

County

- SHARING SPACE
- INSURANCE MATTERS
- HEAVY TRUCK DAMAGE
- STATE BUDGET
- WATER PLANNING

AND MUCH MORE!



2012 PRE-LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE COVERAGE





2012 Officers & Board of Directors

PRESIDENT
Connie Hickman
Navarro County Justice of the Peace

PRESIDENT ELECT
Don Allred
Oldham County Judge

VICE PRESIDENT
Joyce Hudman
Brazoria County Clerk

MEMBERS
Luanne Caraway
Hays County Tax Assessor-Collector

Renee Couch
Comal County Treasurer

Edward Dion
El Paso County Auditor

Laurie English
112th District Attorney

Larry Gallardo
Hidalgo County Constable

Jerry Garza
Webb County Commissioner

Roger Harmon
Johnson County Judge

Bena Hester
Briscoe County County & District Clerk

Debbie Ingalsbe
Hays County Commissioner

J.W. Jankowski
Washington County Sheriff

Harold Keeter
Swisher County Judge

Jackie Miller, Jr.
Ellis County Justice of the Peace

Charles Shofner
Jasper County Commissioner

Sherri Woodfin
Tom Green County District Clerk

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
Vernon Cook
Roberts County Judge
Immediate Past President

Marc Hamlin
Brazos County District Clerk
NACo Representative

Ron Hickman
Harris County Constable
NACo Representative

Glen Whitley
Tarrant County Judge
NACo Representative

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 5

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2012

Contents

Features

- 22 Pre-Legislative Conference Coverage**
Heavy truck damage, public pensions, water planning, jail operations, indigent defense, juvenile justice, mental health and more

- 64 Insurance Matters**
Updates on TAC insurance pools from member regional meetings

- 70 Sharing Space**
Carson County, city of Panhandle unite to build one-stop shop for law enforcement, emergency management

- 78 Unique Charms of a Texas County Seat**
Pictures from a short walk around a Texas county courthouse



p. 64



p. 70

Departments

4 Staff Report / 7 Clipboard / 14 Message for You / 16 Emergency Services / 18 County Cooks / 20 Historical Highlights / 80 TAC Associates / 83 Readings / 84 Crossword / 85 Calendar / 86 County Information Project / 88 One Last Look

County Staff

Gene Terry, *Executive Director* / Leah Magnus, *Communications Manager* / Maria Sprow, *Editor*
Liz Carmack, *Contributing Writer* / Ben Chomiak, *Graphic Design*

Bankhead Highway Study a Roadmap for Appreciation, Preservation

Today, a spaghetti network of high-speed highways crisscrosses our state. But an early 20th century cross-Texas road-tripper only had a few two-lane paved routes to choose from.

A new project to identify, designate and promote these early highways promises to touch a large percentage of Texas counties and has the potential to help them raise awareness of their local and regional histories and boost their economies through heritage tourism.

Bankhead Highway survey

The Texas Historical Commission (THC), in partnership with the Texas Department of Transportation, has contracted with Austin consulting firm Hardy-Heck-Moore to survey the Texas portion of the 1916 Bankhead Highway and the historic sites along it.

The transcontinental Bankhead Highway ran from Washington, D.C., to San Diego, Calif. The highway was named for U.S. Sen. John Hollis Bankhead of Alabama, a champion of good roads. Bankhead scholars today disagree about the details of the route in Texas, but it passed through Texarkana, Sulphur Springs, Garland, Dallas, Fort Worth, Mineral Wells, Abilene, Midland, Van Horn, El Paso and many smaller towns. In 1920, much of the Bankhead became Texas State Highway 1.

The Bankhead passed through the heart of many towns, both large and small, until the 1956 Interstate Highway Act created a network of wider, safer roads that encouraged drivers to bypass Main Street to get from A to B faster. It roughly



The original red brick pavers remain on this original stretch of the Bankhead Highway outside Cisco in Eastland County. Photo courtesy of the Texas Historical Commission.

parallels Interstates 20 and 30 today. The interstates replaced some sections of the Bankhead and bypassed it in other areas.

Nowadays, the Bankhead route mostly follows state, county or city roads, but some bypassed sections have almost disappeared, said Kristen Brown, THC resources survey coordinator. "We don't know all the locations. (That's what the survey will identify.) Some Bankhead sections are deserted. Some are now on private land where the highway was bypassed and the parcel subsequently sold."

David Moore, a principal of Hard-Heck-Moore, said the firm is first preparing a historical context for Texas state highways before conducting the Bankhead survey, which he considers a case study. The context will establish a methodology that can be used by local groups and communities for conducting similar surveys, which Moore hopes will attract greater interest in the state's other historic highways, including the Old Spanish Trail, the Meridian Highway and the East Texas Highway.

Architectural legacy

Development of Texas' cities and towns has been closely tied to transportation. As auto travel grew in the 1920s and 1930s, any town fortunate enough to be bisected by a paved major highway benefitted. Travelers stopped along the road for food, lodging and other services and the communities became commercial centers. The early highways also carried goods, connected farmers and ranchers to market and allowed access to the state's oil producing regions at the time, just as the extensive road network does today.

