

# TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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## AGENDA HISTORIC SITES COMMITTEE

Capitol Extension  
Room E1.030  
1400 N. Congress Ave.  
Austin, TX 78701  
July 26, 2021  
2:15 p.m.

*(or upon the adjournment of the 1:45 p.m. preceding History Programs Committee, whichever occurs later)*

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*This meeting of the THC Historic Sites committee has been properly posted with the Secretary of State's Office according to the provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551, Texas Government Code. The members may discuss and/or take action on any of the items listed in the agenda.*

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1. Call to Order
  - A. Committee member introductions
  - B. Establish quorum
  - C. Recognize and/or excuse absences
2. Consider approval of the April 26, 2021, Historic Sites Committee meeting minutes
3. Consider staff recommendation regarding the Phase I Evaluation of Old Fort Parker – (Item 14.2)
4. Consider approval of utility easement at Caddo Mounds SHS – (Item 14.3)
5. Consider acceptance of transfer of a parcel of land adjacent to the French Legation SHS – (Item 14.4)
6. Consider approval of update to the Eisenhower Birthplace Donor Recognition Plan – (Item 14.5)
7. Historic Sites Facilities Report
8. French Legation Neighborhood Projects Report
9. Update on Levi Jordan Advisory Committee
10. Deaccession Report 2019 to 2021
11. Update on Caddo Mounds Grass House
12. Deputy Executive Director of Historic Sites Update
13. Adjournment

*NOTICE OF ASSISTANCE AT PUBLIC MEETINGS: Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services such as interpreters for persons who are deaf or hearing impaired, readers, large print or Braille, are requested to contact Esther Brickley at (512) 463-5768 at least four (4) business days prior to the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.*

# TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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## HISTORIC SITES COMMITTEE MINUTES

Videoconference Meeting  
AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center  
Grand Salon ABC  
1900 University Avenue  
Austin TX 78705  
April 26, 2021  
1:00 p.m.

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*Note: For the full text of action items, please contact the Texas Historical Commission at P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711 or call 512.463.6100.*

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**Commissioners in attendance:** John Crain (Chair), Jim Bruseth, Monica Burdette, David Gravelle, Laurie Limbacher, Catherine McKnight, and Pete Peterson.

### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner John Crain at 9:00 am on April 27, 2021. Pursuant to the Governor's March 16, 2020, suspension of certain provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the April 26, 2021, meeting of the Historic Sites Committee will be held by videoconference as authorized under Texas Government Code section 551.127. The presiding officer and a quorum of the Historic Sites Committee will be present at the above-posted physical location. The public is invited to attend via Zoom using the registration link provided or in person in accordance with the instructions below. To attend by Zoom, registration is required: <http://bit.ly/april26thcmeeting>. For audio only access via telephone: 1(346) 248-7799 Webinar ID: 914 0970 3244. The meeting had been posted to the *Texas Register*, was being held in conformance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551 and that notice had been properly posted with the Secretary of State's Office as required.

#### A. Committee member introductions

Commissioner Crain welcomed all present and conducted roll call.

#### B. Establish quorum

Commissioner Crain reported that a quorum was present and declared the meeting open.

#### C. Recognize and/or excuse absences

Absences: Commissioner Crain noted that there were no absences.

### 2. Consider approval of the February 2, 2021 Historic Sites Committee meeting minutes

Commissioner Crain asked if anyone had any comments regarding the minutes. There being none, he called for a motion. Motion to approve the February 2, 2021 minutes was made by Commissioner Pete Peterson and seconded by Commissioner Jim Bruseth. Commissioner Crain called for a vote. Vote to approve was unanimous.

### 3. Consider approval of deaccessions from the Fanthorp Inn, Fulton Mansion, Kreische Brewery, and National Museum of the Pacific War State Historic Sites – (Item 15.2)

Joseph Bell, Deputy Executive Director of Historic Sites stated that there are over 1400 objects identified for deaccessioning from four sites. He noted that the photos on the slide illustrate a sample of some of the objects to be deaccessioned. Bell said that staff have reviewed and assessed the items and they are proposed for deaccessioned due to the following reasons:

- Outside the site's period of significance and interpretive period
- items are deteriorated(damaged) beyond usefulness.
- Lack site association and provenance.
- Duplicates
- Items not needed to meet the site's mission.
- A number of items recorded as missing and not transferred.

