

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

THE MEDALLION

WINTER 2014

Scouting the Forts Trail

Frontier Outposts
Near Abilene
Tell Real Stories
of Texas' Past





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www.thc.state.tx.us thc@thc.state.tx.us

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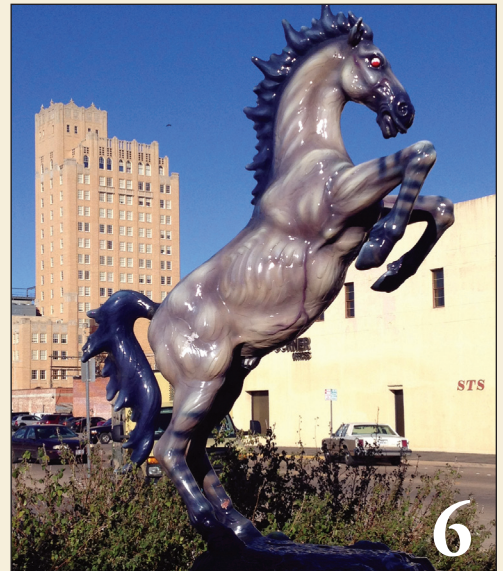
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Fort Phantom Hill near Abilene.
Photo: Andy Rhodes

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FAST FACTS

The THC's preservation programs are significant economic catalysts throughout the state.

Texas Main Street Program

\$2.64

BILLION

reinvested in Texas downtowns and urban commercial districts since 1981.

Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program

\$269

MILLION

in local income generated.

9,693

JOBS

supported.

THC Commissioner Emeritus T.R. Fehrenbach Dies

Legendary Texas Historian, Writer Was ‘Recognized the World Over’

By Andy Rhodes
Managing Editor, The Medallion

Former Texas Historical Commission (THC) Chairman T.R. Fehrenbach, an iconic Texas historian, author, and columnist, died on December 1, 2013 of congestive heart failure. He was 88 years old.

Theodore Reed Fehrenbach served on the commission for three terms from 1983–2001, and was chairman from 1987–1991. Gov. Rick Perry appointed him commissioner emeritus in 2001.

“T.R. Fehrenbach was the embodiment of the Texas Historical Commission’s mission to preserve Texas history and to tell the real stories of the real places of the Lone Star State,” said THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe. “His knowledge of Texas was unsurpassed and recognized the world over. He was a true Texas treasure who will be greatly missed.”

Fehrenbach was buried at the Texas State Cemetery in Austin on December 5. His site is surrounded by the graves of other literary and Texas giants, including Gov. Allen Shivers, author J. Frank Dobie, and artist Tom Lea. He was adorned with medals in his Army officer attire and attended by a Fort Hood Honor Guard.

Fehrenbach was a retired lieutenant colonel who served in World War II and the Korean War. The service included a 21-gun salute and full military honors.

Texas House Speaker Joe Straus presented Fehrenbach’s widow, Lillian, with a flag flown over the State Capitol, and discussed Fehrenbach’s contributions as a storyteller and patriot with those in attendance.

Fehrenbach authored several significant books, some of which are required reading for students of Texas and Korean War history. He published 18 nonfiction books, including the 792-page *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (1968, 1999), the most widely read history of Texas. His book *This Kind of War* (1963, 1995) is considered the classic military history of the Korean War. He served on the Texas 2000 Commission, chaired the Texas Antiquities Committee, and was a trustee of the State History Museum Foundation.

Fehrenbach was also a fellow of the Texas State Historical Association, a member of the Philosophical Society of Texas, a knight of San Jacinto, and member of the Authors Guild and Science Fiction Writers of America. He was a popular Sunday editorial columnist for the *San Antonio Express-News*. The THC’s T.R. Fehrenbach Book Award was presented annually until 2011 to recognize exemplary writing about Texas history.

Former THC Chief Historian Dan Utley fondly recalls working with Fehrenbach during his tenure.

“While Ted Fehrenbach has been rightfully praised as a man of letters



T.R. Fehrenbach was appointed THC Commissioner Emeritus in 2001.

and a giant among the chroniclers of the past, I remember him most fondly as a generous and witty man who always challenged the THC staff to achieve high standards of public service,” Utley said. “He had an innate sense of the layers of history and so greatly appreciated the unique role of the agency in preserving vestiges of the past for the future. In that regard, he and his wife, Lillian, made a dynamic team who selflessly shared their abiding sense of Texas heritage with great purpose, humor, and respect.”

Fehrenbach is survived by his wife, two nephews, and a niece. ★

On the Road to Progress

Bankhead Highway Team Gathers Public Input, Embarks on Resource Development

By Leslie Wolfenden
 THC Historic Resources Survey Coordinator

The Bankhead Highway’s impact on hundreds of Texas communities—from colossal cities to tiny towns—remains evident to this day. Upon completion of the highway in the 1920s, businesses and attractions specifically catering to motorists emerged along the transcontinental roadway, which stretched across Texas from Texarkana to El Paso. Fortunately, many of these resources remain intact.

