

**HARRISON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**February 14<sup>th</sup> 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, Richard Magrill, Rose Mary Magrill, Ann Brannon, Thomas Richardson, Clemmie Copeland, Gerald Gibson, Helen Murray, and Gail Beil.

**Visitor(s) Present:** Steve Horton.

*Carol Greer.* Thomas Richardson reported that Commission Member Carol Greer fell out due to an aneurism while attending his wife's funeral. She was airlifted to the University of Texas Hospital in Tyler and put in critical care but had a stroke there and is now in a new rest home in Longview. At present she cannot walk or talk but rehabilitation is ongoing.

**I. Call to Order**

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

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting of January 10<sup>th</sup> 2019 were approved as distributed.

**III. County Budget Report**

Bill Whitis reported that we have spent \$864 from the \$3,000 included in the county budget for the fiscal year running from October 2018 through October 2019 leaving a balance of \$2,136 remaining.

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

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

Gail Beil reported that at a recent Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) meeting she talked a couple of its archaeologists about excavations in which they might engage in Harrison County that have the possibility of revealing any Caddo Indian villages, and she emphasized that any artifacts they might uncover were to be retained for Harrison County.

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

No report.

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

**Woodlawn Cemetery.** Bill Whitis reported that Woodlawn Cemetery has sent in its application for recognition as a Texas Historic Cemetery.

**Pope Cemetery.** He also reported that the Pope Cemetery application for recognition as a Texas Historic Cemetery has been rejected because it failed to mention the back part of the cemetery where there are graves of African-Americans. (Those making the application are saying that the area is not a part of Pope Cemetery.)

**Damaged Iron Fencing from Greenwood Cemetery.** Ann Brannon reported that she cannot get Ben Harber (the lawn mower for Greenwood and Marshall cemeteries) on the phone in order to make arrangements for picking up the storm-damaged iron fencing which was removed from Greenwood Cemetery in the clean-up. Bill Whitis reported that TX Gates recommends that it be junked because it is not worth saving or trying to sell for scrap.

##### **D. Education**

**History Fair.** Bill Whitis reported that each school district sends someone to the regional history fair and that if a student wins in a school he/she does not need to enter the county history fair in order to compete in the regional. The option for topics in the school districts is broad. Sharon Dews believes that entries in our Harrison County history fair should be limited to subjects dealing with Harrison County. This discrepancy in focus needs to be clarified and/or resolved in some fashion. We will await Sharon's report for the details of this year's fair.

## **E. Historical Markers**

**Markers Damaged/Missing/Etc.** Bill Whitis reported that he has been driving around the county to all our historical markers. The marker at the Woodley Cemetery has a nickel-sized hole that has been blow-torched in the middle of it. The recently reinstalled Stage Coach Road marker is now scratched and bent from someone trying to pry it away from its granite base and, evidently, steal it once again. (The possibility of installing cameras similar to those for capturing wild-life photos in order to observe the Stage Coach Road marker was discussed. The amount of video storage is an issue. Gerry Gibson will search out technical information on such cameras.) The Temple Emanu-El Cemetery marker is already installed without any public celebration of which our Commission is aware. The Fred Lewis marker planned for installation at the Starr Family Home State Historic Site will have a QR code on it (the first in our county to do so!). The C.G. Lancaster marker when it arrives will be installed on Memorial City Hall. Bill reported that the marker received for the Old Elks Club Building on North Washington is still misplaced and that the Wyalucing and Walter P. Lane plaques have disappeared. (The Wyalucing plaque was at the old courthouse at one point.) The marker for Magnolia Hall is missing. In fact, both the marker and the medallion for Magnolia Hall are gone and there has been no response from Rudy Zachry who owned the property when the markers disappeared in 2008 and 2011.

**Bishop College Marker.** The Bishop College marker is installed and will be dedicated on Sunday. It is located on property just east of the Genesis PrimeCare offices. Bill Whitis reported that he has been paying Facebook to push the notification of the marker dedication onto others pages. Approximately 12.8K have responded. A reception following the dedication will be held at Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church. Ann Brannon reported that she has in her possession two huge scrapbooks dealing with Bishop College after its relocation to Dallas. Copies of the program for the dedication of the Bishop College marker were passed out. Landscaping around the marker will be done after the dedication compliments of L.C. Chatham. Gail Beil indicated that she has arranged for a police presence to facilitate crossing of Grand Avenue in order to get to the reception at Bethesda.

**Zephyr Wright Marker.** Gail Beil indicated that she plans to do an application for a marker for Zephyr Wright who was from Harrison County and became the White House family cook when Lyndon Baines Johnson was in

residence there (he credited her with inspiring the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act).

***Russian Presence in the County.*** Gail reported that she is also working on a marker to recognize the presence of Russian representatives in the county when Thiokol was responsible for the static firing of missiles as they were destroyed in accordance with treaty obligations.

***Booker T. Washington School Marker.*** The Booker T. Washington School marker will be installed at the Middle School in Elysian Fields and dedicated on Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup> 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.*)

#### **F. Historical Museum**

***Inez Hatley Hughes Research Library.*** Ann Brannon reported that the task force looking for a new location for the materials of the Historical Museum's Inez Hatley Hughes Research Library met yesterday. She has confidence in the assurance of Mark Rohr, Marshall's new city manager, that the collection will not be pushed out of the current city building which it occupies until there is a place for it. The task force is still looking at the Marshall *News Messenger* building and investigating the cost of possible repairs to the roof.