Bell said that most of the items will be transferred into the site's educational collection and any items that are deteriorated beyond usefulness will be disposed of appropriately. The record will be updated to reflect items notes as lost or missing. He stated that it is the recommendation of staff that the noted objects be deaccessioned. Commissioner Crain called for a motion. Commissioner Laurie Limbacher moved to send forward to the full commission and recommend approval of deaccession of objects from Fanthorp Inn, Fulton Mansion, Kreische Brewery, and the National Museum of the Pacific War State Historic Sites as proposed on the attached lists. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Catherine McKnight. Commissioner Crain called for a vote. Vote to approve was unanimous.

#### **4. Historic Sites Facilities Report**

Bell introduced Glenn Reed, Chief Architect, to provide the Historic Sites Facilities Report. Reed began by saying that an accidental fire destroyed the Courthouse structure at Villa de Austin. He said that staff have been working with all parties involved to assess this situation and devise a plan to rebuild. Reed noted that the standing portions of the building had been removed and the debris hauled away to allow an assessment of the wooden floor structure and foundation. He said that it appears that these components can be reused, and a structural engineer will visit the site to confirm. In the meantime, work is proceeding on the Allen Dwelling, which is the last building to be constructed as part of this project. Describing the photos on the slides, he noted that the brick piers for that building, and the log walls have been erected and the roof is now being framed. He said that despite the setback, he expects the entire project to be completed by this summer. Chairman John Nau asked about the economics of the fire. Bell stated that the estimated amount to reconstruct is \$230,000 and that the contractor had insurance in place. He said that talks have taken place with the insurance company and that once everything is resolved, we will be moving forward with the reconstruction of the structure. Chairman Nau asked what would be done to cover any gap in construction cost and insurance coverage. Bell noted that fundraising will begin to assist in filling the gap as well as searching operating budgets to see if we can redirect any funds from there. When the question was asked about how the fire started and was it intentional, Bell stated that this was not arson and was a spontaneous eruption of chemicals inside the building.

At Levi Jordan Plantation, Reed stated that the learning center complex project is proceeding at a rapid pace. The framing for the archeology lab building, which will also serve as a temporary visitor center, the roofing and exterior wall cladding and insulation have been installed. He noted that we are carefully inserting these buildings into the landscape, with minimal clearing as the landscape of the site is a critical component of its interpretation. The structural steel for the Learning Center building will be delivered by the end of April, and overall substantial completion is scheduled for the end of this year.

Reed noted that at Caddo Mounds, we have begun construction on Phase 1 of the new Caddo Cultural Center, which will replace the visitor center that was destroyed by a tornado. The contractor is completing the building pad preparation. Substantial completion for Phase 1 is scheduled for December. The Friends of THC are gearing up for a capital campaign to raise money for Phase 2 of this project, which will include an Education and Activity Center building and a covered plaza. Chairman Nau asked about the grass hut. Reed noted that the hut is not a part of this reconstruction project. Bell said that staff is in discussion with the Caddo Tribe and that staff is collecting materials for the eventual reconstruction.

Reed stated that our ruins stabilization project at Fort Griffin and Fort Lancaster is out for bid. At least two qualified contractors have made the required pre-bid site visit, and we are hoping for good participation on bid day in late May.

Contract engineers have completed the schematic design phase for the Varner-Hogg Plantation House preservation project. Reed said that the project will address foundation issues, as well as repairs to the building exterior – windows, doors, columns, railings, and stucco. This project will go out for bid in September.

The Seawall Repair project at Sabine Pass Battleground is on the same schedule as the Varner-Hogg project and will focus on repairing damage that is directly attributable to Hurricane Harvey, including re-establishing a surface drainage system to mitigate the effect of future storms. Reed explained that these interventions will allow time to plan and fund the eventual complete replacement of the wall.

Reed said that at the Magoffin Home structural repairs for the 1901 visitor center, located across the street from the historic adobe home, is currently posted for bids. The project will focus on restoring the structural integrity of this unreinforced masonry building, which has been exhibiting some differential settlement in recent years.

Staff continue to meet periodically with the Levi Jordan African American Advisory Group to develop consensus concerning both the site interpretation and the architectural design. Discussions are very positive, and the group is making very good progress.

Reed said that the engineers have completed their assessment work on the historic dam across the Medina River at Landmark Inn and are beginning to develop repair design options. The final report will be submitted this summer and will allow us to determine the next steps that need to be taken to preserve the dam.

Reed concluded noting that at the 1834 Fanthorp Inn in Anderson, staff is developing construction documents in-house for an exterior preservation project to address badly deteriorated siding and windows. We plan to post the project for bids this summer.

