



Staff Photo by Julie Fernandez

This is the entrance to the Western Oaks development, where livestock once roamed.

## J. W. Smith built homes on Western Oaks range

*This article is one of a series written by Porter Junior High seventh-graders last year as part of an honors reading class. The students put together histories of various South Austin neighborhoods.*

By SHAWN FAIRHURST

The area of Western Oaks was first owned by Ola Bell Dahlstrom. The area was a range and on it there were cows, goats and saddle horses. Before the construction began many things were as they are today. Oak Hill was here along with McCarty Lane and Convict Hill Road.

The area was named by Mrs. Dahlstrom, and J.W. Smith asked if he could use the same name as her range for his development. She named it this because of the area's surroundings.

Smith bought the land in 1975 and began building in 1976. Many people think it was a great place to build a neighborhood because it is peaceful away from the city life.

The area soil consists of three layers. The top layer consists of a sandy loam type of soil. The second layer consists of clay and rock, and the third is a type of chalk rock. The main type of tree that grows in my neighborhood is live oak and the type of flowers are those that grow from bulbs.

The area grew from 10 families in 1976 to 110 families in 1981. The homes in the area are very efficient. They are on small lots but most people like it that way because they're easier to take care of and it leaves more time to be with the family.

The area is very successful and most people think that it is a nice place in which to live. In the next decade many people think that there

will be more selling of homes, more business and more traffic.

The neighborhood is near Williamson Creek but flooding has not been a problem. In Western Oaks there have not been any tornadoes, but minor crimes like vandalism. There have been only two fires. Once a kitchen burned and the other time an entire house burned down.

In our neighborhood we have recreational areas—a swimming pool, tennis courts, a park and a basketball court. They all were J.W. Smith's ideas. The places of interest in Western Oaks are the recreational areas.

During the year we have many parties, which were Betty Lewis' idea of bringing the families together. The annual events are the Easter Egg Hunt, the Halloween Party and Parade, a summer barbecue, a tennis challenge, tennis lessons and swimming lessons. The only thing that Western Oaks needs is a community clubhouse where we could have the parties inside if it rained.

The area has been affected by many things. The area has been interrupted by busing. Most people think that if the plan for William Cannon Drive is passed the neighborhood would be changed. It would bring in more traffic and the families wouldn't let their pets and children go out, ride bikes or play as freely as they had before. With the incoming Motorola, many people think that it will bring in too much traffic and other stores may also come in.

There are many churches coming in and the people think other than more traffic it will be good for our neighborhood. Instead of stores the area people think that a fire station and a hospital would be a good idea.

My neighborhood is a nice area which I enjoy. It may not be the same in a few years, but it will still be a place I'll never forget.