

HARRISON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

January 10th 2019

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: Bill T. Whitis, Tom Speir, Richard Magrill, Rose Mary Magrill, Jean Birmingham, Barbara Judkins, Becky Palmer, Clemmie Copeland, Betsy Cadenhead, Gerald Gibson, Marty Vaughan, Sharon Dews, and Robert Wood. *Note:* Helen Murray got lost on her way and will see us next month.

Visitor(s) Present: Steve Horton, L.C. Chatham, and Berenda Chatham.

Death of Thomas Richardson's Wife. Members were saddened to hear of the death of Thomas Richardson's wife. Her funeral was last Saturday. Members contributed money for a gift in her memory to be made to the First Baptist Church of Hallsville.

I. Call to Order

Bill T. Whitis, chair, called the meeting to order on January 10th 2019 at 1:30 p.m. in the conference room of the T&P Depot Museum.

II. Approval of Minutes and Roll of Members for 2019-2020.

Minutes of the meeting of November 8th 2018 were approved as distributed.

Our desire to have Bill T. Whitis serve as chair, Tom Speir to serve as vice-chair, and Richard Magrill to serve as secretary and a roll of members for 2019-2020 has been submitted to the Harrison County Commissioner's Court for a vote on January 23rd. The list of members submitted is as follows:

Margaret Agnor

Gail Beil

Jean Birmingham

Ann Brannon

Betsy Cadenhead

Clemmie Copeland

Barbara Cox
Sharon Dews
Gerald Gibson
Carol Greer
Barbara Judkins
Audrey D. Kariel
Cissy Stewart Lale
Rose Mary Magrill
Richard Magrill
Tracey Mayer

Helen Murray
Thomas Richardson
Thomas Speir
Susan Spears
Vernella Taylor
Marty Vaughan
Bea White
William (Bill) Thomas Whitis
Robert Wood

III. Treasurer's Report

No report.

IV. The standing committee reports are as follows:

A. Archaeology

Rosenwald School Building Destruction. Tom Speir reported that on Friday December 14th a citizen of the county contacted County Commissioner Zephaniah Timmons regarding an old school building that was about to be torn down. An energy company had hired someone to clear out the lot on which it stood. Investigation found an old school building hidden by the trees. Upon initial inquiry, it was reported that the building had been torn down weeks before. However, on Monday the 18th of December, Gerry Gibson actually visited the site and found workers just then tearing down the building. It was suggested that the energy company would be willing to make a contribution to our work. On Tuesday December 19th we received word of a pledge of \$5,000. Contact was made with Commissioner Timmons lest the pledge be construed as a bribe. Mike Webb was the contact with Covey Park Energy in the matter. The check to the Friends of the Harrison County Historical Commission has reportedly been sent to Ann Brannon. (It may be at her home, but she is not here today to give us a report.)

Other School Sites. Gerry Gibson reported that he has found other buildings of Rosenwald and other schools. In the case of the building torn down, Gerry went back a week after he witnessed the destruction. The debris was still there. The paint on the front of the building was reasonably intact. It was probably one of the first Rosenwald schools in the county and therefore in the state. Since then he has discovered other buildings. He found one on a piece of land where the

winter dieback of the underbrush revealed a structure. He checked more closely and sure enough there is another Rosenwald building there although it is not in as good condition as the one that was torn down. He is not at present giving out the name and/or location of this building because he wants to document it before any one becomes aware of it and attempts to try to tear it down. (The building, however, is in full sight and easily visible from the road.) It and counting the one now torn down means that the county until recently had at least three surviving Rosenwald buildings and he has locations for two other buildings. In fact, there is a for sale sign on one of them which he has seen from the road. Jean Birmingham has identified the exact sites of three others which happened to be on church property. Bill Whitis knows of yet another but reports that it is doubtful that we will get permission to visit and/or record it as an archeological site. Gerry has located nineteen sites and is reasonably certain of a twentieth. He is expanding his search to include other county schools.

