

Where is the cliff of *Oak Cliff*?

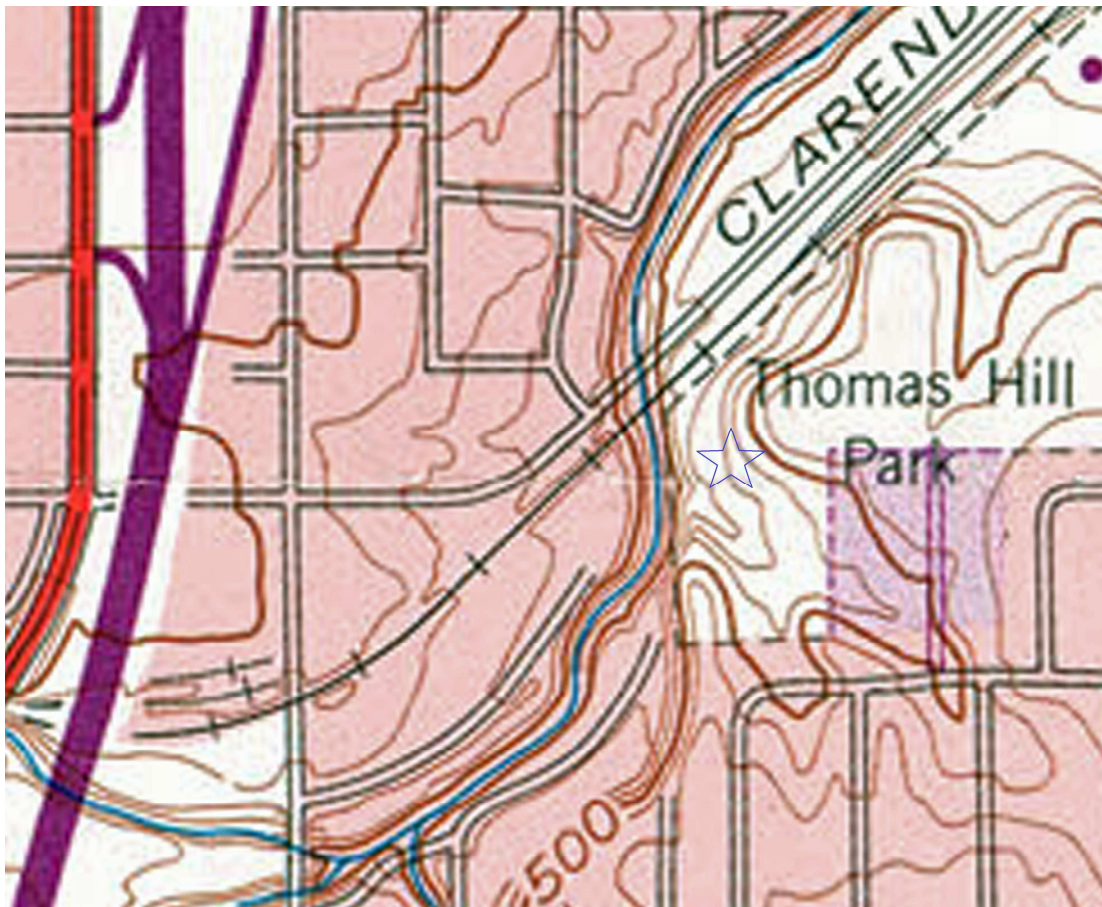
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On Sunday afternoon, the 9th of November 2002, Gerald Harris (1939-2004) invited a group of amateur historians who had already been chatting on the old Dallas Historical Society internet *Message Board* to come to his home for a social gathering, where we spent the afternoon talking face-to-face about our individual Dallas history interests. Toward the end of the gathering Gerald held up a small framed oil painting, showing nothing but an oddly bare rock cliff, and told the group that it had been painted by one of his relatives. His family's story was that this was the cliff which had inspired Thomas L. Marsalis to name his 1887 suburban subdivision *Oak Cliff*. A couple of members who had grown up in the area commented that they knew the place well, and that it had overgrown with dense new vegetation during their lifetimes.

That place is now virtually inaccessible, dimly seen from the cul-de-sac at the end of North Shore Drive (east of Beckley Avenue). On the back west side of the *Dallas Zoo*, beyond the encircling *African Safari* tram, the terrain abruptly descends 75 feet to the streambed of *Cedar Creek*. This cliff is within the *William Hord Section*, which Thomas Marsalis and John Armstrong had purchased in 1886 for their new *Oak Cliff* suburb. The previously bare rock face of the cliff is now covered by heavy vegetation. The railroad line (now a DART track) running below this cliff had already been laid before Marsalis purchased the site.

I know of no other written sources, stories or legends, about Oak Cliff's namesake.



1981 -- USGS topological survey showing the cliff (star), just east of Interstate 35E.