Chairman Nau asked about any uptick in visitation at the sites. Bell noted that visitation has increased in the last six weeks due to holidays and events. Commissioner Limbacher asked about the visitation and outreach report in the packet. Bell said that it is as stated, both onsite visitation and off-site outreach as well as outreach via webinar and electronic engagement.

## **5. San Jacinto Battleground and Monument Report**

Bell stated that the cultural landscape report crafted in 2005 is under evaluation. The team from Gallagher and Associates is looking at the report's recommendations to update it to include the restoration of the Texian camp located next to the Buffalo Bayou once the battleship is removed; the North shore restoration detailing the original shoreline and land topography; and the Old San Jacinto townsite. Continuing to describe the slides, Bell noted that the illustrations show the reflection pool removed with the road system realigned, and the restoration of the Road to New Washington. He said that a proposed new visitor center adjacent to the monument is to have expanded galleries. He noted that the intent is not to create two competing venues. Referring again to the slides, Bell stated that the map has some of the site improvements overlaid which include the monument, reflection pool, battleship slip and the NRG Almonte Surrender site. He said that the updated cultural landscape report will include infilling the battleship slip; restoration of the shoreline to the San Jacinto River; and a review of all the battleground restoration options, restoration of landscape features, and roadway configurations.

Regarding the Almonte Surrender Site, Bell noted that the Land and Water conservation grant from the Texas Park and Wildlife Department is scheduled to be reviewed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Commission at its spring meeting in April or May.

Bell said that Amy Rogers has been hired as the new executive manager at the San Jacinto Battleground and Monument. She previously worked at the 1940 Air Terminal Museum in Houston as the executive director. Bell noted that under her leadership, the annual budget has grown from \$140K to over \$500K, one direct report to now five, and that volunteer participation has expanded to 70 individuals. Ms. Rogers has a BA from Sam Houston State University in History and an MA from University of Houston in Non-profit Management. She is active in the leadership of the Texas Association of Museums and is a strong advocate of community engagement. She has over 11 years of management experience.

Bell stated that Rogers will be managing both the state and non-profit staff on site and reporting to THC Commission through him and directly to the San Jacinto Museum and Battlefield Association Board. He noted that the organization chart illustrates the site management structure merging the battleground and monument museum into a single business unit. Bell said that he is working on the San Jacinto operating agreement, the business plan, and that the statutory authority language that incorporates the new name and previously authorized resolutions and agreements with the state is working its way through legislative hearings.

Bell said that planning is underway to present an illumination event at San Jacinto. It will be on Saturday, September 13 starting at 6 pm after dark and be a drive through event. He stated that the focus is to honor Texans who gave their lives in armed conflict from the Texas Revolution to Afghanistan. 21,500 candles will be placed on the grounds and around the monument with the help of over 300 volunteers from Boy and Girl Scouts to social and church groups. He said that the project is modeled on the illumination project at Antietam National Battlefield and noted that the slide shown is from Antietam, where 23,000 illuminations honor the casualties from its battle on Sept 17, 1862.

Bell stated that due to the unknown pandemic environment, in preparation for the 185th anniversary of the battle of San Jacinto staff began preparing for a film presentation to celebrate the day and provide a public presentation to replace the on-site event annually scheduled. The films were released April 19, 20, 21 and 22 and included the Runaway Scrape, skirmish, battle, and surrender. The four films were representing the multiple day of the event versus the one-day theatrical event done on-site. The participants were all THC staff or volunteers with a very limited budget.

Bell noted that the winter freeze broke a water pipe in the monument. It flooded the basement collection storage area. When staff arrived, six inches of water filled the room. 17,000 objects (about 10% of the collection) was impacted including paintings, Mesoamerican ceramics, firearms, and currency. He explained that Laura DeNormandie, Chief Curator, went to the site and worked with museum staff on triage and mitigation. Curators from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department also assisted. He said that Steve Pines, lead conservator from the Houston Museum of Fine Arts gave two days of service providing guidance and consultation. Since then, the collections have been relocated to higher floors in the monument. Bell said that staff will be doing a collection storage assessment that will detail best storage locations and units for the future.

