$300,000 over five years in raising awareness, hosting meetings, and lobbying politicians. Dallas was going to raise \$30,000 annually, Fort Worth \$20,000, and the rest was to be raised by other towns and cities along the Trinity.

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<sup>179</sup> John Fouts to Carter, Aug. 22, 1930, Box 41, File 7, AGC Collection; Joan Jenkins Perez, "John William Carpenter," New Handbook of Texas 1, 982-983; Lynn Alperin, History of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (Washington: Institute for Water Resources, 1983), 27. Carter's notorious hatred of Dallas was put aside whenever the whole state could benefit.

<sup>180</sup> Minutes from TRCA meeting, ca. November 1930, Box 41, File 7a, AGC Collection.

In a form letter sent to businesses such as Swift Meatpacking, Texas Electric, and Monnig's Department Store, Carter appealed to both their sense of pride in the community and their desire for a growing economy in the region. He claimed that Fort Worth's position at the head of the canal would not only bring business and industry, but would also mean increased savings in freight rates. Carter assured the business community that the project would be national, not local, and pointed out that the president of the Mississippi Valley Association had noted at recent meetings that the Trinity Canal was to be an integral part of the internal waterway system of the United States. He could not resist infusing these letters with the booster spirit for which he was so well known, saying that "Every sign points to success of the Trinity River project." To seal the deal, Carter pointed out a recent unnamed survey showing that the Trinity River shipping area had handled 450 million tons of freight; the survey had also calculated that the present ratio of river traffic to total traffic around the country revealed that the Trinity proper might handle over 5 million tons of traffic. The Southwest would profit by over \$15 million annually; therefore, the approximate cost of construction to the federal government of \$50 million would be easily justified.<sup>181</sup>

Carter believed that the easiest way to get fellow Fort Worthians on board with the idea was to focus on the impact of the canal on freight rates. In an article he wrote for a locally published book on canalization, Carter pointed to the absence of the steel industry from North Texas as proof of the harmful effects of high freight rates. Up to that point, he said, steel mills were unable to locate in the North Texas region because

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.; Amon Carter to L.P. Swift, Jr., Dec. 15, 1930, Box 41, File 7a, AGC Collection. To clarify, Carter defined the Trinity River area very loosely and included ports like Galveston and Houston, while the tonnage given for the Trinity itself is referring to what the river was capable of handling up to Dallas and Fort Worth.

freight rates were too high to ship steel cost effectively. Water rates were much cheaper, and with the canal, steel mills would be willing to build in North Texas. Carter believed that “canalization” (a word frequently used by proponents) was “the most far reaching proposition, in its ultimate benefits, that has been presented to the people of Fort Worth and North Texas since the advent of the railroads.” Increased manufacturing would also mean larger population, more business, and more prosperity for the population as a whole, he claimed.<sup>182</sup>

Though freight rates were at the center of Carter’s argument, he did not want his stand to be mistaken for an attack on the railroads. Carter recognized that the railroads were Fort Worth’s lifeline. Building the canal would help, not hurt, the railroads because the canal would mean increased railroad traffic when many new industries shipped their goods to the canal for further transportation. In Carter’s own words, “The canal will merely be a complementary form of transportation not a competitor of the railroads.” Regardless of Carter’s remarks, the railroads felt threatened by a new form of transportation in the region. Silliman Evans, executive secretary of the TRCA, informed Carter that the railroads were mounting opposition to any legislation that supported the canalization of the Trinity River. According to Evans, railroad attorneys were pressuring lawmakers to defeat any canal bill while simultaneously urging them to hold up favored legislation of those who supported the canal. Determined leadership was needed to rally canal forces, and he believed that Carter was the man for that job. With opposition to his dream mounting, Carter took action by using the pages of the Star-Telegram and by phoning many legislators in Austin urging passage of the Trinity River Canal District

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<sup>182</sup> Amon Carter, untitled manuscript, Jan. 12, 1931, Box 41, File 8, AGC Collection.

Bill, which provided for the formation of a tax district for the canal. The bill passed in May with a 21-6 vote, and Carter received much of the credit for its success.<sup>183</sup>

The TRCA faced more problems than railroad opposition. It was still debatable whether or not the Trinity's water levels could be maintained to allow navigation. In 1932, Colonel W. T. Hannum, a War Department engineer, reported that his preliminary survey of the Trinity disclosed that in fact there was not enough water for year round navigation. However, this survey did not take into account two lakes currently under construction by Fort Worth. According to Fouts, the amount of water impounded by these two lakes would be sufficient for both Fort Worth's needs and the needs of shipping on the Trinity. In response to Hannum's report, the TRCA hired engineers and an attorney to prepare a feasible solution to present to the Board of Engineers in Washington in the summer of 1932.<sup>184</sup>

The TRCA was successful in convincing both the federal government and the state of Texas that a navigable Trinity was worth the research and investigation. The Texas legislature created the Trinity River Canal and Conservancy District to comply with any demands the federal government would make in order to prepare the area for improvement. In 1933, the Department of Commerce completed an economic survey to determine if a navigable Trinity was necessary for the continued development of Texas. Commerce was also interested in knowing if the canal would be worth spending tax dollars to construct. In the fall of 1933, the Department of Commerce determined that the project would cost \$120 million. Carter maintained, however, that it could be built

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.; Evans to Amon Carter, Feb. 23, 1931, May 8, 1931; Fouts to Amon Carter, May 13, 1931, Box 41, File 8, AGC Collection.

<sup>184</sup> John Fouts to Amon Carter, June 14, 1932, Box 41, File 8, AGC Collection.

for only \$54 million and continued rallying local businessmen to the cause of a Trinity Canal. The canal would boost Fort Worth's population to a half-million in time, and despite all the continued enmity from the railroads, it could be completed. Carter believed that Fort Worth's future as a big city hinged on the construction and completion of the canal.<sup>185</sup>

The flurry of activity that accompanied the creation of the TRNA and TRCA slowed down as the effects of the Great Depression reached Fort Worth and Dallas. 1932 and 1933 were especially slow years, if the lack of correspondence between members signified anything. However, the arrival of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his promise of increased federal spending breathed new life into the canalization of the Trinity. Carter and his fellow board members apparently recognized that an increase in public works spending by the federal government could mean more money for the construction of a canal. Workers would be needed to build a canal and the economic benefits created by the canal would be a credible weapon to combat the Great Depression.

Other people involved in the canal project recognized that Carter would be a great emissary to the New Dealers in Washington. His early support for the New Deal combined with his friendships with Jesse Jones and Vice President John Nance Garner gave Carter great influence in Washington. In December 1933, Carl Mosig of the Dallas Morning News' Fort Worth branch notified Carter of \$250,000 in public works money given to the National Planning Board for regional planning projects. Both Dallas and Tarrant counties filed applications for this money, to be used to hire a prominent

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<sup>185</sup> Fouts to Amon Carter, Jan. 18, 1933; Amon Carter to Morris Berney, Oct. 26, 1933, Box 41, File 8a, AGC Collection.

engineer for preliminary planning. Mosig doubted that the money would be given to Dallas and Fort Worth unless Carter contacted federal relief administrators Harry Hopkins or Harold Ickes and persuaded them to divert the funds. Unfortunately for Carter, Hopkins and Ickes believed at the time that the money was better spent elsewhere. This could not have been lost on Carter who, in later years, carried on a low-level feud with Ickes.<sup>186</sup>

Carter's success elsewhere in life resulted partially because of his willingness either to annoy or charm people into giving him what he wanted. When it came to the federal government, annoyance was usually the key, especially during the height of the New Deal. Carpenter, as president of the TRCA, appointed Carter the chair of a TRCA delegation traveling to Washington for the annual meeting of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress. While at the session, Carter revealed the broadening plans of TRCA that would allow for a greater water supply. Flood control in the upper Trinity would be added to the designs in order to reclaim more than one million acres of land. Surveys conducted by TRCA disputed claims made by railroad engineers, and Carter naturally took the side of the association. TRCA surveys showed that yearly maintenance of the canal would cost approximately \$500,000 while the Texas Railway Association stated it would cost in excess of \$26 million. This estimate, Carter argued, was larger than the yearly maintenance of all the canals and rivers around the United States.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Mosig to Amon Carter, Dec. 14, 1933, Box 41, File 8a, AGC Collection.

<sup>187</sup> Fouts to Amon Carter, Apr. 14, 1934, Box 41, File 9, AGC Collection; "Trinity Canal Plan Includes Flood Control," Dallas Morning News, May 2, 1934.

Carter and the TRCA were not alone in struggling to attract the attention and approval of the federal government. Frank Reid, president of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, informed all members of the organization that federal appropriations regarding canals, rivers, and harbors were in danger of ceasing. Competing interests, presumably railroads, opposed to river and harbors were organizing against federal money flowing toward their improvement. Moreover, Ickes and his PWA were reluctant to allocate federal funds toward the improvement of rivers and harbors. The Emergency Appropriation Act of 1934 carried \$500 million for public works but very little of it designated for river improvement. This action, according to Reid, threatened to reverse any gains made by the country regarding rivers and harbors and set the country back twenty-five years. He called for all organizations involved with the National Rivers and Harbors Congress to mobilize to counteract any negative moves made by the federal government or other opponents.<sup>188</sup>

Despite these apparent setbacks to the Trinity plan, Carter and the other members of the TRCA remained optimistic because of the constantly changing landscape of the New Deal. To prepare Carter for further discussions with members of the federal government, Fouts informed him of the continued economic importance of the Trinity Canal. President Roosevelt had created a National Planning Committee consisting of Ickes, Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, and Secretary of War George Dern. Contrary to the fears of Reid, the Roosevelt administration was not intent on halting river improvement. The National

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<sup>188</sup> Frank Reid to Members of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, July 5, 1934, Box 41, File 9, AGC Collection. The National Rivers and Harbors Congress was a lobbying group dedicated to the improvement of waterways and harbors around the nation.

Planning Committee was developing a program for river improvement, and according to Fouts, if the Committee was well-informed about the economic boost that the canal would give to Texas and the Southwest, it would have no choice but to give its assent.<sup>189</sup>

The major thrust of Fouts' argument centered on the natural resources of the Trinity River Valley. He claimed that the area contained nearly 1,000,000 acres of timber, 200,000,000 tons of lignite coal, and, in what was a wild exaggeration, over 200,000,000 tons of iron ore. In addition to these resources, there was also much petroleum in East Texas and limitless amounts of potash in West Texas. Many of these resources had not been developed, and Fouts noted that an improved Trinity would allow for their exploitation. Again, the topic of freight rates weaved its way into the argument. According to Fouts, the Dallas/Fort Worth region freight rates were nearly double that of the average rates around the United States. A navigable Trinity would allow shipping rates almost half of the United States average, thus giving more incentive for greater exploitation of natural resources and greater agricultural productivity. Fouts hoped that arming Carter with all these facts would provide a firm foundation on which to present their case.<sup>190</sup>

The Roosevelt Administration had more pressing matters, however, than building a canal in Texas. It was well over a year before the federal government took specific steps toward addressing the Trinity Canal. The thrust of the New Deal was not improving navigation but providing immediate relief to the unemployed, and though the canal project would provide jobs, it would not be immediate relief. The PWA and the

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<sup>189</sup> Fouts to Amon Carter, July 20, 1934, File 9, Box 34, AGC Collection.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.



already defunct Civil Works Administration did not provide funds for such massive projects. What Carter and his fellow TRCA members envisioned was a Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) style project for Texas, though they never explicitly mentioned the TVA as a model. One reason for this can be determined from Carter's beliefs regarding the role of the federal government. As has already been demonstrated, Carter was perfectly willing to spend New Deal money for Fort Worth and Texas, but any government activity beyond the stimulation of employment and public works projects clashed with his sense of self-reliance and antipathy toward federal regulations. In this way, Carter fit into the mold of the typical Texas New Deal Democrat--standing at the door of the White House with hand outstretched but unwilling to meet any further demands the New Deal might ask in return.

With the Depression still raging and a general skepticism toward the possibilities of canalization, it was a year before the federal government saw fit to address the Trinity Canal. On August 7, 1935, the War Department's Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors held a hearing in Fort Worth regarding the Trinity waterway. At this hearing, Carter made the opening statement outlining his case and the case of TRCA to the federal government. This being the Board of Engineers, Carter did not center his argument on railroad rates and potash in West Texas, but on the feasibility of the Trinity project. Carter opened his statements with three possible questions the federal government might have regarding the Trinity canal: What actions did Texas take to set up a cooperative agency with the federal government? What local steps had been taken by local governments to assist the national government? How receptive were Texans and Fort Worth to the project? The Trinity waterway was unlike any other, he claimed, if

only for the reason that Texas had once been a sovereign country. Because Texas had retained the rights to its public lands, Carter argued that the federal government needed permission to make improvements and must obtain this with either the state of Texas or an agency of the state of Texas. This meant a fairly high level of cooperation between the two entities.<sup>191</sup>

As Fort Worth's most prominent booster, Carter responded to the second question first. Fort Worth had now completed two reservoirs that he believed held sufficient water for navigation. He stressed that previous surveys of the Trinity were made before the completion of these lakes; therefore, their statements that navigation was impossible should be ignored. Though the two lakes were constructed for a supply of drinking water and for flood control, only a fraction of the surface was necessary for these uses. Fort Worth was willing to spend \$6.5 million on reservoirs, so the city was not unwilling to spend money.<sup>192</sup>

Concerning the first question, the federal government would have to cooperate with the Trinity River Canal and Conservancy District with Carter as the executive chairman. With the powers of the state bestowed upon it, the District would be able to guarantee the federal government the necessary improvements such as wharves, docks, and terminals. The District would also write a contract with the government for the construction of the canal that would only need the approval of the electors of the District. According to Carter, cooperation with the federal government would take three forms. First, the two entities needed to cooperate in the surveying and engineering of

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<sup>191</sup> "Opening Statement of Amon G. Carter, of Fort Worth, Texas, at the Hearing held in Fort Worth, Texas, on August 7, 1935," Box 41, File 9, AGC Collection.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

the canal. This would include negotiating rights-of-way and planning proper flood controls in certain areas. Second, rights-of-way would be granted to the federal government without any cost. The Canal District was created with powers normally given to the State of Texas, such as control over the bed and banks of the Trinity and one hundred feet on either side of the canal. The District would then grant this land to the federal government, thus saving the government the cost of buying. The third form of cooperation guaranteed that the proper steps would be taken to ensure the construction of necessary facilities. The District would provide the facilities by either granting a franchise to private investors or else the State find someone if no one stepped forward.<sup>193</sup>

The District passed through three phases: the pre-election board, the preliminary board, and the actual construction phase in which the people of the State of Texas would cooperate with the District by paying taxes. The pre-election board levied a tax on state and county valuations and was empowered to call an election before the end of 1935 to see if the electors approved the District or wanted to dissolve it. If approved, the District would continue the planning of the Canal. If Congress approved the construction of the Canal, an election was to be called to endorse the contract and decide on a permanent board of directors for the District. Any taxes the District levied were not allowed to be spent on construction, but would pay the employees of the District and pay for any other expenses involved in running the District.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. 6-7; "Questions and Answers on the Establishment of the Trinity Conservancy District", n.d., File 9, Box 41, AGC Collection.

Unfortunately for Carter and his associates, the Texas Supreme Court voided the law that had allowed the District Board to levy a one-cent tax. The Court ruled that the law creating the District did not explicitly allow for a tax, while the District argued that the power to tax was implied. The one-cent tax was unpopular, and many taxpayers strongly protested. Not only did the Supreme Court void the tax, but it also forced the District to refund money to the taxpayers. In addition to these legal setbacks, the Chief of Engineers of the United States Army was expected to recommend against the Trinity Canal, claiming there was not a sufficient water supply to dig a canal. Despite these apparent setbacks, the TRCA found some room for optimism. The Corps of Engineers agreed with the TRCA that the building of the canal was feasible from an engineering standpoint, though it disagreed that it could be economically viable. Also, the federal government had rarely agreed to construct a waterway within the first few years of the initial proposal. Therefore, the TRCA agreed to continue the struggle to make the Trinity navigable because the idea was “meritorious and sound,” and Fort Worth and Dallas could not continue their growth without the canal.<sup>195</sup>

Throughout 1936, Carter’s involvement with the TRCA stalled as a result of this massive setback to the project and the imminent Frontier Centennial in Fort Worth that Carter (along with PWA money) was backing. However, the arrival of 1937 brought renewed passion for the Trinity Canal. By January 1937, TRCA had hired eleven engineers to plan for the navigation of the Trinity, and a bill had been drawn up in the state legislature that called for the cooperation of the state of Texas and the Department

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<sup>195</sup> Fouts to the Board of Directors, Jan. 30, 1936, File 9, Box 41, AGC Collection; Dallas Morning News, Jan. 30, 1936.

of Agriculture on a soil erosion project of the Trinity Watershed. The TRCA viewed this bill as a necessary first step in the canalization of the Trinity River.<sup>196</sup>

The TRCA appealed the 1936 decision made by the Board of Engineers and was granted a hearing in 1937. New efforts by TRCA engineers estimated the cost at \$30 million less than the government's plans. However, Texas A & M College, for reasons not stated, opposed the passage of the Trinity Watershed Bill that had been introduced in January. Carter led the charge in Fort Worth to raise the necessary funds to combat the opposition put forth in the legislature by A & M. Unfortunately for Carter, the efforts of the TRCA to persuade the state legislature to pass the Trinity Watershed Bill ended in failure.<sup>197</sup>

The government held numerous hearings throughout 1937 in which the TRCA argued its case for the Trinity Canal. Though each hearing was unsuccessful in persuading the government of the necessity of the canal, the TRCA obtained an outlet for its ideas. Carter worked to gain the endorsement of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce, hoping that its approval would bring more to the TRCA's arguments. In an attempt to sway the Board of Engineers, Carter also wired George Pillsbury, the assistant chief of engineers, that TRCA now had the approval of 130 counties in West Texas, thus proving that it was not only Fort Worth and Dallas that believed that canalization was necessary for Texas's economic well being.<sup>198</sup>

The year 1937 proved to be yet another unsuccessful one for TRCA, though the situation was not as desperate as it appeared. The Board of Engineers had not yet

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<sup>196</sup> Fouts to Amon Carter, Jan. 16, 1937, File 10, Box 41, AGC Collection.

<sup>197</sup> Fouts to Amon Carter, Feb. 24, 1937, Box 41, File 10, AGC Collection.

<sup>198</sup> Amon Carter to George Pillsbury, July 17, 1937, Box 41, File 10, AGC Collection.

given its full approval to the project, but neither had it struck the idea completely down. The TRCA refused to let the issue die, for the organization truly believed that Fort Worth and Dallas needed the canal to continue growing. While visiting Carter on one of his many stops in Fort Worth, Will Rogers commented that all Carter ever wanted to talk about was the Trinity River canal. Once, Carter took Rogers along the banks of the Trinity and described how a canal there would transform the city into a bustling transportation hub. In response to Carter's elaborate plans, Rogers quipped, "I can see the sea gulls now." Carter believed as long as he kept the issue in the public eye then the possibility of its death could be forestalled. Even better, if he could gain the ear of the most powerful man in America, Roosevelt, he might have a chance at pushing his vision forward.<sup>199</sup>

Throughout the New Deal, Carter had cultivated his friendship with President Roosevelt and was able to gain further audience through the president's son, Elliot, who lived in Fort Worth, having married Ruth Googins from the nearby suburb of Benbrook. In a 1938 visit to Elliot's house, Carter described his vision to the President, who was visiting his son. Carter apparently piqued Roosevelt's interest because the President asked for maps detailing the plan while suggesting the canal should be made a little deeper. In response to this interest, Carter sent President Roosevelt a letter containing a full outline of his ideas on the Trinity.<sup>200</sup>

The Trinity program that Carter now envisioned had seven parts: soil and water conservation, flood control, navigation, reclamation of flood lands, alleviation of stream pollution, conservation of wildlife, and storage of water for municipal, industrial, and

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<sup>199</sup> Flemmons, Amon, 158.

<sup>200</sup> Amon Carter to Fouts, July 18, 1938, Box 41, File 10, AGC Collection.

agricultural uses. The canal had now evolved from a strictly economic project to a multi-dimensional program that touched on every aspect of Texas life. In this letter, Carter demonstrated his ability to temper his message toward the audience. President Roosevelt's actions had shown that he was more favorable to projects that demonstrated more than an economic side, and Carter hoped Roosevelt would be swayed by the transformation of the Trinity Canal project into a package that would affect Texas in a holistic manner.<sup>201</sup>

Carter then outlined the details of three of the seven aspects of the Trinity program in great detail. If a good soil and water conservation program was installed, the massive erosion occurring in the watershed could be halted. The frequent flooding of the Trinity carried away much of the fertile soil along the river. A flood control program would reclaim the majority of the arable land that was difficult to cultivate due to the floods. The centerpiece of Carter's letter to the President was the canalization of the Trinity with a focus on the engineering feasibility, economic justification, and the public necessity of the canal.<sup>202</sup>

According to Carter, the engineering feasibility of the project was unassailable, and he cited the last couple of government hearings in which opposing railroads were unable to defend their criticism that the canal would cost too much money. In an appeal for economy, Carter referred to various surveys made by the Department of Commerce, the Corps of Engineers, and private engineers showing savings upwards of \$8 million annually to businesses and consumers. Texas was entitled to a canal because cities in other states now had access to the ocean because of the Intracoastal Canal. Carter

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<sup>201</sup> Amon Carter to Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 9, 1938, Box 32, File 2b, AGC Collection.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

then pointed to the recent approval of a dam on the Red River in Denison that allowed navigation up to Shreveport. This would move trade that geographically should go to the Texas Gulf Coast to New Orleans. Finally, Carter claimed that the continued success of Texas and the Southwest depended on the construction of the canal. He finished his argument by listing the numerous organizations that had endorsed the canal, such as the Democratic and Republican parties of Texas, many Texas newspapers, the cities of Houston and Galveston, and the National Rivers and Harbors Congress.<sup>203</sup>

President Roosevelt forwarded Carter's letter to the secretaries of Agriculture and War for further review. Harry Brown, acting Secretary of Agriculture, responded that he was pleased with the progress that had been made by the TRCA to further cooperation between federal and state organizations, especially in regards to soil conservation efforts. However, he cautioned, the state of Texas needed to pass a strong soil conservation law that would allow for increased agriculture in the Trinity watershed. Though this was not a statement specifically endorsing the idea of a canal, Carter had to have been pleased to hear that some part of the canal idea was well received in the higher levels of the government.<sup>204</sup>

Carter followed up his first letter to President Roosevelt with another one that included engineers' maps, charts, and tables. One map compared the manufacturing and population growth in Texas to that of the United States; the theme of this map was potential growth because Texas still had a lower population density than the United States average, and there were still large amounts of natural resources still untapped.

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Harry Brown to Amon Carter, Sept. 29, 1938, Box 41, File 10, AGC Collection.