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

Bill Whitis continues to post on our Facebook page each week.

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

No report.

#### **I. Preservation**

***Waskom-Bell House.*** There was a report on the Waskom-Bell House which is owned by a Mr. and Mrs. Fowler. They intend to restore the home. Its restoration will finally give the county a good historic home in the town of Waskom.

***Possible Marshall City Ordinance.*** Gail Beil reported that she is working on an ordinance that she plans to propose. It would require the repair of historic structures or their sale to the city which would then undertake necessary repairs and offer the building for sale at the city's original purchase price plus the cost of the repairs with the original owners having the first option to repurchase.

***Granger Rosenwald School.*** Gerry Gibson reported that he and Tom Speir recently inspected the site of the Granger Rosenwald School. The owner, Rick Michaels, is interested in personally restoring the school and making it publically accessible. It is located on US80 just east of Scottsville Road. Tom is working on having it recorded as an archeological site. At this point it is the best representation of a Rosenwald School in the county. It would be an ideal spot to have a historical marker to represent all 21 Rosenwald schools.

**J. Publications**

No report.

**K. Tourism**

More copies of brochures dealing with historic attractions are needed.

**L. Goals**

No report.

**M. Annual Preservation Awards**

Bill Whitis solicited nominations for our Annual Preservation Awards  
Nominations are due by Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> of April.

**V. Special Reports**

**A. 1901 Courthouse**

No report.

**B. Texas & Pacific Depot Museum**

***Depot Activities.*** Gail Beil reported that the Depot Museum celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. There will be a croquet tournament and a celebration of Christmas in July. During the summer, there will also be drive-in movie nights

with the Made-Rite wagon and a popcorn wagon. In October there will be a major event including the sale of donated antiques.

***Request for Meeting Space Rent.*** Bill Whitis relayed a request from Robert Wood that the Commission pay rent of \$50 a month for its meeting in the conference room of the depot. He noted that Robert reported that the City of Marshall has ceased to pay for the cost of utilities and has cut the Hotel Occupancy Tax contribution by \$3,000. (Also, Amtrak pays no rent.) Richard Magrill extended an invitation from the Cumberland Presbyterian Church to meet in its fellowship hall at no cost and with convenient parking. Bill Whitis reported that Barbara Judkins has offered the use of the Blake House of the Starr Family Home State Historic Site as a meeting place for the commission, also at no charge. It was pointed out that we could revert to meeting on county property at no charge. Bill indicated that without Robert Wood here, we will wait until our next meeting to act on his request.

#### **C. Starr Family Home State Historic Site**

No report.

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

***Buffalo Soldier Paintings by Bob Snead.*** Ann Brannon reported that she had been asked to convey the news of a Buffalo Soldier exhibit opening at the Michelson on March 5<sup>th</sup> (reception from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. that day). The exhibit will display the works of Bob Snead who has received many honors for his work to preserve the knowledge of Buffalo Soldiers. He is the father of Karen Partee and has recently moved to Marshall. Due to health problems, this show will be his last, but he is expected to attend the opening.

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

***Central Marshall Historic District.*** At our next meeting, the new Marshall City Manager Mark Rohr, will talk about the efforts toward creating a historic district in the downtown area.

#### **VI. Other**

No report.

## **VII. Administrative**

***New Cell Phone Tower.*** Bill Whitis reported that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) sends its communications to Tom Speir's personal p.o. box rather than the Commission's and therefore Tom (and not Bill) receives them. The FCC has alerted us that there is a new cell phone tower to be built in the Longview area of Harrison County. Bill does not see any issues.

***Sons of Confederate Veterans.*** We have received an invitation from Bill Elliot to come and visit the W.W. Heartsill Camp #2042 of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. (They meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month at Jucy's Hamburgers at 6:00 p.m.)

***Waskom, Gateway to Texas.*** Bill shared an invitation from the City of Waskom to celebrate the grand opening of their new community center on Friday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2:00 p.m. The center is located at 465 School Avenue.

***Boogie Woogie Highway.*** In the March issue of Texas Highways, there is an article about most of US59 being declared the Boogie Woogie Highway.

***Texas State Capitol Christmas Ornaments.*** We received an order form for the annual Texas State Capitol Christmas ornaments. Rose Mary Magrill reminded us that these are conveniently available in Harrison County at the T.C. Lindsay General Store.

***First Baptist Church of Hallsville.*** We have received a "Thank You" from First Baptist Church in Hallsville for the memorial gift which we sent in memory of Thomas Richardson's wife.

***East Texas Historical Association.*** The East Texas Historical Association has announced its fall meeting for October 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> 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 this Saturday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at the Audie Murphy American Cotton Museum (see <https://etha.wildapricot.org/> and click on REGISTRATION).

***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 March 14<sup>th</sup> 2019 at the T&P Depot Museum at 1:30 p.m. The meeting adjourned at 2:54 p.m.

**Submitted by Richard Magrill**