



The Garland Dog Park and the Air National Guard

Dog owners in Garland and the surrounding area were thrilled with the opening of the Garland Dog Park in July 2020 at the corner of Glenbrook and S. 10th Street. The Garland Dog Park is part of the expansive Central Park complex and offers three well-maintained and enclosed off-leash areas, known as paddocks. Additionally, it has water access for dogs and people, shaded seating, lighting, parking, and a nearby restroom. At the time of the opening, Mayor Scott LeMay acknowledged the work of a citizens group, Garland Bark Park, that began the push for a dog park in Garland in the early 2000s. This organization, which is now known as Garland Pawsibilities, is a key partner with the City of Garland in providing pet adoptions at their Downtown Garland location.

With the opening of the Dog Park in 2020, the City of Garland also completed one of its 2019 Our Garland Parks, Recreation & Cultural Arts Master Plan citywide recommendations by completing the “development of the dog park at Central Park to provide a place for dogs to go unleashed and for dog owners to gather.” At the opening event, District 2 Council Member and current Mayor Pro Tem, Deborah Morris, reiterated the benefits of having a dog park in Garland when she stated, “Our new dog park at Central Park is large and lovely, a greenspace our residents and their fur-children can enjoy for many decades to come,” She added,

“Dog parks aren’t primarily for dogs; they provide a happy meeting place for dog owners. Dogs are great at making introductions!”

So, why is the Garland Landmark Society highlighting the Garland Dog Park? As it happens, the paddocks and surrounding area of the park hold some clues to an important part of the history of Garland and provide pointed reminders of a contentious time for the Garland City Council and former Mayor, Douglas Athas.



Garland Dog Park in 2020. *GarlandTX.gov*



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The 221st Radio Relay Squadron Comes to Garland

From 1952 until 2010, Garland’s Central Park was the location of the headquarters for the 221st Radio Relay Squadron, a unit of the Texas Air National Guard (TANG).

In May 1952, the idea of bringing an Air National Guard unit to Garland was proposed to the Garland City Council by Lt. J. M. Rose of the Texas Air National Guard. Lt. Rose explained to the councilmen that the TANG unit would employ five civilian employees, six officers, and approximately ninety-four airmen. He noted that the airmen would come mainly from local enlistments, who would be required to attend forty-eight weekly training periods each year. The men who enlisted would also be exempt from the Selective Service draft. Finally, Lt. Rose explained that the TANG unit “would need some place, not very large at first, in which to meet...”

At the same meeting, and as noted by the Garland Herald, the City Council approved a motion allowing the unit to establish a base in Garland with “patriotic enthusiasm,” and Mayor H. A. Walker along with City Manager L. E.

