

# HARRISON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## Meeting Minutes

January 12<sup>th</sup> 2017

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, Richard Magrill, Rose Mary Magrill, Ann Brannon, Barbara Judkins, Marty Vaughan, Bill Whitis, Jean Birmingham, Gail K. Beal, Robert Wood, and Thomas Richardson.

**Visitor Present:** Tony Crosby.

### Call to Order

Tom Speir, chair, called the meeting to order on January 12<sup>th</sup> 2017 at 1:31 p.m. in the conference room of the Marshall Depot Museum and welcomed all to the meeting.

### II. Approval of Minutes, Announcement of Reappointments/New Appointments, and Election of Officers

Minutes of the meeting of November 11<sup>th</sup> 2016 were approved as distributed.

Tom Speir announced the recently appointed/reappointed members of the Commission for 2017-2018 term as follows:

Margaret Agnor	Joseph F. Hudson
Gail Beil	Alaina Pool Jones
Jean Birmingham	Barbara Judkins
Elizabeth Bradshaw	Audrey D. Kariel
Ann Brannon	Cissy Stewart Lale
Sharon Dews	Rose Mary Magrill
Carol Greer	Richard Magrill

Tracey Mayer  
William "Billy" Nutt III  
Thomas Richardson  
Thomas Speir  
Susan Spears

Vernella Taylor  
Marty Vaughan  
Bea White  
William (Bill) Thomas Whitis  
Robert Wood

Tom noted that Bill Whitis and Sharon Dews are new members and that we now have a total of 24 members which is a reduction from the previous term's membership. He reviewed the on-line certifications that each member is required to complete regarding the open meetings act and the public information act. He also noted that the Texas Historical Commission (THC) guidelines require that the leadership of county historical commissions should cycle rather than just electing officers and leaving them in place for years (which has tended to be the past practice of our Commission). Tom Speir was reelected chairperson by acclamation. Tom emphasized that he will continue to ask us to step outside our comfort zones as we perform our work. Robert Wood was reelected as vice-chair, Richard Magrill as secretary, and Elizabeth Bradshaw as treasurer.

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

In the absence of Elizabeth Bradshaw, Tom Speir reported on the Friends of the Harrison County Historical Commission accounts. The statements showed the following:

Brokerage account	\$ 5,520.28
Certificate of deposit	3,300.00
Certificate of deposit	7,075.12
Greenwood Cemetery Fund	13,423.02
Friends of the HCHC Fund	4,466.50

Tom also reported that we have spent \$529 of the \$3,000 included in the county budget for the new fiscal year running from October 2016 to September of 2017.

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

#### **A. Archaeology**

Tom Speir reported that he had located the spring for which Indian Springs Road in Marshall is named and that it has been recorded as L41HS2. (It is in the

area of the intersection of Yates Street and Indian Springs Road.) He called attention to the book sale which the Friends of Northeast Texas Archeology is having. They have been asked to report what they have that includes Harrison County. Tom will get back to us concerning any purchase recommendations. The renewal of our Texas Archeological Society membership was approved.

### **B. Archives**

In connection with our archives, Tom Speir reported that have received the gift of a filing cabinet from Robert Wood's old office and that Susan Spears hopes to be able to assist with filing later on this spring.

### **C. Cemeteries**

Thomas Richardson reported that he had a request for the location of Ash Springs Cemetery. He noted that there never was an Ash Springs cemetery. There is, however, a Spring Hill Cemetery which is black but may have some whites burried there. He said that he will try to help Bill Whitis with the cemeteries in the Hallsville area as Bill continues to work on completing a new listing.

Bill Whitis gave the following report on his cemetery work:

#### **JANUARY 2017 CEMETERY REPORT BY BILL T. WHITIS**

As an introduction in my first official capacity as a new member of the Harrison County Historical Commission, I wanted to present a brief statement of what I currently see as my role, which should expand over time. I make an attempt to walk through each of the known county cemeteries at least twice throughout each year looking for any damage (natural or otherwise), illegal dumping, new burials, new headstones (including those replacing temporary markers), alterations to public access, as well as any other improvements, deterioration, or changes. When I photograph new markers, individual GPS coordinates are also added to an online database at Findagrave.com. I also look for new obituaries online and add new interments that occur within Harrison County. New cemeteries are also reported to the THC for inclusion on their Atlas.