In his estimation, economic growth in the region was inevitable, and any federal investment in the Trinity region would be therefore be safe. Carter also pointed out the need for flood control along the Trinity because communities in the watershed had spent over \$30 million for reservoirs and levees. Federal help was necessary to coordinate and fund future projects for several more reservoirs that would complete the flood control program.

The second map highlighted the waterways that an improved Trinity would connect. Most of these waterways already had federal involvement; just a little more money, Carter pleaded, would connect all these waterways with the Southwest. Also, since the government had already invested in Texas ports, Carter reasoned that it would only make sense to connect these ports with the cities they were supposed to serve. The Intracoastal Canal currently under construction had been completed from the Mississippi River to Houston. Like the Trinity River Canal, the Corps of Engineers had initially rebuffed the Intracoastal Canal because it believed it would not make economic sense. Carter pointed out that that same Corps had a survey showing over one million tons of freight had moved over the completed section in 1937. If the Intracoastal Canal could work, then a Trinity River Canal would also be a success.<sup>205</sup>

Though Carter had the tacit support of President Roosevelt, this did not mean that he was going to get his canal. Carter wrote Congressman Sam Rayburn that the imminent passage of the Wheeler-Lea Transportation Bill would mean that “Congress would cease to improve rivers for practical navigation.” The Wheeler-Lea Transportation Act, introduced in 1939 by Montana Senator Benton Wheeler, would

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<sup>205</sup> Amon Carter to Roosevelt, Oct. 4, 1938, Box 41, File 10, AGC Collection.

place inland water carriers under federal jurisdiction for the first time and create a temporary transportation board that would monitor their condition. Carter feared government regulation, but he did not cite this reason for his opposition to the bill. There was little indication in the bill that the government was opposed to inland water transportation, but in Carter's case government regulation of an industry meant an attempt to restrict growth.<sup>206</sup>

Carter hoped that Rayburn would use his position to ensure that the Wheeler-Lea Bill would not hurt the Trinity program. When it became apparent that the bill would pass, Carter pressured Rayburn to seek a thirty-day period in which the public could peruse the bill. The bill was so intricate, Carter claimed, that only an expert could understand the complexities. In those thirty days, Carter hoped that the legislators and the public would find some part of it distasteful and dispense with the bill. To Carter's chagrin, however, the Wheeler-Lea Transportation Bill passed, allowing for greater government regulation of transportation. In reality, this legislation proved to be less damaging than the hydrological impossibility of canalizing the Trinity. Carter spent much of the rest of his life attempting to prove that the impossible could become reality with human perseverance and ingenuity.<sup>207</sup>

These canal-related activities during the 1930s are very revealing about Carter's goals, methods, and philosophy about government at the local, state, and federal levels. While not the originator of the Trinity River vision, he clearly saw the ways in which this

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<sup>206</sup> Amon Carter to Sam Rayburn, Sept. 18, 1939, Box 41, File 10b, AGC Collection; David Porter, "Representative Lindsay Warren; The Water Bloc and the Transportation Act of 1940," North Carolina Historical Review 50 (July 1973), 277.

<sup>207</sup> Amon Carter to Rayburn, Sept. 18, 1939, Oct. 24, 1939, File 10b, Box 41, AGC Collection.

program, if followed, could benefit not only his city, but the whole region. Granted, that assumed the feasibility of canalizing a low-flow, narrow, shallow river, but considering the dream did not die until the 1970s, it is clear that the possibility was tantalizing for many people. His support for the project even before the New Deal reveals a willingness to ask for and welcome federal support for internal improvements for his city and region. More than many of his other pet projects, the canalization of the Trinity illustrates the width and breadth of his boosterism. Urging New Deal work relief agencies to fund construction in Fort Worth was limited in scope compared to a project that would immediately impact the Trinity River from the Gulf of Mexico to Fort Worth. Like a typical New South booster, he found nothing to dissuade his support for the canalization idea: government at all levels should encourage entrepreneurial development in as many ways possible and be able to intervene where it was deemed impossible for private enterprise to be successful.

While pursuing a vision of waterborne transportation transforming the Trinity River region and Fort Worth, Carter continued his promotion of aviation in very tangible ways during the 1930s that extended well beyond his hobby of collecting inscribed helmets from famous aviators such as Jimmy Doolittle and General Benjamin D. Foulois. It is interesting to note that though he was heavily involved in aviation interests, he did not see other modes of transportation as competition but rather as complementary. Through a position on the board of directors of American Airlines and through public advocacy of air travel, he demonstrated a commitment to expanding the popularity of air travel even in the midst of the Depression. As with most causes he supported, he hoped that Fort Worth could reap some advantages from his promotion

especially in the construction of a modern airport, but he would pursue that cause in the future when the worst of the Depression had passed. In the meantime, he viewed it as his duty as a leading citizen to show the public that air travel was a safe and feasible means of transportation and that the aviation industry was a worthy investment.<sup>208</sup>

Carter's relationship with American Airways (later American Airlines) during the 1930s, while not tumultuous, certainly ebbed and flowed like the fortunes of America's aviation industry. In 1930, President Hoover's Postmaster General, Walter Brown, desiring to encourage the development of passenger service, moved to consolidate what he regarded as an unwieldy patchwork of airlines delivering mail. From Brown's perspective, most airlines "were not really interested in developing passenger traffic, and never would be as long as they depended so heavily on mail pay, many of them for sheer survival. And Brown believed sincerely that the industry's future rested on passengers, not postal stamps." That same year, he persuaded Congress to pass the McNary-Watres Act which ultimately "gave the postmaster general economic control over the airlines." This act (also known as the Airmail Act of 1930) paid airlines not by the pound-per-mile method, but by space available for mail. His hope was that carriers, motivated by this subsidy shift, would transition to using larger aircraft thus providing space and a motive to fill up the excess room with passengers. Many smaller airlines did not have the resources to continue competing under these new rules, and a new wave of consolidation began. While carrying the mail retained its importance for many

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<sup>208</sup> "Aviation Helmets Inscribed," n.d., Box 35, Amon Carter Personal File 1930-1933, AGC Collection.

carriers, the larger ones realized the possibilities of carrying passengers and began developing more routes to market to travelers.<sup>209</sup>

American Airways, still operating under the umbrella of its parent company AVCO, was one carrier that stood to benefit from this new legislation. After a flurry of mergers and acquisitions that followed, three airlines dominated ninety percent of the industry: Trans World, United, and American. Carter, serving on American's board of directors, saw an opportunity for continued growth of the airlines as well as the possibility of greater gains for Fort Worth. For two years, Carter harangued and negotiated with AVCO chairman Averill Harriman and short-tenured president Frederic Coburn to move its southern operations from Dallas to Fort Worth. It certainly helped his case that former Star-Telegram reporter Silliman Evans served as vice-president of AVCO's board. The Fort Worth city council, most likely at Carter's behest, offered a bonus to American if it agreed to the move: free use of the municipal airport, no gasoline fees, and no taxes for thirty-three years. This offer was made on the condition that American build a \$150,000 building at the airport, a building which, unless the company exercised a twenty-year option, would belong to the city of Fort Worth after thirty-three years. In May 1932, two months after the board of directors deposed Coburn as president for what they believed were poor manufacturing decisions as well as a micro-managing style, American Airways and Fort Worth reached an agreement, much to the chagrin of Dallas city leaders and businessmen. While there was clearly an element of Fort Worth boosterism to Carter's position, a part of it (as well as many of his

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<sup>209</sup> Tim Brady, "U.S. Airlines from 1930 to World War II," in The American Aviation Experience, ed. Tim Brady (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 174; Robert J. Serling, Eagle, 32.

other positions) was the desire to strike at Dallas. For example, when the Oil Well Supply Corporation announced in 1931 that it was moving its offices from Pittsburgh to Dallas instead of Fort Worth, Carter allegedly vowed “revenge will be mine if it takes forever.” The truthfulness of the outburst aside, it cannot be denied that while Carter knew how to cooperate with Dallas on cases such as the Trinity River, when it came to aviation, he desired to outperform Fort Worth’s eastern neighbor in every way possible and to benefit his own city.<sup>210</sup>

Carter’s first tenure on American Airways’ board of directors ended the next year amidst the turmoil at AVCO over control of the company. Coburn’s replacement, LaMotte Cohu, was soon ousted by AVCO shareholder Errett Cord in March 1933. Cord “felt [AVCO] was worrying too much about its bulging portfolio of stocks, too little about its basic business of flying airplanes.” Though many Wall Street associated directors like Robert Lehman of Lehman Brothers and Harriman resigned after Cord’s takeover, Carter stubbornly remained on the board nearly two weeks after the reshuffling. He finally announced his resignation at the end of the month, claiming that this was “purely an act of principle, feeling a newspaper publisher should be identified with as few outside businesses as possible and that it is better to be left entirely free from any semblance of influence in connection with matters which the paper must discuss editorially, from time to time.” To complete his severance, he also sold off his

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 34-35; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, May 4, 1932; Dallas Times Herald, May 5, 1932; “Cohu for Coburn,” Time, Mar. 28, 1932.

500 shares of stock in AVCO. Within five years, however, he would have a change of heart and once again join the board of directors after re-investing in the company.<sup>211</sup>

In the interim, Carter did not abandon his aviation dreams and continued maintaining solid relations with American as demonstrated by his participation in a flight with Elliott Roosevelt on the company's first transcontinental flight from Los Angeles to New York. Yet his dabbling with flying and related activities were now no longer limited. Always the avid collector, he began to build up his collection of inscribed helmets gifted to him from famous aviators like Foulois and Doolittle. He forged a friendship with noted aviator Frank Hawks which, on one occasion, nearly cost them their lives. While between Birmingham and Atlanta on a flight from Fort Worth to New York, Hawks, with Carter as his passenger, flew through what he called "the worst [storm] he had ever encountered in the air." Newspaper coverage of the flight reported that Hawks claimed "at one time, he and Mr. Carter prepared to take to parachutes." Carter denied this in a letter to Hawks, declaring that he "did not know just what was happening when the motor quit on us" and had assumed that Hawks was finding a place to land. Even such a brush with disaster failed to quench Carter's love of flight; he told Hawks that he hoped to make the trip again, however under more favorable circumstances." He continued to fly when he travelled, especially if doing so promoted aviation such as his trip to South America in 1935 on Pan Am's "Brazilian Clipper," a flying boat piloted by

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<sup>211</sup> "Cord in Control," Time, Mar. 27, 1933; Amon Carter to L.B. Manning, Mar. 31, 1933, Box 12, American Airlines File 1, AGC Collection; "Aeronautics: Farley's Deal," Time, Apr. 23, 1934.

Hawks. Even the 1935 death of his close friend, Will Rogers, in a plane crash refused to dampen his spirit and dogged support for aviation.<sup>212</sup>

Carter re-joined American in 1938, a company that looked somewhat different that when he had left. In 1934, American Airways had undergone a name change in response to new government policies regarding air mail contracts, so it was now American Airlines. The president of this new corporation was Fort Worth's C.R. Smith, who had been active in the southern division of the company for some time. Even with this local connection, Carter was absent from American until 1938, when he once again was elected to the board of directors. He remained with American until his death, upon which it was noted that he was the longest-serving member of the company's board as well as the largest shareholder.<sup>213</sup>

Though not always involved in the day-to-day activities of the airline, he was generally considered to be "the most influential director of them all," partially because he "always expressed his opinions freely at board meetings and everywhere else." When Smith decided to remove the footrests from the airline's DC-3s, Carter "bawled [Smith] out." Sometimes his outspokenness could lead to positive gains for the airline as it did in 1940 when he opposed a proposal to partner with an outside company to operate restaurants at airports American served. When the contract was presented to the board, every member except Carter approved. "If we're gonna operate restaurants, we should run 'em ourselves," he exclaimed. The result was Sky Chefs, a subsidiary of

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<sup>212</sup> "Against Time," Time, Jan. 28, 1935; Providence Journal, Mar. 31, 1932; Amon Carter to Frank Hawks, May 30, 1932, Box 35, Amon Carter Personal Papers File 1930-1933; Boyce House, "Amon Carter: Range Boss of West Texas," unpublished manuscript, n.d. Box 36, Amon Carter Personal File 1938, AGC Papers.

<sup>213</sup> Serling, Eagle, 72-73; "Personality," Time, Feb. 25, 1952.



American Airlines that operated concessions at airports and cooked food for in-flight meals. One would expect that Carter would spend a considerable amount of time trying to persuade Smith to move the company's headquarters from Chicago to Fort Worth, but obviously his boosterism was limited by both his understanding that this might not benefit the airline and the fact that such an idea would most likely have been defeated by the other board members.<sup>214</sup>

While ownership of the Star-Telegram gained Carter a certain amount of political influence, he failed to achieve a considerable amount of wealth until the mid-1930s when he finally struck oil after numerous previous attempts had ended in failure. Ever since the West Texas oil boom of the 1920s, Carter had been obsessed with drilling for oil, purchasing large tracts of land in the vast expanses of that region and drilling one dry hole after another. Once again, his tenacious personality paid off. Ever independent-minded, Carter seemed to personify the typical "wildcatter", a man who struck out on his own in pursuit of wealth without the backing of large oil corporations. In reality, he worked with oil companies to purchase leases from them that they had been unsuccessful on or did not desire to develop for whatever reason. His successful quest for oil added to his credibility as a typical Texan, making it easier for him to play the role he had begun to adopt in the 1920s. Now a member of what has been called the "big rich" (Texans like his friend and confidante Sid Richardson, and H.L. Hunt), Carter became an oil legend in his own time, and a celebrity of some stature. It is no accident that, after his entrance into the status of the independently wealthy, his name appeared more often in gossip columns and rumor mills especially after his second

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<sup>214</sup> Dallas Morning News, Jan. 14, 1935; "Against Time," Time, Jan. 28, 1935; Serling, Eagle, 72-73, 148.

marriage to Nenetta fell apart. The sudden wealth he gained also enabled him to begin building a vast art collection, mainly centered on pieces on the American West by artists such as Frederic Russell and Charles Russell. Most importantly, at least from his perspective, his wealth now enabled him to pursue his philanthropic dreams more than ever before.

In the midst of the Depression, drillers discovered more oil the Permian Basin in far West Texas and across the border into New Mexico, and Carter believed that here lay his opportunity for success. Much of this work was done, not by the major oil companies, but by independents like Carter. Many of the majors acquired leases in the region during the 1920s, but these were only valid for ten years unless production had begun. As oil prices dropped during the Depression, the major companies turned to the independents and offered them farmouts, defined as “a contribution of lease acreage in exchange for the drilling of a well.” Like many independents, Carter found this to be a ready method of accessing what turned out to be productive fields in West Texas. By 1935, oil companies and wildcatters alike were rushing to West Texas searching for instant wealth, to the extent that Humble Oil Company reported that year that over 40,000,000 acres of the state was under lease. Carter purchased a tract in Lea County, New Mexico and in May 1935, found oil. Soon after, through his independent oil company Crafton Oil and a partnership with Fort Worth oilman W.A. Moncrief, he received a farmout from the Pure Oil Company in the Keystone Field in Winkler County and struck oil once again. This considerable boost to his fortune allowed him to plow even more money into more wildcatting. Two years later, Carter negotiated with Continental Oil to obtain expiring leases in Gaines County and on June 19, 1937,

brought in Wasson No. 1, the first of many productive leases for Carter in the region. Later that year, he “extended the Harper Field in Ector County with a 608-barrel well in another farmout,” and in 1940, discovered two more wells on his lease in the Wasson Field. As the oil flowed in so did the money and Carter was now able to develop his wealth independently of his media empire. It would not be until 1945 that Carter would take a large portion of his oil income to form the Amon Carter Foundation, but the most important piece of the foundation was laid for a promising future in philanthropy.<sup>215</sup>

Just as Carter had adopted the Fort Worth Cats in the 1920s as his favorite local baseball team, in the 1930s he became the leading booster for Fort Worth’s Texas Christian University Horned Frogs football team. His support for the team went beyond simple fandom when he embarked on a campaign to raise funds for a new stadium and later accompanied Heisman Trophy winner Davy O’Brien to New York City for the ceremony. His new-found wealth from the Wasson Field oil strike enabled Carter to give even more lavishly to the university in the future. Though instrumental in pushing for the creation of Texas Tech University, his support for the university did not extend to the athletic department, possibly due to the simple fact that Lubbock was much too far from Fort Worth to allow for steady cheering. Plus, from Carter’s perspective, there was never any desire to cheer against a team from Fort Worth, especially one that was enjoying as much success as the Horned Frogs.

Texas Christian was a small private university that, after some years in Waco, moved to Fort Worth in 1911 after a fire destroyed the main building. The Horned Frogs

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<sup>215</sup> Roger M. Olien and Diana Davids Hinton, Wildcatters: Texas Independent Oilmen (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2007), 71, 73-74; Dallas Morning News, Apr. 7, Jun. 1, 1935.

had been playing football as a member of the Southwest Conference since 1922, and were building a solid program. Even though the university was still small with an enrollment of less than two thousand students, the old stadium, Clark Field, found itself overcrowded at times, especially since they were beginning to be a powerhouse in the conference. In 1929, after a game in which over 21,000 fans crammed themselves into the rickety wooden structure, “the Star-Telegram ran a big picture . . . saying that TCU needs a new stadium.” By September 1929, the university formed a committee to “investigate the stadium proposition” and, fueled by the school’s first Southwest Conference championship, decided by December that Carter was “the one and only man to head up his stadium drive or campaign or whatever you desire to call it.” It was understood that few men in Fort Worth had Carter’s reach when it came to fundraising, and his expressed desire to see the university have a new stadium meshed well with this gift.<sup>216</sup>

While other committees focused on stadium planning and construction, Carter began drawing on his vast network of business contacts to raise the funds necessary to construct the stadium. A corporation, the Texas Christian University Stadium Association, was formed to sell \$300,000 in bonds with Carter leading the sales drive. In January 1930, he hosted a dinner for faculty and trustees of the university at the Fort Worth Club and announced that the bonds would begin being sold as soon as they could be printed; he expected that the football team could begin playing its games there in the fall “if public spirited citizens take over the bonds without delay.” His largest

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<sup>216</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Dec. 4, 2010; Jerome Moore, Texas Christian University: A Hundred Years of History (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1974), 98; Athletic Committee/Board of Trustees of Texas Christian University to Amon Carter, Dec. 13, 1929, Box 198, 1929 File, AGC Collection.

victory in the bond campaign came when he persuaded rancher and oilman W.T. Waggoner to purchase \$25,000 in bonds. Though other prominent and active Fort Worthians peopled the sales committee, Carter led the way with over \$110,000 in bond sales. By October, the stadium was completed and opened with great fanfare as the Horned Frogs slaughtered the Arkansas Razorbacks, 40-0. In recognition of his efforts to secure the funding for the stadium, the university named the structure Amon Carter Stadium. The stadium effort proved timely since the Depression loomed on the horizon; it is hard to believe that Fort Worth citizens would have been as willing to purchase hundreds of thousands of dollars in bonds in 1931 or 1932. Fortunately for the city and the university, the Horned Frogs provided a good diversion during the Depression.<sup>217</sup>

Carter continued to form a close bond with Texas Christian University during the 1930s and helped in small ways wherever he could; for example, he purchased some new instruments for the marching band in 1937 before a showdown with Fordham University at the Polo Grounds in New York. Such support earned him a small reward; in 1937, band director Don Gillis composed "The Amon Carter March," a tune often played at halftime in Carter's honor. The decade witnessed the Horned Frogs thriving in the Southwest Conference, due in part to an excellent head coach in Dutch Meyer and their possession of two excellent quarterbacks: Sammy Baugh and Davey O'Brien. Sammy Baugh, who hailed from Sweetwater in West Texas, led the Horned Frogs to the brink of a national championship in 1935 with a victory over Louisiana State University in the Sugar Bowl. 'Slingin' Sammy Baugh, as he was known, left in 1937 to

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<sup>217</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Jan. 8, 1930. Carter often targeted the wealthy Waggoner for his charities and fundraisers, prompting the old rancher on one occasion to hold up a quarter and comment to a photographer, "Here, take a picture of this quarter; it's the one thing Carter hasn't taken from me yet."

play for the Washington Redskins in the National Football League, but the Horned Frogs were in capable hands with Davey O'Brien at quarterback. A diminutive 150 pounds, O'Brien nevertheless was an exceptional quarterback, leading Texas Christian to a national championship in 1938 and that same year became the first Southwest Conference player athlete to win the Heisman Trophy. Winning the Heisman Trophy, awarded annually to the best college football player, gave O'Brien an opportunity to travel to New York City for the ceremony. Carter, ever the avid booster, went as part of the O'Brien party, and found an opportunity to once again play the role of the blustering Texan. On the day O'Brien was due to receive the Heisman Trophy at the Downtown Athletic Club, Carter drove him down Wall Street on a stagecoach to the astonishment of the staid New York financial elite. The grateful O'Brien returned the favor and gave him his helmet, which then hung on Carter's office wall until his death.<sup>218</sup>

In the decade leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War, Carter's personal life descended into turmoil once again as he found his marriage with Nenetta deteriorating to the point of divorce. Amid the chaos, he still found time to be a devoted father to Amon Jr. and Ruth, finding in the two of them not only heirs to his media empire but also a warmth that seemed to be missing from his relationship with his wife. As his children grew older, they became closer to their father; even while away at school, there was a constant correspondence between them. Amon and Nenetta on the other hand, found the last years of their marriage to be a struggle.

Like his relationship with first wife Zetta, Carter's marriage to Nenetta became more strained as his work kept him away from home on many occasions. With Zetta,

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<sup>218</sup> Moore, A Hundred Years of History, 215-216; Amon Carter to Amon Carter Jr., Oct. 11, 1937, Box 38, Amon Carter Jr. 1937 File, AGC Collection.

the strain had come while he was building the Star-Telegram into the dominant newspaper in Texas. By the 1930s, the newspaper was comfortably in the lead in regards to Texas circulation, but now there was more to catch Carter's eye. The whirlwind of politics, ever present since the 1928 Democratic convention, took more of his attention because of the promise of the New Deal, as did his continued work in aviation, oil, and general Fort Worth boosting. From Nenetta's perspective, as much as she enjoyed the life of a socialite, an absent husband was no husband at all. Even when he was gone, he could still provide an insufferable presence; while on a trip to Washington at the start of the New Deal, he called numerous times to a friend's home where Nenetta was known to be attending a party. Evidently his constant telephoning was an annoyance and embarrassment to Nenetta, especially as she had left before the party was over and had heard the next day of how her husband was trying to track her down. Exasperated, she wired him at the Willard Hotel where he was staying. "I do not appreciate one bit all the telephone calls you put in for me last night," she began, explaining that the reason she had left the party was because it was a children's party. She added, "If you have any desire to embarrass me further by checking up on me I will be glad to furnish you with my whereabouts every hour in the day."<sup>219</sup>

By the late 1930s, Amon and Nenetta had drifted further apart with young Amon and Ruth caught between them. A letter from Nenetta to Amon Jr. on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in 1940 contains veiled references to his father's absences and preoccupation with his work:

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<sup>219</sup> Nenetta Carter to Amon Carter, July 5, 1933, Box 35, Amon Carter Personal Files 1933, AGC Collection;

“When the time comes for you to make your choice in the woman you want to share your life, your love and your name, make up your mind to put her next to your God. Let her play the most important role in your life and never allow your business, community, and civic, as well as other interests, to push her out of that special niche she deserves. Then you will have accomplished what so few men realize only after it is too late.”

