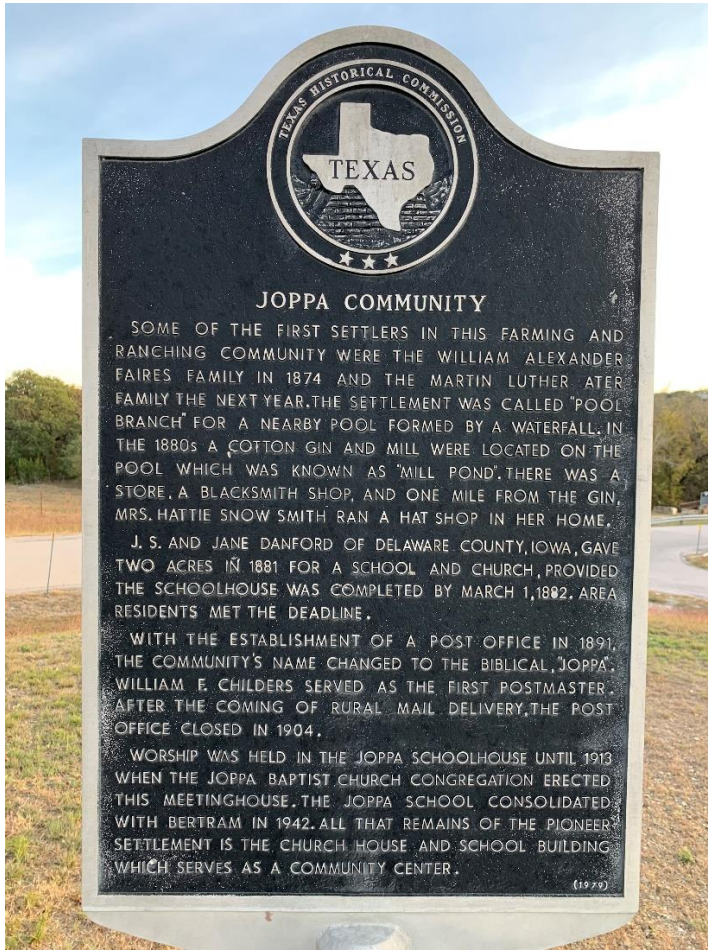
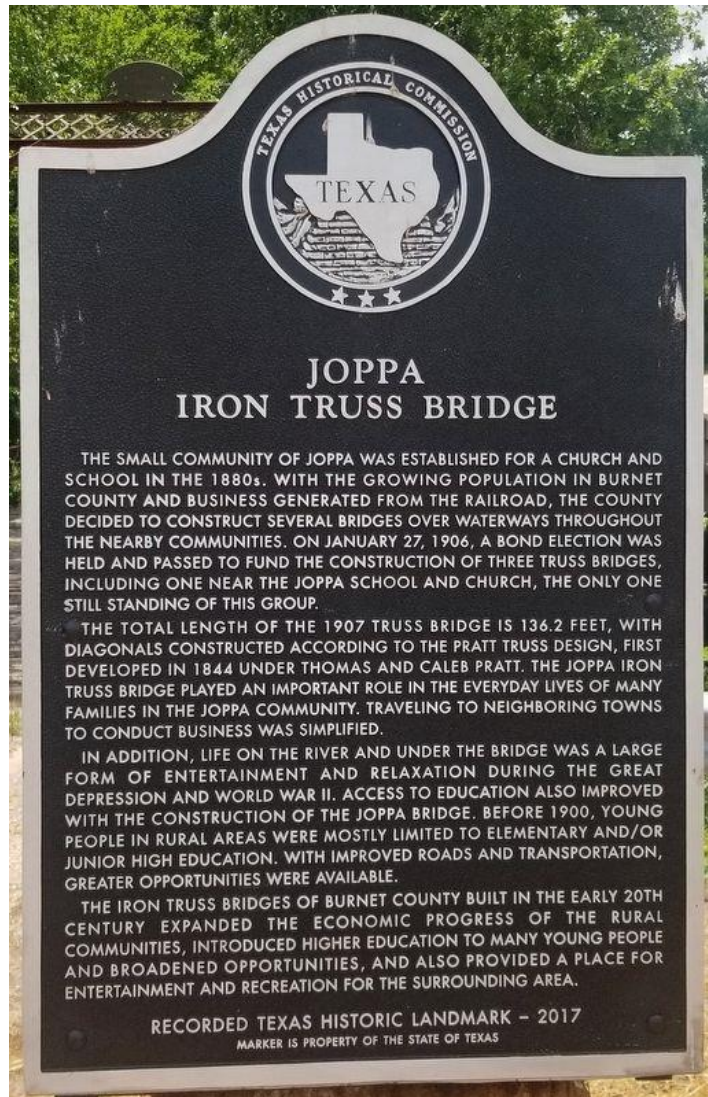