Cell Phone Tower Requests. Bill Whitis reported that we have been called to give our opinion regarding two different cell phone tower requests. One is on FM450 north of Hallsville and one is in Longview Heights. Neither would impact existing cemeteries or other known historic or archaeological sites.

B. Archives

Bill Whitis reported that Robert Wood had secured an additional filing cabinet for the office. When the archeological reports that have nothing to do with Harrison County are sorted out, Rich Mahoney from the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) in Tyler will come for them. Investigations are ongoing to locate Rebecca Buard's historical papers. Margaret Agnor, when she was chair of our Commission, tried to secure these papers for the Historical Museum's Inez Hatley Hughes Research Library, but she was unsuccessful. Becky Palmer has searched the Museum files but has been unable to find any evidence of such a collection.

C. Cemeteries

Slave Graves. Robert Wood reported that he and his wife, Brenda, were on Sue Bell Lake Road and found an old cemetery which includes slave graves. The property is now for sale. Robert talked with County Judge Chad Sims who indicated that if there is no fence, we should feel free to walk on the land. Tom

Speir suggested that Robert write up his conversation with Judge Chad Sims to provide a basis for anyone actually visiting the site.

New Generic Signs Regarding Burials. Bill Whitis reported that we have put up our first sign at Greenwood Cemetery. We have had incidents of people coming in and using post hole diggers to inter cremains without notification. (The signs indicate that persons should contact any county funeral home before performing a burial.)

Damaged Iron Fencing from Greenwood Cemetery. Ben Harber, the lawn mower for Greenwood and Marshall cemeteries, has a pile of mangled iron fencing from Greenwood and wants to get it picked up. Brad Thomas, Harrison County Maintenance Superintendent, has been contacted.

Bone from Greenwood Cemetery. The bone that Ann Brannon had discovered in Greenwood Cemetery has been determined to be that of an animal (probably a turkey leg). It has been discarded unless it is still on her mantle for conversation.

D. Education

History Fair. By January 15th we will know what types of projects will be included in the History Fair entries this year. The Marshall Independent School District (ISD) will be the only one involved, although we hope to increase the participation to include others in the county. An effort was made this year to enlist participation from the STEM students at Marshall's Sam Houston Elementary. We have worked through librarians in promoting the fair. It will be held at the Marshall Junior High School on January 19th. The number of projects will determine the number of judges that will be needed. Optimally we would like to have three judges for each entrant. We have medallions and ribbons on hand, but will need more certificates. On motion, we will secure reprints of the certificates from the Print Shop as per last year.

E. Historical Markers

Markers Missing. Bill Whitis reported that the marker received for the Old Elks Club Building on North Washington is misplaced. The Wyalucing and Walter P. Lane plaques have disappeared. The Wyalucing plaque was at the new courthouse at one point. The marker for Magnolia Hall is missing. In fact, both the marker and the medallion are gone. There has been no response from Rudy Zachry who owned the property when the markers disappeared in 2008 and 2011.

Bishop College Marker. Bill Whitis introduced L.C. Chatham and Berenda Chatham and expressed appreciation that L.C. donated the funds for the Bishop College Marker. It is locked in the basement of the 1901 Courthouse. We need to select a date for installation and dedication. L.C. expressed the hope it could be done in February. Tom Speir said that it typically takes nearly thirty days to get everything rolling for a dedication. Bill suggested that we would need to consult with Gail Beil who was not present for this meeting.

Booker T. Washington School Marker. The Booker T. Washington School marker will be installed at the Middle School in Elysian Fields on Saturday, April 27th at 2 p.m. Tom Speir will represent the Commission, doing introductions, etc., because it was he who worked so long with the local people in the process of securing the marker.

