



The Garden of Eden: The Story of a Freedmen's Community in Texas

Drew Sanders

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Tucked in a bend of the Trinity River a few minutes from downtown Fort Worth, the Garden of Eden neighborhood has endured for well over a century as a homeplace for freed African American slaves and their descendants.

Among the earliest inhabitants in the Garden, Major and Malinda Cheney assembled over 200 acres of productive farmland on which they raised crops and cattle, built a substantial home for their children, and weathered a series of family crises that ranged from a false accusation of rape and attempted lynching to the murder of their eldest son.

Major and Malinda Cheney's great-great-grandson, Drew Sanders, recounts engaging tales of the family's life against the backdrop of Fort Worth and Tarrant County history—among them stories about the famous family Sunday dinners (recipes included).

Though some family members, including writer Bob Ray Sanders and transplant specialist Dollie Gentry, no longer live in this special place, life in the Garden of Eden still shapes the family's character and binds them to the homeplace.

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