In October 1940, Nenetta moved out of the home she shared with Amon in Rivercrest Country Club and to New York City where she stayed at the Savoy Plaza. This temporary move put her at odds with her children, especially Ruth who was particularly close to her father. Nevertheless, Nenetta believed that her relationship with Amon had moved beyond repair and filed for divorce in 1940, stating that Carter’s “absence from home and failure to show proper affection toward her has created a form of cruelty” that “impaired [the] petitioner’s health.” Demonstrating the relative level of celebrity he had attained, the news spread rapidly across the nation. Most newspapers carried the Associated Press wire release with little to no editorializing, but Time magazine differed from most news outlets, reporting the divorce in its “Milestones” section and describing Carter as the “peripatetic . . . Dictator of Cowtown” who was both “fiercely hospitable” and “belligerently civic-minded.” Nevertheless, the divorce had little impact on Carter’s professional life, and by all accounts he considerably enjoyed his new bachelor status.<sup>220</sup>

Financially, Carter did not suffer a substantial blow to his newfound wealth or to his holdings in Carter Publications. The couple agreed in the divorce settlement that even though Nenetta was due forty percent of the Carter estate, her portion would be

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<sup>220</sup> Nenetta Carter to Amon Carter, Jr., Dec. 23, 1940, Box 30, Amon Carter Jr. File 1940, AGC Collection; Amon and Nenetta Carter Divorce Papers, Sept. 30, 1941, Box 36, Amon Carter Personal File 1940, AGC Collection; “Milestones,” Time, Jan. 20, 1941.



controlled by him. Because of the complexities of the financial situation, it was contracted that Nenetta would receive \$24,000 annually from Carter. Nenetta's major motivation in not pursuing more of Carter's empire was her desire for Amon Jr. to receive his holdings intact. As she had no desire for her son to lose a portion of his inheritance through a disastrous court fight, it seemed wiser to follow a more moderate course. A long-lasting effect of this property settlement was that it kept the couple financially intertwined throughout the rest of Amon's life. Though bitterness was present in the years immediately following the divorce, in the long run, they were able to overcome their previous animosity to collaborate for the cause of philanthropy.<sup>221</sup>

One would expect that a divorce based on grounds of "mental cruelty" would result in bitterness between the involved couple, and briefly this seemed to be the case, especially regarding Nenetta's relationship with the children. Though discussions between the couple were limited at the time, the war between them could very easily be waged by proxies: Amon Jr. and Ruth. After the divorce, Nenetta travelled to sunny Miami Beach, where she stayed for some time at the Versailles Hotel. In between sunbathing on the hotel roof and enjoying the blooming flowers, she wrote Katrine Deakins, Amon's long time secretary, of how she feared Ruth's loyalty lay more toward her father than her mother. "I am afraid I have just about lost my baby girl thru her dad's influences," she complained, "but as soon as he begins to treat her as he once did me, she will have her eyes opened." Nenetta felt that Ruth was enthralled by her father and did not care whether or not her mother was happy. "She is so much like him and falls for his generosity and attention that she has never seriously considered anyone's

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<sup>221</sup> Divorce Settlement, Jan. 3, 1941, Box 36, Amon Carter Personal Papers File 1941, AGC Collection.

happiness but her own and has never once given me a thought as regards my happiness.” As the months went by, some of these feelings bled over into her letters to both her children as she began to believe that they were both aligned against her. America’s looming entry into the war and young Amon’s enlistment would soon distract her from these issues, yet for a time she struggled to pick up the pieces of her life.<sup>222</sup>

The correspondence between Amon and his children at this time is revealing in that it shows a close bond between a father and his children that extends beyond the niceties. Their letters to one another are full of conversation about family, friends, politics, sports, and school, and it is in these letters that one can dig deeper into the inner workings of the Carter family. The tone differs depending on the recipient; his letters to Ruth are intimate and caring, with more personal commentary and humor, while his correspondence with Amon Jr. is businesslike and professional, yet still fatherly. Like Amon’s oldest daughter Bertice, Ruth was sent to boarding school for her secondary education; she attended the prestigious all-girls school Madeira School in the Washington, D.C. suburb of McLean, Virginia. What letters exist between father and daughter while she was away at school show Ruth to be an intelligent, charming young lady who followed politics with the same devotion as her father. Politics did not dominate their correspondence, but her remarks and inquiries about people and issues like Jesse Jones, the Neutrality Act of 1939, and a humorous poem about the New Deal are liberally sprinkled among comments and questions about the family, school, and her social life. Despite being the daughter of a wealthy publisher, she refused to take advantage of her status by relying in her father’s generosity. For example, her interests

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<sup>222</sup> Nenetta Burton to Katrine Deakins, Mar. 7, 1941, Box 41, Ruth Carter File 1941, AGC Collection.

in chemistry led her to spend one summer interning for St. Joseph's Hospital in Fort Worth, working in a lab with the hopes of securing a paying job in this field in the future. Obviously, there was never a chance that Carter would let his daughter completely fend for herself, and she was simultaneously raised to fulfill the demands placed on females of high society; yet he did want to ensure that she would have a job based upon her own merit, not through the fortune of her last name.<sup>223</sup>

Carter groomed young Amon as the heir to Carter Publications but refused to treat him differently because of his status as the publisher's son. When Amon Jr. was only eleven, he started working for the Star-Telegram as a news boy, delivering and selling newspapers in Fort Worth neighborhoods during the summers, on vacation days, and on school days after school was out. Like the other newsboys for the Star-Telegram, there were scholastic requirements placed upon him by the newspaper. A profile of Amon Jr. in the Urbana Evening Courier reported that "The paper and the school work together. If the boy is not punctual at school and it is found that selling or a route harms his school work, he is asked to temporarily drop his school work." When Amon Jr. stated that he was ready for employment, Carter "turned him over to the circulation manager [Harold Hough], stating to him that under no circumstances was he to show Amon Jr. favoritism in any way." Clearly, he believed that his own experiences as a young man had shaped his life in a positive way and, as much as possible, his son must learn how to make his own way in the world. Star-Telegram managers treated him as they would any other employee but generally commended him for his hard work and

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<sup>223</sup> Amon Carter to Ruth Carter, Nov. 9, 1939; Ruth Carter to Amon Carter, Oct. 6, 1940; New Deal poem, n.d.; clipping of "Ruth Carter Wants Job So Much She'll Work for One," from Fort Worth Press, n.d., Box 46, Ruth Carter File, AGC Papers.

ability to sell newspapers. A responsible young man, Amon Jr. was trusted enough by Hough to represent the newspaper to news dealers in Colorado Springs responsible for delivering copies of the Star-Telegram while on vacation with his family in 1934 at the exquisite Broadmoor Hotel.<sup>224</sup>

The next year, Carter sent his son to the prestigious Culver Military Academy in Indiana in preparation to attend the University of Texas. Culver Military Academy attracted the sons of notable businessmen and politicians across the United States and combined a rigorous academic tradition with a regimented military lifestyle. Students, or cadets as they were called, were enlisted in the infantry, cavalry, or artillery for the duration of their time at the school though military service was not required upon graduation. Carter stayed informed of his son's progress at school and did not hesitate to encourage his instructors to bear down harder. "I am ambitious to see Amon Jr. make good and the best way for him to make good is for you to keep after him and see that he toes the line in every respect." He encouraged his son to develop his business sense while at school and delighted to hear that in his first year, Amon Jr. made extra money shining buttons for other cadets' Easter dress uniforms. Carter must have beamed with pride as he wrote his son, "This shows the right spirit and is an evidence that you are no afraid of work and that you are not stuck up or 'high-hat'. Nothing could please me more than for you to be Democratic, friendly, thoughtful, willing to work, and make your own way through individuality and conduct." If there was a philosophy Carter

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<sup>224</sup> The Evening Courier, July 28, 1934; Amon Carter to Lt. Col. G.L. Miller, Mar. 30, 1936, Box 38, Amon Carter Jr. 1936 File, AGC Collection; Harold Hough to Amon Carter Jr., Aug. 11, 1934, Box 38, Amon Carter Jr. 1919-1935 File, AGC Collection.

ascribed to throughout his life, this was it and he wanted his son to imbibe deeply of the same values.<sup>225</sup>

When Amon Jr. turned eighteen in 1937, Carter wrote him a letter that, in a sense, welcomed him to manhood. He laid out his hopes for the future, telling his son, “I hope to see you step in and take Dad’s place, provided you show sufficient aptitude, interest, and qualification to do the job.” In case Amon Jr. had any thought of ignoring the insight and wisdom of some of Carter’s longtime colleagues who helped build the Star-Telegram, Carter wrote, “I hope you will, when the time comes, give due consideration and thought to their views, the same as I have during all my years of association with them.” Clearly Carter had dreams of ensuring the newspaper would be passed down into what he hoped would be the capable hands of his son. From his perspective, if his son sowed discord and ruin among Carter’s longtime associate upon taking over the Star-Telegram, this would destroy everything he had worked so hard to build. In no way was the man who had once sold chicken and bread to train passengers going to see his hard work all for naught. After graduating from Culver, Amon Jr. enrolled in the University of Texas with the idea that after completing his degree there, he would then begin to work full-time at the Star-Telegram as the heir to the Carter fortune. While this did ultimately happen, the road to his inheritance was longer than was expected as war loomed on the horizon.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Amon Carter to Lt. Col. G.L. Miller, Oct. 23, 1935; Application for Admission to Culver Military Academy, Box 38, Amon Carter Jr. 1919-1935 File, AGC Collection; Amon Carter to Amon Carter Jr., April 11, 1936, Box 38, Amon Carter Jr. 1936 File, AGC Collection.

<sup>226</sup> Amon Carter to Amon Carter, Jr., Dec. 23, 1937, Box 30, Amon Carter, Jr. File 1937, AGC Collection.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE WAR YEARS OF AMON CARTER, 1940-1945

On the eve of American entry into the Second World War, Carter could certainly lay claim to possessing a vast national network of business and political contacts that he could exploit whenever he deemed necessary. As the nation prepared for and then entered the war, he found ample opportunity to exercise his influence with the Roosevelt administration and corporate America. Carter's experience in forging relationships with politicians and bureaucrats for New Deal and canalization purposes continued to reap benefits for himself, his city, and even his state as evidenced by his successful efforts helping lead the campaign to create Big Bend National Park. A vocal supporter of rearmament as Germany and Japan waged war on their neighbors, he comprehended how his boosterish desires intertwined with the needs of national defense. Thus was born his support for the building of a Consolidated Aircraft plant in west Fort Worth in 1941. But just as the war created new opportunities, older ideas such as the canalization of the Trinity had to be temporarily shelved. Meanwhile, on the home front, Carter dealt with the new realities of bachelorhood, and rumors of new loves abounded in newspapers and in family correspondence. Sadly, the war became very personal for the Carter family as his son, Amon Jr., was captured by the Germans in North Africa in 1943 and held in a prisoner-of-war camp until near the end of the war. By the end of the war, Carter trekked to Europe, documenting the horrors of Germany's concentration camps while also seeking reunification with his son.

Though often critical of the reform-oriented aspects of the New Deal, Carter knew better than to completely eliminate all support for Roosevelt. His leadership in the creation of a national park at Big Bend in West Texas demonstrated his ability to simultaneously censure and cajole the Roosevelt Administration. Even while arguing the Roosevelt's pro-labor stance was detrimental to the health of the American economy and that Harold Ickes was intervening in Texas politics, Carter possessed the fortitude to press for National Park status for Big Bend. Nearly a decade passed between the beginning of his campaign and Roosevelt's final approval giving Big Bend National Park status on June 6, 1944, demonstrating that Carter possessed a great amount of patience in pursuing his goal. Usually, the causes Carter supported and advocated provided some direct benefit for Fort Worth, but Big Bend was an exception to this rule. Still, he considered this a project that was connected to Fort Worth because having boosted Fort Worth for years as the gateway to West Texas, he believed in the importance of nurturing the relationship between his city and the region by promoting the creation of Big Bend National Park.

Few of Carter's initiatives reflect his ability to bring federal, state, and local personalities together than his push to create Big Bend National Park. This project required the partnership of public and private entities, something Carter had grown adept at through projects such as the canalization of the Trinity River or his New Deal successes. Carter was able to bring a variety of groups together to raise the funds necessary for the federal government to accept Big Bend: Texas women's clubs, the Boy Scouts, civic boosters across the state, all while working to assure the state and

federal governments that the money would be delivered. Though not solely responsible for the creation of Big Bend, his efforts were integral to the success of the project.

While Carter was instrumental in the creation of Big Bend National Park, the idea was not his own. The concept of a park of some kind for West Texas went back as far as 1921 when “a group of civic officials petitioned the Texas state legislature to identify lands within the Davis Mountains for a state park.” This venture as well as similar attempts failed throughout the 1920s due to lack of organization and legislative support. One might assume the onset of the Great Depression would stifle plans for a West Texas state park, but the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933 and the work of two state representatives from West Texas, Robert Wagstaff and Everett Townsend provided the impetus the creation of a state park in the region. West Texans and nature lovers rejoiced later that year when Governor Miriam Ferguson signed into law their legislation creating Big Bend State Park on 225,000 acres in and around the Chisos Mountains and the canyons of the Rio Grande.<sup>227</sup>

The region’s boosters had little intention of keeping Big Bend relegated to state park status, especially Townsend. Throughout 1933, the former Texas Ranger and native of the region “sent a barrage of letters and photographs to the Park Service . . . that captured the vastness and contrasting beauty of the area’s desert, canyon, river, and mountain landscapes.” Through Townsend’s efforts, the National Park Service grew very favorable to the idea of Big Bend National Park culminating with Interior

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<sup>227</sup> Michael Walsh, Landscape of Ghosts, River of Dreams: A History of Big Bend National Park, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2002), [[http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/bibe/adhi/adhi2.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/bibe/adhi/adhi2.htm)] (accessed June 2011); John Jameson, The Story of Big Bend National Park (University of Texas Press: Austin, 1996), 22-25.



Secretary Harold Ickes' final approval of the idea in February 1935. With local support for the project high, Texas' congressional delegation in Washington pushed through a bill giving federal approval to the creation of Big Bend National Park, a bill signed in June 1935 by President Roosevelt. Unfortunately for park supporters, there was still much work left to be done.<sup>228</sup>

The Big Bend Act of 1935 might have enabled the creation of Big Bend National Park, but it was contingent on one piece of action from Texas: the state "had to present to the federal government the title of all of the acres included in the park boundaries." Such a stipulation would not have been a major source of trouble if it was not for the fact that Texas Public School Fund was guaranteed the mineral rights. In addition, since the state legislature had convened before Roosevelt had signed the bill, it would not be until 1937 that it could address its responsibilities. When the legislature reconvened in January 1937, the issue was immediately addressed but with serious barriers. Governor James Allred had endorsed the plan for Big Bend but was simultaneously trying to deal effectively with the state's budgetary problems. Citing the possible damage such spending might cause to the general fund, in June 1937, he vetoed a bill appropriating \$750,000 to purchase land for the park. With the veto coming just before the legislature adjourned, it seemed that the dream of having a national park in Texas was farther away than ever before.<sup>229</sup>

Allred's veto prompted swift action from private citizens of West Texas, including Carter. Once again using the Star-Telegram as an instrument of his will, he began encouraging individuals to do their part to ensure the creation of Texas' first national

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<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-35.

park. On June 11, 1937, the editorial page of the Star-Telegram called for Texans to emulate the people of Virginia where nearly a million dollars had been raised to purchase Shenandoah National Park. If one million Texans gave one dollar each, the editorial surmised, then Texas would be able to purchase the land for the national park. Herbert Maier, a regional officer for the National Park Service, contacted James Record, the Star-Telegram's managing editor about sponsoring the fund drive because the paper was "one of Texas' leading dailies," and Carter was "perhaps in the best position in the state to get this thing successfully going." The Star-Telegram agreed to sponsor the fundraiser and cooperated with other Texas newspapers as well as various chambers of commerce across West Texas. Carter's paper led the way with numerous positive stories, donor lists, and even a picture of Governor Allred donating his one dollar contribution. Though most Texans involved in the campaign did not lack for enthusiasm and boosters travelled the state pleading their cause, money sprinkled rather than poured into the coffers; after four months, only \$50,000 had been raised.<sup>230</sup>

Fortunately for Big Bend supporters, legislative support was forthcoming during the fall of 1937. Allred had always supported the idea of Big Bend National Park given the right piece of legislation; therefore he took advantage of the special session of the state legislature that fall and signed a bill that "officially recognized the national park, approved the boundaries proposed by the secretary of the interior, and authorized the Texas State Park Board to receive donations of land and money." Even though state

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 36-37; Herbert Maier to James Record, July 13, 1937, Box 21, 1937 File, AGC Collection.

money was nowhere to be found in the legislation, “the legal and governmental machinery to establish Big Bend National Park was in place.”<sup>231</sup>

Up until this point, Carter’s involvement with the Big Bend project had been minimal, content as he was to use positive coverage of the park to stir up public support for fundraising. But, with the obvious failure of the first round of fundraising, it was clear that park boosters needed a new approach. Governor Allred appointed an Executive Committee of fifteen (later expanded to twenty-six) prominent Texans to head this new drive: names included men like Jesse Jones of Houston, John Carpenter of Dallas, and Carter. Because of the Star-Telegram’s coverage of this West Texas project as well as Carter’s ability to achieve worthwhile objectives,” his fellow committee members chose him to chair the committee. As a man who had become well-known for his trademark yell of ‘Hooray for Fort Worth and West Texas!’ this was an opportunity Carter had to exploit. Though civic-minded and philanthropic, he did believe that the creation of Big Bend National Park was not without its financial benefits. He called the project, “one of the most constructive and beneficial things that could happen to Texas,” since it would “bring millions of dollars of money into the State to be spent by the tourists each year” and welcomed the “opportunity of attracting a great number of people through Fort Worth for the purpose of vacationing . . . in the Big Bend country of southwest Texas.”<sup>232</sup>

At Governor Allred’s request, the Executive Committee first met in Austin in May 1938 with the goals of “publiciz[ing] the national park and rais[ing] funds for land

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<sup>231</sup> Jameson, The Story of Big Bend, 38.

<sup>232</sup> H.W. Morelock to Amon Carter, Mar. 10, 1938; Amon Carter to Houston Harte, June 1938; Charles Cotton to Amon Carter, May 27, 1938, Box 21, 1938 File, AGC Collection, AGC Collection.

acquisition.” With objectives like these, it was obvious why a man like Carter was chosen to be the head of the committee. The expanded committee included “heads of women’s clubs, parent-teachers clubs, presidents of colleges and public school representatives, as well as leading business men and public spirited citizens.” Understanding that one of the primary reasons for the failure of the first fundraising attempt had been a lack of organization, the committee brought in Adrian Wychgel of Adrian Wychgel and Associates; this firm had raised \$2 million for Shenandoah and Mammoth Cave National Parks in Virginia and Kentucky. The committee decided that to cover organizational expenses such as campaigning, supplies, and a headquarters, they would need \$25,000. Carter offered \$5,000 to cover Fort Worth’s contribution, while the difference was to be made of \$5,000 each from Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, and West Texas. The state was then to be divided up into districts with local directors leading the campaigns in their respective districts. At the beginning, the committee estimated that \$1.2 million needed to be raised, and all funds raised would be directed under the auspices of the Big Bend Park Association, the name of the organization the committee lead. Once the requisite cash was raised, it would be “turned over to the State Park Board, which will negotiate the land deals.”<sup>233</sup>

Carter spent much of the rest of the year pressing committee members to raise their money and deliver on their pledges while also encouraging them to wait for a statewide campaign policy to be set before attempting any major fundraising so as to avoid returning to the same donors twice. As in the previous campaign, money slowly

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<sup>233</sup> Jameson, The Story of Big Bend, 38-39; “Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Board Texas Big Bend Park Association,” May 23, 1938; Amon Carter to Nelson Rockefeller, June 18, 1938, Box 21, 1938 File, AGC Collection.

trickled in. According to Carter, the Star-Telegram had \$35,000 “sent in voluntarily by readers in answer to editorial appeal for subscriptions” from the unorganized effort begun on 1937, with small amounts still coming in. Obviously, this amount would have little impact on the campaign, but in a time of depression, it seemed there was precious little for people to give.<sup>234</sup>

By September, Dallas had only contributed \$500 of the \$5,000; Carter cajoled fellow committee member and Dallas banker Nathan Adams, “I realize you are tremendously busy and have many calls on your time and finances,” but “I hope you will find the time to get a few friends together and raise the remainder of your pledge.” Houston had only contributed \$1,000 of its share, prompting him to attempt to wring the money from its business leaders by telling banker A.D. Simpson that Big Bend National Park would “be of more benefit to the South Texas cities than to those in North Texas.” In November, with little headway being made, a clearly annoyed Carter told W.B. Tuttle of the San Antonio Public Service Company, “If it had not been for you and Del Rio, we would not have made much progress in October toward our \$25,000 working fund goal.” By the end of the year, only \$15,500 had been raised with grave doubts arising that the goal could be reached, yet “Carter refused to proceed [with the fundraising campaign] until the working fund had reached \$25,000.” Despite the clear lack of progress, he requested of incoming lieutenant governor Coke Stevenson that he quash any move to appropriate funds because “any effort to secure a legislative appropriation will interfere with our plans.” Such a move seems odd in the face of clear signs of failure, leading some to suggest that Carter “had lined up a major donor,” or “did not want to obligate

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<sup>234</sup> Amon Carter to Nelson Rockefeller, June 18, 1938, Box 21, 1938 File, AGC Collection.

himself to the new governor,” “Pappy” Lee O’Daniel. Speculation aside, it appears that he simply believed that the money could be raised by the end of the next legislative session in May 1939. To concede defeat at this point would be too much for the stubborn Carter.<sup>235</sup>

In a sign of Carter’s influence on Texas politicians wary of crossing the powerful publisher, Lt. Governor Stevenson complied with Carter’s request and the Legislature failed to pass any appropriations for the park. Executive and legislative leadership was forthcoming in other ways however, thanks to the newly elected governor, Wilbert Lee “Pappy” O’Daniel. A Fort Worth flour merchant, O’Daniel emerged as a bona fide Texas celebrity in the late 1920s when he began emceeing a radio show featuring Bob Wills and the Light Crust Doughboys. Heard on stations like Carter’s own WBAP, WOAI in San Antonio, and KPRC in Houston, O’Daniel’s show “probably had more daily listeners than any other show in the history of Texas radio.” He agreed to run for governor in 1938, “at the behest of radio fans,” and running on a vague platform of the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, and an old age pension, easily defeated his opponents, Texas Railroad Commissioner Ernest Thomson and Attorney General William McCraw. Though by most accounts one of the worst governors in Texas, O’Daniel did make it a point to support the Big Bend campaign. The result was “the only real victory of his administration.”<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Amon Carter to Nathan Adams, Sept. 19, 1938; Amon Carter to A.D. Simpson, Sept. 24, 1938; Amon Carter to W.B. Tuttle, Nov. 8, 1938, Box 21, 1938 File, AGC Collection; Jameson, The Story of Big Bend, 40.

