

THE BOIS D'ARC CORRAL

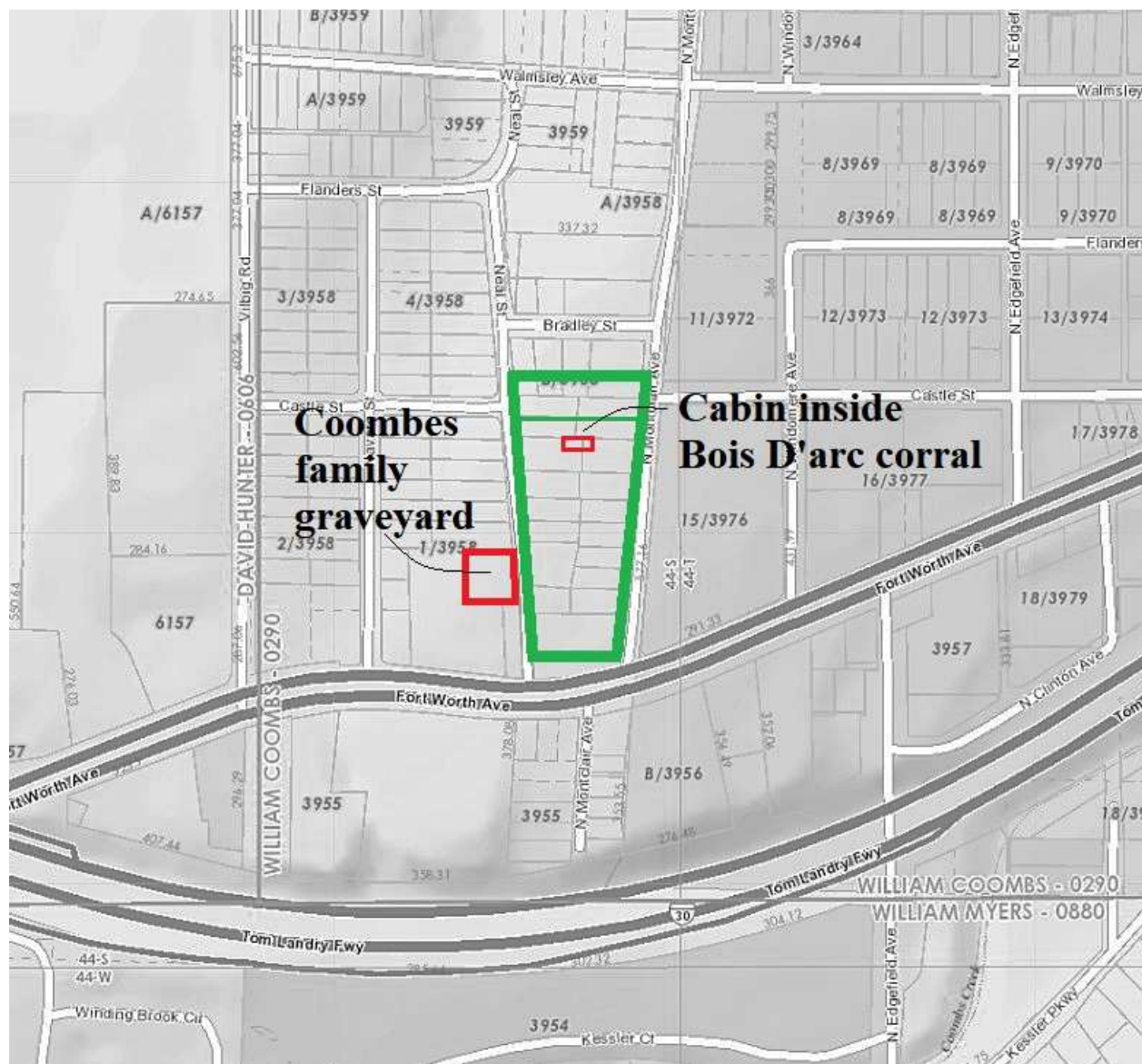
21st October 2025-- last revised 31st October 2025;