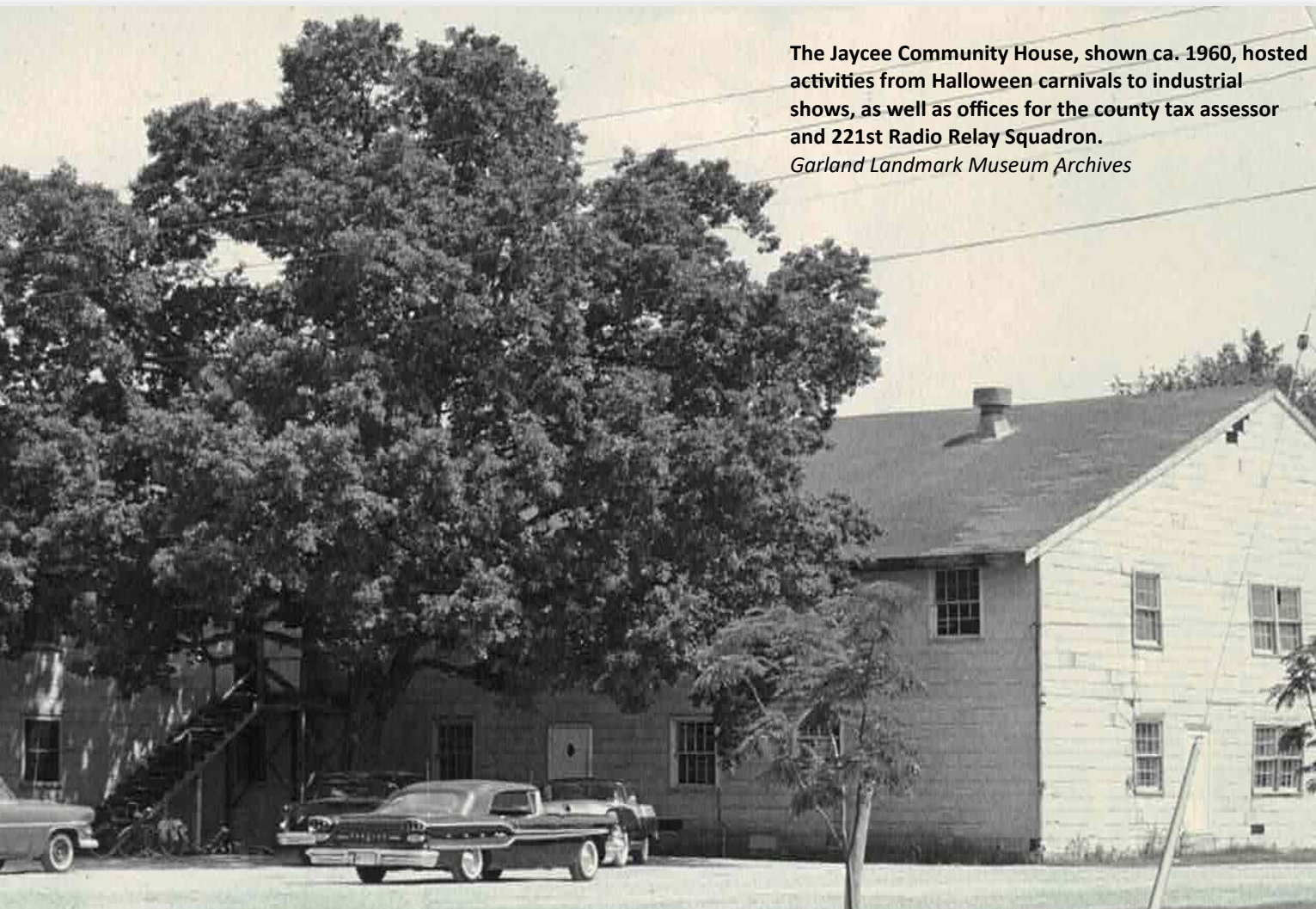


Stark were instrumental in securing a part of the Jaycee Community House in Central Park as a temporary meeting place. The unit would be allowed to use the Community House until it outgrew that space, giving it enough time to find a larger space in the Garland area.

The Jaycee's Community House, which should be an article unto itself, was a former WWII-era Army service center at Ft. Maxey near Paris, TX. The structure was acquired by the Garland Jaycees in 1947 at a cost of \$28,000 from the War Assets Administration, disassembled, and moved to Garland, where it was reassembled in the Municipal Park area. According to oral histories, it was located in the area of Central Park near where the Granger Recreation Center is situated today. The Jaycees made improvements on the building by adding a kitchen and a keeper's apartment. Over the years,

the Jaycees hosted an array of social events at the Community House including an annual Halloween carnival, and it served as the first home to the 221st Radio Relay Squadron.

Garland's own 221st Radio Relay Squadron of the Texas Air National Guard was officially activated on July 10, 1952, in ceremonies at the Community House in Central Park attended by US Air Force Reserve officers, TANG dignitaries, locals, and Lt. Louis Allison Howard. Lt. Howard, the former manager of KETR and later KMEA radio studios in Garland, was a key figure in bringing the unit to Garland. Howard served as the information officer of the TANG Squadron and was the person who introduced Lt. Rose to the Garland City Council when the proposal was made.



The Jaycee Community House, shown ca. 1960, hosted activities from Halloween carnivals to industrial shows, as well as offices for the county tax assessor and 221st Radio Relay Squadron.
Garland Landmark Museum Archives



Lt. Allison Howard, commanding officer of Garland's newly activated 221st Radio Relay Squadron of the Texas Air National Guard, and S-Sgt. Jacob M. Bewley, staff member of the unit, prepare to do a little recruiting as they set up a sign in front of the unit's headquarters at the Community House. About 21 men have already enlisted in the squadron, which will be trained in Garland as a supporting unit of the 136th Fighter Squadron. *Garland Herald*, July 17, 1952. Photo by Doc Allen

Lt. Howard, who is kneeling on the left in the *Garland Herald* photo from July 17, 1952, was also named the temporary commander of the 221st Radio Relay Squadron until a permanent commander could be appointed. On the day of activation, the new TANG unit had a force of twenty-one men, roughly a fifth of its designated capacity of ninety-nine. Lt. Howard explained that the Garland unit would operate radio equipment as part of the 136th Flight Interceptor Wing, Texas Air National Guard, out of Love Field in Dallas, and that the men would receive training in "radio, wire [e] equipment and automotive maintenance during meetings at the unit."

Lt. Howard also mentioned that, given that the 136th had already seen service in Korea, "it would not be called again unless there was an all-out

emergency." This meant that the 221st Radio Relay Squadron would only be federalized as part of the larger 136th Fighter Interceptor Wing, and not on its own.

In September 1952, it was announced that Lt. Harold Adams had been appointed to be the new commanding officer of the 221st Radio Relay Squadron. Lt. Adams had served in the Navy during WWII, followed by a short stint in the Air Force. By the time Lt. Adams took command of the unit, it had grown to twenty-eight airmen, and plans were already underway to build a permanent armory once the unit reached about ninety men.