<sup>236</sup> George Green, The Establishment in Texas Politics (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 22-23; Jameson, The Story of Big Bend, 42.

O'Daniel first visited Big Bend in 1938 and then pledged his support for the project during the 1939 legislative session by urging the Legislature to pass Bill 123, co-sponsored by Lt. Governor Stevenson and State Senator H.L. Winfield. Per Carter's request, the bill did not contain the requisite appropriations to purchase land, but it "granted the Texas State Parks Board the right of public domain and the power to acquire land through purchase, condemnation, and donation." Private land prices in the region were set at a maximum of two dollars per acre. As the Senate debated the bill, O'Daniel delivered a strong message to the legislature declaring Big Bend to be a "Gift of God' to Texas and our nation." Conjuring up his gifts as a former radio host, he spoke, "lyrically of the beauty and grandeur," of the park, and "claimed that 'from many large peaks the gorgeous scenery is as impressive as a vast fairy land.'" Worried that without protection the region's geological and natural wonders might be lost to future generations, O'Daniel claimed that, "an emergency existed at Big Bend, due to "acts of vandalism," and, "unauthorized collecting of botanical, archeological, and geological specimens." To seal his argument, he mentioned President Roosevelt's support for the bill, and quoted from a letter from the President: "I am very much interested in the proposed Big Bend National Park in your State." Roosevelt stated that "'it would be very gratifying to me personally' if Big Bend 'could be dedicated during my Administration.'" For once, the legislature responded positively to O'Daniel, and the bill sailed through and onto his desk.<sup>237</sup>

Carter understood that a major task was at hand. Having ensured that no appropriations would be made, he (and, by extension, the Big Bend Park Association)

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<sup>237</sup> Walsh, Landscape of Ghosts; Jameson, The Story of Big Bend, 40-41.

had to deliver the privately raised funds. “It should be impressed on the public,” he cautioned, “that this is only the first step toward getting the national park for Texas.” Because “this bill was only enabling legislation,” Carter stated, “we must raise \$1,500,000 to pay for the land. . . Now it is up to Texans to complete the project.” The response was a deafening silence, a fact encouraged by the lack of an immediate publicity blitz from the Carter camp. The only major Big Bend-related news during the summer of 1939 was an August announcement by Carter that the federal government had approved the exemption for income tax purposes of donations to the Big Bend National Park Association. Though such a move was calculated to bring in donations, little was forthcoming. The onset of war in September 1939 actually seemed to briefly brighten the park’s prospects, at least in the eyes of park boosters. The Star-Telegram published a story on September 12, claiming that since Europe was no longer a viable option for tourists, more Americans would have to travel at home. “Texas should not fail to seize the opportunity to become a greater tourist State and to profit from the increased travel that is to be diverted from Europe to this country,” the article argued, therefore it stood to reason that the Texas public should respond by donating funds to begin purchasing land.<sup>238</sup>

While Carter’s paper’s “wishful thinking” was “accurate in the long-term,” the immediate future did not hold much promise due to the war, depressed economy, and Carter’s perceived lack of attention to the project for much of the rest of the year. National Park official Maier contacted Carter in October, believing the campaign to raise the \$1.5 million should begin very soon. Explaining that “due to the War, the oil and

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<sup>238</sup> Dallas Morning News, May 13, 1939; Walsh, Landscape of Ghosts.



cotton industries are in very sound positions,” “the present . . . should be an opportune time to for Mr. Carter to launch his appeal.” Behind the scenes, many park supporters from the Park Service and in West Texas wondered if Carter had forgotten to launch the initiative. Even O’Daniel expressed skepticism of Carter’s lack of attention to the Big Bend initiative and his inability to raise the promised funds. The governor believed that ultimately, “it would be essential for the Texas legislature to appropriate all, or the major portion, of the funds necessary.”<sup>239</sup>

Doubting the necessity of asking the legislature for the funds, Carter took action in November 1939 by asking Jesse Jones if he could assist the campaign in Houston by working to “prevail on someone in Houston who would be sufficiently influential to give some strength to the campaign.” More than a year had elapsed since Carter had started his campaign to raise \$25,000 for the initial campaign expenses, and he refused to start a statewide campaign without the funding. He noted to Jones that even Humble Oil had only contributed \$1,000, a sign of the moribund economy and the unsettled world situation. The situation was no better in North Texas where it took until December 1939 for Dallas businessmen to raise the \$5,000 pledged from their city. Despite this apparent lack of momentum, Carter felt confident enough to announce in December 1939 that there were plans to start the fundraising campaign in January 1940. Unfortunately, his (and the committee’s) “desires to get all the money in hand” before starting the campaign undermined the committee’s ability to begin fundraising in earnest. 1940 dawned with no imminent campaign in sight. As national park historian Michael Walsh states, the year “had begun hopefully enough, when Governor W. Lee

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<sup>239</sup> Walsh, Landscape of Ghosts.

O'Daniel accepted the entreaties of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and championed the park with Lone Star lawmakers," but ended in disappointment for park boosters because, "the anxieties caused by war surrounded Big Bend."<sup>240</sup>

The year 1940 proved to be no better for park supporters and the official fundraising campaign appeared to be stalled. Boosters around the state, including Carter, made efforts to raise funds outside the auspices of the Park Association. Clearly aware of the fundraising capabilities of women's clubs, he occasionally turned to their leaders for support. In February 1940, Carter presided over a Fort Worth Garden Club rally held to raise money for and awareness of Big Bend. Color movies of the region were shown, a special dance, the "Big Bend", was inaugurated, and attendees dined on "Horsetail Cataract shrimp cocktail, Pack Saddle chicken, Paint Gap Hills green beans, Green Gulch Canyon salad," and other Big Bend-themed dishes. Though over two hundred women attended the meeting, only fifty dollars was raised for Big Bend. In November 1940, Carter suggested to Mrs. Louis Wardlaw, head of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs, that she should "explain that the movement has been retarded by existing world conditions." In a sign of his continuing reliance on the Federation, he closed by saying, "We are confident we can rely upon the club women of Texas to cooperate with this movement when our campaign gets under way."<sup>241</sup>

Positive publicity and lip service from Texas' business community failed to overcome the financial hurdles erected by a weak economy. Though never said

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<sup>240</sup> Amon Carter to Jesse Jones, Nov. 10, 1939, Box 21, 1939 File, AGC Collection; Dallas Morning News, Dec.8, 1939; Alpine Avalanche, Dec. 1, 1939; Walsh, Landscape of Ghosts.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.; Dallas Morning News, Feb. 8, 1940; Amon Carter to Mrs. Louis Wardlaw, Nov. 11, 1940, Box 21, 1940 File, AGC Collection.

explicitly, it seems that the distance between Texas' major cities and the Big Bend region must also have played a role in the lack of proffered private funds. In this boosterish, yet economically depressed era, few civic-minded citizens were willing to expend their wealth for a national park in the West Texas wilderness far removed from their urban centers. Fortunately, political efforts on behalf of Big Bend had taken a different turn, thanks in part to O'Daniel's re-election, and park supporters were forced to realize that private efforts to purchase land in Big Bend were going to fall short.<sup>242</sup>

O'Daniel marched easily to victory in 1940, soundly defeating his opponents, Ernest Thompson and a hopeful, but weak Ma Ferguson. Carter was much more concerned with national politics and with promoting a possible Garner candidacy, so he did little to involve himself in the election. As a huge supporter of the park, O'Daniel's win boosted the chances of making Big Bend National Park a reality. By 1941, many Texas politicians recognized that "the failure of the private popular subscription campaign left only one alternative: a state appropriation." After all, Carter's Big Bend Park Association had only raised just over \$9,500 by the end of 1940. When the legislature was called in January, O'Daniel asked it to "honor its commitment to the federal government to acquire the Big Bend acres." In response, the legislature began moving through a bill to spend \$1.5 million of the state's general fund to begin purchasing land. Despite his previous negativity toward Carter did little to impede the passage of the bill and continued to publicize the virtues of Big Bend. In February, he gave an interview on WBAP focusing on the economic benefits of Big Bend, claiming that "when properly developed with adequate facilities, [Big Bend] will do for Texas"

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<sup>242</sup> Dallas Morning News, Dec. 9, 1938; Amon Carter to Mrs. Louis Wardlaw, Nov. 11, 1940, Box 21, 1938 File, AGC Collection; Jameson, The Story of Big Bend, 39, 42.

what Shenandoah, Great Smoky Mountains, and Yellowstone National Parks were doing for their states. That same month, he claimed that “despite the effect of the international situation on economic conditions,” “the Big Bend national park may pass from the project stage to reality in less time,” than other national parks.<sup>243</sup>

With little opposition, the legislature passed a bill appropriating \$1.5 million to purchase land in Big Bend, and in July 1941, O’Daniel signed it into law. The bill “had given the state parks board only twelve months to complete all transactions,” meaning that the land purchases had to go smoothly and quickly. Despite an attempt by some opponents to prevent the state comptroller from spending the appropriation, the purchases were well under way by 1942. Rather unexpectedly, the process moved fairly rapidly, but was more expensive than projected. Running low on funds to pay for the administrative costs of the program, the state turned to Carter to see if he could release funds from what little had been raised through the park Association’s efforts. With little hesitation, Carter assented, and the state was able to keep the land acquisition functioning past the deadline. Thus, by November 1942, very little acreage remained un-purchased. Newton Drury, director of the National Park Service, agreed to recommend to Harold Ickes that “the federal government accept title to the acquired acres,” and in June 1943, “Ickes concurred.” The first national park in Texas was about to become reality.<sup>244</sup>

By this time, O’Daniel had left the governorship for the Senate, having appointed himself to the deceased Morris Sheppard’s seat in 1941. This brought Lieutenant

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<sup>243</sup> Green, The Establishment in Texas, 42; Jameson, The Story of Big Bend, 42; “Script-Texas Big Bend Park Association’s Program, WBAP,” Feb. 16, 1941, Box 21, 1941 File, AGC Collection; Temple Telegram, Feb. 14, 1941.

<sup>244</sup> Jameson, The Story of Big Bend, 43; Walsh, Landscape of Ghosts.

Governor Coke Stevenson, a longtime supporter of the park, into the governor's seat. By the end of 1943, Stevenson had given the land deeds to the Park Service and presented Carter with the cession deed as well, with the instructions that he was to deliver it to Ickes. Carter, recognizing the value of formal ceremonies, insisted on waiting until Roosevelt was available to preside over the transfer. Because World War II captured most of Roosevelt's attention, it was some months before Carter was granted the White House ceremony he desired. Finally, on June 6, 1944, as Allied troops stormed the beaches of Normandy, a beaming Carter formally presented the title to 700,000 acres of land to Ickes and Roosevelt. In less than a decade, Carter had helped bring about the creation of Big Bend National Park.<sup>245</sup>

National park status for Big Bend did not occur through the massive outpouring private monies as Carter expected, but instead of continuing down what was clearly a failed path, he changed course. Though supporters of the National Park system could say that Carter should have pushed for public funds sooner, it appears from his perspective that there was little to be gained in such an endeavor. As president of the Park Association and the publisher of the most widely read newspaper in Texas, the sight of one million Texans subscribing one dollar to purchase land would have been seen as another major victory for Carter and cemented his legacy as philanthropist extraordinaire. Instead, the twin problems of the economy and the war sabotaged his efforts, forcing him to change his tone and accept a state appropriation. Carter did not seem to view this as a defeat, though it is not much of a stretch to believe that Stevenson's request for him to present the deed was mainly acknowledgment of his

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid.; "FDR Accepts Final Title to Big Bend National Park," West Texas Today, June, 1944, 10.

hard work to publicize Big Bend for much of the 1930s. What stands out in Carter's involvement in the Big Bend project is his ability to balance it with his other pursuits, as well as the recognition by others that he was an integral piece to the success of the project. One must keep in mind that during the late 1930s and early 1940s, he was simultaneously engaged in canalizing the Trinity, drilling for oil, landing Consolidated, waging a rhetorical war on Ickes, coping with the collapse of his marriage to Nenetta, and running the Star-Telegram, among other sundry ventures.

Despite the passage of the Wheeler-Lea Bill in 1940, the Trinity Improvement Association (TIA, formerly the TRCA) did receive good news. The completed reports from the Departments of War and Agriculture were favorable and created a detailed plan for the proper use of water and soil resources in the watershed. Also, the War Department committed itself to spending money for the deepening of the Trinity Channel from Galveston up to Liberty, and money was diverted for the clearing of sand bars and snags to Romayor, thus making over one hundred miles of the Trinity navigable. The Department of Agriculture also began cooperating with the Texas Soil Conservation Board to halt soil erosion along the Trinity. In addition to actions by the government, railroads began reducing rates in the Southwest because they feared that Congress would approve the canal.<sup>246</sup>

Though the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor greatly diminished the debate over the canal, Carter still wanted to make sure that the issue remained in the hearts and minds of politicians. Ten days after Pearl Harbor, he asked Fort Worth City manager Sam Bothwell for continued assistance regarding the canal. As chair of the executive

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<sup>246</sup> Fouts to Trinity Improvement Association, May 30, 1940, Box 41, File 11, AGC Collection.

and finance committee of the TIA, Carter “found it to be a tireless, hard, up-hill job” that cost the Star-Telegram money and aroused great opposition by the railroads. If Fort Worth wanted to continue attracting manufacturers, a canal would have to be built as railroad rates were still relatively high. Carter went so far as to claimed that General Motors and the Continental Can Company would have located in Fort Worth instead of Houston had it not been for a lack of access to water. If the City of Fort Worth continued to give its full support to the project, Carter believed that it might be possible to persuade the government of the necessity of the canal. Carter then tied the canal with the war effort. Fort Worth was now a national defense center, and its central location was very attractive to the government. If men like Carter could personally spend thousands promoting the canal and flood control, then the City of Fort Worth should have had the motivation to call more loudly for its own improvement.<sup>247</sup>

As the United States prepared for and then entered the war, Carter and the TIA’s efforts to persuade the government that the Trinity Canal would benefit the war effort continued. He specified to the other members that TIA from then on would only couch its requests for federal funding within the context of national defense. This meant that the TIA had to present any further suggestions to the Departments of War and Agriculture as well as to various United States defense agencies. Any changes that these defense agencies recommended would have to be made by the TIA. In a further continuation of this theme of national defense, TIA General Manager John Fouts wrote to all the members of Congress defending the passage of the 1942 Rivers and Harbors Omnibus Bill. Responding to the Association of American Railroads lobbying Congress

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<sup>247</sup> Amon Carter to Bothwell, Dec. 18, 1941, Box 41, File 11, AGC Collection.

for continued support, Fouts accused the railroads of “disloyal and pernicious activities” because their “subversive tactics in wartime are imperiling the freedom of our Nation and aiding our country’s foes” by attempting to quash other forms of transportation such as inland waterways and highways. The bill passed, and the Axis powers were eventually defeated, but during the war, little progress was made on the canalization of the Trinity. Evidently, comparing the railroads to Japan, Germany, and Italy was of no avail and the canal would have to wait for peace to be won.<sup>248</sup>

While the United States’ entry into the war postponed activity on the canal, Carter found ways to ensure that Fort Worth would benefit from wartime conditions. After all, the southern region as a whole discovered that the war was good business. During both world wars, the south not only contributed to but also benefited from the war effort as millions of southerners marched off to war and southern states became the homes to numerous military installations and armaments factories. Most scholars “point to World War II as the catalyst that catapulted Texas and the rest of the South into a stage of unprecedented growth and urbanization.” Even though “the South remained more campground than arsenal,” “war production increasingly found its way southward” as the federal government ended up spending \$4 billion on defense contracts in the formerly impoverished region. The location of military installations and defense industry in the South was the result of a two-way relationship. From the perspective of the federal government, the South was seen as the nation’s “number one economic

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<sup>248</sup> Amon Carter to Amon Carter, Jan. 7, 1942, File 13, Box 41, AGC Collection. Carter often sent out form letters to numerous local businesses and members of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce. He would also send a letter to himself, presumably for his own benefit. Fouts to United States Congress, Feb. 26, 1942, File 13, Box 41, AGC Collection.



problem,” so choosing southern states as the location for much of the nation’s wartime needs was part of a deliberate policy. And just as many southern supporters of the New Deal saw the advantage of supporting the program in its early stages, they also recognized that this new war offered many of the same economic possibilities for the region.<sup>249</sup>

Historians generally agree that Texas, more than any other southern state, was transformed by the Second World War. As historian Kathryn Pinkney observes, “Possessed of abundant natural resources, deepwater ports, open spaces, a mild climate, and a central location, the state met many of the needs of wartime America.” Having already been the location for numerous temporary army bases and airfields during World War I due to its abundant space and good climate, Texas emerged once again as a natural choice; changes to Texas’ economic structure would arise, however, more as a result of sincere efforts by Texas politicians and boosters to industrialize Texas by partnering with the federal government. As the nation began rearming after 1940, Texas’ strong congressional delegation worked to ensure that their constituents would receive a sizable portion of the government’s largess. Though one might expect the most rapid economic growth in Texas’ traditional fields of oil and agriculture, Randolph Campbell notes that “the most dramatic economic changes wrought by war came in manufacturing.” Therefore, “Texas entered World War II a largely

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<sup>249</sup> David Goldfield, Promised Land: The South Since 1945 (Arlington Heights, IL.: Harlan Davidson, 1976), 5

impoverished, rural, agricultural state and emerged from the war decade thriving and far more urbanized and industrialized than ever before.”<sup>250</sup>

These changes were not unwelcomed or unforeseen by many leading southerners. Historian Dewey Grantham writes, “Southerners, more than other Americans, generally adopted a bellicose attitude toward the national debate over foreign policy in 1940 and 1941.” This was not necessarily a new development in southern history as the region had “rallied around the flag” in the Spanish-American War and in World War I. George Brown Tindall attributes Southern readiness to enter World War II to numerous factors: “sentimental identification with the British,” the fact that “German conquests menaced the cotton and tobacco trade with Europe and Britain,” as well as the demographics of the region: few Germans or Irish immigrants, groups that were notoriously anti-British, had settled in the south. In addition, he notes that “Southern history had bred a psychology of danger and defense, and a military-patriotic tradition.” In addition to these factors, Anthony Gaughan points out that while many Americans during the 1930s were antagonistic toward the defense industry believing them to be “merchants of death,” “southerners saw war as a source of regional economic growth.” Therefore, “the prospect of intervention did not frighten southerners.”<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Kathryn Pinckney, “From Stockyards to Defense Plants, the Transformation of a City: Fort Worth, Texas, and World War II” (Ph. D. Diss., University of North Texas, 2004), 78-79; Campbell, Gone to Texas, 404.

<sup>251</sup> Tindall, Emergence of the New South, 687; Dewey Grantham, The South in Modern America: A Region at Odds (New York: Harper, 1995), 170; Anthony Gaughan, “Woodrow Wilson and the Rise of Militant Interventionism in the South,” The Journal of Southern History, 65 (Nov. 1999), 805.

As the state's most prominent publisher, Carter understood the gains that could be made in supporting Roosevelt's call to make the United States, the "arsenal of Democracy." In 1940, Roosevelt began a national defense program that would allow for greater coordination between business and government for the purpose of readying the United States' defense capabilities. Like many other southerners, Carter possessed a hawkish view of foreign affairs as well as full awareness of the dangers of what he termed in a Christmas 1940 letter to his employees, "a world gone mad." Therefore Carter easily came to terms with the idea that the nation should prepare its defenses. When Roosevelt delivered his "arsenal" speech, Carter wired the president his praise. "America's duty and obligation must cover the requirement of Great Britain," he argued. Demonstrating his loathing of the opposition, he remarked, "The defeatists and isolationists are a hindrance to our welfare and happiness." Within the war readiness President Roosevelt was calling for lay the possibility of Carter continuing his campaign to modernize Fort Worth by relying on the political and business network he had created for himself and his city. Armed with this sensibility as well as a strong boosterish spirit, he turned his attention toward figuring out how the mobilization of the American economy might benefit Fort Worth. Carter and other prominent Fort Worth citizens believed the new opportunities provided by the Roosevelt administration would be one more way for Fort Worth to become an industrialized city as well as pull it from the depths of the Depression. Carter took on the most important role in attracting the Consolidated Aircraft Corporation to Fort Worth by using his acquaintance with Reuben A. Fleet, president of Consolidated, to his, and his city's advantage.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Amon Carter to the Star-Telegram Family, Dec. 20, 1940, Box 36, 1940 File, AGC

The North Texas region seemed a logical place for the defense aviation industry. Plentiful labor, no housing shortages, and distance from the more vulnerable coastal regions made that part of Texas very attractive to government officials. Consolidated briefly toyed with the prospect of moving to Grand Prairie, just east of Dallas near Hensley Airfield, but the plans never materialized. By September 1940, with the Roosevelt administration working to increase aviation production, the Defense Plant Corporation, a sub-agency of Jesse Jones' RFC, allowed North American Aviation to move to the site. Undaunted, Fleet turned his attention toward Fort Worth, a city that would be sure to offer favorable conditions to Consolidated.<sup>253</sup>

Amon Carter and Reuben Fleet began discussing some form of cooperation between Consolidated and Fort Worth in 1940. Fleet contacted Carter stating his interest in expanding his company's operations outside San Diego. In phone conversations and in writing, Fleet outlined what he was searching for in possible locations for a new plant: "wage scales, union activities, labor disturbances, labor supply...state, county, and local taxations" among other things. He also was wise enough to explicitly mention that Consolidated was interested in other sites around the Southern United States.<sup>254</sup>

Consolidated soon had a new proposition for Amon Carter and Fort Worth. Fort Worth officials and Carter were working on preparing the city for Consolidated's possible presence when the company's chief test pilot requested a favor from Carter

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Collection; Amon Carter to Roosevelt, Dec. 29, 1940, Box 61, 1940 File, AGC Collection.

<sup>253</sup> E.C. Barksdale, The Genesis of the Aviation Industry in North Texas (Austin: Bureau of Business Research, 1958), 2-3, 8.