Jim Barnes

" ' The chief objection settlers had to Indians as neighbors was they would steal horses. They got all the horses grandfather had three different times. In fact horses were so hard to keep that most of the settlers used oxen exclusively. On one occasion the settlers went in pursuit of the Indians. They followed them as far as the Cross Timbers, where Indian signs became so thick that the settlers decided that it would be well to turn back.'" ^A " 'After that grandfather enclosed with a bois d'arc hedge a corral for his stock, with his cabin in the middle of it. But the Indians came back no more, and it was never demonstrated in his case whether Comanches could break through bois d'arc entanglements. Parts of the old hedge are still to be seen, but they give no hint of how they happen to be growing there.' " ^B.

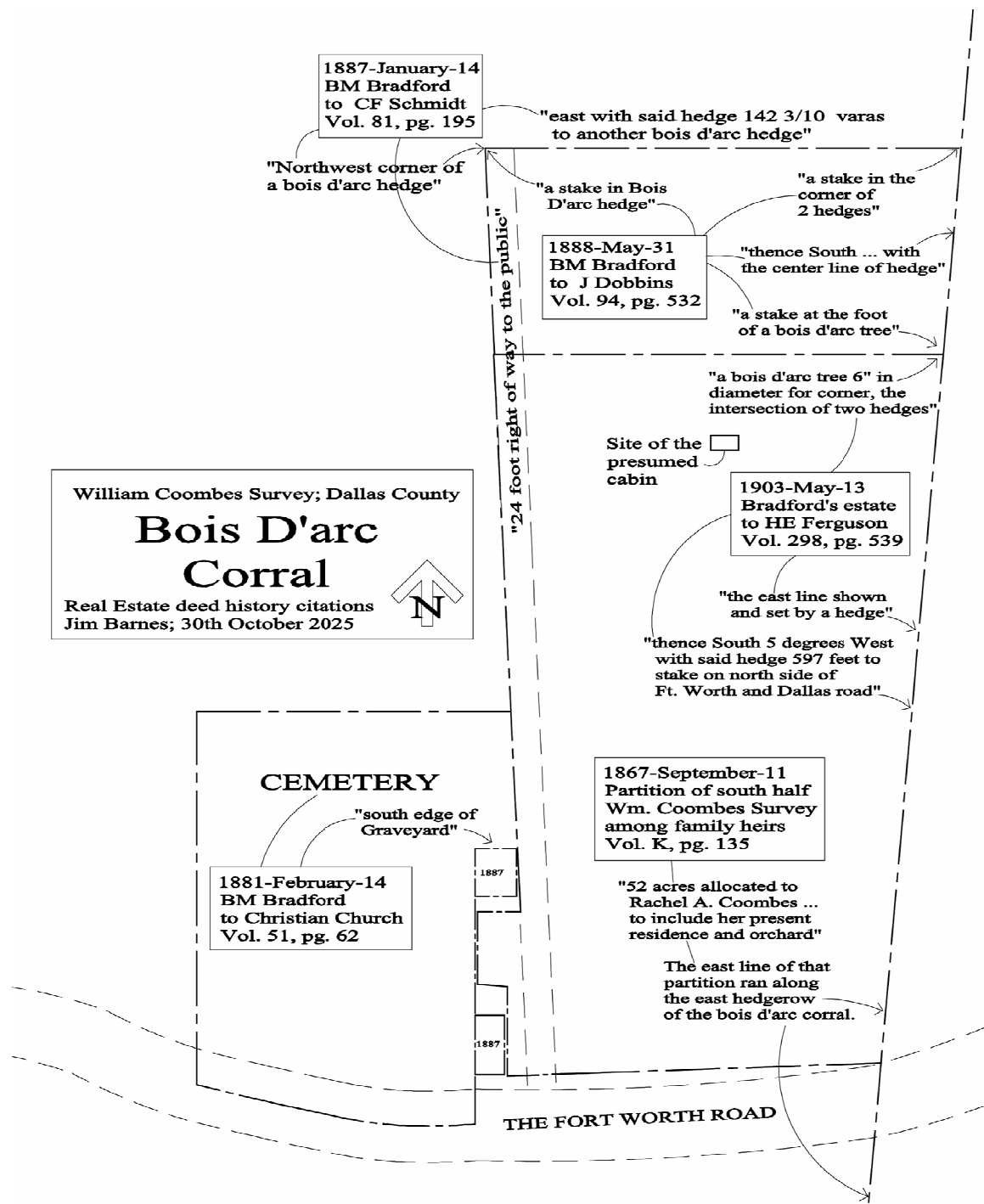
Around the time Judge Coombes told of remnants of his grandfather's bois d'arc corral still being visible, the first aerial photographs of the site were made. In those photos, and in the deed records, we see the location for most of that naturally prickly corral fence, with one long straight bois d'arc hedge running along what is now Montclair, another along what is now Neal Street, a northern line segment running south of today's Bradley and the southern end presumably being a hedge just north of the Fort Worth Avenue. Today the bois d'arc corral is completely gone.





