



# The house . . .

**In 1941, Garland lumber company manager H.A. “Hap” Manzer built this house, which he designed, at 1230 W. Ave. A, in an architectural style known as *Art Moderne*.**



# . . .that Hap built

**The stone-framed front window (left), and other features such as the rounded balcony and flat roof, were very different from other city houses of the period. Top photo shows house from rear during construction, with screened porch at left, the long second-floor balcony, and rounded bay window on the first floor.**

*Garland Landmark Society Photos.*

Harold Arthur “Hap” Manzer was in his early 20s when he arrived in Garland in 1921 to manage a new lumber company, one of several branch yards of Quarles Lumber Co. of Fort Worth, which was in an expansion mood in the heady first years of the 1920s.

He met his future wife in Garland, raised a family, was active in civic affairs, and, at his death, left some residential and commercial buildings as his un-attributed legacy. Otherwise, little of written record remains to give a rounded portrait of the man.

It is doubtful that he had formal schooling in architecture, and his educational record is unknown. He was adept at cartooning, and from what he left behind, he seemed possessed of a great sense of humor,

winning laughing fans during presentations illustrated by cartoons as he talked at civic clubs in Garland and other cities.

It’s not known when he began designing houses and other buildings, but he was engaged by at least one neighbor to plan a home, and he also designed some commercial buildings, the most noted of which is the Plaza Theatre in downtown Garland, whose lighted name pushes skyward on the Square.

When Manzer designed and built the new home on West Avenue A for his family in 1941, his neighbors included several of the city’s prominent businessmen and civic leaders:

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# ‘Bankhead Highway’ author will be Landmark’s speaker

## New slate of officers to be chosen at Society’s annual meeting

Dan L. Smith, author of *The Bankhead Highway in Texas*, will outline the highway’s history and talk about its route through Garland when he speaks to members and guests of the Garland Landmark Society Monday, April 6, during its annual meeting at 7 p.m. in the North Conference Room of Garland’s Central Library, 625 Austin St.

A fellow of the American Meteorological Society, Smith had a 40-year career with the National Weather Service before retiring in 2005 in Fort Worth. The Florida native has also written books on Florida maritime history and of Seminoles in that state. His first encounter with the Bankhead Highway came a few years ago while he was bicycling on Parker County backroads and came upon a worn road marked by a sign which identified it was the “Old Bankhead Highway.” The forgotten stretch of road had been a part of Texas Highway 1, a link in the nation’s first all-weather transcontinental highway in the 1920s and 1930s.

That experience sent Smith on research journeys to find what remained of that once-famous road, a section of which ran through Garland. A part of that highway is now known as Main Street; street signs marking it as “Bankhead Avenue” remained in place as late as the 1950s.

Landmark will also elect new officers at the meeting, with members expected to okay a slate of nominees headed by President Michael Hayslip. Other proposed officers are: John Swanson, Vice-President/Development and Museum Affairs; Bill Dickson, Vice-President/Membership; Janice Black, Secretary-Treasurer; Claude Doane, Curator.

Director nominees are: Bob Compton (editor, *On Track*), Bob Dunn, Jay Jones, Joann Nelson, Pete Nelson, and Elizabeth Montgomery. Directors emeriti are Chuck Cabaniss and Wylene Taft.

# Design was fun, but lumber was his business

(Continued from Page 1)

Mayor Ray Olinger, theater operator H. R. Bisby, insurance man W.E. Peavy Sr., seed company owner Haskell Roach.

Manzer's rather daring design brought him queries from others interested in adapting his ideas. Among those were Bisby, who also later engaged Manzer to design his new Plaza Theatre on downtown's Square, a structure that included some of the ideas Manzer used in his home design.

But architectural design remained just a sideline for Manzer, who stayed with his day job in the lumber business. Quarles, which had opened its new yard in Garland with much anticipation, was forced to close it in 1929 as the Great Depression began. It was succeeded by Mitchell-Goodwin Lumber Co., and Manzer became its manager.

He had met Helen Low of Garland after he arrived in the city and they were married in 1923. Their only child, Helen Doris, was born in 1925.

Around 1951, Manzer decided to establish his own lumber business and opened Manzer Lumber Co. in the 400 block of State Street. The venture was not successful and by 1955 it had closed.

The Manzers, husband and wife, both were enthusiastic members of Garland Little Theater, organized around 1935 to offer citizens stage plays by resident amateur actors. Both acted in plays, originally presented in the high school auditorium, and "Hap" designed sets. The group was a forerunner to Garland Civic Theatre, founded in 1968.



H.A. 'Hap' Manzer



*Garland Landmark Society.*  
**Manzer menu drawings for a 1944  
 Ferris-Watson dinner honoring  
 Texas State Certified Seed Breeders  
 Assn.**

(See THE HOUSE, Page 4)

# The house across from high school

(Continued from Page 4)

Manzer was a regular featured speaker for the Lions Club, of which he was a member and later president, in what were termed “Chalk Talks,” drawing cartoons to illustrate his spoken words.