Community of Joppa, EST 1874 Northeast Burnet County, Texas



1906 Iron Truss Bridge



History of Joppa

Joppa, located on the North Fork of the San Gabriel River seven miles northeast of Bertram, was first called **Pool Branch**, after a nearby pool formed by a waterfall. At that pool in the 1880s were a cotton gin and a mill; just southeast of the gin were a store and a blacksmith shop. First settlers of this farming and ranching community included the **William Alexander Faires family** who moved to the area in 1874 and the **Martin Luther Ater family** who moved from nearby Mahomet in 1875.

The community got its start when in 1881, **J. S. and Jane Danford** of [Delaware County, Iowa](#), donated **two acres of land on the north bank of the river for a school and church**. Their only stipulation was that residents had to complete construction of the schoolhouse by March 1, 1882 and they met that the deadline.

The original settlement name was **Pool Branch** for a nearby pool of water carved out by a waterfall on the North Fork of the San Gabriel River. By the 1880s, a water-powered cotton gin and mill were established on the pool and a store and blacksmith shop soon followed, the only other businesses in the settlement.

When a post office was established in 1891, residents submitted the biblical name "Joppa" and the postal service approved it. The first postmaster was William F. Childers and the post office continued in existence until rural mail delivery was established in 1904 and it closed.

On May 19, 1904, the first telephone was installed in Joppa and in 1911, the Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron Company out of [Leavenworth, Kansas](#) built an iron bridge across the river. The bridge still stands today though a new concrete bridge has replaced it for automobile traffic. In 1939 under the Rural Electrification Act, the Pedernales Electric Cooperative strung the first transmission line to bring electricity to the area.

As late as the 1930s, the community held annual picnics as well as Friday and Saturday night socials and Sunday night singings. Part of that tradition continues today when members of the community gather the second Sunday of each month for "dinner on the grounds."

Until 1913, the schoolhouse hosted church services. That year the Joppa Baptist Church congregation erected a meetinghouse across the road from the school and has been holding weekly services continuously ever since.

The original school building was converted to a community center after the one-room school consolidated, in 1942, with the Bertram Independent School District. The Joppa school merged with Bertram during WWII.

All that remains of the pioneer settlement are the church & community center, still in use today.

1906 Iron Truss Bridge

The small community of Joppa was established for a church and school in the 1880s. With the growing population in Burnet County and business generated from railroad. The county decided to construct several bridges over waterways throughout the nearby communities. On January 17, 1906, a bond election was held and passed to fund the construction of three truss bridges, including one near the Joppa school and church, the only one still standing of the group.

The total length of the 1907 truss bridge is 136.2 feet, with diagonals constructed according to the Pratt truss design, first developed in 1844 under Thomas and Caleb Pratt. The Joppa iron truss bridge played an important role in the everyday lives of many families in the Joppa Community. Traveling to neighboring towns to conduct business was simplified.

In addition, life on the river and under the bridge was a large form of entertainment and relaxation during the Great Depression and World War II. Access to education also improved with the construction of the Joppa bridge. Before 1900, young people in rural areas were mostly limited to elementary and/or junior high education. With improved roads and transportation, greater opportunities were available.

The iron truss bridge of Burnet County built in the early 20th century expanded the economic progress of the rural communities, introduced higher education to many young people and broadened opportunities, and also provided a place for entertainment and recreation for the surrounding area.

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BRIDGE CHRISTMAS LIGHTING TRADITION. In 2007, the church members, while having a Christmas Party, had the idea (from T.J. Morris,) to decorate the bridge; and they also expressed interest in singing Christmas Carols on the bridge. Some others in the community started helping after 2016, when the church was short on volunteers. It became a joint effort with the “Coffee on Historic Bridge” group. An email group known as Our Joppa community

Resources:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joppa,_Texas
- <https://www.texasalmanac.com/places/joppa>
- <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=27539>
- https://www.lhindependent.com/news/community/joppa-church-a-safe-harbor-in-life-history/article_f5e2b5a2-93ef-5d6a-aa5e-c7a27b750509.html
- <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/joppa-tx>
- <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=150410>
- <http://www.texasescapes.com/TexasHillCountryTowns/Joppa-Texas.htm>

Bridge and Community Photos: <https://stevensonpublic.shutterstock.com/joppa/1292>

