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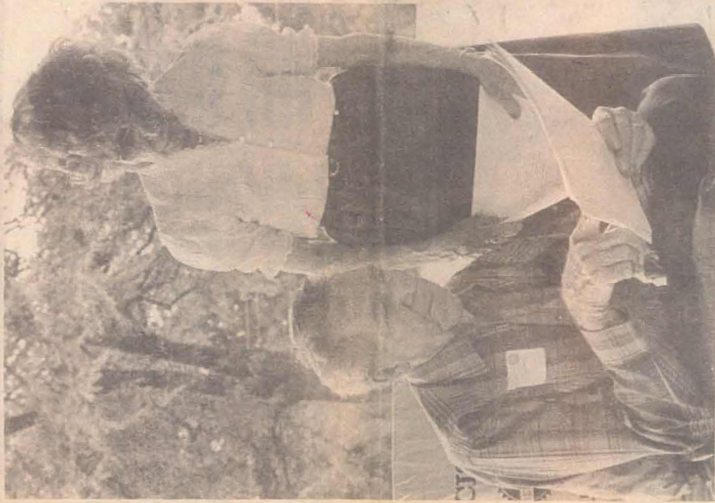
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Henry Valenzuela/Staff photo
Francis Carpenter, left, and Lecta Brigham, grandchildren of Capt. R. W. Carpenter, discuss the family tree.

Historic family gathers for reunion

By STEPHEN SOLTIS
Staff Writer

When Capt. Robert Washington Carpenter stepped down from a stagecoach at the Wells Fargo post called "Plano" 134 years ago, he began a family legacy here that is as long and colorful as the history of the city itself.

A Confederate Civil War captain from Kentucky, Carpenter settled on a tree-

lined grassy stretch of land which contained the area now known as Pittman Corners Shopping Center and extends west past the sites of Electronic Data Systems and the Bethany Cemetery.

The Plano Carpenters have worked as farmers, politicians, clergy, educators and civic leaders. They immersed themselves into every facet of frontier society. As devout followers of the Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ), the Carpenters played a key role in developing Addison Male and Female College, which later went on to become Texas Christian University.

Like the Harringtons, Haggards and Wells families, the Carpenters were influential founding fathers in a city which still feels the wake of their traditions. Carpenter Road (now Legacy Drive) and Carpenter Middle School were named in

their honor.
Sunday, for the 52nd year, the descendants of R. W. Carpenter gathered in Plano to honor the memory and spirit of an earlier time. It was a time when Plano really was part of the "Wild West," and inhabited by rugged individualists who lived the dream of which Horace Greeley spoke.

Only a handful of Carpenters Turn to REUNION, page 3A



Henry Valenzuela/Staff photo
Members of the Carpenter family gathered yesterday at Harrington Park for the family's 52nd reunion.

Reunion

From 1A

still reside in Plano. Most of Sunday's gatherers came from communities scattered across North Texas. They spoke of the changes, both good and bad, that had come to Plano.

"This is a great time to get together and reacquaint ourselves with each other," said Francis Carpenter of Dallas, one of only two surviving grandchildren of R.W. Carpenter. "Everybody's so spread out these days. This gives us the chance to meet up and see how the rest of the family's doing."

While children ran to the playground, grown-ups sat under the veranda at Harrington Park, finished up their lunch and talked of plans for the future.

"It's just amazing to come back here every year and see all the changes that have hit this city. Plano has come a long way. It's an exciting city with a vision for the future," said K. Visser, a relative from Fort Worth.

The recent name change of Carpenter Road to Legacy Drive was also on the minds of those who attended the family gathering. "I'm sure some politics had something to do with it," said Rex Carpenter of Corsicana. "It's a shame, but it's kind of out of our hands now."

When the name-change vote was

before the city council last summer, Carpenter family spokespersons voiced opposition to the change, sought by Electronic Data Systems officials.

"Oh, it's awful, but there's nothing we can do anymore," Francis Carpenter said. "The Carpenter name will always be a part of Plano though," he said.

Miss K. Visser had a different perspective. "I really can't blame the city of Plano. When people drive north up here from Dallas, they've got to be impressed with the name 'Legacy Drive.' None of these new people know or care about the Carpenters. What they see is a beautiful new subdivision and office complex. It's funny though, because I was born on the land where EDS now sits."

Lecta Brigham, the only surviving child of John Henry Carpenter's seven offspring, said she remembers a time when she knew everyone in Plano by name.

"This was a tight little community where everyone knew everyone else by name. If you didn't show your face every so often people worried. Everybody looked out for everyone else," the 84 year-old woman said.

The Carpenters are already planning for next year's reunion in Plano. "No matter what, we just keep coming back," said Rex Carpenter. "Plano will always be an integral part of this family."

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