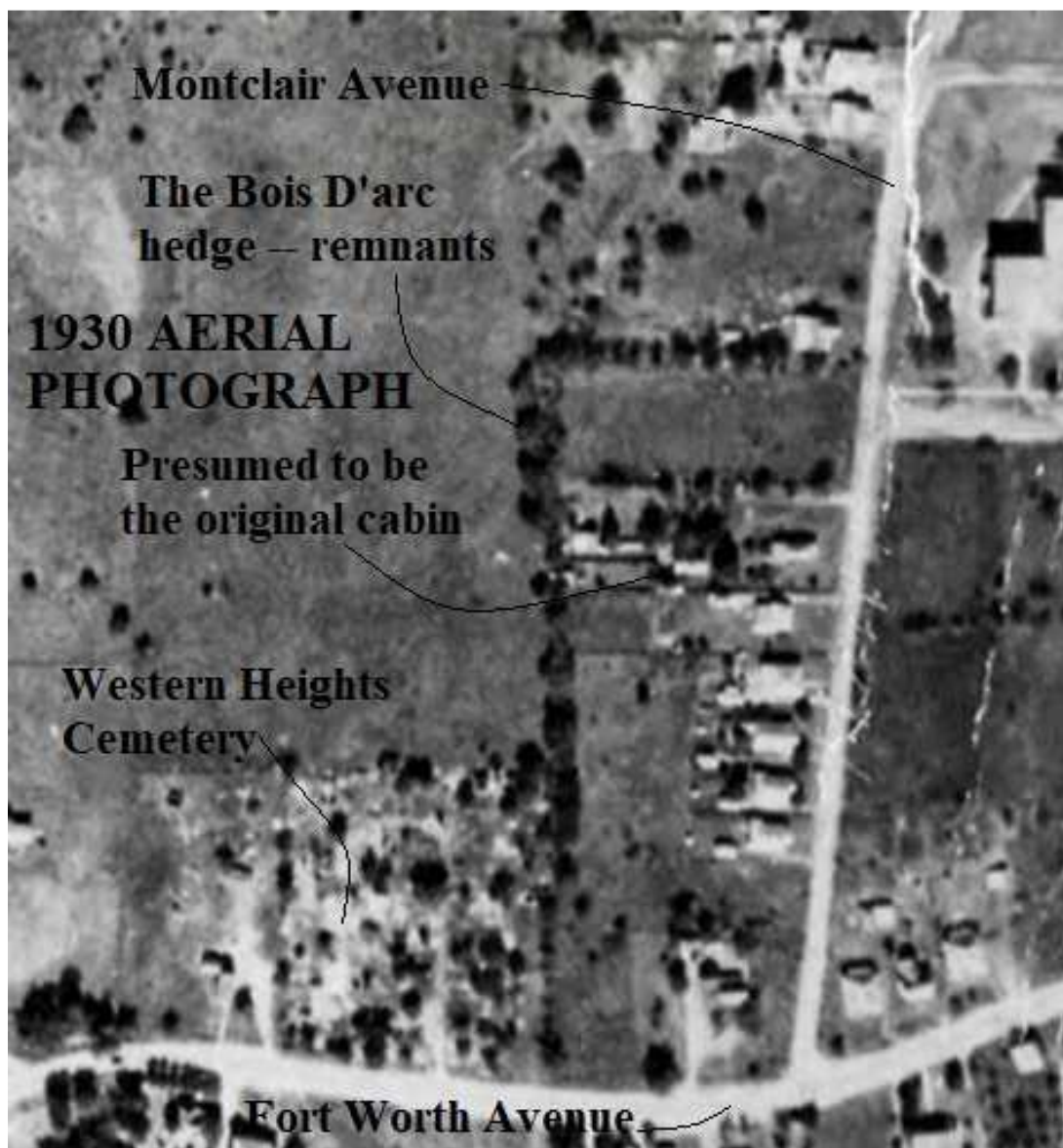
This corral was big -- enclosing about three acres. Its four sides formed a trapezoid (all presumably straight). The Coombes cabin stood inside, centered toward the north end. It is uncertain exactly when William Coombes and his son Zachariah Ellis Coombes planted this thorny fence -- 1844 or 1845? It is also uncertain where they placed gates. (The possibilities of gate location will be discussed in a separate article about Western Heights Cemetery.)