In Texarkana, the historic route along 7th Street is lined with 1940s, ‘50s, and ‘60s motels, restaurants, and gas stations built for those traveling by car. Similarly, in the 1920s, the Bankhead Highway traversed the Deep Ellum neighborhood in Dallas along Commerce Street. Today, the neighborhood retains many of the gas stations, garages, and dealerships dating to that era. In Abilene, South 1st Street contains one of the best collections of historic motels (1930s–60s) along the entire highway’s path in Texas.

In smaller towns, the Bankhead often traversed Main Street business districts. Communities such as Mount Vernon in Franklin County, Ranger and Eastland in Eastland County, and Big Spring in Howard County hosted the historic highway, and they retain respectable collections of auto-related businesses dating to the mid-1900s.

The Texas Historic Roads and Highways Program’s public involvement and survey phases were completed in December 2013. Earlier in the year, teams of professional historians traveled along the route to document historic buildings and structures.

Survey teams followed the five known alignments of the historic highway: a 1922 route based on the T. A. Dunn Tourist Guide; a 1923 route based on a Rand McNally Auto Trails Map; and routes from circa 1930–34, 1936–40, and 1961 following the various historic alignments of U.S. 67 and U.S. 80 based on Texas Highway Department maps. The survey teams began work in Texarkana and traveled westward to El Paso through dozens of Texas communities.

documented several historic Chevrolet and Buick dealerships.

Notable historic hotels identified along the Bankhead Highway include the Adolphus Hotel and the Statler Hilton in downtown Dallas, the Baker Hotel in

Mineral Wells, the Mobley Hotel in Cisco, and Hotel Settles in Big Spring. Other noteworthy resources

include Fair Park in Dallas and the Kimbell Art Museum and Stockyards in Fort Worth.

“The survey team even documented the Bankhead itself—original roadway segments, bridges, culverts, and some roadside parks,” explains Bratten Thomason, director of the Texas Historical Commission’s (THC) History Programs Division. “They found a segment of the original concrete

road from the 1920s that runs for about five miles near Redwater. This stretch really helps shed some light on the highway’s history, with several intact bridges and historic culverts.”

Although multiple original segments of the road remain in various West Texas communities, one of the longest pieces of original brick roadway still in use was documented in Cisco (Eastland County). Extensive segments of brick roadway are



Remnants of the Bankhead Highway can still be found in communities across Texas, including (above) the Sinclair gas station in Albany, and (top) a historic car dealership in Garland.

Teams documented more than 30 different types of resources related to the historic highway, including auto repair shops, gas stations, auto dealerships, restaurants, motels and tourist courts, hotels, and drive-in theaters. Excellent examples of original Gulf, Magnolia, Texaco, Sinclair, and Phillips 66 gas stations were identified by the survey teams along the highway. The survey teams also

still in use in the towns of Eastland and Ranger, and the survey team documented small metal stop signs embedded into the roadway in Eastland and Merkel.

Also of particular interest were two segments of the historic Bankhead Highway that are now under water. These portions of the old highway can be seen partially submerged in Lake Ray Hubbard near Garland and in Hubbard Creek Lake outside of Breckenridge.

In addition to completing the survey work, the team of historians is also documenting a significant amount of insightful material gathered during the public involvement phase of the project. From August to December 2013, 10 public



The Baker Hotel in Mineral Wells was on the Bankhead Highway.

meetings were held in Texarkana, Mount Vernon, Dallas, Fort Worth, Eastland, Mineral Wells, Abilene, Midland, Van Horn, and El Paso.

In each community, David Moore, president of Austin-based cultural resource management firm Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., spoke to the public regarding the project. Attendees were encouraged

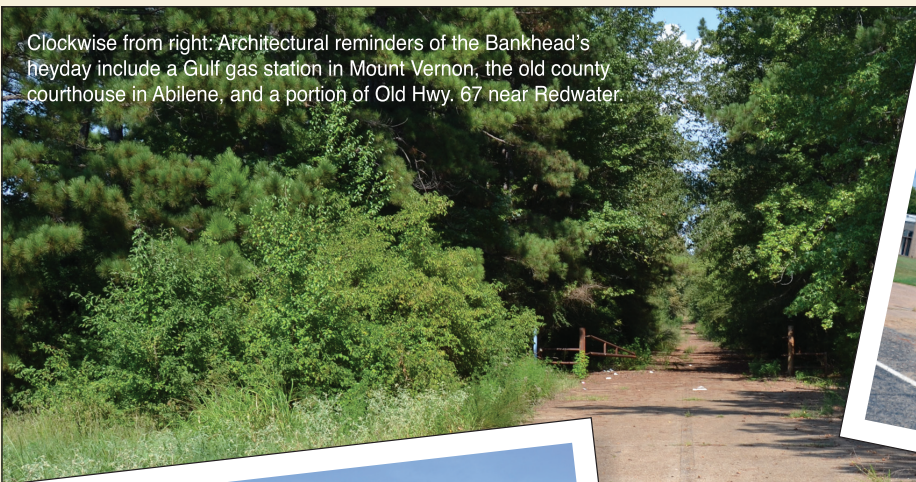
to share photographs, maps, postcards, and stories about the Bankhead Highway to add to the public body of knowledge.