A keen eye notices the rich architectural legacy still standing along early highways, including motor courts, gas stations, hotels,



Billy Frank Hicks, Franklin County Historical Commission chair and former county attorney, was involved in the restoration of the 1929 Bolin Station on Main Street in county seat Mount Vernon. Travelers driving the Bankhead Highway in the early 20th century topped up their tanks here, a block from the town square. Photo courtesy of Hudson Old.

auto dealerships and warehouses. Many may be neglected or have been repurposed, but historic resources such as these are waiting rediscovery in some 40 counties through the Bankhead survey alone.

Counties treasure these remnants, which add character to their communities and tangible links to their history. B.F. Hicks, Franklin County Historical Commission chair (and a former county attorney), proudly points to the 1929 Bolin Station, Mount Vernon's oldest gas station, as a preserved icon from that era. Restored and most recently operated as an art gallery, it sits one block from the town square along part of the Bankhead's East Texas route, on Mount Vernon's Main Street.

Volunteers at the county's Thruston House/Bankhead Highway Trails and Visitor Center share the highway's story with locals and visitors. "We want them to be aware of our heritage and know where we've come from, from covered wagon to the railroad to modern transportation," Hicks said.

In the North Central Plains, the Bankhead roughly followed Highway 80 and Interstate 20 through Taylor County, tracking through downtown Abilene. Motor courts such as the Ponca Motel and the Abilene Courts remain from the old highway's heyday, as do a few pieces of the original roadway, including an 18-foot-wide stretch west of Trent. An original Bankhead concrete marker at the corner of North 1st and Cedar streets still marks the intersection where two legs of the Bankhead meet in Abilene.

In El Paso County, a few properties boast county historical markers on the Far West Texas portion of the Bankhead, but many more buildings are gone, said Bernie Sargent, El Paso County Historical Commission chair. "A number of old drive-ins and some motor hotels are still in existence, but they've been altered significantly. The county doesn't really have any jurisdiction to control growth along these roads. It's a growing concern."

Heritage tourism and preservation

The Bankhead survey and increased attention focused on Texas' historic highways offer counties claiming a piece of this transportation history a chance to boost heritage tourism and step up preservation efforts.

The Bankhead overlaps with the Old Spanish Trail and the Butterfield Trail in El Paso County, Sargent said. "Over the past years, we've been attempting to elevate awareness, as well as garner community support, which will result in a positive financial impact," he said. "People are in a hurry to get from point A to B and we want to change that. We want them to spend some time in El Paso County. When they spend time, they are spending money. The result is more jobs and a lessening of the tax burden on residents in the county."

"The county should be interested in supporting this because it's economic," said Anita Lane, Taylor County Historical Commission chair. "When they get the restaurants busier and the gas stations busier it's going to benefit each of the counties along the way."

"Think about historic Route 66," Moore said. "The Bankhead preceded Route 66. By focusing on the Bankhead we're hoping that it will get people to stop and re-examine some historic properties that they probably considered eye-sores but are really significant in these communities because they serve as a link to the past."

Public input sought

The Bankhead study is in its early stages, but the THC and Hardy-Heck-Moore will reach out to communities over the next two years for information as they track the roadway and the historic resources along it. Preliminary plans are to provide a website or other means for people to upload and share historical details and photos with project staff. In the meantime, contact David Moore at dmoore@hhminc.com or (512) 478-8014, ext. 109.

"For this to work, we have to reach out to the public," Moore said. "County government officials will be instrumental because they have a lot of the information in their county records. They also work with county historical commissions that can inform the public about the project and share stories about their communities."

The final report on the Bankhead and historical context for Texas' historic highways is due to the THC in 2014. The project also includes updating information collected during the survey on the THC's Texas Historic Sites Atlas, atlas.thc.state.tx.us, and interpretation of the survey's findings through an online portal providing historic tourism information. ★

Writer's Note: Published sources used for this story include: "Bankhead Highway" by Joe W. Specht, in Abilene Stories, edited by Glenn Dromgoole, Jay Moore, and Specht and to be published by Abilene Christian University Press in March 2013; "On the Road Again," by Gene Fowler in the May 2011 issue of Texas Highways; and "Banking on the Bankhead," in the Jan.-Feb. issue of The Medallion.



This old postcard shows the 1930 Abilene Courts, a motor court that provided accommodation to Bankhead Highway auto trekkers stopping overnight in Abilene, Taylor County. Photo courtesy of Joe Specht.

The roots of Texas history are in its counties and bind the state together in its collective past. "Historical Highlights" features many aspects of Texas history, from details on a county's little-known historical events and people, to how a particular county brings

its history to life to the history-related news affecting Texas counties. County officials, employees and historical commission members who would like to submit story ideas should email County contributing writer Liz Carmack at lizc@county.org.