Wiley College Cemetery had a recent tree clearing at the back of the cemetery uncovering several additional graves. In my survey of that area afterwards, I discovered there are at least two more burials located farther back along the property in another smaller wooded area which has

been covered with trash. The caretaker, Richard Hodge, will be alerted to the additional burial area when next seen. He previously told me of an opportunity they are looking into where they could purchase the land located at the front of the cemetery leading up to the main entrance along the dirt path starting at Rosborough Springs Road.

McKay Cemetery, also known as Hendricks Cemetery, has been re-found in the area a few yards off an abandoned fire tower road off FM31 north of Elysian Fields (a few yards south of Old Town Road on the west side of FM31). The cemetery was founded in 1848, and the last known burial occurred in 1917. An archway was dedicated by Angus McKay in 1977; that metal arch has been heavily damaged by a fallen tree, but is still standing over the gate. The cemetery appears to have been largely uncared for since that time and is surrounded by briar patches and dense forest. I was unable to document all areas of the cemetery due to the overgrowth. The GPS coordinates have been added to the state atlas and Findagrave.

Crosby Cemetery on Tom Smith Road in Harleton has also been identified and documented. I have solid leads on four additional cemeteries I hope to get to soon and one possible cemetery on land near Grangeway and Pinecrest.

I have also responded to a recent online request for directions to Red Oak Cemetery near the Darco area.

The following is a summary of new names and headstones (or temporary marker) photos I have added to the website Findagrave.com, which records burial data in our county (and worldwide) and is freely available to anyone looking to research genealogical data in Harrison County. When I photograph a burial, individual GPS coordinates are added to the Findagrave website.

It should be noted, Findagrave.com sends this data to Ancestry.com users. I try to research each burial interment I find in our county and add additional data and links to other family burials. I feel this time spent can potentially help bring in tourism to our area for those looking to research their family's histories. I have been notified in past years by online users of Ancestry and Findagrave websites that it has brought attention to burials that have led to repairs of damaged headstones, as well as the addition of stone markers when relatives have seen only a thin metal temporary marker remaining several years after the passing of family members.

Over 580 headstones or temporary markers have been documented and over 150 names have been added since the previous meeting. These additions have been made for the following cemeteries: Memory Park, Longview 184 photos and 19 names; New Zion, Nesbitt 20 photos and 10 names; Scratcheye, Nesbitt 3 photos and 2 unnamed

burials; Nesbitt, Nesbitt 10 photos and 3 names; Ebenezer, Marshall 12 photos and 4 names; Colonial Gardens, Marshall 69 photos, 4 names, and 21 pet burials; Potters Creek, Marshall 2 photos; Forest Hill, near Longview 3 photos and 3 names; Hebron, FM449 1 photo and 2 names; LaGrone Chapel, Longview area 9 photos and 4 names; Rock Springs, Scottsville 14 photos and 4 names; Scottsville, Scottsville 1 photo and 1 name; Concord, Jonesville 169 photos and 42 names; Fairview, Marshall 1 photo and 1 name; Wiley College, Marshall 15 photos and 6 names; McKay/Hendricks, Elysian Fields area 7 photos and 5 names; McJohnson, Marshall 58 photos and 28 names; Saint Joseph Catholic, Marshall 6 photos and 5 names; Saint John, Crossroads 8 photos and 4 names; Mount Pleasant, Elysian Fields 3 photos and 1 name; Shady Grove, Gill Community area 2 photos and 1 name; Gill, Gill Community 6 photos and 1 name (100% documented); Liberty, Marshall, US59 1 photo; Antioch, Leigh 13 photos and 3 names; Nichols, Marshall 9 photos and 7 names; and Algoma, Marshall 14 photos and 1 name.

Tom Speir noted that a letter from the THC defines an abandoned cemetery and that a single grave constitutes a “cemetery” but the Texas Legislature is considering changes to this existing law. Adams Cemetery is moving forward with their plans to apply for a Texas Historic Cemetery designation. Barbara Judkins noted that she hopes to work with Bill Whitis as the plans go forward for the 2017 cemetery tour this fall. She hopes that the tour can be spread out across the county, using a bus to transport people around to the different locations. Bill voiced the concern that cemetery tours should be held twice a year and not just once at Halloween. It is hoped that Barbara and Bill can meet jointly to plan this year’s tour. They will talk with Tom Richardson, gather information, and report to the Commission in February about proposed cemeteries and options for driving and/or bus tours. Barbara reported that in her experience such tours will teach older and relatable history to folks in a meaningful way. She and Bill will bring a report on all their ideas in February.