<sup>254</sup> Reuben A. Fleet to Amon Carter, May 27, 1940, Box 12, File 18, AGC Collection.

and Fort Worth. Consolidated was in the process of building PBY seaplanes for Great Britain, and these planes needed a place to land on their way from San Diego. Since these flights were to begin in the winter, the planes needed a warmer climate so as to avoid frozen water surfaces. Consolidated officials explicitly asked to land at Lake Worth and asked Carter to mediate between them and the city of Fort Worth.<sup>255</sup>

By December 1940, Consolidated's seaplanes were landing at Lake Worth on their way to Great Britain. Meanwhile, Carter urged local politicians to pressure the United States Army to allow Consolidated to locate in Fort Worth. Carter believed Fort Worth to be the ideal spot because it offered water for Navy planes and plenty of land for the Army. If Consolidated was to build in Tulsa or Oklahoma City as had been suggested, the plant would be forced to only build Army planes at the plant. Armed with this reasoning and confident of his sales abilities, Carter considered the deal with Consolidated to be done; all that was needed was the Army's consent.<sup>256</sup>

Officials on both sides of the negotiations were confident that Consolidated would choose to locate in Fort Worth. Carter and the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce were willing to give Consolidated anything they needed to build a functioning plant. William Holden, executive vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce, listed what Fort Worth would grant Consolidated if they chose Fort Worth: 1200 acres along Lake Worth, two runways with taxi strips, a water supply system with a sewer main and sewage disposal plant, necessary utility and railroads trunk lines (these at no cost), highways, and housing. Holden also stated that the three bodies of the Fort Worth City Council,

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<sup>255</sup> Wheatley to Amon Carter, Nov. 22, 1940; Edgar Gott to Amon Carter, Nov. 26, 1940, Box 12, File 18 AGC Collection.

<sup>256</sup> Amon Carter to Gott, Dec. 7, 1940, Box 12, File 18, AGC Collection.

Tarrant County officials, and Chamber of Commerce representatives were united in their efforts to bring Consolidated to Fort Worth. Amon Carter would not be alone in this project.<sup>257</sup>

Once Carter had established a solid partnership with Fleet and Consolidated, he turned his attention to politicians and government officials. Carter again used his connection with Elliott Roosevelt to influence various people in the government such as General E. M. Watson, secretary to President Roosevelt and of course, the President himself. He also contacted Texas Senator Morris Sheppard, Chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, urging him to lean on Assistant Secretary of War Patterson and President Roosevelt. In order to assist Sheppard in his duties, Carter sent him a brief detailing what Fort Worth had to offer. W.S. Knudsen of the National Defense Advisory Committee was next on Carter's list; fortunately for Carter, he already had a working relationship with Knudsen. Knudsen had formerly worked with General Motors, and Carter had tried unsuccessfully to coax Knudsen into constructing a plant in Fort Worth. The National Defense Advisory Committee recommended building four bomber plants, the third of which was to be built in Tulsa by Consolidated. However, Carter told Knudsen that Consolidated believed Fort Worth to be the better site; Tulsa could receive the fourth bomber plant to be run by some other aviation company.<sup>258</sup>

The federal government continued to press for a Consolidated plant in Tulsa, even though Consolidated officials had stated that Fort Worth would be a better location. However, the government insisted that factories should be given to states that

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<sup>257</sup> William Holden to Fleet, Dec. 19, 1940, Box 12, File 18, AGC Collection.

<sup>258</sup> Amon Carter to Morris Sheppard, Dec. 22, 1940; Carter to Van Dusen, Dec. 22, 1940; Amon Carter to W.S. Knudsen, Dec. 22, 1940, Box 12, File 18, AGC Collection.

had not already benefited from defense dollars. Texas already had a sizable military presence, and the Dallas-Fort Worth area had acquired a North American airplane plant in Grand Prairie. Fleet remained adamant that Fort Worth should be selected and continued to urge Carter and Fort Worth officials to mount a last offensive against the War Department. Carter capped this flurry of activity with a wire to President Roosevelt stating what both Fleet and he had been saying all along. Fort Worth offered numerous advantages over Tulsa: better climate, more railroads, and a position along American Airlines' transcontinental route. Also, Consolidated was still using Lake Worth as a stop for flying boats. If the War Department deemed it necessary to build bombers and flying boats, Fort Worth would be the ideal site for a plant. Carter offered Roosevelt a solution. He suggested Tulsa be granted a plant and that Consolidated be allowed to come to Fort Worth.<sup>259</sup>

On January 3, 1941, federal officials announced that Fort Worth would be awarded the Consolidated plant along with Tulsa. Fort Worth officials were ecstatic and congratulations poured into Carter for his effort throughout the whole ordeal. Two local businessmen lauded Carter for his "untiring efforts" noting, "All Fort Worth will rejoice in your achievement." Lt. Colonel A.B. McDaniel, an officer serving in the Office of the Chief of the Air Corps, was apparently well informed of Carter's history of getting his way in regards to the government as he wrote, "you 'did your stuff' as usual." Carter

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<sup>259</sup> Pinkney, "From Stockyards to Defense Plants," 87-88; Amon Carter to Van Dusen, Dec. 30, 1940, Box 12, File 18, AGC Collection.

fired off a telegram to President Roosevelt thanking him for his help and apparent influence over the situation.<sup>260</sup>

The existing correspondence indicates that those involved in the Consolidated efforts viewed Carter's role not only as important but also indispensable. Without his presence, it is likely that Fort Worth would never have received the Consolidated plant. Reuben Fleet was no friend of the New Deal as evidenced by his numerous appearances before Congressional Committees denouncing high taxation, the plowing under of cotton, and the "super-intelligent, wonderful, brainy people, who have never themselves made a success of business." William Holden did not possess the presence or political connections of Carter and would not have received the same respect from Washington politicians. It was Carter who urged Senators Connally and Sheppard to speak on his behalf and he also took it upon himself to write to Roosevelt about the controversy. His flurry of activity at the end of December 1940 was the decisive factor in the War Department's decision to build a Consolidated plant in Fort Worth.<sup>261</sup>

Bringing Consolidated to Fort Worth proved to be one of the most remarkable feats in Amon Carter's life solely because of the impact Consolidated had on the Fort Worth economy. In 1941 alone, Consolidated added 6,000 jobs to the Fort Worth economy; to put that number in context, there were fewer than 10,000 manufacturing employees in the city in 1939. At the height of wartime production, 38,000 people were

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<sup>260</sup> Leon Gross and Raymond Meyer to Amon Carter, Jan. 3, 1941; A. B. McDaniel to Amon Carter, Jan. 6, 1941; Amon Carter to Roosevelt, Jan. 6, 1941, Box 12, File 18, AGC Collection.

<sup>261</sup> William Wagner, Reuben A. Fleet and the Story of Consolidated Aircraft (Fallbrook: Aero Publishers California, 1976), 302.



employed at the Consolidated plant building B-24 Liberators, one of the main workhorses of the strategic bombing campaign over Germany. Consolidated not only added jobs, but also poured payroll dollars into Fort Worth, an amount which increased from \$10 million in 1942 to \$60 million in 1944. The end of the war did not halt production at Consolidated as the United States remained militarily on alert throughout the Cold War. Consolidated underwent a few name changes and buyouts through the rest of the century beginning with Convair, then General Dynamics, and finally Lockheed; regardless of the changes, Fort Worth continued to benefit from the presence of the plant.<sup>262</sup>

As the first bombers rolled off the production lines at Fort Worth's Consolidated plant, Carter continued his vocal support for the burgeoning war effort and criticized any gains by labor unions that might threaten defense capabilities. Like most other southern businessmen he was wary of any strength labor unions might gain, especially in the middle of America's national defense preparations. Labor historian Irving Bernstein notes that strikes "became a critical issue during the defense period" due to "rising employment, growing inflation, residual resistance by management to unionization, the inexperience of new bargainers on both sides of the table, and the exploitation of unrest by communist leaders within the CIO unions they controlled." Even though Roosevelt created the National Defense Mediation Board in March 1941, it seemed little could stop the wave of strikes in the shipbuilding, steel, lumber, aluminum, coal, and other

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid.; Campbell, Gone to Texas, 404.

industries. In 1941 alone, over 500 strikes occurred within defense-related industries, leading to the loss of over 4.7 million man-days.<sup>263</sup>

One of the most crippling strikes of the period was a coal strike ordered by John L. Lewis, former president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations and, at the time, president of the United Mine Workers in the fall of 1941 in support of a union shop at steel-company owned coal mines. When Senator Connally publically decried these strikes that harmed the war effort, Carter notified him of his full support. “A few selfish people are doing honest labor a great injustice,” he fumed. Connally, ever mindful of the necessity of positive newspaper coverage, replied that he was “pleased to have your approval and commendation [and I] hope you can give editorial and newspaper publicity to support.” When the possibility of labor strife emerged once again in February 1942, Carter fired off a telegram to Senator Alben Barkley of Kentucky, Connally, and Congressman Sam Rayburn denouncing work stoppages in the midst of war. “If we cannot achieve unity of purpose to victory on the home front, how can we expect our soldiers to sacrifice their lives for victory on the battle front?” he queried. “Anything which delays, restricts in quantity, or in any way hampers the flow of machines and materials to our forces in battle, means that the war must last longer, that more American soldiers must be killed and wounded before we win.” He went on to say, “When delays are deliberately engineered or concerted, it is treason, and nothing else.” Lewis, constantly a thorn in Roosevelt’s side, continued to threaten strikes throughout the war. Coal miners under his leadership walked out in 1943, forcing

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<sup>263</sup> Irving Bernstein, “American in Depression and War,” in A History of the American Worker, ed. Richard Morris (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 176; Byron Fairchild and Jonathan Grossman The Army and Industrial Manpower (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1959), 66-67.

Roosevelt, through the War Labor Board, to order them back to work. Carter approved of his move, stating that the United Mine Workers actions, “are lending aid and solace to our mortal enemies” and that “Mr. Lewis should promptly be brought to an accounting and definitely given to understand that neither the United States government nor the public will tolerate disloyal arrogance of this kind.”<sup>264</sup>

Amid war and rumors of war, Carter’s personal life was marked by turmoil and tension as he attempted to deal with the aftermath of his divorce from Nenetta. Their children, particularly Ruth, found themselves torn between mother and father, a battle their indomitable father was sure to win. Reports in April 1941 of Carter being seen in the presence of other women did little to heal the scars of the recent divorce. Nenetta had taken refuge in New York, but even there, she could not avoid hearing rumors of her ex-husband’s dalliances with women. Hurt as she was, she poured her swirling emotions out on Ruth in an effort to turn her against her father. She reported hearing of Amon’s new female companion, a woman who “is my age, has blonde grayish hair, and is taller and larger than I am.” Nenetta’s friends witnessed Amon, “coming out of a [New York] florist with [his new girlfriend] dripping orchids and then again dancing every dance with her at Monte Carlo Sat nite.” The fact that this happened on a Saturday

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<sup>264</sup> Kenneth Davis, FDR: The War President, 1940-1943 (New York: Random House, 2000), 327-328; Amon Carter to Tom Connally, Nov. 18, 1941; Connally to Amon Carter, Nov. 18, 1941, Box 36, Tom Connally File, AGC Collection; Amon Carter to Alben Barkley, Tom Connally, and Sam Rayburn, Feb. 7, 1942, Box 36, 1942 File, AGC Collection; Amon Carter to Stephen Early, June 5, 1943, Box 61, 1943 File, AGC Collection.

night was a blow to Nenetta: "You know full well," she complained, "he never took me to such places and was always too tired to get dressed for me."<sup>265</sup>

Nenetta claimed she still had feelings for Amon but disagreed with her daughter's belief that Amon wanted her back. She told Ruth, "You seemed to think your daddy was so hurt and still in love with me, and now you know differently," thanks to the new woman. Plus, she had, "sent him a box of ties and lovely argyle socks . . . just to let him know how I felt, but he has never acknowledged them." Meanwhile, in an effort to assuage her hurt feelings, she took up with a gentleman named Eddie, much to her daughter's chagrin. An angry Amon forbade his daughter to be seen with Nenetta and Eddie, a fact that only stoked Nenetta's resentment toward her ex-husband. In a rage, she vented to Katrine Deakins, Amon's secretary, "I think he has a hell of a nerve to ask her not be seen with me and a nice man." Matters took a turn for the worse the next week when he was witnessed in New York at the Stork Club, "with a cheap Mexican tramp he picked up in Paris." Even gossip columnist Walter Winchell wrote of the sighting in his "On Broadway" column, noting that Carter was seen in the club with "somebody newer, somebody truer, etc." That same week, Nenetta had lunch with a large group, one of whom, without knowing Nenetta was Amon's ex-wife, mourned that, "It was a crime that Amon could not quit his tomcatting around as he had been doing for years and he guessed his wife must have found him out and left him." A wounded

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<sup>265</sup> Nenetta Carter to Ruth Carter, Apr. 21, 1941, Box 46, Ruth Carter 1941 File, AGC Collection.

Nenetta got up and left the table. In her eyes, it only confirmed that he was, “openly doing now what he has been doing on the sly all along.”<sup>266</sup>

Understandably, Ruth was torn apart by the acrimony she witnessed through her mother’s letters. In an attempt to get Ruth to “see my side,” Nenetta wrote her a detailed letter about Amon’s new girlfriend, a dancer and, in her eyes, “a cheap little tart.” “With so many decent ones to go with,” she sighed, “it breaks my heart,” that he was with a lowly dancer. An exasperated Ruth wrote Katrine that, “I am just getting sick and tired of them. I think I shall tell Dad and Mother both that I don’t want to hear any more about anything.” Regarding the allegations about her dad’s past and present womanizing, she claimed, “I don’t know what to believe. But I know Daddy would never do anything disrespectful.” Either way, her mother’s statements did little to loosen the bond between father and daughter, and Ruth was “mad as a wet hen at her accusations.” The tension between Nenetta and Ruth continued until Amon Jr. was captured in North Africa in 1943.<sup>267</sup>

Sadly, Carter’s war successes were marred by the capture of Amon Jr. by the Germans in the North African campaign in 1943. After graduating from Culver Military Academy in 1938, Amon Jr. attended the University of Texas. His military interests gained at Culver influenced him to maintain ties with the Army and upon turning twenty-one, he was granted a commission as a second lieutenant. As the nation prepared its defenses, Amon Jr. was called to active duty in July 1941 as a lieutenant in the First Armored Division at Fort Knox. After the United States entered the war after the

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid.; Nenetta Carter to Katrine Deakins, Apr. 26, 1941, Box 46, Ruth Carter 1941 File, AGC Collection.

<sup>267</sup> Nenetta Carter to Ruth Carter, Apr. 26, 1941; Ruth Carter to Mrs. Carl Deakins, Apr. 27, 1941, Box 46, Ruth Carter 1941 File, AGC Collection.

Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, his unit was shipped to Northern Ireland where it remained until the American invasion of North Africa. His military service caused his already patriotic father to take an even more intense interest in public support for the troops. When the Associated Press referred to American troops in North Africa as “green” after being dealt defeats by German forces at Kasserine Pass, Carter took offense. Partially motivated by his sense of patriotism, but mainly by Amon Jr. serving in the First Armored Division, he wrote a letter to Kent Cooper, general manager for the Associate Press, claiming that “the American boys are not lacking in guts or patriotism.” Noting his son was currently serving in North Africa, he closed, “I feel somewhat resentful in having these boys continually referred to as “green troops” and I am rather confident they do not appreciate it themselves.”<sup>268</sup>

An artillery officer in an armored division, Amon Jr. went missing on February 14 near Faid Pass, Tunisia. He spent nine days hiding behind German lines before he was “knocked unconscious by the Arabs, robbed of his cameras, six shooter, his watch, money, and all of his clothes and turned over to the Germans. The Germans then transported him to a prison in Capua, Italy by a Junkers 52 transport plane in a trip that nearly ended in his death as American fighter planes attacked his formation. Conditions on the ground in Italy were no better. “It was there,” newspapers reported, “the Italians vented their spite on the American prisoners.” Amon Jr. remembered, “They spat in us and threw rocks at us. It was the worst treatment we had from anybody.” He was then

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<sup>268</sup> Amon Carter to Kent Cooper, Feb. 22, 1943, Box 36, 1943 File, AGC Collection; Dallas Morning News, Mar. 12, 1945.

taken to Germany and finally to Poland, where he spent eighteen months at a German prison camp for officers, *Oflag* LXIV near the town of Schubin.<sup>269</sup>

For some time after his capture, his whereabouts were unknown and he was reported as missing. As word spread of Amon Jr.'s disappearance, his father found himself deluged with telegrams and letters from friends and associates nationwide praying and hoping for his son's survival. "A thousand girls and boys a thousand wishes that you may soon hear that Amon Jr. is safe and well," students at Amon Carter Riverside High School in Fort Worth wired. J.C. Penney wrote, "I scarcely know how to write to you for it is difficult to know what to say to a man whose son has been reported as missing." The indomitable J. Edgar Hoover wrote that he "read with deep emotion the newspaper clipping concerning Amon." John Cowles of the Lend-Lease Administration attempted to soothe Carter's fears by reporting that a friend "told me he believed that nine out of the ten American soldiers who were reported as missing in action [in North Africa] had probably been captured, and that it would later be reported that they were all right." Full of hope for his friend, he closed: "when Rommel is destroyed Amon will be released from a Tunis prison camp in good health." In an egregious error, Ickes wired Carter, "report has reached me that your son has been lost in action." The rest of the telegram was replete with references to his death, with one line mentioning that "it was his privilege to die for his country." Carter's response is unknown but receiving such a statement from someone as prominent as Ickes must have been a temporary blow to his already fragile state. Fortunately, correspondence from other people like Sam Rayburn and President Roosevelt countered Ickes'

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<sup>269</sup> Dallas Morning News, May 6, 1945.

comments about Jr.'s death and offered sincere hopes about his safety. As Carter mourned the possible loss of his son and worried about his safety, he could at least rely on the support of his vast national network of friends and acquaintances.<sup>270</sup>

The situation eased for Carter in April when he received word that his son was not dead but had been taken to Poland where he was now in a prisoner of war camp. For the next two years, father and son kept up a flurry of communication. Letters from Carter to his son were full of information about life back home and updates on friends, family, and colleagues. Amon Jr., desperate for some semblance of comfort and ease in his barracks, constantly requested candy, cigars and blankets, while also notifying his father of recent Texas arrivals to the camp in order for him to publish their names in the newspaper. All the while, Carter remained hopeful that the war would end soon, knowing that its end would mean reunion with his son. Never a devout man, he nevertheless received spiritual encouragement from chaplains and pastors urging him to rely on his faith to see himself through these dark days.

Always looking to exploit his Washington connections, Carter asked Connally in 1944 to add his support to legislation that called for the promotion of captured officers. He reasoned that the officers had suffered such great hardships at the hands of the Germans that they should get automatic promotions. Carter stressed that he was not doing this solely because of his son, but because he wanted the officers rewarded for their perseverance. In an attempt to make this an issue Connally would be willing to support, Carter added that as of May 1944, 10 percent of the American officers in the German prison-camp *Oflag* LXIV were Texans. Connally contacted Secretary of War

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<sup>270</sup> Dallas Morning News, Apr. 15, 1943.



Henry Stimson regarding the issue, but Stimson refused to support the idea, observing that whatever the hardships the officers endured, “none of those circumstances can be justified as the basis for promotion under sound military policy.”<sup>271</sup>

The tension of Amon and Nenetta’s recent divorce having worn off, the family found common ground with Amon’s capture. In January 1945, a flustered Nenetta wrote Amon about a tip she had received from someone she wished to remain anonymous, warning her that she has been recently investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). She was warned to carefully monitor her “mail, telegrams, and phone conversations regarding news from, of and by Amon Jr.” Though she had not gone to Amon for advice in “nearly four years,” she begged Amon to handle [the situation] as you see fit.” Upon receiving the letter, Amon wired J. Edgar Hoover a brief note from his New York hotel: “Will you please have one of your top men call on me here at the Ritz-Carlton at his convenience?” How the resulting conversation between Carter and the FBI unfolded is unknown; fortunately, the family did not have long to worry about Amon Jr.’s well-being as Germany neared collapse.<sup>272</sup>

On February 2, Carter received word from Connally that a camp near Stettin where his son was being held was moved further into Germany as the Red Army advanced on its final offensive. Finally, Amon Jr.’s liberation appeared imminent. As Germany teetered on the brink of collapse, the opportunity soon arose to be reunified with his son. In early 1945, as American and British forces began encountering German camps such as Buchenwald and Dachau, General Dwight D. Eisenhower requested that

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<sup>271</sup> Amon Carter to Connally, Aug. 16, 1944, Box 12, File 13, AGC Collection.

<sup>272</sup> Mrs. Burton Carter to Amon Carter, Jan. 7, 1945; Amon Carter to J. Edgar Hoover, Jan. 12, 1945, Box 36, 1945 File, AGC Collection.

a number of American newspaper publishers be sent to survey the camps in order to enforce upon the public the magnitude of German crimes as well as to dispense with any notions that reports of German atrocities were merely Allied propaganda. Carter was asked to accompany seventeen other publishers to Europe, where they encountered horrific scenes of emaciated prisoners and piles of dead bodies. The photos that were taken of the press tour show the publishers repulsed and, in Carter's case, seemingly sickened at the images. Amid the repulsive setting of the camps, he learned some inspiring news: his son had been liberated by the Soviets. One liberated American prisoner reported that "Carter was in charge of distributing Red Cross parcels and when I saw him last Tuesday he was in good shape and was staying in the Luckenwalde camp in compliance with the senior American officer's order that prisoners stay there until arrangements are made for them."<sup>273</sup>

While Carter camped with the 83<sup>rd</sup> Division along the Elbe River in Germany, a special patrol was sent to acquire his son. On May 5, father and son saw one another for the first time in over two years as Amon Jr. "walked up behind his father and said quietly, 'Here I am dad.'" The two embraced for some time, both attempting to hide their emotion from the gathering press and military men. Amon Jr. was adamant that his fellow prisoners be sent for as well. "We've got to go back and get those other fellows," he implored of the officers present. Carter could not have been happier as 'Cowboy' as he called his son, was back home and ready to take the helm of his father's empire in the near future.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Dallas Morning News, Feb. 3, 1945, May 3, 1945.

<sup>274</sup> Dallas Morning News, May 6, 1945.

Joyous as he was, Carter could not shake his bitter feelings toward Germany. Already hawkish in his approach to the war, his experiences of having a son spend two years in German camps as well as witnessing the brutality of Dachau and Buchenwald brought him new beliefs about America's role in the world. Travelling through Germany's prisoner of war and "political atrocity" camps shaped his views both about how Germany should be treated after the war and how the United States should face the complexities of the post-war world. Like many of the publishers who travelled with him to Germany in 1945, he strongly believed that Germany should be harshly punished for its crimes and believed the United States should use its power to prevent similar events from ever happening again. Upon arriving back in Fort Worth, he wrote at length of his feelings toward Germany. Never one to keep his thoughts to himself, he exploded with anger. "We found the attitude of the Germans still arrogant, and they do not seem to feel that they have lost the war." Well aware that many Americans believed that "Hitler and his gang of cutthroats were solely responsible for the war or atrocities," Carter fumed, "I am confident that the German people knew what was going on. They were a party to it. They were the beneficiaries of the loot drained from occupied countries; of thousands of slave laborers." He declared that "national sterilization would not be too severe," but recognizing the implausibility of this path, suggested the best way to prevent such actions again would be for the United States to "have an Army, Navy, and Air Corps of such size and quality that no other nation would have the nerve even to think of starting another war."<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Amon Carter, memo, n.d., Box 37, 1945 File, AGC Collection.