Deed records describe locations where these and other such bois d'arc hedges had been planted on the *William Coombes' Headright Survey*. Barbed wire had not yet been invented and didn't become available for fencing until the 1880s. There were similar bois d'arc hedgerows planted many places on the prairies of southwest Dallas County.



The deed records indicate that there was a secondary bois d'arc hedge inside the corral, appearing as a smaller (younger) line of trees in aerial photos. The purpose for this secondary hedge is unknown. It might have been a sub-corral for live-stock, a fenced garden, or perhaps protected the orchard mentioned in the 1867 partition of the *William Coombes Survey* land.

The pathway of the 24 foot wide right-of-way along the west side of the bois d'arc corral is not precisely defined in the easement's deed record. What is drawn here is conjectural, both in exact location and in its straightness.



Before he left Kentucky, William Coombes had owned 18 horses.^C In Texas, prior to 1850 William is taxed for owning no more than 3 horses – he was tired of bad Indians raiding his homestead and stealing them. Later he again kept more. In the tax rolls of 1855 William, agent for wife Rachel A. Coombes, owned 12 horses and 58 head of cattle. In 1866, the year before William's death, Rachel A. Coombes was assessed for 9 horses, 35 head of cattle, and 90 sheep. During his early years in Dallas County, the 1845 tax rolls William Coombes had been assessed for 16 head of cattle^D -- they wouldn't run off nearly as far, or as fast, as the horses did.

Picture images:

1. Detail: *Dallas Public Library*, copyright, November 1924 aerial photo, notes by author.
2. William Coombes' bois d'arc corral, cabin, and family graveyard superimposed on 2025 Dallas Central Appraisal District land parcel map – color and notes by author (2025).
3. Drawing by author, based on metes-and-bounds description in Dallas County deeds.
4. Detail: *SMU Library*, Fairchild 1930 aerial photo survey of Dallas County; notes by author.

Notes:

- A. 1928-07-01; *Dallas Morning News*, p.8; W.S. Adair, "*Horse Stealing Best Sport of Texas Indians*".
- B. 1925-07-12; *Dallas Morning News*, Sec. 3, p.2; W.S. Adair, "*Indians on Rampage in Dallas Area*".
- C. FamilySearch.com (June 2025); "*Tax books (Nelson County, Kentucky) 1792-1894*".
- D. FamilySearch.com (June 2025); "*Texas, County Tax Rolls (1837-1910)*"; Robertson+ Dallas County.

(End of article about "The Bois D'arc Corral")