

LOCAL

BURNING BUSH

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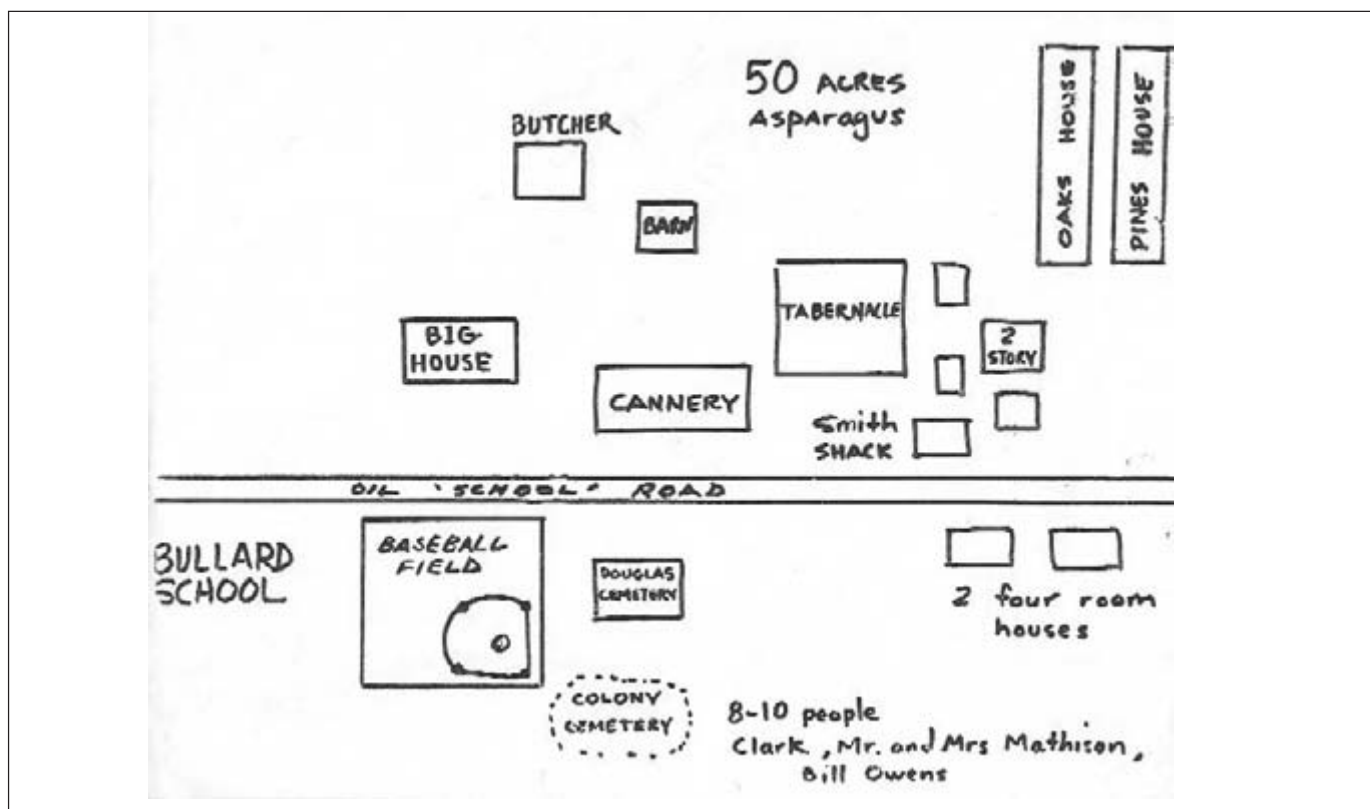
The Burning Bush Society bought the Douglass Mansion and 375 members came to Bullard by train.

Dr. Jane Purtle, who spoke at the rededication, said that the Burning Bush Society was one of the most advanced communities in East Texas. The community had a water system, sewer, power plant and a sawmill.

The Burning Bush also had a cannery, where they would can fresh fruits like peaches. Bullard High School teacher Jan Berry used to sell peaches on the side of the road to help get by on her teacher pay.

One day she was approached by two old men, who wondered where the peaches came from. She told them that she picked the peaches from the old Burning Bush site.

"They were excited that someone even knew about the Burning Bush Society," Berry



Courtesy Map by Jan Berry

This map was created after Jan Berry interviewed several people who knew of the Burning Bush Colony.

said.

She began asking the men questions about where things were on the property, like the Tabernacle and the cemetery.

She drew everything on a paper sack and transposed it to a map.

"The cemetery is right where the softball field home plate is," she said.

Only six years after the Burning Bush Society was established in Bullard, the society was disbanded. They could not afford to eat and had to

large coupons with the local mercantile owner J.L. Vandiver.

He sewed for \$17,000 and won. Vandiver bought the land for \$1,000 in 1919.

MISSION

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But the assistance found in Bullard for area-wide, low-income families is a lot more than mere service. It's a passion felt by the Mission House director Hazel Mason and the House's volunteers.

"If you give them food, clothes and a clinic and you have not touched their soul, what have you done?" Mason asked.

Mason said that sometimes people criticize the Mission House for helping poor people. The criticism echoes an ideology that helping poor people only enables them not to help themselves.

"Jesus never asked questions when he helped someone," Mason said. "So we don't look past the person. They need help and we help them."

Mason said that some families do not have beds for their children, and other families with children have not had a roof over their heads at one time or another. To judge any of these families goes against the very teaching of Jesus.

"If you give them food, clothes and a clinic and you have not touched their soul, what have you done?"

Hazel Mason
Mission House Director

"God wants me to help," Mason said. "What they do with this help is up to God."

The Mission House, which receives donations from every Christian denomination around the area, seeks to touch people's lives in need. The volunteers also hope to show its patrons the love of Jesus Christ.

Sharon Starwalt, a Mission House board member and volunteer, said not only does she get to witness and pray to people who use the Mission House services, but she also is humbled.

"It's not a division, we

don't have all on our side," Starwalt said. "This gives us an opportunity to see the Lord."

Bill Cox, who volunteers in the food pantry, said putting hours in at the Mission House has let him see that there is a need for the services.

"With unemployment and the current economy, we are continuing to see folks not able to make it through on their local income," Cox said. From the lack of insurance or funds, they can't make it from one month to the next."

Betty Caldwell, a senior citizen who goes to the Mission House for groceries said the volunteers go out of their way to help.

"I've never been in a place where there is so much love," Caldwell said. "I think God for them, they treat people with so much love."

Mission House to hold fundraiser

The Mission House of Bullard is presenting the First Annual Genny Wood Art Show and Sale on Nov. 8.

The event will feature local and Tyler area artists and 20 percent of the proceeds will benefit the Mission House of Bullard.

The Mission House was established to help those in need, offering a food pantry, clothes closet and a medical clinic.

Wood paints in her studio in Bullard. Wood has taught art at Moore Middle School

and helped to develop the art program for Grace Community School. She also painted murals for First Presbyterian Church and Landmark Title Company in Tyler. She also taught classes at the Tyler Museum of Art and helped develop a program at the Discovery Science Place. The program was later presented to the Texas Art Education Association.

To participate or for more information call, (903) 539-3812 or (903) 825-3910.