James Farmer, Jr. Statue. The work toward erecting a statue of James Farmer, Jr. on the western portion of the lawn of the 1901 Courthouse continues in a state of limbo pending action on a policy statement. (*Note:* James Farmer, Jr. was a noted Civil Rights activist and Marshall native.)

Monuments on County Property. Bill Whitis reminded us that we have the ongoing request from Hugh Taylor, the former County Judge, asking for a recommended policy statement to be adopted by the County Commissioners' Court which can provide future guidance for the erection of statues and other memorials on county property. Tom Speir has a proposed policy written. On the 23rd of January, he and Bill will go to meet with Judge Chad Sims to see if it can be prepped for presentation to the Commissioners' Court.

Hallsville Bank and Temple Emanu-El Cemetery Markers. Tom Speir reported that the text has been approved for the Hallsville Bank Marker. It will be mounted on the building. The Temple Emanu-El Cemetery Marker is in the pipeline somewhere.

F. Historical Museum

Women of East Texas. Jean Birmingham deferred to Becky Palmer who reported that the Historical Museum is initiating a new annual "Women of East Texas" event each spring and this year is looking for information about as many teachers as possible who taught in the 21 identified Rosenwald Schools in Harrison County. These schools mostly consisted of two rooms. They were in existence from 1920 until 1933. She expressed the hope that all would attend this event in March.

Harrison County Genealogical Society. The Harrison County Genealogical Society has started back up. Dues are \$10. There will be four events held by the Society this year. The first will be focused on researching the heritage of African American families. It will be held on Tuesday March 12th at 11:30 a.m.

Military Exhibits. The military exhibits in Marshall's Memorial City Hall will be completed in about a week. The Historical Museum is very happy to be almost across the finish line of this long-planned addition to its services.

Resignation of Jean Birmingham. Jean Birmingham indicated that she did have one announcement for this meeting: her resignation from the Commission. She has been ordered by her children to resign and they are moving her closer to them. She will be going to Houston where her son lives and will reside in Saint Dominic's, an assisted living facility near the medical center. The Commission was saddened at the thought that her wise counsel and cheerful presence would no longer be among us and wished her well in her new location.

Inez Hatley Hughes Research Library. Bill Whitis asked if the Museum had made progress on locating a building for the Inez Hatley Hughes Research Library. The committee is still engaged in its search. It recently had a field trip to Louisiana State University at Shreveport to inspect facilities there. The visit provided information on the kind of structure and amenities that are desirable.

G. Information Technology

Bill Whitis indicated that there is no report on information technology other than the continuing need for photos for the Facebook page. He noted that he tries to post something new every Friday morning. He is currently working on a post on Lemon Thompson who started the Marshall Area Wiley Club.

H. Oral History

Bill Whitis made an attempt to record Carl Sperier at a family gathering but it was too noisy so a second attempt will be made later. Barbara Judkins reported that Annie Julia Graves was interviewed by the Starr Family Home State Historic Site just before her death.

I. Preservation

Freedom Colonies. Bill Whitis reported that M.J. Biazar has inquired about the Freedom Colonies in Harrison County, *i.e.* Piney Ridge, Nesbitt, Lott, Leigh, and Hughes Spring.

Springs. Tom Speir is still looking for any springs in the county that should be recorded as archaeological sites..

Stagecoach Road. Bill Whitis reported that he will begin trying to arrange for the annual truckload of concrete for the preservation of Stagecoach Road.

J. Publications

Reprint. Gerald Gibson is working on the Stagecoach Trace brochure revision but does not feel a pressing need to work on it until we have the funds to reprint it. When he knows we have the money, he can complete the task within two weeks. Tom Speir said that we need to wait until the new markers can be purchased and installed since both the markers and the numbering will change. Gerry indicated he will complete his part of the work by the 1st of February.

K. Tourism

Hallsville Sesquicentennial. Tom Speir reported that he has talked with Carol Greer about the Hallsville Sesquicentennial which will be observed from the 24th to the 27th of October this year.

