

Focus on Historic Resources

Educate Your CHC on the Importance of Historic Bridges

By Amy Hammons
County Historical Commission Outreach Coordinator

The last edition of CHC Corner addressed how the Texas Historical Commission (THC) provides technical advice, affirmation, and moral support. In addition to these general areas of assistance, THC staff educates individuals on the complexities of specific historic resource types.

The THC, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and Historic Bridge Foundation (HBF) recently identified the most significant bridges built in Texas in the decades following World War II. These partners held public meetings to discuss what educational materials could best tell the story of these important resources.

Together, THC, TxDOT, and HBF are producing guidance for local preservationists and engineers. TxDOT created a visual glossary of bridge components and the “Dos and Don’ts” of bridge repairs. HBF’s website includes key steps to promoting bridge awareness, and the THC’s website

features a section with additional guidance and information to help the public understand historic bridges.



Above and at right: The Piano Bridge in Fayette County was recently preserved thanks to support from county officials and preservationists.



Photos by Michael Amador/TxDOT

The THC website also features TxDOT’s maps of historic truss bridges and post-World War II bridges

eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Determining the value of historic bridges is particularly important considering their replacement rate due to perceived cost-prohibitive repairs.

“Our preference is that bridges, like buildings, be left at the original location,” says Linda Henderson, a historian with the THC. “However, a bridge may be stored and reused, and

the move may not lessen the bridge’s integrity if it’s historically significant for its engineering.”

Whether rehabilitated or repurposed, bridge use typically is limited to simple conveyance (crossing a

natural feature), while buildings have a seemingly broader range of reuse (retail, office, residence, etc.) that enable reinvention and some degree of return on investment. For this reason, we challenge you to increase the value of historic bridges by highlighting their role in heritage tourism.

“Bridges and other infrastructure are key characters in stories of exploration, settlement, and industry, as much as buildings,” Henderson says.

CHCs can promote local history by highlighting unique historic bridges. More information on saving bridges in your community can be found by searching “historic bridges” on the THC website (www.thc.state.tx.us). ★

The Medallion is published quarterly by the Texas Historical Commission. Address correspondence to: Managing Editor, *The Medallion*, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276. Portions of the newsletter that are not copyrighted or reprinted from other sources may be reprinted with permission. Contributions for the support of this publication are gratefully accepted. For information about alternate formats of this publication, contact the THC at 512.463.6255.

The Medallion is financed in part by a grant from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. All of the agency’s public programs and activities are operated free from discrimination on

the basis of race, color, national origin, age, gender, or disability. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against should write to Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

The Medallion is available online at www.thc.state.tx.us/medallion. If you would prefer to receive *The Medallion* electronically instead of through the mail, please send your name and address to thc@thc.state.tx.us. You will be notified by email when each new issue is available on the THC website and will no longer receive a printed copy.

Our Mission

To protect and preserve the state’s historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education, enjoyment, and economic benefit of present and future generations.