

# HARRISON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## Meeting Minutes

November 12<sup>th</sup> 2015

The Harrison County Historical Commission (HCHC) is the county agency in Harrison County, Texas for historic preservation. Its mission is to assist the commissioners' court and the Texas Historical Commission (THC) in the preservation of our county's historical and cultural resources and to protect and preserve the county's historic and pre-historic resources for the use, education, enjoyment and economic benefit of present and future generations.

**Members Present:** Tom Speir, Rose Mary Magrill, Richard Magrill, Carol Fletcher, Doc Holliday, Robert Wood, Barbara Judkins, Vernella C. Taylor, Ann Brannon, Alaina Jones, Thomas Richardson, Elizabeth Bradshaw, Gail Beil, and Billy Nutt.

### **I. Call to Order**

Tom Speir, chair, called the meeting to order on Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup> 2015 at 1:34 p.m. in the Marshall Visual Arts Center. The commission applauded in congratulating Tom on his finally being appointed our chair.

### **II. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of October 8<sup>th</sup> 2015 were approved as distributed.

### **III. Treasurer's Report**

Elizabeth Bradshaw gave the treasurer's report which showed assets of \$13,820.22. Tom read a draft of an e-mail to County Judge Hugh Taylor regarding the transfer of the commission's bank account to the new Friends organization. Judge Taylor appeared to be in agreement with the proposed action but wants to run it by the county auditor and legal counsel.

#### **IV. The standing committee reports are as follows:**

##### **A. Archaeology**

Tom Speir reported that a man from the Elysian Fields area called to have him come look at what turned out to be just a collection of curiously shaped rocks (which showed no sign of any human artifice). Tom and Robert Wood both examined the collection. Tom also received a confidential report that northwest of Harleton is cemetery that may need recording. There is also an old roadbed nearby which can be recorded with the property owner's permission. Swancey Cemetery in the Texas Eastman area will be recorded when ownership is clarified and permission secured. Concerning the iron bridges on old US80, Judge Taylor wants to see if the county abandoned the bridges. Tom has checked with the Central Appraisal District and its records indicate the bridges are still county property (untaxed right of way). Tom is going to check into the procedures for recording archeological sites on county property. He is also checking on a site at the county airport that relates to WWII activities.

##### **B. Archives**

Tom Speir reported that we have received our two donated filing cabinets. Joey Hudson picked them up and delivered them to the office. Now we can have a filing party. Once we get the contents of the boxes filed we will have more room. We should then go ahead and get two or three more cabinets for future use (since they are free). Alaina Jones suggested Tuesday mornings as a time for the filing activity. Tom will mail a "thank you" letter to Doug Hurd at SIG Insurance for the gift of the filing cabinets. December 1<sup>st</sup> at 8:30 a.m. is the date agreed on for the filing party. Ann Brannon volunteered to come and help in afternoon.

##### **C. Cemeteries**

Thomas Richardson had no report. Ann Brannon showed before and after photos of the restoration work at Greenwood Cemetery being done by the Meadowbrook Funeral Home. The work is still in progress (delayed by the recent

rains) and payment will be made when it has been completed. Tom Speir reported on the Swancey Cemetery. He has contacted Sarah Randow about the work at the cemetery. He shared photos of the progress in clearing the cemetery and a listing from a database of graves that is being developed. The last burial was in 1966. December 5<sup>th</sup> at 8 a.m. will be the next work day (weather permitting). Use of new software that can do 3-D scans of headstones in order to help bring out obscured lettering is planned. Also, we may have access to a cemetery near the intersection of Sue Bell Lake and Henderson School House Road.

#### **D. Education**

Tom Speir presented a more finalized version of the new brochure being produced cooperatively by the museums (the T&P Railroad Museum, the Starr Home, the Michelson Art Museum, and the History Museum).