#### **D. Education**

Tom Speir reported that the revival of the History Fair in the Marshall ISD (MISD) will be on Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup>. He passed around a sample of the Participation Certificates and Winners’ Medallions. Six judges and three alternates will be needed. At the moment we have four judges. Tom reviewed the Judging Evaluation Guidelines and judging forms. Judging will be on Saturday morning prior to the opening of the fair to the public. The students will be asked to come for

interviews only for call-backs, in case of a tie. Everything appears to be progressing and if all goes well we will plan to expand our efforts to have fairs at all the other school districts in the county. (The History Fair Committee is composed of Sharon Dews, Becky Palmer, Barbara Judkins, Elizabeth Bradshaw, and Gail Beil.)

### **E. Historical Markers**

Gail Beil reported that work is in progress to get the James Farmer marker text corrected. Plans are for the dedication to take place on Monday afternoon the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. We are looking at the peninsula just north of the Paramount Theater as the location for the marker. (Note: the marker may be installed on a plinth rather than on a pole.) Of course, we may have the dedication without the actual marker if it is not finished in time. We may be able to hold the dedication in the city auditorium. However, Tony Crosby suggested that the dedication be at the band shell. Folks could then walk up North Washington to the peninsula. Hank Thomas is committed to come for the event. He was on the Freedom Rider bus that came into Anniston, Alabama after being set on fire on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1961. In fact, he was the one who forced the door open in order to allow the passengers to escape.

The Elks Club Marker application has gone in, as has the one for Bishop College. It may be that the marker for J.J. Rhodes will be located with the Bishop marker. Gail Beil is still working on the application for a marker for the old Cities Service Gas Station building in downtown Marshall. First Presbyterian Church (EPC) in Waskom is working on their application. We have not heard back from Thurman and Diane Johnson regarding the work on the application for the Oakhill Baptist Church. Still in the hands of Wiley College is the work on its two possible new markers in memory of Coach “Pop” Long and Dr. Lawrence Nixon.

Tom is still pursuing getting a marker for the Nadaco Caddo Homeland. This marker would be applied for in the “undertold story” category (which means that THC would fund the cost). Also in this category Tom plans to apply for a marker commemorating the journey of the Hernando Desoto Expedition through the county after Desoto’s death as its trek continued under the second in command.

It was noted that the Stagecoach Trace individual road markers are not right. Only a few have been checked, but those looked at are either fading or in the wrong place or missing. Redoing the markers on the Trace will be a major project. Gail Beil will rewrite the relevant brochures which will need to match what is

physically out there on the Trace. One marker is on a collapsing house in Elysian Fields. We may need to omit that site altogether.

Gail Beil is looking at reproducing a book of all the Registered Texas Historical Landmark locations in the county. Robert Wood talked with County Judge Hugh Taylor this morning and about the work on the granite base for the reinstallation of the Stagecoach Road marker.

### **F. History Museum**

Jean Birmingham reported that the History Museum military display planned for Memorial City Hall is being held up by the delay in the renovation work. Jean noted that photographs of people in their military uniforms are wanted but that also needed are recent pictures to be placed with them so that the individuals can be recognized by those who have known them in later years.

The fees for inclusion in this exhibit related to the three different sizes available are as follows: \$350 for 3"x5"; \$650 for 10"x14"; and \$2500 for 20"x21".

Inclusion will be limited to those who were born in Harrison County and/or who lived in the county and who served while living in it. The schedule for when the exhibit will be installed is unknown, since it depends on Marshall's renovations at the site.

### **G. Information Technology**

Tom Speir noted that all our minutes continue to be provided on-line on the county website and are up-to-date.

### **H. Oral History**

Tom Speir indicated that the tapes sent to Legacy Box for duplication have been lost.

Tony Crosby mentioned a family friend, Gertrude Jenkins, who is 103 this month and just fulfilled a lifelong dream to walk on the Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma, Alabama. Hers, he noted, is a good story and would be worth working on.

Tom Speir indicated that we have a whole list of possible subjects, but we simply lack the volunteers to conduct interviews with potential candidates.

The only area college with an oral history program is Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches.