Helen Manzer was also an active participant in Garland civic life, a member of the Garland Neoteric Club and Garland Story League, both of which she served terms as president.

She also served for a time as advertising manager of Garland’s Ferris-Watson Seed Co., and her husband

contributed cartoons to illustrate some of the company’s publications.

The family was active in the First Methodist Church, and later Manzer became a director of Garland Federal Savings & Loan.

The house he built on West Avenue A was home for the Manzers for a brief six years. In 1947, he sold the house to Herschel Lewis, newly arrived in Garland to take a position with Emsco Inc.

Lewis sought a home near Garland High School, convenient for his oldest

daughter Virginia “Ginny” who was about to begin her high school years, and the Manzer house was just a street away.

Ginny (now Ginny Harper) who became a Garland High School Sports Hall of Famer for her prowess on the tennis and

basketball courts, remembers the house.

“Mother and dad had the big room upstairs with the master bath and Loretta (her younger sister) and I shared the downstairs bedroom,” she recalls.

“And there was a carport, and a separate storage

building. There was a screened-in porch at the back of the house

which my dad later made into another bedroom for Loretta.”

The original Manzer house still stands after changing ownership several times, but remains distinctive despite some alterations, including the gabling of its once flat roof.

Hap Manzer died in July, 1979, just a month shy of his 82d birthday. His wife, Helen, died in 1994, and his daughter, Helen Doris, in 1997. The graves of all three are in Garland Memorial Park.



Garland Landmark Society.

The 1941 Manzer house as it looks today.

# Plaza Theatre: Manzer's monument

*(Adapted from a 1995 story by Michael Hayslip in The Dallas Morning News)*

In 1941 H. R. Bisby and his wife Jennie, began construction of Garland's Plaza Theatre, which would be the flagship of a 5-unit movie combine owned and operated by couple. Besides their three locations in Garland, the couple operated the Plaza Theatre in Rockwall and the Wylie Theatre as well. Theirs was the primary entertainment game in the entire area.

The Plaza was located at the northwest corner of the town square, from a 1918-vintage structure formerly occupied by the Cole & Davis dry goods store. Their third Garland site, the Texan Theatre at 510 Bankhead, opened in 1947.

"Hap"

Manzer, the Bisby's friend and neighbor who was commissioned to design the theater, created a classic Art Deco facade, employing ornamental stucco and maroon colored glass, for the 50-by-140-foot structure. Flanking the central ticket booth on either side of the doorway were spaces for small shops, and, inside, a balcony was created to expand seating area for 700 persons. Although no cost

figures were published for the private venture, the Bisbys bragged that the Plaza was equal to any \$50,000 theater in the Texas.

Opening night was April 4, 1941, Garland's 50th anniversary of the city's incorporation.

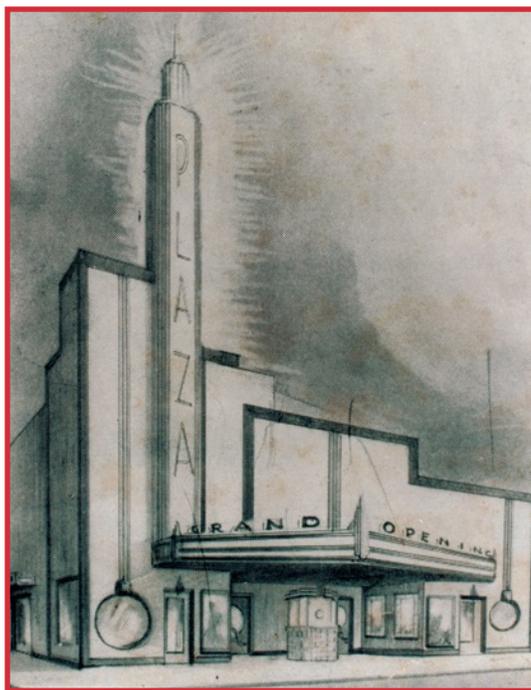
In 1950, the building was remodeled, stem to stern, this time designed by Dallas architect Jack Corgan.

By the late 1950s, with many of Garland's 25,000-plus residents now developing affection for their television sets, the Bisbys had withdrawn from active theater management to pursue their many civic interests full-time. The Plaza was subsequently leased to a series of entertainment

occupants, and over time the building fell into disrepair. Most of the roofing material had already collapsed and floated downstage

when John Skelton, trustee of the Bisby estate, donated the property to the City of Garland in 1992.

In recent years, the City of Garland restored the theater to its original style, and equipped the 350-seat theater with state-of-art lighting and sound systems, offering a variety of entertainment, movies to stage plays as part of its Cultural Arts Center.



Garland Landmark Society.

Manzer's original sketch for Plaza Theatre.

## Garland Landmark Society

### Heritage Crossing

393 N. Sixth Street  
Garland TX 75040

Depot Museum and the Rail Car are operated by the Garland Landmark Society,  
a non-profit and volunteer organization.

Website: [www.garlandhistorical.org](http://www.garlandhistorical.org)

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