Notable attendees at the meetings included Jim Wright, former Speaker

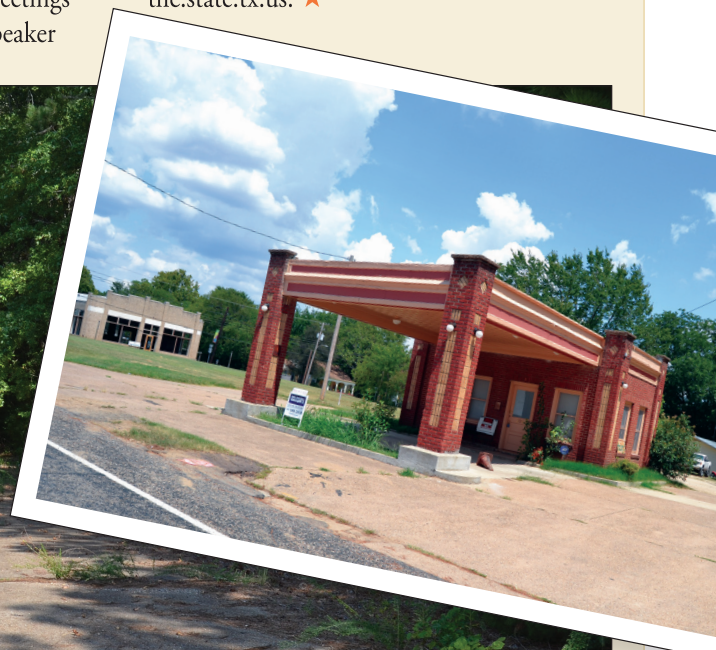
of the U.S. House of Representatives; Dan Smith, Bankhead Highway enthusiast and author; and Noah Gilliam, district and legislative director for State Representative George Lavender.

The Bankhead Highway resource team will remain busy throughout the first half of 2014 with multiple tasks, including finalizing the statewide historic context report on historic highways; developing the research and survey materials into user-friendly products (such as electronic-based maps and applications to provide heritage tourism and cultural resource information); creating a historic highway resources typology and National Register of Historic Places eligibility evaluation criteria; and updating the THC's Historic Sites Atlas database.

For additional information about the Texas Historic Roads and Highways Program, visit www.thc.state.tx.us or contact the THC's Leslie Wolfenden at 512.463.3386 or leslie.wolfenden@thc.state.tx.us. ★



Clockwise from right: Architectural reminders of the Bankhead's heyday include a Gulf gas station in Mount Vernon, the old county courthouse in Abilene, and a portion of Old Hwy. 67 near Redwater.





A Taste of Texas

Texas Forts Trail Region

'Is the Real Texas People Expect to Experience'

*Text and photos by Andy Rhodes
The Medallion Managing Editor*

Sitting next to a crackling fireplace in the timber-lined dining room of his legendary steakhouse, Tom Perini surveys his surroundings and begins smiling.

He motions to the perfectly prepared ribeye on the table and the stunning landscape beyond the window, proclaiming, "This is the real Texas people expect to experience. Just look at everything around here—sometimes it feels like we're still on the edge of the frontier, with all these wide-open spaces and natural gifts. I really don't think you could find a better place for Texas history and culture."

Indeed, this portion of the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Forts Trail Region near Abilene is known as Big Country for a reason. Its panoramic views and legendary history are colossal. And Perini, a THC commissioner, proudly attests to this enormity.

Although he's internationally known as the proprietor of Perini Ranch Steakhouse in Buffalo Gap, Perini is also an important cultural ambassador for Texas. A native of the area, he has a deep knowledge and appreciation for its heritage, which he shares with local residents, national visitors, and even foreign dignitaries.

In the 1990s, Perini was asked by then-Texas Gov. George W. Bush to cook meals on special occasions. He continued the arrangement when Bush became president, and was once invited to prepare a genuine Texas-style dinner in Crawford for visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin.

According to Perini, "Putin had never experienced the taste of properly cooked beef, since Russians usually make it well-done." Although Perini admitted to being nervous about cooking for two of the most powerful men in the world, he managed to prepare a medium-rare steak that he deemed satisfactory.



PERINI RANCH
STEAKHOUSE



Above: A map from the THC's Chisholm Trail travel guide shows the Goodnight-Loving trail route. Below: Scenes from Abilene's Frontier Texas! museum.

"President Putin was amazed with the flavor—he told me he couldn't believe this type of food even existed," Perini recalls. "I even went to Russia to show their chefs how to properly cook beef. I'm not sure how successful they ever got with it, but at least I was able to show them how it's supposed to be done."

Perini has been promoting Texas' cultural attributes for three decades at his steakhouse 15 miles southwest of Abilene, and his pride in regional history is evident as he shares stories with guests about the Forts Trail Region's colorful past. He also proudly cites the efforts of his wife Lisa, who served as the first coordinator (1998–2000) for the region that paved the way for the THC's Texas Heritage Trails Program.

Looking back at the region's past several centuries, Perini cites the tremendous impact of the Comanche tribe, which he deems "a force to be reckoned with on horseback" that ultimately triggered the U.S. to build several lines of protective frontier forts for westward settlers.

"We wouldn't have a Forts Trail Region if it wasn't for that military conflict," Perini notes. "All the forts in this area have a different way of letting folks know about that time in Texas history."

