

Dec. 31, 1955

The late Mr. Amon G. Carter, after considerable persuasion by others, agreed to become the head of a committee or organization to acquire the Eisenhower Birthplace and surrounding property at Denison, Texas, to restore the birthplace, suitably park the surrounding area and eventually to present or dedicate it to the people of Texas... provided that Web Maddox would agree to handle the project as an active executive. This was not an unusual arrangement by Mr. Carter in matters of this sort and Maddox consented but not without some reluctance. Mr. Carter interested Mr. Sid W. Richardson in the project and Mr. Houston Harte, one of the original proponents, agreed that Mr. Fred Conn, Editor of the Denison Herald (Mr. Harte's newspaper at Denison) would be available for any and all work in this connection.

The Eisenhower Birthplace Foundation was incorporated under the laws of Texas on the President's Birthday, October 14, 1953 and the following officers elected:

Sid W. Richardson, Chairman of the Board
Amon G. Carter, President
Houston Harte, Vice President
Fred J. Conn, Secretary
Web Maddox, Treasurer

Since the original incorporation was done hurriedly and for personal reasons, the charter was amended December 10, 1953 and suitable minutes and other documents provided by the generosity of Mr. Harry Weeks, prominent tax attorney of Fort Worth. Following Mr. Carter's death, Web Maddox became President (although this individual considers it a temporary expedient) and Mrs. Oveta Culp Hobby of Houston became a Vice President.

In beginning this project it was believed that approximately \$75,000 would be involved. Mr. Carter and Mr. Richardson each agreed to contribute \$25,000 and Mr. Carter intended to a third donor for a like amount. Because of Mr. Carter's regrettable passing, preceded by a long illness, none of this financing has been provided. All the financing has been done by Web Maddox or, more accurately, by means of loans now totaling \$25,000 from the Fort Worth National Bank. This was done by a series of notes (now consolidated as above) each of which was signed by Maddox and either Mr. Carter or Mr. Richardson. All checks issued from this account have been signed in similar manner. Since both Mr. Carter and Mr. Richardson correctly judged that the land acquisition could be more effectively handled by purchase and disbursement at Denison, most of the checks have been issued by the Denison Herald and/or Mr. Conn and, consequently, a majority of the funds from the Fort Worth account have been issued to the above. To a copy of this memorandum for Mr. Richardson are attached all cancelled checks from the Fort Worth account. It is assumed that Mr. Conn has kept similar records. He cannot be commended too highly for the tremendous amount of work--not always pleasant--which he has done in connection with this Foundation.

The property sought to be acquired, in addition to the birthplace, consisted mainly of negro homes. The basis of the acquisitions in most such cases was providing a similar lot in another section of the town and moving the home to that location with incident expense such as utilities, etc. Minor acquisitions came from contributions of small footage from railroads, needed to straighten lines. The largest single purchase was acquired from the eccentric owner of an old, dilapidated "hotel" which was needed for parking space. He was paid \$4,000, a much lesser sum than he originally demanded. The birthplace (and lot) had previously been bought by public subscription and given to the City of Denison. This has now been conveyed to the Foundation by the City of Denison--the deed containing an acceptable deed restriction applying to use.

Of the \$75,000 originally estimated for the project, something in the neighborhood of \$40,000 was estimated for real estate. The land acquisition has now been completed. The cost has been approximately \$22,549. With the exception of nominal attorney fees and other necessary legal expenses, all this has been expended for outright purchase or exchange. Mr. Conn is due great credit for this and he has been assisted by a committee of fine citizens of Denison. Although there has been some salvage, the cost is arrived at in the following manner :

Total loan, Ft. Worth National Bank		\$25,000.00
On hand, Ft. Worth after payment of current interest	\$ 980.78	
Interest payments to Bank	1,069.24	
On hand Mr. Conn (approx.)	400.00	
	<u>2,450.02</u>	<u>2,450.02</u>
Approx. cost of land		\$22,549.98

The above does not include an appreciable sum contributed by Maddox for various necessary purposes (probably likewise with Mr. Conn); nor does it take into account many skilled and professional services contributed by many public-spirited individuals.


After the conclusion of our land acquisition program, Mr. Joseph Pelich, prominent architect of Fort Worth, was asked to prepare plans for restoration of the Birthplace, for the park and a small caretaker's or administration cottage. Mr. Pelich was requested to keep the project down to approximately \$25,000, in keeping with the simple little Birthplace and the surroundings. A very considerable amount of research, investigation, painstaking care and work went into this matter. Various historical societies and technical consultants contributed valuable assistance. (One expert came up with a fire-prevention system costing some \$7,000.) The contractor to whom the plans were submitted gave us his estimated price as \$60,000.00. Needless to say, this writer was astounded although the plans included a complete restoration of the birthplace, now sadly in need of repair, in such manner as to provide maximum resistance to time, fire and public wear-and-tear.

Perhaps Mr. Pelich's plans are too ambitious. But he should not be censured since he has contributed his services and those of his organization. At least one of his men worked an entire week on this matter and every inch of the birthplace has been meticulously inspected, measured and made a matter of record. However, an early conference with Mr. Pelich will be arranged for the purpose of bringing the costs within our means.

Many conferences have been had with officials of the State Parks Board as well as with the National Park Service. Secretary McKay of the Department of The Interior provided an expert to inspect our project and provide a basic plan for its development. However, the State Parks Board evinced little interest--or apparently so--claiming that they do not want the Eisenhower Birthplace to administer because they think it will show an operating loss and that the Board is already seriously in lack of funds. It was suggested that they would be very happy with it if an adequate endowment fund were provided. I am familiar to some extent with the unremitting efforts directed at men of great wealth by money-raisers and "do-gooders" (but may God continue to give them strength and courage, since I sometimes find myself in this category) and have frequently acted as a buffer. But I cannot find good and sufficient reason why the Birthplace of one of our greatest Americans to be dedicated as a patriotic shrine should have to be privately endowed in this great and wealthy State of Texas.

(In strictest confidence ; a few months ago I was able by fortuitous circumstances to bring Mr. Richardson and the gentleman who was then Chairman of the State Parks Board in contact. The latter was most anxious to have Mr. Richardson use his influence in bringing The President to Texas for the dedication of the Big Bend National Park. It was an obvious implication that, if this could be done, the Birthplace problem might be disposed of easily. I think I was not indulging in wishful thinking and I am convinced that Mrs. Hobby, Mr. Richardson and Mr. Harte with their individual and collective influence can handle this matter.)

The Carter Foundation or Estate will soon provide the money to pay the bank loan. Every effort will be made to complete our task with the additional \$25,000. It has been suggested that a public fund-raising campaign be undertaken to finish our undertaking and/or for an endowment. I know that Mr. Carter took a dim view of such procedure. It well may be that circumstances have changed so as to make this advisable. But it is a matter for the Board to determine. No professional audit of income and disbursements has been made. Whether or not this should be done is also for determination by the Board.


Web Maddox,
Treasurer and
(Temporary)
President.