Such words, strong as they were, were not unexpected from a man of his personality. A proponent of preparedness before America's entry into the war, it made sense for him to support the concept that would later be termed "peace through strength." In his words, "If America keeps its powder dry, keeps itself ready for all emergencies, it will be the best preventive of war we can have." As the United States found itself faced, not with the specter of a resurgent Germany, but with the increasingly menacing Soviet Union on the rise, Carter continued to advocate for a strong defense policy. Meanwhile, on the home front, the loss and reunion of the Carter family with Amon Jr. reaped great benefits for individuals and institutions in need. In 1943, Nenetta, "kneeling before the altar of the Blessed Mother at St. Patrick's Cathedral . . . made this promise: 'If God will give me back my son, I will spend the rest of my life trying to help others.'" The result was the Amon G. Carter Foundation.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> McAdams, "Mudholes, Fairy Godmothers, and Choir Bells," 95.

## CHAPTER 8

### “ONE OF THE GREAT MOVING FORCES OF OUR TIME”: THE FINAL DECADE OF AMON CARTER, 1945-55

Carter's twilight years reveal a man comfortable with his status as a nationally recognized booster, yet still retaining the fiery drive to promote his city and region that propelled him from his humble beginnings. An incredibly wealthy man, he established a philanthropic foundation with an initial endowment of over \$8 million and was often involved in the minutiae of his charitable endeavors. He remained politically active as he sought to navigate the changes in the post-war political and economic landscape. Carter maintained the relationship he had cultivated with Lyndon Johnson since 1941, railed against Harry Truman for his stance on the Tideland oil controversy, and vocally supported Dwight D. Eisenhower in his 1952 presidential run. But, toward the end of his life, he suffered a humiliating political defeat at the hands of a young Jim Wright. His boosterish activities, which involved petitioning figures and organizations external to Fort Worth and Texas, did not wane as he continued to lobby for support for canalization of the Trinity River and succeeded in persuading General Motors to build a plant in Tarrant County. Finally, he seemingly achieved domestic peace with a third marriage, this time to Minnie Meacham Smith, all while continuing the friendly relationship he had built with Nenetta. Unfortunately, a series of heart attacks in beginning in 1953 marred his usual frenetic activity and the last years of his life were spent combating his failing health.

Carter's 1937 discovery in the Wasson Oil Field shifted his philanthropic efforts toward a more organized approach. Access to millions of dollars enabled him to quit borrowing money or relying on his newspaper to support his charitable endeavors. Some of his first donations went to a summer camp for a local Boy Scout troop, the purchase of a light system for Amon Carter Riverside High School (a Fort Worth school named after him during the 1930s), and air conditioning for polio patients at John Peter Smith Hospital. Even though Carter was able to give larger gifts more frequently, it was not until 1945 that he formally organized his philanthropy with the founding of the Amon G. Carter Foundation. Carter, along with his wife Nenetta, formed the Foundation on April 7, 1945 with an original endowment of over \$8,000,000. Two years later, the Foundations assets were expanded by the sale of his holdings on the Wasson Oil Field in West Texas to Shell Oil Company. The purpose of this foundation was to support "benevolent, charitable, educational, or missionary undertakings." The Foundation was formed as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization originally housed in the Star-Telegram building. According to Foundations of Texan Philanthropy author Mary Kelley, Carter had numerous reasons for creating a foundation for "large-scale, organized philanthropy after more than thirty years of individual giving". As cliché as it may appear, he loved his community and wanted to promote its interests whenever possible. By forming a philanthropic foundation, he could perpetually promote Fort Worth's well-being while simultaneously ensuring a strong legacy for himself.<sup>277</sup>

For this reason, the Carter Foundation's grants were restricted to Texas with a focus on the Fort Worth region. It was also good business for the generous Carter to

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<sup>277</sup> Kelley, Foundations of Texan Philanthropy, 61-63; "Shell Purchases Amon G. Carter Wasson Properties", The Pecten, September 1947.

place much of his money in a sheltered foundation where no inheritance taxes could reach it, and in this way he was like other wealthy businessmen who wished to protect their finances. He also believed that it was his duty to share the wealth that he accrued in his lifetime, and by forming the Carter Foundation he would be able to continue his giving from the grave. In an undated, untitled memo that gives some details as to how Carter wanted some of his foundation's funds to be directed, he specified not only some preferred recipients but also how much was to be given to them. He directed that money be given to Texas Christian University for a science building that could cost up to one million dollars, a new building for the Lena Pope Home (a Fort Worth home for homeless and abandoned children) that was expected to cost nearly \$500,000, and a nurses home at Fort Worth St. Joseph's Hospital costing up to \$250,000. Fortunately, Carter donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to these institutions before his death (and apparently after the memo was written).<sup>278</sup>

Now that Carter had money available to grant to grateful recipients, he seemed to throw himself into giving with greater enthusiasm. Proving that he was no absentee philanthropist, he constantly communicated with the beneficiaries. One of his favorite charitable targets with which he maintained a steady correspondence was the Lena Pope Home. Pope had opened a children's home in 1930 and had often received monetary assistance from Carter. Before becoming a wealthy man, Carter often gave gifts to the children at the Home at Christmas. With the creation of the Carter

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<sup>278</sup> Untitled Document, n.d., Box 41, File 9, AGC Collection.

Foundation, now he was able to become more involved with the home and served on the advisory board.<sup>279</sup>

In 1945, Carter and the Lena Pope Home board of directors began working to obtain land in the Arlington Heights neighborhood for the expansion of the facility. Buying the appropriate plots of land took several years of negotiations with the neighborhood and the Fort Worth City Zoning Ordinance especially since eight blocks of land to be purchased belonged to hundreds of owners. By 1950, construction on the Home's new nursery known as "Babyland" was under way. Carter consistently gave to the Lena Pope Home building fund beginning in 1944 (in 1944, the Star Telegram had given ten thousand dollars) and by 1949 had donated over fifty thousand dollars. In April of 1950, Carter wrote Pope that he would like to contribute twenty-five thousand dollars more to the building fund which would cover the costs of the sixty acres of land already purchased for the expansion.<sup>280</sup>

Understandably, Lena Pope was very grateful for Carter's purchase of the land, especially since it apparently was somewhat unexpected. She wrote, "My first impulse was to tell the world about it through the newspapers. Mr. Leonard advised against this-said every agency in Ft. Worth, even broadened it into Texas, would be seeking a conference with you-and 'asking'. Hence I refrained." This strikes at the heart of much of Carter's philanthropy, especially to Pope. The public often remained unaware that he was so involved since his own newspaper rarely covered these examples of generosity.

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<sup>279</sup> Bette Conn, "Lena Pope", New Handbook of Texas 5, 269; Lena Pope to Amon Carter, Jan. 12, 1947, Box 41, File 9, AGC Collection.

<sup>280</sup> W.A. Hawkins and Lem Billingsley to Board of Directors, Sept. 12, 1945 Box 138, File 7; Amon G. Carter to W.O. Jones, Aug. 20, 1946, Box 138, File 7, AGC Collection; Amon Carter to Pope, Apr. 16, 1950, Box 138, File 9, AGC Collection.



Until his 1955 death, Carter continued to help in small ways such as purchasing beds, mattresses, and sheets for the nursery when a small fire destroyed the existing bedding.<sup>281</sup>

Another example of Carter's growing influence within the field of charitable giving came in 1949 when, on May 17, the Trinity River flooded its banks and submerged a tenth of Fort Worth. Thousands of citizens were left homeless, ten people lost their lives, and damage estimates reached twenty-five million dollars. The Red Cross rushed to give aid and assist in the recovery from this devastating flood. In the middle of the crisis, Carter immediately took the lead in beginning a fundraising campaign to counter the flood damage. He gave ten thousand dollars to the fund and then used his newspaper to issue calls for help from the business community and Fort Worth residents.<sup>282</sup>

As money poured into the relief fund's coffers, so did appeals for assistance. Memos crossed Carter's desk, notifying him of the hundreds of people who were in need. For a variety of reasons, the Red Cross was unable to assist some of the families. Two intriguing cases involve the issue of race in the New South. Ella Patterson and Bea Steel, an African-American mother and daughter, both appealed to Carter and the Star-Telegram for relief after being turned down by the Red Cross. Most

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<sup>281</sup> Pope to Amon Carter, Apr. 29, 1950, Box 138, File 9; Katrine Deakins to W.K. Stripling, Dec. 29, 1950, Box 138, File 9; Katrine Deakins to Otto Monnig, Dec. 29, 1950, Box 138, File 9, AGC Collection; Deakins to Pope, Jan. 3, 1951, Box 138, File 10, AGC Collection; Mr. Leonard refers to Marvin Leonard, the owner of Leonard's Department Store in downtown Fort Worth. He was a prominent member of the Fort Worth business community and sat on the advisory board of the Lena Pope Home. For more information, see Victoria and Walter Buenger, Texas Merchant: Marvin Leonard and Fort Worth (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998).

<sup>282</sup> Fort Worth Star Telegram, May 17 and 18, 1949.

of Patterson's furniture and one recently built room were washed away by the flood. The Red Cross (reportedly represented by a woman from Wisconsin) told the 70-year-old Patterson "that her two daughters could take care of her" and gave her fifteen dollars. Steel, Ella's daughter, lived in a different location but suffered heavy damage to her house as well. She complained that the Red Cross was "helping many people . . . who never have and never will work a day in their lives and lost nothing in the flood." While Carter was in no way an advocate for racial equality and always functioned within the Jim Crow system, he had a history of making small contributions to the black community. The two women must have been aware of this and of his role as a kind of grandfather to the city and believed that he would give them fairer treatment than a Wisconsin woman representing the Red Cross. They, along with many other citizens both black and white, received help from the Star Telegram Relief Fund.<sup>283</sup>

The Flood Relief Fund was successful in raising money for the hundreds of people who were in dire need of assistance. Texaco donated five thousand dollars after C.B. Williams, division manager of Texaco's West Texas Division of the Producing Department, conversed with Carter by telephone. Convair, one of the city's largest employers, donated fifteen thousand dollars to the fund. Hundreds of citizens, from all classes of Fort Worth society, heeded Carter's calls for donations. Soon, Carter and the Star Telegram had raised over \$335,000 and disbursed the funds to hundreds of families and businesses, repaired houses, and bought school books, clothes, bedding, and furniture for those who had applied for aid. By August 1949, the Red Cross had committed nearly \$1.7 million in aid as well, meaning that Fort Worth was soon on its

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<sup>283</sup> Memo, n.d., Box 80, File 40, AGC Collection.

way to recovery. Carter recognized the great help the organization provided and hosted a large party at his famed Shady Oak Ranch for many of the workers. The chairman of the Fort Worth Chapter of the Red Cross commended him for “the invaluable aid rendered by the Star Telegram during the emergency period of the flood and throughout the many weeks of rehabilitation.” Though the Red Cross with its national organization was able to give more assistance than the Relief Fund, Carter had proven that he was not going to rely on external help to bring the city through this natural disaster. His attitude is best expressed in a letter he sent to a Dallas banker: “Fort Worth made no appeal at any time for outside aid as the result of the flood. It felt that it was a responsibility of its own citizenship.”<sup>284</sup>

One of Carter’s targets for giving was the medical field. Carter held an interest in medical practice for quite some time. In some ways, it was tied into his civic boosterism as evidenced by his pressing for a United States Narcotics Hospital in Fort Worth during the Great Depression. He also had a long fascination with osteopathic medicine and used the editorial page of the Star-Telegram to support legislation that allowed greater freedom for osteopaths. Once Carter became a wealthy man and formed the Amon Carter Foundation, he was able to do more than use his newspaper to support the medical causes to which he was devoted. Carter recognized that Fort Worth needed a better healthcare system if the city was going to continue to expand, thus he joined the Greater Fort Worth Hospital Fund as honorary president in June 1951. According to a pamphlet distributed by the Fund, the purpose of this non-profit organization was to

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<sup>284</sup> C.B. Williams to Amon Carter, May 30, 1949; Disbursement of Flood Funds, n.d.; W.L. Stewart to Amon Carter, August 16, 1949; Amon Carter to Fred Florence, June 10, 1949, Box 80, File 40, AGC Collection.

“combine the needs of all our non-profit voluntary hospitals into a balanced plan and thus more economically finance at one time the construction of sufficient hospital facilities to meet more fully our total pressing needs.” The organization would “conduct the federated appeal, collect the funds, and distribute them to the hospitals in accordance with their individual expansion programs within the master plan.” The financial goal was to raise nearly four million dollars for five Fort Worth hospitals: All Saints, W.J. Cook Children’s Hospital, Fort Worth Osteopathic Hospital, Harris Hospital, and St. Joseph’s Hospital.<sup>285</sup>

Due to his age, Carter only served as honorary president, and his participation, while wholehearted, was not quite as vigorous as earlier campaigns. Much of Carter’s support was financial as denoted by his gift of \$300,000 to the fund. Fellow Fort Worth philanthropist and oilman Sid Richardson donated the same amount. As the campaign neared its end in 1953, Carter did exert a bit more effort into the campaign in order to reach the expressed financial goal. A good example of Carter’s ability to exert pressure is given in a letter to G.J. Coffey, president of the Chicago Pneumatic Tool Company. The company had recently opened a location in Fort Worth and had committed to giving to the Hospital Fund, but Carter believed that its pledge of \$1,000 over the course of five years was too little. He wrote Coffey a letter designed to shame him into giving more. Carter told him that other companies were contributing large amounts to the fund and to press the point home, sent him a list titled “Out of Town Owned or Controlled Firms who Have Subscribed to the Fund.” Whether or not Carter was successful in

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<sup>285</sup> “The Challenge to Fort Worth”, n.d., Box 95, File 6, AGC Collection; St. Joseph’s Hospital would also be one of the direct recipients of Carter’s generosity as this paper will soon show.

getting Coffey to give more money was not discovered, but the overall success of the campaign by 1954 seems to indicate that these types of tactics must have been a boon to the campaign.<sup>286</sup>

Of course, these are not the only instances of Carter's generosity, but they are some of the most prominent. It is clear that he did not limit himself to one area but gave money to what he believed were pressing needs at the time. When France and Italy struggled to feed themselves in 1947, Carter donated six thousand 100-pound bags of flour (from Fort Worth of course). He consistently gave money to the Presbyterian churches in Fort Worth and gave \$25,000 to improve Como Park, a park in an African-American neighborhood in Fort Worth. The question remains: what do the Flood Relief Fund, the Good Fellows Fund or any of Carter's philanthropic activities tell us about his philosophy of philanthropy in his attempt to modernize Fort Worth? While Carter is not always explicit in his correspondence about his motivation in giving, one must look at his whole body of work. His preeminent goal was to promote the interests not only of himself but also of the city of Fort Worth. Throughout his writing, it is clear that he wanted Fort Worth to continue growing and become a major center of business and industry. As has been demonstrated, this was balanced by a giving spirit that was not always publicly demonstrated. It could be argued that few persons have ever held the level of devotion to a city like Carter held for Fort Worth; philanthropy meshed easily with this commitment, and as he wrote to a Dallas banker, "Fort Worth should take care

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<sup>286</sup> "Some Larger Contributions to Date," No date; Amon Carter and Sid Richardson to Fort Worth Greater Hospital Fund, March 5, 1952, Box 95, File 6, AGC Collection; Amon Carter to G.J. Coffey, Dec. 30, 1953, Box 95, File 7, AGC Collection.

of its own.” As national as his outlook could be, Carter’s goal was always Fort Worth progress.<sup>287</sup>

Of course, Carter was always ready to wield what national influence he had, and a great example of this in his later years involved General Motors. Carter began luring General Motors to Fort Worth in 1935 in the middle of his campaign to canalize the Trinity River and secure PWA funding for Fort Worth. From time to time, Carter discussed with William Knudsen, the executive Vice-President of General Motors, the possibilities of reopening a defunct Chevrolet plant on Camp Bowie Boulevard in West Fort Worth. Coincidentally, Carter mentioned, Camp Bowie became Bankhead Highway, Fort Worth’s link to West Texas, El Paso, and California. Dallas had its benefits with its perceived eastward oriented culture, but Fort Worth had access to the markets of West Texas and beyond.<sup>288</sup>

The old Chevrolet plant was mostly vacant except for a portion that Frigidaire rented as a distribution center. Carter proposed two methods for General Motors to maximize their benefits from the building. General Motors could either use it as an assembly plant or as a distribution center. The City of Fort Worth recently had presented the latter option to General Motors but the corporation declined, declaring that such a move would trigger “unfavorable sentiment on the part of the citizenship of Dallas.” Carter wrote, “This feature...was greatly exaggerated.” A move from Dallas would actually be beneficial for General Motors and Carter pointed to the Frigidaire Corporation as evidence. Frigidaire had been using the Fort Worth location for

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<sup>287</sup> Kelley, Foundations of Texan Philanthropy, 61; W.P. Bomer to Amon Carter, Nov. 18, 1947, Box 89, File 22, AGC Collection; Amon Carter to Florence, June 10, 1949, Box 80, File 40, AGC Collection.

<sup>288</sup> Amon Carter to Knudsen, Feb. 15, 1935, Box 18, File 23, AGC Collection.

seventeen years, the most recent two as the distribution headquarters for Northern Arkansas, North Texas, and Eastern New Mexico.<sup>289</sup>

In case Knudsen and General Motors were concerned about freight rates, Carter sought to diminish whatever fears they might have had. He cited a recent study by the Traffic Department of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce showing an advantage for Fort Worth in rates to twice as many points when compared to San Antonio, Dallas, and Houston. Because Fort Worth was the “railroad and transportation center of the Southwest,” the city could afford to be in this advantageous system. In case Knudsen was unaware of the transportation statistics, Carter provided them for him. Fort Worth had nine trunk line railroads, nineteen rail outlets, and twenty-five motor freight lines. In addition to this, American Airlines had recently moved its Southwestern headquarters to Fort Worth from Dallas. Also, Tarrant County, of which Fort Worth was the county seat, had a modern highway system that was well connected to nearby federal highways. From Carter’s point of view, it was clearly beneficial for General Motors to reopen in Fort Worth, especially from a transportation perspective.<sup>290</sup>

As the owner of Carter Publications, Carter knew what appealed to large corporations when considering a move. Cutting costs was appealing, but many corporations were also interested in the quality of life in the new location. Carter loved enhancing Fort Worth’s reputation and he took advantage of a long letter to continue this practice. Fort Worth had a burgeoning population, was an oil center, had a large meatpacking presence, and a business friendly, businessman run city-government. In

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

addition to these physical positives, Fort Worth was a healthful city with one of the lowest death rates among Texas cities.<sup>291</sup>

Carter then moved to items directly related to General Motors by writing that a move to Fort Worth would not affect General Motors' sales. He maintained that people bought General Motors because of the name, not because they were located close by. Carter cited a recent traffic count conducted by Fort Worth near the proposed location, pointing out that nearly twenty thousand cars had passed in the space of one day, with probably double that number of people in the automobiles. A General Motors presence would be great advertising for the company and would also be a central location for car dealers. Having presented Knudsen with an apparently invincible argument, Carter asked him if he was

Going to continue carrying the meal in one end of the sack and the rock in the other merely because it has been a habit in the past? Or, will you go with the tide and move to Fort Worth, thereby taking advantage of the large investment you have here and, at the same time, be closer to the territory in Texas which is showing the greatest growth and development?"<sup>292</sup>

Having thrown down the gauntlet, Carter waited for a response. Unfortunately for Carter and Fort Worth, General Motors did not feel a pressing need to uproot their headquarters in Dallas and move to Fort Worth. This did not stop Carter from continuously corresponding with General Motors employees. The next year, 1936, witnessed Carter scrambling for funds to pay for Fort Worth's Frontier Centennial, the Carter-driven response to the Texas Centennial in Dallas. In April of the same year, Carter wrote Knudson again-and R. H. Grant, general sales manager for General Motors-about possibly advertising and setting up an exhibit at the Frontier Centennial. If

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.



General Motors was concerned that the Frontier Centennial was to compete with Dallas, Carter assured them that it was not. This Centennial celebration was entertainment only with no educational or scientific exhibits.<sup>293</sup>

Carter knew that General Motors had already committed to the Texas Centennial in Dallas, and he felt it would only be fair for General Motors to share some of their wealth with Fort Worth. Since the spirit and theme of the Frontier Centennial was the pioneer spirit that conquered the West, Carter believed that it would be highly appropriate for the pioneering company of General Motors to play some part in the proceedings. He proposed that General Motors construct their own building, provide their own exhibits, and put on whatever entertainment they saw fit. Whatever the cost of the exhibit was, General Motors would profit from being present at the Centennial.<sup>294</sup>

Carter proposed to furnish the land for the building if General Motors purchased \$50,000 in 4% bonds that the City of Fort Worth was selling. Their main expense would be the construction and entertainment costs. The possibility of the bonds not being paid was slim because it was assumed that Casa Manana, the Billy Rose-produced spectacle that was at the heart of the Frontier Centennial, would pay for the whole \$750,000 in bonds. Carter was confident that attendance would be sufficient to cover everyone's costs; the Dallas show was estimated to attract over ten million people and Fort Worth could expect to get at least half of those people. Finally, Carter told of one last advantage for General Motors. As there would few if any exhibits to compete with, the General Motors exhibit would easily become the must-see building.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Amon Carter to R.H. Grant, Apr. 13, 1936, Box 18, File 23a, AGC Collection.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

General Motors declined to be involved in the Frontier Centennial to the extent that Carter had hoped. Grant believed that there would be too much overlap between the Fort Worth and Dallas celebrations and the amount of money General Motors would have to spend would be too extravagant. However, General Motors did agree to be a major sponsor of the Centennial and also sponsored radio broadcasts of various events at the celebration. Businessman that he was, Carter accepted this decision by General Motors and was happy to have them agree to sponsor a small part of the festivities. However, one wonders whether or not Carter believed that his proposal was feasible. Clearly he must have known what General Motors's response would be considering their present position in Dallas. It is possible that Carter never expected General Motors to accept his whole proposition but hoped to get some smaller amount from them. If that was the case, he was very successful.<sup>296</sup>

Carter neglected to woo General Motors for the next nine years as he pursued other interests that he deemed more important. His quest to canalize the Trinity River increasingly took his time, as did his involvement with the movement to create a national park in the Big Bend region of West Texas. When war erupted in Europe in 1939 and the United States began providing arms to Great Britain, Carter took advantage of the mobilization of the American economy by persuading Consolidate Aircraft to build a plant in Fort Worth. No sooner was this accomplished that the Germans in North Africa captured his son, temporarily distracting him from other pursuits. Once the initial shock of the news wore off, Carter resumed his normal activities of bringing greater economic benefits to Fort Worth.