#### **E. Historical Markers**

Gail Beil reported on conversations with Bob Brinkman of the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Marker applications must be submitted electronically by the end of month. The status of the various marker applications in process is as follows: Birthplace of Boogie Woogie is ready; Pop Long (football coach at Wiley) is ready; Elks Club needs minutes in order to be finished; and James Farmer (founder of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)) is coming along. Gail has volunteered to pay for the Farmer marker and will ask the city to accept placement for it. Wiley College is planning on dedicating its markers in March of next year. Brinkman would very much like to be present at the Wiley dedications. He also thought that a marker commemorating Bishop College is a great idea. Gail thinks a Bishop marker should be on the grounds of Bethesda Baptist Church since it was the mother church to the college. Concerning the proposed Ingleside Historic District it is necessary to show that there is no objection from 51% of the people in the area to be designated.

Doc Holliday discussed the old bank building in Hallsville which dates from 1909. He is researching this site.

Concerning the Stagecoach Road marker, Doc is going to see if the Boy Scouts can practice cleaning it. Judge Taylor wants to see if the county can pay for erecting the marker on the Pine Bluff Church grounds.

In re: Bishop College materials referenced by Bo Ellis (some years ago) as far as Tom has been able to determine these unofficial materials are in storage in Dallas. Alva Phillips is the contact person. Vernella Taylor will make this contact and will contribute personal items to any collection assembled for display and/or storage in Marshall. Gail Beil noted that the official Bishop College archives are in an African American Museum on the State Fair Grounds in Dallas. Our focus is on items in private hands that might be collected in Marshall. Vernella will try to bring together these private collections and get them to Marshall.

Gail Beil reminded the commission that it had voted some years ago to move the Swanson's Landing marker from Jonesville to a higher traffic location (perhaps in Waskom).

#### **F. History Museum**

Carroll Fletcher reported on a presentation made by Becky Palmer on Tuesday night. The Museum is still selling plaques for Veterans. The cemetery tour was lightly attended this year, but we believe that with more publicity and having it closer to Halloween attendance can increase.

#### **G. Information Technology**

Elizabeth Bradshaw (chair of our Information Technology Committee) discussed placing QR codes at the various historic sites in downtown Marshall. It may take a year but should be completed by the Wonderland of Lights for 2016. Tom Speir reported that our minutes are now available on the county website: "We are expanding our digital footprint."

#### **H. Oral History**

Tom Speir reported that Debbie Gullett's fiancé has developed brain cancer and this situation has precluded her involvement in this area of our work.

## **I. Preservation**

No report.

## **J. Publications**

Gail Beil reported that Andy Rhodes is doing a story on Sabine Farms and is looking at doing a feature on Melvin Tolson in February. Tom Speir shared a copy of *Texas Heritage Travel Guide* and read the Marshall entry to the commission.

Gail mentioned the Lale Trail. Tom is trying to get permission to link our website to the Lale Trail website at Stephen F. Austin State University.

Tom also reported that he has made his own brochure for Sabine Farms.

## **K. Goals**

Tom Speir noted that we have already discussed the QR code project. As soon as we have funds we will proceed on the project to erect signs on US80 celebrating it as the World War II Veterans Memorial Highway.

## **L. Annual Preservation Awards**

Tom Speir asked that commission members be thinking about nominees for next year's awards, indicating that we will probably need the nominations by March in order to present the commission awards on Sunday May 15<sup>th</sup> 2016 jointly with the Landmark Preservation Board awards. "These awards are tools in our toolbox," he emphasized. "Folks in our county have private files and with a little recognition they can be encouraged to share them. Our awards are a tool in this recognition and encouragement." He reported that the Librarian at Waskom has a file on its local history. Becky Palmer would normally ask folks to let us copy, but, due to the refurbishing of Memorial City Hall, Becky will not be able to accept any donations to the Research Center at the Museum until November of 2016. It was noted that the records of the Research Center are being stored offsite during the construction work. Tom passed out nomination forms for proposed recipients of next year's awards.

## **V. Special Reports**

### **A. 1901 Courthouse**

No report.