Perini also has a strong interest in the subsequent era of the region's heritage: cattle drives. He acknowledges the significance of famous routes like the Chisholm and Western trails, but he is especially intrigued by the Goodnight-Loving Trail (active circa 1866–86), which traversed the Abilene-Buffalo Gap area before heading south toward San Angelo and eventually along the Pecos River into New Mexico and Colorado.

During this same period, nearby Fort Griffin, now one of the THC's 20 historic sites, became a hub of activity with the development of an adjacent community known as The Flat. Local historians describe The Flat as a quintessential Wild West town, with rough-and-tumble saloons, dubious law enforcement characters, and plenty of money from the lucrative buffalo hide trade.

"The Flat owes most of its existence to the buffalo slaughter, which started in 1874 and lasted about four years," Perini explains, adding that an estimated five million buffalo were killed in the area at the time. "Looking back now, it's a shame, really. But at the time, it was big business."

By 1881, Abilene was established with the arrival of the Texas and Pacific Railroad. Perini notes the city was named after the well-known Kansas cattle town of the same name in hopes of establishing a similar reputation in Texas, but by then the trail-drive era was coming to a close. With the newly arrived railroads providing national trade routes, Abilene became a significant provider of buffalo bones (remnants of the slaughter) for fertilizer plants and bone-china warehouses.

Perini's family moved to the area at this time and eventually established the ranch where his steakhouse now sits. He spent his early years on the property attempting a rugged cowboy life, until a fateful conversation with legendary ranch owner Watt Matthews shifted his perspective.

"He said to me, 'Tom, you really know how to cook beef. I have a feeling you'd have more success with cooking than with ranching.' Turns out, he was right!" Perini recalls. "I can't help but think how things have changed so much since I was a little boy. I could never imagine I'd be in such a fine situation, living and working in a part of Texas I love so much."



A FRESH FRONTIER

From Comanche legends to buffalo bones to cattle drives, one of the best places to experience the Forts Trail Region's immense history is **Frontier Texas!** (325.437.2800, www.frontiertexas.com), a 10-year-old museum in downtown Abilene that has already undergone a renovation project. Executive Director Jeff Salmon reports the museum added exhibits, artifacts, and interpretation related to the region's pre-history, since it previously focused only on the century before Abilene's 1881 founding.

"There isn't a natural history museum anywhere near us, so we felt it was important to include a broader scope so our visitors could understand the context of significant historical events in this area," Salmon says.

Museum administrators re-scripted stories told by the "spirit guides" (holograms of significant historical figures), recreated exhibits with specific themes, and worked with founder H.C. Zachry on new visual imagery and concepts. Salmon also notes that the museum's previous approach—primarily focused on multimedia interactive experiences—was not entirely effective with visitors, who occasionally avoided touch screens or unknowingly walked past electronic exhibits.

"We brought in some artifacts and text panels—now people are stopping to look at these things and making a connection with the physical objects as opposed to a computer screen image," Salmon

Right: Frontier Texas!' tower of buffalo skulls; Fort Phantom Hill's lone chimneys.

says. "In some respects, we're sort of taking a step back to a more traditional model, but these older museum concepts certainly stand the test of time."

Visitors now take a chronological journey through the museum,

beginning with pre-historical Native American occupation, continuing to European expansion, and culminating with Abilene's official founding. One exhibit that consistently draws attention is a nearly 15-foot tall pile of buffalo skulls bathed in an ominous red light. Salmon says it represents Abilene's lucrative buffalo bone business in the late 1800s; specifically, one of the museum site's previous occupants—Texas Hide & Bone, Co.

"All the buffalo bones from this area were brought right to this spot and put on the train," Salmon explains. "It was said there were so many buffalo bones around here, that you could walk all the way to Buffalo Gap without ever touching the ground."

He believes it is one of many memorable experiences that will resonate with visitors.

"Our goal is to get people excited about the Forts Trail Region's history, and then go out and be heritage tourism ambassadors," he says.

"Hopefully, they'll spread the word about all the amazing stories we have to tell, and that will get other people just as excited."



Above: A portion of Fort Chadbourne's extensive gun exhibit.

ABILENE ADVENTURE

As its name implies, the Forts Trail Region has a rich military history, starting with the 17th-century Presidio San Saba and the mid-1800s frontier forts, including: Belknap, Chadbourne, Concho, Griffin, Mason, McKavett, Phantom Hill, and Richardson. The following forts are within an hour of Abilene.

Fort Griffin

(325.762.3592, www.visitfortgriffin.com), one of the THC's 20 historic sites, is currently undergoing needed renovations, including expansion of the visitor center and exhibit. Located about 50 miles northeast of Abilene, the fort was active from



1867–81, and contains the remains of several historic structures. It became a major support post during the Red River War of 1874. The site is also home to a portion of the Official Texas Longhorn Herd. While the historic fort area is not accessible, a temporary visitor center (with exhibits and museum store), campgrounds, and educational programs continue to operate. The expanded visitor center is expected to reopen with all-new exhibits in late 2014.