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<sup>296</sup> Grant to Amon Carter, Apr. 23, 1936; Amon Carter to Grant, Jul. 22, 1936; Grant to Amon Carter, Jul. 23, 1936, Box 18, File 23a, AGC Collection.

In 1944, Carter contacted Alfred Sloan, CEO of General Motors, and John Thomas Smith, Vice-President of General Motors, and renewed his efforts to bring the company back to Fort Worth. His reasoning was that the economic status of Fort Worth had improved considerably in the last nine years. Again he was rebuffed, though General Motors did consider the offer a little more carefully this time. Instead, the company opted to build a plant for Buicks, Oldsmobiles, and Pontiacs in Kansas City. However, General Motors stated that future operations in Fort Worth might be a possibility depending on the growth the Southwest underwent.<sup>297</sup>

Carter restrained himself from pursuing General Motors for an automobile plant for three years. In 1947, Carter wrote Paul Garrett of General Motors about a “railroad friend” who reported that General Motors was looking to build another assembly plant. Whether this was true or if Carter was just seeking a way of bringing the topic up once more is open for debate, but the method worked. Carter told Garrett that Sloan had offered to build a plant in Fort Worth if freight rates would allow General Motors to ship as cheaply from Fort Worth as they could from St. Louis or Atlanta. Carter promised that if General Motors built a factory in Fort Worth, the city would arrange for friendlier freight rates.<sup>298</sup>

It would be another three years before General Motors made any more overtures to Fort Worth. Apparently Carter’s attempt at bringing rumors to life had failed. However, by 1950, General Motors was serious about opening a plant in Fort Worth and Carter began discussions with local railroads about local freight rates which were the

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<sup>297</sup> Amon Carter to Smith, Jun. 26, 1944; C.E. Wilson, to Amon Carter, Oct. 19, 1944, Box 18, File 24, AGC Collection.

<sup>298</sup> Amon Carter to Garrett, Apr. 15, 1947, Box 18, File 24, AGC Collection.

stumbling block to previous endeavors to bring General Motors to the city. D.V. Fraser, president of Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad Company, wrote Carter concerning a conversation regarding General Motors they had at a prior banquet. Fraser informed Carter that the railroad was offering rates at a price that would make Fort Worth an attractive site for General Motors. Not only that, but Fraser promised Carter that he would “help fulfill your ambition to locate the General Motors plant in Fort Worth.” F.G. Gurley, president of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway System, reported to Carter that he was discussing freight rates with the proper people in his company. He added that his was the last major railway upon which General Motors had failed to place a plant. This would make the negotiations with General Motors much easier as they would want to solidify their position by being located on all major American railways.<sup>299</sup>

Armed with these affirmations of railway assistance, Carter contacted Sloan one more time. Though he had invited General Motors twice before, Carter believed that this invitation would not slip by unheeded. His reasoning was Fort Worth had grown considerably since his last push for a General Motors plant. Automobile registration in the Southwest region was booming, Fort Worth’s labor force was increasing, and there were over five times as many manufacturing employees as there were in 1940. More importantly, Carter claimed there were over 200,000 General Motors cars sold in the Fort Worth area in 1949. In addition to these facts, Carter presented Fort Worth as a

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<sup>299</sup> D.V. Fraser to Amon Carter, Aug. 14, 1950; F.G. Gurley to Amon Carter, Sept. 11, 1950, Box 18, File 26, AGC Collection.

large city with the heart of a small town always ready to “run out the welcome mat for General Motors.”<sup>300</sup>

During the fall of 1950, Carter instructed the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce to draw up a report for General Motors with details about Fort Worth and reasons why it would be a good decision for them to build a plant in Fort Worth. Included in the brief were two suggested locations that were along the Santa Fe Railroad. Carter also asked Gurley, president of Santa Fe Railroad, to contact Charles Wilson, president of General Motors, with positive information regarding Santa Fe and freight rates. In December 1950 Carter along with William Holden, executive vice-president and former mayor of Fort Worth, traveled to Detroit to present the brief to General Motors. After the introduction of this latest report, General Motors began seriously considering the possibility of building a factory in Fort Worth.<sup>301</sup>

Carter continued exerting pressure on General Motors officials, hoping that this would persuade them that Fort Worth was a worthy site for an assembly plant. He was no longer concerned that they use their former property located on Camp Bowie Boulevard because he was now touting a 2,000-acre tract south of Fort Worth that he happened to own. In a token of goodwill, Carter informed Garrett, vice-president of General Motors, that he would be willing to sell the land at cost. However, Carter was

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<sup>300</sup> Amon Carter to Sloan, Nov. 20, 1950, Box 18, File 26, AGC Collection. It must be noted here that Carter’s definition of the Fort Worth region fluctuated. It varied in size from Tarrant County to all of West Texas. Carter conveniently left out his definition here.

<sup>301</sup> Amon Carter to Gurley, Dec. 1, 1950, Box 18, File 26, AGC Collection; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, May 14, 1952.

open to the idea of the factory being located elsewhere, specifically along either the Rock Island Railroad or the Santa Fe Railroad.<sup>302</sup>

After months of investigation and due to pressure from Arlington Mayor Tommy Joe Vandergriff, General Motors purchased a 255 site in Arlington, Texas, halfway between Fort Worth and Dallas. The land was located along US Highway 80, a well-traveled road upon which the plant would have high visibility. Not only was it not located on any land Carter owned, but also it was also located along the Texas and Pacific Railroad Line, which went against Carter's previous suggestions. The site was purchased by the Buick-Oldsmobile-Pontiac Assembly Division, though "future plans for use of the property depend upon availability of materials for construction." Once it was clear that General Motors was moving to Arlington, Carter began decreasing his involvement with the project. In addition to this, his health had been deteriorating and he was spending time in and out of hospitals.<sup>303</sup>

Though Vandergriff succeeded in his efforts to bring General Motors to Arlington, Carter received much of the credit from other city leaders for bringing General Motors to Tarrant County. Holden, as the executive vice-president of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, invited E.C. Klotzburger, the future plant manager with General Motors, to Fort Worth for discussions on the relationship between the city and the corporation. In his letter, Holden praised Carter for his extensive efforts to bring General Motors to the area. Because of his patience and perseverance, 6,000 North Texans would owe their employment to Carter. When ground was broken on May 27, 1952, Carter was

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<sup>302</sup> Amon Carter to Garrett, Jan. 4, 1951, Box 18, File 27, AGC Collection.

<sup>303</sup> Thomas Groehn to Amon Carter, Aug. 2, 1951, Box 18, File 27, AGC Collection.

rewarded with turning the first shovel of dirt, an honor he had performed numerous times at other ceremonies.<sup>304</sup>

An analysis of correspondence between Carter and General Motors officials reveals few if any different methods of approach by Carter. Though no mention of his canal plans appear, it is possible that its proposed benefits entered his mind at some point. General Motors blamed their unwillingness to build in Fort Worth on high freight rates, something Carter was trying to reverse with the Trinity Canal. Though it took sixteen years to be successful, Carter was determined to bring General Motors to Fort Worth. This resolve marked Carter's approach to projects and demonstrates that he was endowed with both a highly optimistic worldview and sheer stubbornness. Both characteristics can be readily seen in other areas, especially in his devotion to developing the Trinity River.

Until 1945, the federal government did little work on the Trinity River. In February 1945, Trinity Improvement Association (TIA) general manager John Fouts saw fit to detail what the government had done regarding the Trinity River. Congress had authorized the Trinity soil and water conservation program, began work on flood control by assisting in the building of lakes, and started reclaiming formerly uncultivated land along the river for agricultural use. Though these were definitely steps in the right direction, Fouts still urged Carter to continue pressuring politicians to begin making the Trinity navigable from Liberty to Fort Worth. By 1948, the Corps of Engineers began work on four reservoirs on the upper Trinity River. Carter's role in persuading the government of the necessity of the lakes earned him the right to preside over a couple

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<sup>304</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, May 14 and 23, 1952.

of the groundbreaking ceremonies. Carter liked nothing more than to add to his silver spade collection from his numerous groundbreaking ceremonies, and to be able to assist in the opening of work that promised to make his dream a reality was to him a worthy reward. At the groundbreaking of Lake Benbrook, Carter described for the crowd the ample benefits that the lake would bring. Imagine, he told them, the “cool cottages...the bathers...the boats...and the black-mouthed bass.” Beyond these recreational advantages, he claimed the lake would prevent flooding in Fort Worth, provide water during drought, and send industrial goods to the Gulf.<sup>305</sup>

At the fourth and final groundbreaking at Garza-Little Elm Reservoir, Carter rejoiced because this was the crowning reservoir for the upper Trinity. Now, he said, soil conservation and flood control could begin in earnest. Floods would no longer endanger cities and towns downstream, and farmers could begin cultivating previously unusable bottomland. Carter noted that in the near future, work was to begin on dredging the lower Trinity from the Houston Ship Channel to Liberty. All that was needed was Congress's approval to begin the canalization of the rest of the Trinity.<sup>306</sup>

Satisfied that the federal government appeared to be committed to the idea of a navigable Trinity River, Carter spent considerable time asking local businessmen to continue giving to the TIA. The sales gift that was honed in the chicken and bread business and the selling of picture frames continued to work as Fort Worth businesses responded positively to Carter's letters. Donating money, he touted, was a “most

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<sup>305</sup> John Fouts to Amon Carter, Feb. 12, 1945; “For Mr. Carter's use at Groundbreaking Ceremony,” n.d., Box 41, File 15, AGC Collection.

<sup>306</sup> “Remarks of Mr. Amon Carter, Chairman, Executive Committee Trinity Improvement Ass'n on the Occasion of the Groundbreaking Ceremonies at Garza-Little Elm Dam Site November 23, 1948,” Box 41, File 16, AGC Collection.



excellent business investment” that the region’s “best citizens” would see as a wise move. Carter updated recipients on the status of the Trinity project, especially noting the millions of dollars the government was spending building reservoirs and working on soil conservation. Donors included national businesses like Coca-Cola, Southwestern Bell, and Gulf Oil. Local businesses like Cox Dry Goods Company, Chickasaw Lumber, and Washer Brothers also contributed to the TIA. Contributions ranged from \$25 to \$1,000, depending on the size of the company and the amount of benefits it might receive from a navigable Trinity.<sup>307</sup>

Carter later noted that an improved Trinity would have probably saved Fort Worth from the devastating effects of the 1949 flood. Though construction on the reservoirs was underway in 1949, they were far from complete, and the flood cost the city millions of dollars in damages and the loss of several lives. In addition to preventing future floods, he argued that the whole improvement program was an “efficient” and “democratic” development program. It was democratic because TIA had worked so long with Congress and finally earned that body’s approval along with several other federal agencies; it was efficient because work was underway conserving the soil and preventing future flooding. These aspects, combined with the government’s imminent work on making the Trinity navigable from Liberty to Fort Worth, made contributing to the TIA a worthy investment from Carter’s perspective. Sadly for Carter, his death came before he witnessed any future work on the Trinity Canal. Even if he had continued living well past the 1950s, it is doubtful that his efforts would have succeeded. The government began to view the project with alarm as millions of dollars were being

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<sup>307</sup> Amon Carter to Glenn Woodson, n.d.; “Contribution received from Fort Worth as of March 15, 1950,” n.d., Box 41, File 17, AGC Collection.

spent with few results. Though the project did not die with Carter, the Trinity Improvement Association lost its most ardent advocate.<sup>308</sup>

It is inevitable that the question will arise as to why this topic, failure that it appears to have been, is worth discussion. What relevance does it have to Carter's achievements if there never was a Trinity Canal? First, though the Canal never became a reality, Carter's work resulted in some benefits for Fort Worth and Texas. The Dallas/Fort Worth region gained several lakes such as Benbrook, Lewisville, and Grapevine to serve as recreational and flood control facilities. Also, a serious soil conservation program was begun in which farmers along the Trinity learned ways to prevent erosion while simultaneously being able to reclaim fertile bottom land. Finally, this project demonstrated the passionate devotion of Carter to his adopted city and to his state. Nowhere in the correspondence of TIA did Carter appear to be chasing visions of grandeur for himself, though he was certainly guilty of perceiving his city as a kind of Valhalla where cowboys and entrepreneurs were glorified.

Franklin D. Roosevelt's death in April 1945 forced Carter to forge relationships with new presidents. The post-war era also witnessed Carter's older Washington-based friends leaving and new personalities emerging. Gone were the days when he could rely on men like Jesse Jones, Morris Sheppard, John Nance Garner, and soon, Tom Connally. Though often at odds with Roosevelt over the more liberal aspects of the New Deal, Carter remained good friends with the president both for the benefits he could gain and his genuine desire for friendship. Without Roosevelt, one might expect Carter to indulge himself in the niceties of life and enjoy his twilight years, but he was

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<sup>308</sup> Carter to Carter, Mar. 3, 1952, Box 41, File 18, AGC Collection; Wayne Gard, "Trinity River Navigation Projects," New Handbook of Texas 6, 570-571.

too endowed with a strong boosterish personality to refrain from further political activity. Loyal Democrat that he was, he attempted to establish a firm friendship with Harry S Truman, but was not able to curry the same favor with him as he was with Roosevelt. His acquaintance with Dwight D. Eisenhower blossomed into friendship during the late 1940s, and by the early 1950s Carter became one of his most outspoken supporters. At the state level, Carter built upon the support he had given to Lyndon B. Johnson in 1941, and ensured that Carter would always have a voice in Washington by providing positive coverage of Johnson in the Star-Telegram during and after his notorious Senate run in 1948.

If Carter expected the Truman administration to cease the liberal trends begun under Roosevelt, he was sorely disappointed and let the president know of his displeasure with the administration's generally pro-labor policies. Initially Carter attempted to ingratiate himself with Truman, going so far as to send the president a Star-Telegram editorial praising his support for streamlining and re-organizing duplicate government departments in the wake of World War II. When Truman appointed Averill Harriman, a former associate of Carter in the early days of American Airlines, as his secretary of commerce, he commended the president for "selecting the right man for the right place at the right time." Carter's early belief that "America is extremely fortunate in having a competent, hard-hitting, square shooter at the helm" was soon replaced by disdain. In response to a United Auto Workers strike at General Motors plants in late 1945, Truman concurred with the union that "a company's earnings is relevant in wage disputes." In a letter to Truman, Carter wholeheartedly disagreed with him on the grounds that this would negatively impact a business's ability to save money or re-invest

the money into the company as workers could claim an increasingly greater share of the profits. "If all profits earned above a meager return to stockholders are paid out in wages and salaries," he argued, "it is a foregone conclusion that all business and industry will suffer, the progress of the nation will be retarded, and even the employees themselves will be injured in the long run." Foreseeing the impending backlash to the Wagner Act that culminated in the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, Carter, who favored the latter, stated, "I do not believe the labor problem will be solved until the Wagner Act is amended so as to make labor and management equally responsible."<sup>309</sup>

Carter opposition to Truman's pro-labor position paled in comparison to his antagonism toward the administration's position on the Tidelands oil issue. The controversy began when, in 1946, Truman vetoed a bill that would have given states ownership of offshore oil resources, and then accelerated when the Supreme Court ruled the next year against California's "claim to ownership of the oil-rich land off its shored from low tide to three leagues." The state of Texas claimed that it was exempt from the ruling due to its special status as having been an independent republic for nearly a decade. During the 1948 presidential election, Truman expressed what many interpreted as support for Texas' claim to the Tidelands, stating during the campaign that "Texas is in a class by itself; it entered the Union by treaty." It became obvious after winning the election that Truman had no intention of recognizing Texas' claim and the United States attorney general filed suit against the state. His actions against Texas'

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<sup>309</sup> Dallas Morning News, Dec. 21, 1945; Amon Carter to Harry S Truman, Sept. 12, 1945, Box 214, 1945 File, AGC Collection; Amon Carter to Truman, n.d., Box 214, 1946 File, AGC Collection; Amon Carter to Truman, Dec. 24, 1945, Box 214, 1945 File, AGC Collection.

position made it clear that this issue would influence Texas' position during the 1952 presidential campaign.<sup>310</sup>

As a conservative Democrat and Texas oilman, Carter firmly believed in Texas' claim to the tidelands and used the Star-Telegram to publicize his stance. The administration's suit against Texas prompted Carter to order a chain of editorials defending Texas, an action repeated in 1952 when Truman vetoed a bill guaranteeing state ownership of the tidelands. Hoping to wield some direct influence on the White House, Carter wrote Truman before the passage of the bill and after his veto arguing like other Texans had that one of his motivations in supporting the bill was his "deep interest in behalf of the school children of Texas, who would be the prime beneficiaries from the legislation." In an appeal to national defense, he argued that federal ownership of the mineral resources in the Tidelands would delay drilling because, "the cost of finding and producing oil in the submerged area is so great that no one can be expected to undertake it while the present cloud of uncertainty remains." He wrote, "This result is one that could be of dire import if the nation should be plunged into a major war in the next few years." In his blunt manner, Truman responded succinctly to both pieces of correspondence, generally summing up his position as follows: "I am sorry to have to tell you the Texas viewpoint is not mine. I think those offshore oil reserves belong to the whole United States and that every State in the Union has an interest in them." Having

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<sup>310</sup> Price Daniel, "Tidelands Controversy," New Handbook of Texas 6, 490-492; Campbell, Gone to Texas, 414.

taken such a stand, Truman ensured he would get no support from Carter, or many other Texans, in the 1952 election.<sup>311</sup>

Carter's conflict with Truman over the Tidelands spurred his interest in supporting Eisenhower in his run for president in 1952. Carter was good friends with Eisenhower, a friendship that began in 1945 when the two met while Carter was in war-torn Europe. Though Eisenhower was a Republican and Carter, like most southerners at the time, was a lifelong Democrat, this did not stop Carter from loudly supporting him in his run for the presidency. In no way was this an odd pairing. For decades a one-party state, Texas was undergoing a political shift, and the state's support for Eisenhower during the 1950s was the first sign that the Democratic hold on the state was slipping. In his biography of Carter, Jerry Flemmons speculates that Carter and his friend, oil magnate Sid Richardson, talked Eisenhower into running for president while sailing on Carter's yacht on Eagle Mountain Lake in late 1951 or early 1952. This seems unlikely considering that in none of their correspondence did Eisenhower, Richardson, or Carter refer to this event, and Eisenhower did not even hint at this alleged action in his memoirs. In addition, many of Eisenhower's friends had been pressuring him to run for president since 1948, originally as a Democrat. Privately a Republican, he supported Thomas Dewey in 1948 though he refused to endorse the candidate publicly. Biographer Stephen Ambrose notes that Eisenhower, "anticipating a Dewey victory, followed by Dewey's re-election in 1952 . . . believed that he had finally put politics completely behind him." But, "that dream was shattered on election night, 1948," since

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<sup>311</sup> Campbell, Gone to Texas, 416; Amon Carter to Truman, Apr. 17, May 6 and 19, Box 205, Tidelands File, AGC Collection.

“Truman’s upset of Dewey thrust [Eisenhower’s] name back into the forefront of politics.”<sup>312</sup>

While not actively pursuing the presidency of the United States in 1948, Eisenhower did accept an offer to become president of Columbia University. The smattering of conversations between Carter and Eisenhower increased during this time, with phone calls and long letters moving back and forth between the two men. Well aware of Carter’s philanthropic efforts, Eisenhower dangled in front of Carter the possibility of leaving behind some legacy at an institution like Columbia. “I personally think that the most magnificent kind of family memorial that any man of wealth could leave behind him would be an edifice or series of scholarships in a great university such as Columbia,” he said enticingly. In another letter to Carter, he wrote, “I do hope that you will continue to give some thought to Columbia and the suggestions that I made to you concerning it.” Some portions of his letters to Carter hint at developing a political platform, even as early as 1949. “The problem of our day and time,” he mused, “is how to distinguish between all those things government must do now in order to perpetuate and maintain freedom for all—freedom from economic as well as political slavery—while, on the other hand, we combat remorselessly all those paternalistic and collectivistic ideas which, if adopted, will accomplish the gradual lessening of our individual rights and opportunities and finally the collapse of self-government.” As a conservative Democrat who had grown tired of the increasingly liberal positions of the Truman administration, these were words of which Carter could approve. Still, Eisenhower had

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<sup>312</sup> Flemmons, Amon, 296-7, 320; Campbell, Gone to Texas, 416-417; Stephen Ambrose, Eisenhower: Soldier, General of the Army, President-Elect, 1890-1952 (Simon and Schuster: New York, 1983), 478.

a difficult time understanding Carter's obsession with the Trinity Canal. During a trip to Fort Worth, he attended a Chamber of Commerce meeting with Carter and heard discussion of the project. From his recollection, "it was implied that the Federal Government should prosecute that Project energetically." How could Carter, someone who was "definitely opposed to unnecessary Federal intervention in state and local matters," support such a measure "merely because it promises temporary local advantage"? he wondered. Regardless, such questions about his political philosophy did nothing to damage their friendship and Carter positioned himself as one of Eisenhower's most steadfast Texas supporters.<sup>313</sup>

By 1952, the pressure on Eisenhower to run as the Republican nominee for president mounted. He finally agreed to enter the party's primaries though he was now serving as the commander of NATO. The Star-Telegram was the first paper in Texas to endorse him for president, as evidenced by the publishing of an editorial in February 1952 urging people to support Eisenhower as the candidate who could "appeal to the vote of those who make no fetish of party loyalty and who look to the man rather than the party." As a paper that had endorsed Democratic candidates without fail, such words were high praise and somewhat ironic. Carter, ever aware of the necessity of informing candidates of his unwavering support, sent Eisenhower a copy of the editorial and received in return a short note from a grateful Ike. "I shall always be proud that I have a friend of the warmth and courage of Amon Carter," he remarked, "for I realize

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<sup>313</sup> James Patterson, Grand Expectations: The United States 1945-1974 (Oxford University Press: New York 1996), 156; Dwight D. Eisenhower to Amon Carter, June 27, 1949, Dec. 22, 1949, Box 71, 1949 File, AGC Collection.



that it takes courage in the South to go full out for any other than an avowed Democrat.”<sup>314</sup>

As the 1952 campaign escalated, Carter and the Star-Telegram continued their support for Eisenhower. It must be stated that while in the context of Texas politics this seems odd given the state’s history as a Democratic stronghold, Carter was not out of step with other members of the Texas political establishment. When the Democratic Party nominated liberal Adlai Stevenson from Illinois, many other Texas Democrats shifted their support to Eisenhower, especially since he “promised to ‘return’ the tidelands to Texas and respect states’ rights in general.” This promised support for Texas’ cause in the tidelands debate combined with his general popularity gave Eisenhower 53 percent of the Texas vote in the November election. Even when prominent Democrats Estes Kefauver, J. William Fulbright, and Paul Douglas, noticing the impending defeat of their candidate, fired off a last-minute telegram to Carter begging him to “write the largest possible check today,” but he refused to give any aid to the national Democratic Party. Eisenhower was his friend and candidate, and old party loyalties did little to sway his opinion. That being said, too much should not be made of Carter, or other Texas Democrats, supporting Ike the Republican. At the state level, Carter still endorsed Democratic candidates, and at no point were there any signs that he was prepared to begin pouring money into what was then a relatively defunct Texas Republican Party.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Feb. 10, 1952; Eisenhower to Amon Carter, Mar. 1, 1952, Box 71, 1952 File, AGC Collection.