Almost a year later, when the unit left for summer training at Hensley Field in Dallas in June 1953, it had grown to sixty-five airmen from

Garland, and other places in North Texas like Wyle and Carrollton, and two officers. By 1959, the critical number of airmen had been achieved and construction was under way on a permanent armory on Glenbrook Ave. WBAP-TV covered the dedication of the new armory on April 11 of that year, reporting that, with a full force of 100 men, the 221st Radio Relay Squadron was taking possession of a \$202,000.00 structure and was expected to have a combined civilian and military payroll of \$300,000.00 per year. Major General Harry Crutcher, the Chief of Staff for the Texas Air National Guard, told the audience that, "the space age, rather than putting the reserve unit out of service, will actually increase their responsibilities and value."

The Mission of the 221st Radio Relay Squadron

The mission of the 221st Radio Relay Squadron was rooted in WWII when the Air Force began moving to radio communications as a way of alleviating the use of overloaded electrical communications facilities. Radio communications in the field were advantageous for several reasons, including the use of radio frequencies was less prone to static and outside interference, and the high-powered electrical equipment was large and heavy, while the FM radio transmitters were compact, mobile, and did not require the electrical voltage that traditional communications at the time did. Because FM bands are "line of sight transmissions," they require relay stations between main stations to move communications signals across long distances. The charge of 221st Radio Relay Squadron was, from the beginning, to "install and maintain this type of equipment."

Over the years, the men and women of the 221st Radio Relay Squadron participated in training exercises across Texas, the United States, and overseas. They also provided invaluable communications support in times of natural disasters. When Hurricane Beulah hit the Texas coast on September 20th, 1965, the 221st Radio Relay Squadron was the first to be called up to provide a mobile single sideband radio network that was often the only means of communication. Similarly, during the devastation in Louisiana following Hurricane Katrina, the 221st Combat Communications Squadron deployed satellite communications packages to Hammond, LA, and to the Superdome in New Orleans.

In 1968, the 221st Radio Relay Squadron was rebranded as the 221st Mobile Communications Squadron and assigned to the 254th Mobile Communications Group. Later, its name was changed to 221st Combat Communications Squadron under the 254th Combat Communications Group. In 2009 it was announced that the 221st Combat Communications Squadron would be relocated to Hensley Field in Dallas. This



The Wylie News, February 16, 1956

was completed in 2010 and the property was transferred to the City of Garland.

To support its mission, the armory was equipped with several large permanent antennas installed strategically on the property at the corner of Glenbrook Ave. and S. 10th St. When the City of Garland made the decision to raze most of the structures on the site in order to build the new Dog Park, the aesthetic decision was also made to leave the antennas intact as an homage to the history of that site and its significance to Garland, the Texas Air National Guard, and the nation as a whole. The photo of the Dog Park groundbreaking with Mayor Scott Lemay in the middle from 2019, clearly shows one of tagged antennas in the background. Visitors



Council members Hedrick, Aubin, Mayor LeMay, Morris and Gibbons break ground at the Garland Dog Park on August 1. Garland Messenger August 3, 2019



221st Radio Relay Squadron Antenna in the Dog Park Paddock, September 24, 2022.

Garland Landmark Society Archives. Photo by John Hatch.



221st Radio Relay Squadron Antenna in the Dog Park area, September 24, 2022.

Garland Landmark Society Archives. Photo by John Hatch.

to the Dog Park today can see all four antennas standing silently on guard reminding them of the men and women who served for almost sixty years in the 221st Radio Relay Squadron, the 221st Mobile Communications Squadron, and the 221st Combat Communications Squadron.

A Decision that led to the Mayor’s Resignation

Garlandites may well remember the relatively recent controversy over what to do with the armory site once it was vacated by the 221st Combat Communications Squadron in 2010 and transferred to the City. The controversy came to a head in 2017, when the City Council voted 6-3 in favor of demolishing most of the existing armory buildings and moving forward with the construction of the Dog Park. Mayor Douglas Athas was opposed to demolishing the armory, arguing that the city could put the Dog Park in another location and find new uses for the armory buildings that already existed. Athas’ stance was echoed by many in the Embree Neighborhood that borders on the armory site. Following the vote, Athas announced his intention to resign before the end of his term. He officially offered his resignation on January 9, 2019, saying he would stay in office until a replacement was elected in a May 2019 special election.

-John Hatch

Share Your History

If you’re a Landmark Society Member or friend—and you must be if you are reading this—you have history in your head that we would like to share with other members. We encourage you to write your memories of Garland’s history and send them, along with supporting pictures, letters or newspaper articles, to us.

Email Heritage@GarlandTX.gov

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Questions? Email Heritage@GarlandTX.gov
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