Just north of Abilene, **Fort Phantom Hill** (325.677.1309, www.fortphantom.org) is one of the area's most popular heritage attractions. A new visitors kiosk offers historical information and an extensive brochure with a map and self-guided tour. The fort, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, was one of the largest of its kind, with dozens of structures and hundreds of soldiers at the "Post on the Clear Fork of the Brazos" (its unofficial name at the time). Its eerie lone chimneys reaching upward to the expansive sky have beckoned photographers for decades.

About 45 miles southwest of Abilene lies **Fort Chadbourne** (325.743.2555, www.fortchadbourne.org), a true outpost in an extremely rural area of the state. Visitors making the excursion are rewarded with well-preserved fort buildings and endless Big Country vistas. An impressive new visitors center offers an educational video and hundreds of artifacts telling the tales of fort life. Established in 1852, Fort Chadbourne was home to hundreds of soldiers who protected westward settlers, and it reportedly hosted legendary visitors such as Confederate Generals Robert E. Lee and George Pickett.

A more-recent era of military history is highlighted in downtown Abilene at the **12th Armored Division Memorial Museum** (325.677.6515, www.12tharmoredmuseum.com). According to museum President Dale Cartee, the facility is dedicated to World War II soldiers who trained in Abilene at former Camp Barkeley. Division members, officially known as Hellcats, were dedicated to the liberation of Nazi concentration camps. The museum collection includes rare military uniforms,



Above: Historical exhibits in the Grace Hotel lobby. Left: The 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum.

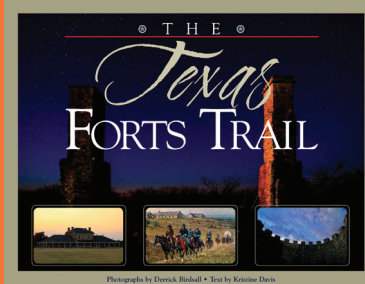
weaponry, impressively constructed dioramas, five vehicles, and 2,700 photos. "One of the main reasons we're able to preserve so many artifacts and documents was due to the somewhat-rare appointment of battalion historians at the time," Cartee explains.

The most current military site is Abilene's active **Dyess Air Force Base** (www.dyess.af.mil). The base contains a small heritage center with information about namesake Lt. Col. William Dyess. Visitors should note that viewing its most impressive collection—several dozen historic aircraft at the Dyess Air Park—requires a lengthy application and approval process. Call 325.696.2863 for information.

Abilene's most-recognized historic downtown building is the **Grace Museum** (325.673.4587, www.thegracemuseum.org), a magnificent four-story 1909 National Register-listed property. It now houses several separate museums dedicated to regional history, international artwork, and children's displays. A notable exhibit is a recreated boot shop representing local commerce in the 1940s.

For information about other nearby heritage tourism destinations, order a free copy of the THC's *Texas Forts Trail Region* travel guide at 866.276.6219 or www.texastimettravel.com. ★

FORT PHOTOS



A new book with photos by Derrick Birdsall and text by Kristine Davis documents historic structures in the Texas Forts Trail Region.

"It's a stunningly gorgeous book," says Margaret Hoogstra,

executive director of the Forts Trail Region. "The beautiful photos and informative content do a wonderful job of highlighting our region's appealing nature."

The book features images related to frontier life, including Comanche heritage, the Butterfield Overland Mail stage route, and Army soldiers. For more information, visit www.acupressbooks.com.

Grass-Roots Preservation

Researchers Unearth Cultural Heritage Clues at Hays County Cemetery

By *THC Cemetery Program Staff*

Sometimes, a routine phone call about a Historic Texas Cemetery (HTC) designation can lead to spectacular discoveries and unexpected insights.

Jennifer McWilliams, the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) new Cemetery Preservation Program coordinator, recently spoke with Dr. Ana Juárez, a Texas State University (TSU) anthropology professor seeking guidance about an HTC application for a historic cemetery in Hays County.

Juárez's oral history research indicated an important Mexican American cemetery was missing from the Hays County records. After consulting with Hays County Historical Commission (CHC) Chairman Jim Cullen, they decided to investigate a site that was plotted on a county map, but had not been documented because it reportedly contained only a few stones and rotting crosses. Juárez and Cullen were rewarded with unanticipated findings such as crosses with rare decorative metal tips, wood and metal plot fences, several headstones, numerous rock cairns, and personal offerings from bygone days.

McWilliams later met Juárez at the cemetery along with Amy Benton, collection manager for TSU's Center for Archeological Studies, and Rebecca Swaim, a TSU student. Juárez had previously made numerous visits to the site, and received early permission from the landowner, a state requirement when accessing a cemetery via private property.

"Without this permission, significant historic and cultural information would be lost," McWilliams says. "Texas landowners should be commended for cooperating with researchers to record historic cemeteries."



Above and at right: This Hays County Cemetery was undocumented due to its reported lack of gravesites.

She adds that the Hays County site visit took the research team along a faint path through interspersed cedar trees, up a steep hill, and to a slight swale, where signs of a forgotten cemetery began to appear. First, they saw a piece of barbed wire embedded in a tree, leading to a broken fence line. Soon afterward, they observed a hand-carved limestone cross toppled into an animal burrow, a patch of non-native agaves, and intermittent lines of rectangular rock piles identified as burial cairns.