<sup>315</sup> Campbell, Gone to Texas, 416-417; Green, The Establishment in Texas Politics, 145-148; Estes Kefauver, J. William Fulbright, and Paul Douglas to Amon Carter, Oct. 26, 1952, Box 140, Presidential Campaign File, AGC Collection.

As close as Carter was to Eisenhower, two things prevented him from exploiting having a close personal friend in the White House who shared most of his core beliefs. First, due to his death in June 1955, there was little time for Carter to establish a strong working relationship with the new president. His health began deteriorating in 1953 and the vigor with which he pursued his favorite causes was no longer present, thus diminishing his chances of making any great gains for his city. Second, while he did enjoy a warm friendship with Eisenhower, Carter did not have the same extensive network within the Republican Party as he did his own Democratic Party or even a large measure of influence over the president personally. Ever the cautious administrator, Eisenhower refused to let his amiable relationship with Carter sway him too much, even in relatively minor bureaucratic appointments as shown in his refusal to acquiesce to Carter's request to retain longtime Civil Aeronautics Board chairman Oswald Ryan. There was no serious state-level Republican Party in Texas for Carter to work through and at the national level, most of Carter's longtime political friends and acquaintances were Democrats. As has been shown, his far-flung system within the Democratic Party ensured a fairly successful run for Carter during the Great Depression and World War II but by the 1950s, that was gone, leaving him much less powerful within the corridors of power, though not without a friendly legislator as can be attested by his support of Johnson.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, Personal and confidential To Amon Giles Carter, Sr., 17 February 1953. in The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, ed. L. Galambos and D. van Ee, Doc. 36 (World Wide Web facsimile by The Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission of the print edition; Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996 [<http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/presidential-papers/first-term/documents/36.cfm>]).

Carter's association with Johnson can be traced back to 1941 when the Star-Telegram endorsed Johnson over O'Daniel in that year's special Senate election. Morris Sheppard had died in April 1941 and Governor O'Daniel, mulling a possible run for the seat, immediately named Sam Houston's 86-year old son, Andrew Jackson Houston, to the seat, knowing he would be much too weak to run in the June election. Johnson, a congressman since 1937, quickly entered the race, having gained O'Daniel's false promise that he would stay out. The governor changed his mind, prompting a hard-fought race on both sides with Carter firmly supporting the young Hill Country representative. Carter had only just met Johnson at a function where the young congressman, with his usual penchant for violating personal space, "got right up in his face-talked to him thirty minutes, standing right next to him . . . At the end of that time, Amon was sold." Two Star-Telegram editorials from the campaign stand out: one praising Johnson for his unwavering support for Roosevelt in national defense preparations, and a second excoriating O'Daniel for his demagoguery and insulting manner. As Election Day, June 28, came and went, it looked as if Johnson had pulled off a stunning victory over the popular, homespun persona of O'Daniel. Carter wired his congratulations to Johnson, comparing his apparent victory to that of David over Goliath, or even of Texas Christian University quarterback Davey O'Brien. The praise was premature, however, as over the next few days, votes trickled in from O'Daniel's East Texas base, enough to give him the victory by July 1. Fraud being evident on both sides, there was little Johnson could do to strike back at O'Daniel, and he emerged from the fight "convinced . . . as never before that politics was a dirty business in which a willingness to be more unprincipled than your opponents was a requirement for

success.” As for Carter’s support for him, Johnson was grateful, writing him that “when a main of your affairs” supports a young candidate like Johnson, “there is not much a youngster can say except ‘thank you very much’.”<sup>317</sup>

Johnson re-emerged to run for the Senate in 1948, this time in a quest to replace the increasingly unpopular O’Daniel. His major opponent in the Democratic primary was former governor Coke Stevenson, a conservative who opposed New Dealism in general the resurgent liberalism of the Truman administration. Once again, Carter threw his support behind Johnson, who was running as something of a nationalist conservative, seeing in him a candidate who was more gifted than Stevenson at knowing how to ensure the continued flow of federal dollars into Texas. He was not alone among the Texas Establishment in seeing something in Johnson. George and Herman Brown, of Brown and Root defense contractors, and Carter’s friend and wealthy oil magnate Sid Richardson were among the many wealthy Texans who, along with Carter, helped finance his campaign.<sup>318</sup>

As Johnson maneuvered himself into position to run for the Senate, he voted for the Taft-Hartley Act and to override Truman’s veto, both positions that ensured him the support of men like Carter. A string of editorials appeared in the Star-Telegram lauding Johnson for his “independent voting record” and his moderate votes on labor issues. Once again, Johnson was involved in a close race, this one much more hotly-contested and clearly more fraudulent than the last. This time, however, Johnson was determined

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<sup>317</sup> Robert Dallek, Lone Star Rising: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1908-1960 (Oxford University Press: New York, 1991), 208-209. 221-224; Randall B. Woods, LBJ: Architect of American Ambition (Free Press: New York, 2006), 150-151; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, June 19 and 28, 1941; Amon Carter to Lyndon B. Johnson, June 30, 1941; Johnson to Amon Carter, July 2, 1941, Box 111, 1941 File, AGC Collection.

<sup>318</sup> Dallek, Lone Star Rising, 308-309.

that he would win, and win he did, though most historians attest that determining the clear-cut winner in such a race is nigh impossible. As Johnson prepared to take his seat in the Senate, he wrote Carter a letter explaining how much he felt he owed to him for his victory. "I just want to express to you my sincerest gratitude and appreciation for your unbroken and unwavering friendship and support," he wrote, "without which my success this year would have been impossible." "When a firm hand was needed to steady the ship," Carter "supplied it." When Johnson "steered too close to impetuous and intemperate action," Carter "pulled him back." Finally, Johnson was grateful for the favorable correspondents Carter assigned to his campaign and to editor Bob Hicks, whose "editorializing proved him a better strategist than most professional campaign managers." Granted, Johnson's victory hinged on much more than Carter's support, but he recognized that the man and newspaper that had supported him for the Senate twice in seven years could provide him much more than he could ever produce for Carter. A wily politician, Johnson needed to ensure that he had a solid base upon which he could rely in order to prevent the rise of any challengers. Having the largest newspaper in Texas at one's back was an insurance policy he could not take for granted. Carter, on the other hand, could now rest knowing that Texas once again had two solid senators who could act, to a certain extent as his voice in Washington.<sup>319</sup>

For the first few years of Johnson's Senate career, Carter leaned on him for numerous favors, many of them relatively small. When Carter was made aware of official statements from the Rumanian legation lauding the "liberation" of the nation by the arrival of Soviet forces being sent to American newspapers, he wrote Johnson

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<sup>319</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 4 and 18, 1948; Johnson to Amon Carter, Dec. 28, 1948, Box 111, 1948 File, AGC Collection.

hoping that he could influence the State Department to “call a halt to the crap of this kind.” Johnson promptly forwarded the letter to the State Department but was told that in the interest of demonstrating freedom of the press, no action would be taken. Another example of his tendency to bog down the senator with small problems was Carter’s request for greater pipe allotment from the Petroleum Administration for Defense (PAD) for oil drilling. In this case, Johnson spoke with PAD administrator Bruce Brown and succeeded in getting Carter what he desired. This short list of small requests marked a shift from the actions of the previous decade-and-a-half. With the Truman Administration faced with a struggling economy and the heating of the Cold War, there was little desire to begin another round of New Deal spending. The re-allocation of federal dollars into other projects meant there was little else for Carter to fight for beyond his usual tilting at the Trinity Canal windmill. Then, Carter severed his connection with Johnson due to a dispute over the 1952 presidential election. As campaigning got underway, Johnson had no choice as a Democrat but to support Adlai Stevenson in his bid, thus losing his once warm friendship with Carter. Once again, Carter demonstrated that, at least for him, politics and friendship could sometimes make for a horrible combination.

Despite his poor health, Carter found the time and energy for one last political fight in 1954. Jim Wright, the 31-year-old “boy mayor” of Weatherford, Texas, dared to challenge one of Carter’s favorite congressmen, incumbent Wingate Lucas of the 12<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, in the Democratic Primary in 1954. Lucas was not a formidable politician on his own, but he had Carter’s support. Elected to Congress in 1946, Lucas had become one of Carter’s “rubber stamps” in Washington ensuring that the publisher

continued to have a vote on Capitol Hill. Once, when an obscure tax bill came up for a vote in the House, Lucas voted against the wishes of Carter. What the tax bill was or whether Lucas supported it is not known from the existing correspondence, but his vote angered Carter. Lucas wrote a letter of apology to Carter, apologizing for not having consulted with him first. After all, he wrote, “the only purely political action” he had ever taken “was done after consulting” Carter. A contrite Lucas sought to soothe Carter’s displeasure by assuring him that he had never “consciously done anything as Congressman from our District that I thought you would disapprove,” and that he would continue to seek Carter’s approval.<sup>320</sup>

That being said, running against Lucas meant running against Carter, and Wright was determined to enter the fray. On July 22, 1954, the Star-Telegram published a front-page editorial entitled “The Voters Know Lucas’ Record, But Where Does Wright Stand?” Up to this point, Carter and the Star-Telegram had ignored Wright’s candidacy, but an apparent groundswell of support for the man attempting to overthrow the reigning figure in Fort Worth caused Carter to make a pre-emptive strike. The editorial accused Wright of refusing to voice his opinion on issues such as foreign aid and scoffed that “he is for avoiding atomic war...Who Isn’t?” According to the editorial, Lucas had greater political experience and had always “voted with sturdy independence for what he thought was best for the state and nation.” Carter’s lackey evidently had been transformed into a man of great conviction.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Jul. 24, 2004; Wingate Lucas to Carter, Mar. 20, 1954, Box 24, File 24, AGC Collection.

<sup>321</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Jul. 22, 1954.

Wright swiftly responded to this editorial with an “Open Letter to Mr. Amon G. Carter and the Fort Worth Star-Telegram” and spent \$974.40 of his own money to take out a large ad in the Star-Telegram. When the newspaper’s advertising manager asked Carter if the ad should be run, Carter simply asked if Wright’s check was good; the check was good, and the ad was run. Wright told Carter, “You have at last met a man... who will not bow his knee to you and come running like a simpering pup at your beck and call.” He added, “It is unhealthy for ANYONE to become TOO powerful...TOO influential...TOO dominating. It is not good for Democracy. The people are tired of ‘One-Man Rule’.” Wright’s main complaint against Carter was his refusal to cover Wright’s campaign fairly and objectively. According to Wright, he had spoken out on many political issues with clarity and depth, something Carter’s “private errand boy Congressman” had never done. Wright pointed to a recent rally for his campaign with nearly 1,000 people in attendance that the Star-Telegram had covered. Carter had the story buried and reportedly “gave it less space than an obituary of some Chinese laundryman who once passed through Fort Worth.”<sup>322</sup>

In his younger years, Carter might have taken these affronts much more seriously, but he had grown more generous in his old age. An editorial countering Wright’s remark was printed on the opposite page, and Carter also wrote an open letter to Wright. The Star-Telegram defended itself by saying that the paper had fairly treated Wright. His rally was not covered because it was a paid event; if it had been advertised as a campaign-opening rally, he would have received the proper coverage. The editorial claimed that Wright had been asked for specific ideas regarding Eisenhower’s

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<sup>322</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 23, 1954.



farm program, yet he had been not been able to come up with any solutions to the problems he perceived. Regarding Wright's statements accusing Carter of having a stranglehold on what Fort Worthians could read, the editorial responded that the Star-Telegram would not be so successful if it had a history of covering up the truth.<sup>323</sup>

Carter's personal letter was more conciliatory than the editorial. Writing after Wright's victory in the primary, Carter was full of congratulations and good wishes. However, he did respond to the allegations that he had his own personal congressman. According to Carter, he had only phoned Lucas three times and had never written him. A couple of the phone calls addressed funding for the Benbrook Dam and one call came amid rumors of layoffs at the Consolidated-Vultee Plant. Research shows that Carter either suffered from memory loss or had a very selective memory. The aforementioned letter from Lucas to Carter implies that there were frequent conversations between Lucas and Carter, mainly consisting of Carter giving Lucas advice. The bill to which Lucas referred, though not specifically named, clearly did not refer to Benbrook Dam or Consolidated-Vultee. Also, there is at least one existing wire from Carter to Lucas asking him to push H.R. 2319 pertaining to the unification of the armed forces. Evidence shows that Carter was much more involved in the legislative duties of Lucas than he remembered or cared to admit.<sup>324</sup>

Though permanent marital bliss previously remained out of Carter's grasp, in 1947, he married his third wife, Minnie Meacham Smith. The daughter of former Fort Worth mayor and department store owner Henry Meacham, and widow of Glen Smith, appeared a natural match for Carter given her family's elite status. Her background

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<sup>323</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 23, 1954.

<sup>324</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 25, 1954.

being what it was, she circulated among the city's upper echelon, and marrying Carter sealed her future as one of Fort Worth's leading ladies. Having attained political influence and great wealth, Carter had nothing to gain in marrying Smith. It appears that his marrying Smith, twenty-four years his junior, was based on a desire for companionship. As in his previous marriages, correspondence between the two is scarce, leaving it difficult to assess the condition of the relationship. What can be gleaned from existing documents is that the Carters thoroughly enjoyed their position in society with trips to Europe and continued friendships with the nation's celebrities, as well as a consistent circulation among Fort Worth's elite circles.

Oddly enough, the friendship that Carter developed with Nenetta upon their son's capture during World War II did not wane with his new marriage, though understandably their correspondence slackened. Their mutual interest in the success of the Carter Foundation as well as Nenetta's shares in Carter Publications ensured the former couple would continue to remain cordial. In addition, their shared memory of Amon Jr.'s imprisonment helped forge a bond between the couple, and the tension that was once present dissipated in the post-war years. When one of their son's fellow prisoners wrote a book in 1946 titled Diary of a Kriegie (a self-descriptive term used by ex-prisoners of war), she sent Amon a copy and remarked, "It tells much of what happened at Stalag III-A that Amon Jr. never did tell." Though there was much about Amon that Nenetta disliked, she did not seem to lose her admiration for the man. When, in 1953, Fort Worth named its new airport after Amon Carter, she wrote, "It is such a great tribute to you in every way, Amon, and again and again I am proud of the name of Carter."

Having retained her married name and never remarried, her identity was still largely intertwined with her husband's identity and accomplishments.<sup>325</sup>

Amon remained close to his children at this time, and seemed content to see both Amon Jr. and Ruth married and formally out from under his roof. Amon Jr. settled into his position as his second-in-command at Carter Publications and by all appearances seemed to adapt quickly to the demands placed on an a media empire heir. Ruth married Fort Worth native J. Lee Johnson in 1946 and then lived sometime in South Bend, Indiana, where her husband studied law at Notre Dame before moving back to Fort Worth, where he settled into his law practice. But while domestic affairs with his two children by Nenetta generally seemed to flourish, the same could not be said for his oldest daughter, Bertice.<sup>326</sup>

Bertice had always had a strained relationship with her father extending back to her time at a preparatory school and well into adulthood. Her marriage to her first husband, Harry Kay, collapsed as he never seemed to be able to find a way to make a decent living. Having moved to Dallas in the late 1930s, she entered the world of radio, where she worked for WFAA during World War II reporting on women's news under the name 'Diana Dale.' While working for WFAA, she met the station's foreign correspondent, Hugh Speck; they married in 1944. For reasons unknown, Carter did not particularly enjoy Speck and this caused tension between father and daughter. Her penchant for whining and general lack of maturity and self-confidence must have also bothered Amon. Her letters to her father by the late 1940s reveal a very insecure

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<sup>325</sup> Nenetta Carter to Amon Carter, July 11, 1946, Box 38, Amon Carter Personal File 1946, AGC Collection; Nenetta Carter to Amon Carter, June 20, 1953, Box 40, Amon Carter Personal File 1953, AGC Collection.

<sup>326</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Aug. 20, 2002.

woman who made much of every slight, real or perceived, and yearned for constant affection from Amon. It appears their relationship was in constant flux, with periods full of a flurry of communication and visits interspersed with spells of emotional drought usually brought on by Bertice's feeling isolated from the rest of the family. For unknown reasons, Bertice believed that she had become the "family pariah", a feeling exacerbated by Amon's inclusion of Ruth's husband in the business affairs of Carter Publications. To make matters worse, she struggled with her weight and alcohol abuse, both of which negatively impacted her health as she got older. Liver problems brought on by her alcohol usage resulted in hospital stints to try to revive her flagging health. During one stay in the hospital she attempted to reassure her father: "Don't worry that I won't live up to the rules as laid down. They have me convinced that my life depends on the way I live, rest and no worrying." Sadly, liver disease took its toll on Bertice, and in September 1952, after ten days in the hospital, she passed away with Amon at her side. For the first time since his father died in 1915, he was confronted with the death of a close family member, but extent records do not reveal his reaction to losing his first daughter.

Though having received a glowing health report from his doctor in 1951, Carter's own health rapidly deteriorated over the next few years much of it due to heart disease. He was first placed in St. Joseph's Hospital for an extended period in 1953 when he spent over seven weeks recovering from what was rumored to be a stroke but turned out to have been two heart attacks. His son hastily denied it, saying that, "Dad has just been run down and he is resting for a few weeks in the hospital." When Fort Worth's new Amon Carter Airfield was dedicated that year in April, Carter had to be content with

watching the proceedings on television from his hospital room. His ill health did more than impact his ability to attend ceremonies, however, as he was unable to mount a vigorous campaign in support of a Tarrant County location for the new Air Force Academy. A younger, healthier Carter may not have been able to persuade Department of Defense officials to choose the shores of Lake Grapevine over Colorado Springs for the Academy, but he certainly would have been able to wage a much stronger campaign.<sup>327</sup>

By June 1955, it was clear that Carter had failed to fully recover from his previous heart attacks and in June, doctors ordered him to remain at home after his recent New York trip to attend the Associated Press and American Newspaper Publishers Association meetings. On June 23, two days after initial reports that Carter was at home suffering from a “critical illness”, he passed away in his home at 8:20 p.m. The outpouring of grief at his passing and praise for his life was instantaneous and deserves some attention for what it reveals about how people at the time felt about his legacy. From President Eisenhower on down, government officials were profuse in extolling how Carter had boosted his region and city for much of his adult life. Johnson, despite their recent falling out, took to the Senate floor to memorialize Carter the day after he died. Calling him “one of the great moving forces of our time,” he noted that even though Carter was commonly known as “Mr. Fort Worth”, “the impact of his personality was felt beyond the borders of Texas.” Texas governor Allan Shivers wired the Carter family that his “drive and personality” enabled him “to do great things for his beloved Fort Worth and for his state.” Prominent New Dealers like John Nance Garner and

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<sup>327</sup> Katrine Deakins to City Hall Secretary, Apr. 13, 1953, Box 40, 1953 File, AGC Collection; Dallas Morning News, Mar. 12, 1953.

Jesse Jones added their statements to the sympathetic chorus. Dallasites, generally his enemy during his decades-long dispute with Fort Worth's eastern neighbor, were unanimous in their acclaim for his accomplishments. Mayor R.L. Thornton called him a "gladiator" and a brilliant leader, while John Carpenter declared that he "Ranked with the top statesmen and business men." Celebrities and other public figures who had developed friendships with Carter through the years mourned his death, including comedian Edgar Bergen, boxer Gene Tunney, and orchestra leader Paul Whiteman. Publisher that he was, it was fitting that others in the industry like Arthur Sulzberger and Henry Luce each contributed statements of consolation to the Carters' ever growing pile of telegrams.<sup>328</sup>

As might well be expected for the man many called "Mr. Fort Worth", Carter's funeral on June 25 took on the air of a state service, with much of the city closing that day in his honor. Many downtown stores shut down at funeral time and Texas Christian University, longtime recipient of his largess, cancelled classes on that day. Two days later, with flags throughout the city flying at half-staff, what was reported to be "the largest crowds of mourning" ever seen in Fort Worth visited his gravesite at Greenwood Cemetery just west of the city's central business district. Cemetery officials observed that "hundreds of cars were waiting" at 6:30 on the morning of his graveside tribute and by the day's end, an estimated 15,000 people paid their last respects to Carter, whose grave was "blanketed with a 60-foot cross" of flowers as well as orchids from the

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<sup>328</sup> Dallas Morning News, June 23, 1955; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, June 24, 1955;

Eisenhowers and a Shady Oak hat made of flowers contributed by Broadway producer Billy Rose.<sup>329</sup>

Carter's philanthropic practices, only recently organized, garnered greater attention upon his death as his will revealed much about his philosophy of philanthropy. Many telegrams that poured in to his family mentioned his generosity, and the public learned more about what Carter believed about giving. His will, filed for probate on July 1, contained a long statement from Carter that can best be described as his shortened version of Andrew Carnegie's Gospel of Wealth. "I have come to realize," he mused, "that they who acquire wealth are more or less stewards in the application of that wealth to others of the human family who are less fortunate than themselves." Carter admitted that "money alone, nor broad acres . . . nor estates of oil and gas" can "bear testimony to the fine quality of man or woman." Since "the grave is a democracy for all of human kind," he contended that the wealthy should not "refuse[s] to heed the pleading voice of humanity," but understand that true happiness "comes from doing good to others." Carter's declaration was obviously meant for posterity and to ensure a positive legacy for his life, but at the same time, it is clear that he was putting into words what he had been doing over the latter portion of his life.<sup>330</sup>

Much can and should be made of Carter's importance in Texas' transition into urban modernity. His contemporaries understood his contributions throughout his life and obituaries around the nation noted the many industries and institutions that came to Fort Worth as a result of his efforts. During his tenure, he helped lead his adopted hometown from a glorified market town to a major hub of business and commerce.

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<sup>329</sup> Dallas Morning News, June 25, 1955; Fort Worth Press, June 27, 1955.

<sup>330</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 1, 1955.

Carter was able to accomplish much of this by focusing much of his attention outward, understanding that in so doing, the state and national network he was building could and would ultimately help modernize Fort Worth. While verbally championing Texan concepts of individualism and self-help, he understood that his region's destiny would be shaped by its ability to fit into a much larger national network both politically and economically and in many cases, by partnering with a more expansive federal government. This is not to say, however, that Carter was an altruistic man. His obituary in the Star-Telegram noted that "his passion for fostering and promoting this civic and regional interest was undoubtedly born of the realization that his own business could prosper only as Fort Worth and West Texas prospered." But where other New South boosters might have narrowed their sites to building themselves and their empires up within the boundaries of their regions, Carter's expansive vision enabled him to become a nationally known figure, a fact which undoubtedly made him one of the most influential boosters of his time.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Fort Worth Star-Telegram, June 25, 1955.



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