History “Must Sees” in Harrison County. Bill Whitis reported on the Greater Marshall Chamber of Commerce’s upcoming fundraiser. Tickets are \$50 each and you can reserve a ten-person table for \$500. The Chamber will be moving into one of the front offices of the Business Development Building shortly. He also shared an email which he had received from Stormy Nickerson, executive director of the Chamber. In which she proposes the question: “If someone asked you where they should visit in Harrison County from a historical perspective, what would you and the Harrison County Historical Commission say?” The following suggestions were made: Historical Museum, Wiley College, East Texas Baptist University, Texas and Pacific Depot Museum, T.C. Lindsey General Store, Starr Family Home State Historic Site, Michelson Museum of Art, Wiseman Center, Sabine Farms, Caddo Lake State Park, Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and the Josephine Davidson Memorial Chapel (open by appointment).

Brochures. Gerald Gibson raised the concern that many of the materials which promote such locations appear to be out of print. It was pointed out that most of the brochures are in storage and that contact should be made with the Convention and Visitors Bureau, now located in the Wiseman Center, to secure them.

Boogie Woogie Festival. The first annual Boogie Woogie Festival is scheduled for the third weekend in May in 2019. It will begin on Friday night. The Saturday activities will end with a street dance. At 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, there will be a gospel fest. The City of Marshall is raising funds for this event.

Monthly Community Calendar. Bill encouraged all organizations to share their activities with the community calendar of area events. The calendar is sponsored and mailed out by the Marshall Regional Arts Council and is prepared by Dr. Brenda Dearman (bdearman8@gmail.com), a retired music professor from East Texas Baptist University.

L. Goals

Inspection of Old Homes in the County. The County Fire Marshall, Thomas Mock, is still willing to make inspections. We are just waiting for someone to report that they know a homeowner who is willing to take advantage of this service. We are reaching out county-wide. Bill Whitis has a number for the secretary who should be contacted in order to schedule an inspection.

Stagecoach Trace Signs. Tom Speir and Bill Whitis need to discuss with Judge Chad Sims the possibility of receiving funding for new markers for the Stagecoach Trace.

US80 as World War II Veterans Memorial. In connection with the possible project of erecting signs at the Waskom and Longview entrances to the county on US80, Tom Speir suggested that the \$5,000 which is being contributed to the Friends by Covey Park Energy might be a source of funding. Two signs would cost \$4,416. (*Note: US80 has officially been designated as a World War II Veterans Memorial but private funds are needed to erect any signs calling attention to the designation.*)

M. Annual Preservation Awards

Bill Whitis reported that nominations for our Annual Preservation Awards are due by Friday the 4th of April.

V. Special Reports

A. 1901 Courthouse

No report.

B. Texas & Pacific Depot Museum

Roof Problems. Robert Wood reported on the roof problems at the Depot. He noted that the Depot Building was erected in 1912 and originally had a combustible roof, but the current tiles were made and installed in 1924 to prevent the possibility of fires being started by embers emitted from the smokestacks of coal-burning trains.

Waskom Depot. A couple of years ago, Robert located a lady that was aware of where the old Waskom Depot was located. She is in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Marty Vaughan indicated that the woman in question is Bea Oliver. Marty will try to contact her. She is now living in Frisco.

C. Starr Family Home State Historic Site

Wonderland of Sites. Barbara Judkins reported on the “Wonderland of Sites” event held in conjunction with Marshall’s “Wonderland of Lights.” Crowds were dismal. Instead of doing a home tour at Christmas, the Starr Family Home is considering a spring setting when the tour can be a stand-alone event. She has talked with Bonnie Strauss at the Michelson Museum of Art about the change in schedule. Becky Palmer agreed with the idea of a different time, noting that during the “Wonderland of Lights” it is necessary to go out into the streets to attract folks into the Historical Museum which is located in the lighted 1901 Courthouse, the centerpiece of the Wonderland festival.