"Through the patchy cedars, we could see wooden and metal decorative plot fences, standing and fallen," McWilliams recalls. "Even the untrained eye could recognize that these were out of place. This was definitely a forgotten cemetery."

Juárez's accompanying visitors have consistently expressed excitement as they reached more populated portions of the cemetery, where they witnessed vessels that once contained offerings (including tin containers and a porcelain teapot), wire from flower wreaths, and bright green and solarized glass vases.

Juárez pointed out a metal-tipped cross at the end of a wooden picket plot fence and another at the head of a rock





citizens to replace the slaves. Juárez says the cemetery’s cairn-style burials could be a practical solution to a rocky burial ground; however, she has also uncovered historical evidence that may link them to mestizo or indigenous groups from West Texas or Northern Mexico.

As an anthropologist, Juárez looks at the cemetery from as many angles as possible to study the community’s culture. Historic research from the surrounding 19th-century

community showed an early Anglo Methodist church in the vicinity. The earliest Hispanic church was the Hispanic Methodist Church, established in the 1870s; a Catholic church was not established until the mid-1880s.

“It’s possible this relationship affected the incorporation of English, and this could potentially indicate the community was

is to reverse the years of neglect by immediately clearing and cleaning it. Though this is a natural reaction, well-meaning caretakers should consider what might be lost by these actions. For example, McWilliams says much of a cemetery’s vegetation is cultural, and removing it results in a critical loss of information.

“In Hays County, the density of the natural vegetation would result in massive dragging and piling, which would destroy some of the ephemeral evidence such as remains of wooden crosses,” McWilliams explains, adding that Juárez immediately consulted a local expert on native flora (in this case, Linda Keese).

McWilliams recommends mapping as a top priority. She says the map does not need to be created with modern technology; in fact, pencil and paper maps allow researchers to include detailed notes and visual descriptions. Each visit to the site provides researchers with a new view of the cemetery, including vegetative changes in different seasons.

McWilliams adds that an increasing threat to Texas cemeteries is modern encroachment and development. As highways, shopping malls, and housing developments are built, historians and archeologists are often required to address the disturbed and undisturbed remains.

To help determine if nearby cemeteries may be threatened, look for potentially neglected locations on the THC’s Historic Sites Atlas (atlas.thc.state.tx.us).

“Our estimates show that we have tens of thousands of cemeteries to find,” McWilliams says. “Texans can help with this research by conducting oral histories, consulting archival records like historic maps and military documents, and hiring archeologists to conduct surveys. The sooner this work is done, the less history we will lose.” ★



Further research by historians and anthropologists revealed dozens of graves, broken headstones, and several rare objects.

cairn. Additional pieces of metal tipping were found on the ground beneath the crooked crosses. Simple wooden crosses were the most common type of grave marker.

“Many of these crosses had fallen over, allowing weathering and decay to accelerate—these are the graves that will be lost very soon,” McWilliams explains. “The only legible names were traditionally Hispanic names, but some of the legible inscriptions were in both English and Spanish.”

CULTURAL AFFILIATION

Juárez’s research indicates the cemetery was affiliated with a local cotton plantation dating to the 1850s that originally used enslaved labor. After the Civil War, cotton farmers recruited Mexican

less segregated or had more class-based diversity during this period,” Juárez explains.

McWilliams adds that these types of significant cultural findings typically begin with Texans working at the grass-roots level. When curiosity leads to discovery, a simple phone call to the THC or a local CHC can result in far-reaching historical impacts.

“Dr. Juárez’s efforts have helped save this cemetery,” McWilliams says. “We had a dot on a map to mark the location, but now there’s so much more that can be learned and tied in to the cultural landscape.”

PREVENTING NEGLECT

McWilliams says once a lost cemetery is rediscovered, an initial response

Strong Stewards

THC Program Assists with Ongoing Courthouse Maintenance

By Susan Gammage
THC Architecture Division

In November 2013, Navarro County citizens decidedly approved a \$7.5 million bond referendum, of which \$4.7 million was a local match for a Round VII \$4.4 million Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program grant.

Just weeks before the bond election, a 100-year-old water pipe broke on an upper floor, flooding part of the courthouse and causing the county to shut down the building for two days while plumbers made repairs. Then, mere days after the successful outcome of the bond election, an electrical fire erupted in the county judge's office. Although it was quickly extinguished, the blaze could have had devastating consequences.

With the bond election now passed, James Kirk, Navarro County's director of maintenance, said he felt tremendously relieved knowing the county is committed to a major building overhaul, which will result in a newly renovated, water-tight building with updated plumbing, electrical, and mechanical systems. He added that he "can see a light at the end of the long tunnel" of frequent and stop-gap repairs that ultimately cost the county extra money. County Judge H.M. Davenport believes "the public will be well pleased with the changes."

Across Texas, many county officials and residents would likely agree that prior to undertaking the restoration of



Ongoing maintenance at Jeff Davis County Courthouse.

their courthouses through the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, the condition of their buildings was distressing. The listing of Texas' courthouses on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in 1999 and again in 2012 attests to the poor condition of many of the state's 240-plus historic courthouses.

"The projects that received major funding from our courthouse preservation program have fortunately addressed their buildings' needs, and they've certainly found that maintenance of their courthouses is much easier," says Sharon Fleming, director of the THC's Architecture Division.