### **B. T & P Depot Museum**

Robert Wood reported that the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party for the T&P Museum's Engine 400 went well. They were particularly pleased to have two of the last surviving engineers present. Laura Perry is now at work in the gift shop. The museum has new lighting which they hope to fire up for tonight in connection with Wonderland of Lights. "Santa at the Depot" is coming up December 5<sup>th</sup>. Tom Speir noted that the office received a copy of the proposed improvements on handicapped access at the depot.

### **C. Starr Home**

Barbara Judkins reported on the exhibit on 19<sup>th</sup> century fashion at the Starr Home. Some items are from the Starr Home collection, some from Shreveport, and some from the History Museum. Free showings are available to all commission members. Be sure to check Facebook in December where an elf will be making posts. The elf will also visit the community and show folks how to be elves. The Starr Home will dedicate the gazebo in the name of Marjorie Perkins on December 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. It will also have its Christmas theatrical and open house that day. She noted that the cemetery tour in October will be moved closer to Halloween.

### **D. Michelson Museum of Art**

Tom Speir read an e-mail from Susan Spears regarding the Michelson Museum. The American Watercolor Society exhibit, on display now, will remain through December 12<sup>th</sup>. December 19<sup>th</sup> the Michelson will present a play, *Always Christmas*, for the Wonderland of Lights. This event will be from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### **E. Historic Landmark Preservation Board**

Alaina Jones indicated that there is nothing to report.

### **VI. Other**

#### **Annual Luncheon Panel Discussion.**

Gail Beil noted that there is talk about having a luncheon panel discussion in February around the time of the Super Bowl which would focus on sports figures such as Y.A. Tittle, George Foreman, and Pop Long.

### **VII. Administrative**

**Business Cards.** Tom Speir showed examples of our old business cards. He intends to have generic ones printed which can be used by all commission members. These cards would include the office e-mail address and the telephone number for voice-mail inquiries. He indicated that commission members should make their use of the cards very judicious since he had seen similar cards used at gun shows to claim authentication by various organizations. The printing of generic cards was authorized.

**Incoming Mail.** Tom Speir reported that we get mail regarding a variety of subjects: a gentleman who has box of stuff from Judge F.H. Prendergast; a person looking for a quiver and bow; interest in an artifact collection at East Texas Baptist University; someone wanting Stagecoach Road better maintained; somebody interested in sawmills; another wanting a marker for the home of Jim Reeves (in neighboring Panola County); information on how to get a tour of Sabine Farms; and a man in Elysian Fields who has a home originally located in Marshall which was moved to Elysian Fields and who wants somebody to buy and move it back.

**Texas Preservation and The Medallion.** Tom shared issues of *Texas Preservation* and *The Medallion* with commission members. He has sent a list and hopes that, as a result, all commission members will be added to the mailing lists for these publications.

**Commission Member Terms of Office.** Tom reported on a meeting with Judge Taylor. In order to get our terms on a biennial basis corresponding to our bylaws, next December he will renominate all of us. In November next year we will have a new election of the chair and the secretary will communicate our action to the county judge requesting the appointment and Tom will send renomination forms in for the commission members. The judge has expressed concern that 30 members is a large number. Tom noted that if a couple of members step down (we have a couple of people who have asked to join us) then we can ask for such new members to be added.

**Historic Buildings for Sale.** Tom reported that he has received a request for a listing of historic buildings for sale. Such a list is not our job, but he may discuss with local realtors to see if they would set up such a listing. If they do a list we could link to it from our website. Ann Brannon will contact Ann Yappen.

**Key to Courthouse Annex.** Tom has asked for his own key to the door of the courthouse annex where our office is located.

**August 27<sup>th</sup> Called Meeting and Bylaws Revision.** The minutes of the August 27<sup>th</sup> called meeting and the Proposed Revised Bylaws contained therein were approved as printed. These Bylaws will now be submitted to the Commissioners Court for their approval. Once they have given their approval, Tom will send the new bylaws to THC for its review.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

The next meeting will be January 14<sup>th</sup> at the Marshall Public Library at 1:30 p.m. The meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.

**Submitted by Richard Magrill**