Kitchen. Barbara reported that the restored kitchen is up and running and they are practicing on how to cook on the wood-burning stove. She pointed out the difficulty of calculating temperatures by judging the sizzles of drops of water on the cooking plates. The site is investing in the more modern expedient of an infrared gun to judge cooking temperatures.

New Staff. Kellie Farr, the site’s new educator, is on staff. Kellie loves Marshall and is passionate about working with other partners in the community.

D. Michelson Museum of Art

Contribution. Bill Whitis reported that we have received a thank you for a donation which we made to them. (Unlike other county museums, the Michelson does not have “memberships” so our “membership contribution” is considered a donation.)

Will Klemm Exhibit. Susan Spears reported that there is a new exhibit by Will Klemm that will begin the end of February and continue through April.

Klemm is an Austin-based artist whose work has been shown nationally since 1993. He is a veteran of over forty one-man exhibitions. His work appears in museums and corporate and private collections including the Austin Museum of Art, United Artists, Fidelity Mutual, Motorola, Samsung, Dana-Farber Institute and many others.

E. Historic Landmark Preservation Board (HLPB)

Central Marshall Historic District. Tom Speir mentioned that he is in contact with Gregory Smith, who will be working with Ralph Newlan on a Central Marshall Historic District. (When Smith is here he will work with us on doing a workshop on securing National Register listings.) There is already a Ginnochio Historic District. The new district being developed will be a large square area incorporating downtown. When established, it may help owners in its area access funding for preservation projects.

Other. Susan Spears has reported that she has done a Powerpoint presentation with “then” and “now” photos of various city homes. Ralph Newlan is still the current HLPB president and has been having health issues.

VI. Other

No report.

VII. Administrative

Incoming mail. We have received a postcard from the Marshall Regional Arts Council announcing a concert, “Close to You: Music of the Carpenters.” It is a tribute featuring the students of Trinity Episcopal Elementary School. It will be this Friday, January 11th at the Marshall Convention Center. Tickets are \$25. THC sent out an email packet for orientation for new members. TXDOT sent us an email concerning various available publications and inquiring as to the best way to communicate with us. We received a Christmas card from Gillam and Smith, LLP featuring a photo of the old Gregg County Courthouse. Preservation Texas sent a schedule of all their meetings throughout the year. We have received renewal notifications for the American Association for State and Local History and the Texas Oral History Association and an invitation to the Christmas open house held in December at the T.C. Lindsay Store in Jonesville.

Preservation Scholars Program. The Friends of the THC have announced that they are accepting applications for summer internships in their Preservation

Scholars Program. Recipients will receive a \$5,000 stipend for an eight-week internship (40 hours a week). Those interested may contact *info@thefriendsorg*.

East Texas Historical Association. The East Texas Historical Association has announced its fall meeting for October 10th - 12th 2019 at the Fredonia Hotel in Nacogdoches. They also have a spring meeting coming up in Greenville. It is a one-day event with the main emphasis on discussions about statue removals. It will be February 16th at the Audie Murphy American Cotton Museum (see <https://etha.wildapricot.org/> and click on REGISTRATION).

Pop-Up Sign. Our pop-up sign continues to be displayed in Waskom at the Texas Travel and Information Center. We may still want to consider the Weisman Center for later display.

Facebook Page. Bill Whitis emphasized that, as always, we need photos and also ideas of subjects for our Facebook page.

VIII. Adjournment

The next meeting will be on Saint Valentine's Day, February 14th 2019 at the T&P Depot Museum at 1:30 p.m. It was suggested that our new chair, Bill Whitis, should treat us to Valentine's Day candy. Richard Magrill observed that it was too bad that we were not meeting on the 15th when Bill could get discounted candy. Bill said he might look into some red-wrapped candy left over from Christmas. The meeting adjourned at 3:18 p.m.

Submitted by Richard Magrill