The concept that even newly restored buildings require regular active maintenance led to the creation of the Texas Courthouse Stewardship Program in 2005 by then-THC Commissioner Frank Gorman of El Paso. It is an essential piece of the THC's strategy for preserving Texas courthouses. The program provides education and assistance to counties in their efforts to provide regular, cyclical maintenance and properly address the ongoing care a historic building requires. The effort is also intended to protect the investment made by the state and counties in the grant-funded projects.

The program offers guidance to county judges, commissioners, and facilities managers through an annual

workshop (sponsored by the Texas Land Title Association since 2007). The workshop features professional speakers and THC staff discussing issues identified as challenges by the attendees. Stewardship workshops have included sessions on pest management, maintenance of the grounds and trees, care of delicate clockworks, developing policies to manage use of the building and its square, and when to hire an architect.

In addition to conducting the workshops, THC program staff continue individual consultations with county representatives long after their buildings are restored. Many counties request guidance on best practices for maintenance, and require input on various issues that emerge.

"Under the preservation easements granted to the THC as part of the grant process, counties have a legal responsibility to care for their courthouses," Fleming explains. "But beyond that, we all want to do the right thing to ensure their beauty and functionality continue for many decades to come."

For more information about the Texas Courthouse Stewardship program, visit www.thc.state.tx.us or call 512.463.6094. ★



THC staff host annual courthouse stewardship workshops.

Meet Dr. Glen Ely

Friends of the Texas Historical Commission Donor Discusses Preservation's Significance

By *Rebecca Borchers*
Executive Director, Friends of the Texas Historical Commission

The Friends of the THC receives generous support from Dr. Glen Ely, a Texas historian. In 1999, the THC recognized Ely with its "Award of Excellence in Preserving History" for significant contributions to the understanding and preservation of Texas history.

Please tell us about your background and how you became interested in historic preservation. From 1984 to 2002, I produced Texas history documentaries for cities, counties, and historical societies (including county historical commissions), traveling more than 750,000 miles throughout the Lone Star State. In 2008, I received my Ph.D. in history from TCU in Fort Worth, and am now focused on researching and writing books on Texas history.

Do you have a personal story that you can share about historic preservation? My new book is a history of Texas' antebellum frontier, including Texas' portion of the Butterfield Overland Mail Route (St. Louis to San Francisco) that spanned our frontier from 1858 to 1861. For the last 25 years, I have worked with public and private landowners locating and documenting every Butterfield station in Texas, including some heretofore-unknown sites. Some of these stage stops are the oldest Euro-American sites in these counties. I wanted to preserve the stories of these early frontier communities, the people who lived and worked at these stage stops, and to document what remained of these historic sites so that they are not lost to time. All of the landowners have been very enthusiastic about this project and committed to preserving Texas' Butterfield legacy.

Why are you interested in the programs of the Texas Historical Commission?

The THC is the front line in historic preservation, and its people are often the first responders to communities and individuals across our state. I have long admired THC's outreach programs. Whether it is assisting with historic site preservation, heritage tourism, a local Main Street Program, a new historical marker, or learning how to write a preservation grant, the THC has always been committed to helping Texans keep their history alive and vital.



Friends of the THC donor Dr. Glen Ely has supported preservation projects across the state.

What is your personal philosophy about historic preservation? I believe that effective historic preservation is a public-private partnership. This partnership requires that the State of Texas, counties, cities, and dedicated individuals all work together in preserving and promoting our rich and diverse heritage. All of

these players must remain committed to this process if we are to continue safeguarding our state's remarkable legacy for future generations. As an individual, I want to be a part of this collaborative team working together to ensure that this happens.

What motivated you to make a gift to the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission? The annual appropriation that the THC receives from the state legislature does not cover all of the agency's programs, projects, and activities. Therefore, the rest of the funds needed for these historic preservation programs must come

from private individuals, corporations, and foundations.

What would you tell others who are thinking about giving to the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission? As Texans, we are blessed to have such an incredible heritage. Lone Star citizens, however, cannot take this legacy

for granted. We all share a common responsibility in giving of our time and our resources to help preserve our state's history. Historic preservation does not happen on its own—it requires committed citizens working together as a team. ★

Deadline Pending for Courthouse Preservation Program Grant Applications



The Comal County Courthouse was rededicated in 2013.

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) is now accepting applications for Round VIII of its award-winning Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program. With a \$4.2 million appropriation from the 83rd Texas Legislature, the Round VIII grants will be limited to funding smaller courthouse projects addressing urgent needs, rather than full restorations.

The THC requested \$20 million for the Round VIII grant cycle, but was appropriated only what remained in Proposition 4 bond funding. Round VIII emergency grants will address serious building deficiencies affecting usability, structural, and safety issues. The local cash match is 50 percent of the total project cost, and the maximum award is \$450,000.

Past emergency grant awards have covered such issues as termite-damaged windows, foundation stabilization, roof repairs, and accessibility upgrades for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The deadline for applications is February 13, 2014; forms and procedures are available at www.thc.state.tx.us. For information, contact the THC's Architecture Division at 512.463.6094. ★

NEW STATEWIDE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY CONFERENCE PLANNED

The inaugural Texas African American History Conference will take place February 23–28 in Dallas. The event's theme—"Creating Preservation Partners to Protect and Locate Historic African American Places and People"—emphasizes the need to assist preservationists across Texas.