## **I. Preservation**

Tom Speir has created a spreadsheet to begin work on a countywide survey of buildings that should be preserved. Tony Crosby noted that there was a survey in 1972 and that we should try to get a record from THC of what they already have before duplicating the 1972 effort. It was noted that Susie Lale sent us two boxes from Max Lale's files of that survey. Gail Beil and Tony both feel that there should be some survey information in Austin, but it would also be good if we could get volunteers to go through the boxes in our office to see if the Lale files are there.

It was noted that finally a section (but only a section) of Stagecoach Road has been resurfaced to see how the gravel used might hold up under the elements. After this winter and spring, the section that was repaired will be evaluated to determine if the method used is effective and preferred for repairs.

Tony Crosby reported on the progress (or lack thereof) on renovation of Memorial City Hall. Tonight it is hoped that the City of Marshall will be in a position to respond to bids. (Architectural drawings were still not available as of yesterday afternoon.)

Tom Speir reported that the request to expand the coal mining operation around Sabine Farms is being declined by the THC because of noise and dust and also because THC would like to see at least one of the homesteads that were part of the farms preserved. The THC is not saying no but has determined that there would be an adverse effect.

Gail Beil and Tony Crosby are working on the preservation of the Turner House at 410 South Washington.

## **J. Publications**

Tom Speir was contacted by Susy Glover who has been asked by the *Marshall News Messenger* to write a story on the need for volunteers. He passed around a draft of the article.

## **K. Tourism**

Tom Speir noted that he had nothing to report in the area of tourism. Barbara Judkins called our attention to a report on Red River Radio that, unlike most counties in the area, Harrison experienced an increase in sales tax revenue in November of 2016 probably due to tourism promoted by the Wonderland of Lights celebration.

## **L. Goals**

Tom Speir asked if anyone had any new goals to discuss emphasizing that 2017 is here and we need to come up with suggestions.

## **M. Annual Preservation Awards**

Likewise, Tom Speir reported that we need to come up with nominees for the 2017 Preservation Awards, noting once again that the awards provide a fruitful means of getting people interested in the work of the Commission.

## **V. Special Reports**

### **A. 1901 Courthouse**

No report.

### **B. Texas & Pacific Depot Museum**

Robert Wood reported business continues as usual at the Depot Museum and that he had, in fact, gotten a couple of phone calls this very morning from students working on their History Fair projects. The museum is trying to get a committee together that will be able to work with the students.

### **C. Starr Home**

Barbara Judkins reported that the Starr Home had a good December and that the carol sing on December 17<sup>th</sup> went well with some 150 in attendance, until the cold winds from the north came and the gathering dispersed an hour earlier than planned. The event in 2017 will not be held at the gazebo but on the main property of the Starr Home.

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

The Michelson Museum sent word of an artist's reception on January 19<sup>th</sup> from 4:30-6:30 p.m. for Kelli S. Kelly's exhibition of silhouettes.

### **E. Historic Landmark Preservation Board (HLPB)**

Tony Crosby reported that the Historic Landmark Preservation Board has not met in two months and has nothing to report. He and Ralph Nolan are continuing to work on a proposal for getting downtown Marshall designated as an historic district.

## **VI. Other**

Nothing to report.

## **VII. Administrative**

**Mail.** Tom Speir passed around a communication from Preservation Texas. He indicated that he had contacted Joey Hudson, president of the Friends of the Harrison County Historical Commission, who asked him to go ahead with the filing of IRS FORM 1023-EZ. Tom has done so and paid the filing fee and will need to get reimbursed by the Friends during their meeting which immediately follows this session of the Commission. He called our attention to the fact that we should be getting letters from Judge Hugh Taylor indicating our appointments/reappointments.

**Refreshments for History Fair Judges.** There is a need to provide refreshments for the judges at the History Fair. These refreshments cannot be paid for out of our county budget. Bottles of water and snacks should be sufficient. Gail Beil volunteered to bake cookies. Barbara Judkins will provide bottled water. Gail will also bring her coffeepot. Jean Birmingham reported that she has been much engaged with her sister who is in hospice care but she might be able to volunteer to serve as a History Fair judge and, if here, would be happy to serve.

**Remember the Alamo Day.** Tom Speir noted that we had received an email to remind us that March 6<sup>th</sup> is now an official state holiday called Remember the Alamo Day.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

The next meeting will be February 9<sup>th</sup> of 2017 at the T&P Depot Museum at 1:30 p.m. The meeting adjourned at 3:22 p.m.

**Submitted by Richard Magrill**