Planned tours include historic African American churches and neighborhoods as well as "Sacred Burial Grounds" and "Political and Military Giants." Tours and meals are available for individual purchase, and a full-access conference admission is also available. Registration deadline is February 15. A Dallas-based location will be determined based on number of registrants.

Conference details are available by contacting The African American Preservation League's Dr. Ray Barnett at aahpl2003@gmail.com or 214.565.9026, ext. 335. ★

SAN JACINTO DAY FESTIVAL AND BATTLE REENACTMENT APPROACHES

Organizers of the San Jacinto Day Festival promise "booming cannons, cracking musket fire, thundering hooves, and battle cries will resound" on April 26 as hundreds of history reenactors recreate the events leading up to Texas winning its independence at the decisive Battle of San Jacinto.

The event commemorates historic events at the San Jacinto Battleground, where Gen. Sam Houston led his Texian soldiers to victory over the Mexican Army in 1836.

This dramatic battle reenactment is the centerpiece of the free San Jacinto Day Festival, held from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on the 1,200-acre San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site in La Porte, just east of Houston.

For more information, visit www.sanjacinto-museum.org or call 210.392.9047. ★

TEXAS TIME TRAVEL SWEEPSTAKES WINNER ANNOUNCED



Clarksville resident Jim Clark, a descendant of the town's namesake, won the THC's Texas Time Travel Sweepstakes. Clark will receive a "behind the scenes with the THC" heritage tourism trip in the Texas Heritage Trail Region of his choice, the Texas Tropical Trail Region.

Clark is the seventh generation of his family to live in Clarksville, and is senior vice president of the State Bank of De Kalb. He serves as treasurer of the Red River County Historical Society and helps lead historical house tours.

Clark's April 2014 journey will be chronicled in an upcoming *Medallion* heritage travel article. To start planning your own trip in one of Texas' heritage travel regions, visit www.texasimetravel.com. ★

Plan Now for Preservation Month

Celebrate CHCs with Fun Family Events in May

By Amy Hammons
County Historical Commission Outreach Coordinator

When planning activities for 2014, be sure to celebrate Preservation Month in May. Use this opportunity to join your CHC's voice with other preservation advocates to demonstrate the importance of saving real places that tell real stories.

Preservation Month acknowledges the mission we share with communities across the country to cultivate a love of historic places. Together, we help others understand the importance of saving history.

Construct an event or activity that enables all ages to learn about the historic resources in your county. This celebration should demonstrate how preservation efforts are not only educational but also fun and engaging.

For those who have already scheduled events for May, consider taking a few moments during your event to recognize Preservation Month, and mention this celebration in your publicity efforts to show your connection to a nationwide network of preservation-related organizations. Also, take some time to visit historic sites, museums, and courthouses. Stroll down main streets and support businesses that invest in the historic



Suzanne Young, Kendall County Historical Commission

Consider holding CHC programs during Preservation Month in May. Above: Bill Sultenfuss welcomes visitors to a Kendall County "Heritage Passport" event, inviting them to walk along the historic Pinta Trail. This activity demonstrates preservation fun for all ages.

fabric of their town. Take your friends and family along, and show them why preservation matters to you.

Preservation Month is a good time to join forces with other preservation organizations in your area and co-host an event. Regardless of the degree of involvement, be sure to include local, regional, and statewide

partners in your promotional efforts and event announcements.

THC staff have suggestions for those looking for a Preservation Month project, or who just want to expand their current scope of work. Visit www.thc.state.tx.us and search "Preservation Month Ideas" to see recommended projects. ★

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Our Mission

To protect and preserve the state's historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education, enjoyment, and economic benefit of present and future generations.



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

P.O. BOX 12276 • AUSTIN, TX 78711-2276
PHONE 512.463.6100 • FAX 512.475.4872
www.thc.state.tx.us

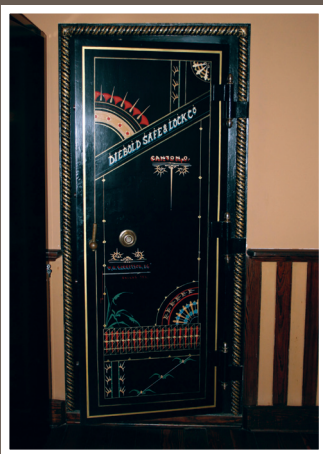
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WHERE ON EARTH...IN TEXAS

Know your Texas history? Put your skills to the test by identifying the pictured site! The first three people who correctly identify the location will receive a prize and be named in the next issue of *The Medallion*. Send your answer to: *The Medallion*, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276 or email to medallion@thc.state.tx.us.

Need a clue? The National Register listing for this iconic Lakes Trail Region building states that the octagonal tower “was most certainly inspired by the dome of the Cathedral, Florence Italy.”



Answer to the photo from the last issue: The site pictured at left is a vault inside the 1887 Leon County Courthouse in Centerville. Although several readers submitted responses referencing courthouse vaults in other cities, none correctly identified this site. Thanks to all who participated! ★