## **6. Washington-on-the-Brazos Report**

Bell said that work is underway on the site's master plan with Gallagher and Associates, staff, and stakeholders. He noted that Gallagher presented a 50 percent progress review focusing on enhancing the visitor experience. Bell said that there were seven areas of focus: Main entry, the Star of the Republic and its traditional museum exhibits, Visitor Center and underutilized conference center, Independence Hall, town

site, river overlook, and Barrington Plantation as a living history farm. The team is looking to improve the visitor experience and structure journeys through the site and try to determine a central starting point. Bell noted that in determining what story is told in each area, staff will be able to detail the interpretive focus: the Texas Revolution and the site's role in the formation and its position in the Republic; its political, economic, and cultural importance as themes. He said that when looking at the means to tell the story from rebuilding historic structures like San Felipe to impressions of buildings. The use of technology from augmented reality, 3D modeling, and virtual reality. He noted that the team is collecting stakeholder comments on the presentation and those will be address in the next full group presentation.

Bell stated that Washington-on-the-Brazos staff also planned an anniversary film in lieu of an in person event due to the pandemic. The Washington-on-the-Brazos Foundation funded the production and worked with staff on the script and production logistics. THC staff and volunteers were the reenactors. It focused on Washington-on-the Brazos' role in the creation of a new nation and fight for independence with the 59 elected delegates gathered on-site to declare independence. The film was well received.

#### **7. Deputy Executive Director of Historic Sites update**

Bell stated that the Texas Living History Association awarded Fort McKavett for their living history event "50 Miles by Wire, 1875". Bell explained that staff installed a working period-styled telegraph system between the post headquarters and other structures on site. It was one of the first telegraph stations in West Texas. Describing the slides, Bell said that the one photo shown is an ambrotype done by Cody Mobley, Site Manager at Fort McKavett, with reenactors. It is shown next to a contemporary image.

Bell noted that Bexar County is finalizing the demolition of the jail building next to Casa Navarro and that the site has been closed and fenced off during the demolition. Staff have completed an inspection of the site and identified areas where debris fell onto the property damaging the stone wall. He said that the area is to be developed by University of Texas San Antonio (UTSA) for its business school. He noted that San Pedro Creek Cultural Park is being developed behind the jail property. In addition to the jail demolition, the Federal Courthouse is finishing its construction and is pictured across from the site. He said that eventually the site will be wrapped in new development. Chairman Nau noted that he is trying to secure meetings with Bexar County and UTSA to discuss how all this development will impact the site.

Bell said that Michael Moore was able to secure the donation of an appropriate period styled printing press for the Print Shop structure. He said that the printing press is pictured on the slide and comes to us from. Mr. John Horn. Bell said that Michael and Bryan McAuley, Site Manager, San Felipe de Austin will be picking it up in Little Rock, Arkansas and delivering it to the site in late May. It is an operational press to be used in programming and demonstrations.

Bell noted that the outfitting of the buildings in Villa de Austin is underway noting that all of the items are props or reproductions.

At the French Legation, Bell said that a third-party vendor has been selected. Foodworks will operate the retail, food service, catering, recreational equipment rental and provide its own janitorial service. Foodworks is part pf the Compass Group, a British multinational corporation and is one of the largest foodservice companies in the world serving a broad range of business sector functions from corporate dining, cultural facilities, higher education, to sports venues. Bell noted that Foodworks has contract with the Smithsonian, Guggenheim, American Museum of Natural History, and the Harley-Davidson Museum. In Austin, Compass companies service the Palmer Event Center and the Convention Center as well as provide food service at the university. Bell explained that Foodworks will be operating their Market Café business concept, which is a coffee bar and grab and go food items stocked daily. They will be assigning two staff to the Legation to operate daily food, coffee, and retail operations.

Bell said that catered events will be partnered with local restaurants and caterers provided they pass Compass's quality review process. Bell said that contract negotiations are underway and that the last area to address at the French Legation will be the retail and food service areas in the visitor center. The anticipated interior finishes will be completed this fall.

Bell noted that Aquila is moving forward with development of the lot on 7th Street and the DRT is building its museum next door.

Bell stated that Historic Sites worked with the Friends of the THC on an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Cares Act grant. \$201,335 was received to create two programs, a digital engagement platform and crisis response toolkit in conjunction with History Programs, Communications, and Friends of the THC staff.

Bell explained that the digital engagement platform will include a digital format for interpretive and educational programming; website portal and software platform; content for history teacher and students from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade; and virtual visits to specific historic sites tied to the developed programming. Bell said that the next focus will be the Crisis and Trauma Response Toolkit that will include being able to provide resources to site staff to address community traumatic events; offer structured and guided responses to engage peers and visitors, and to help interpret the event as part of the evolving history of the site and community. He said that the deliverables will include a website portal with needed software owned by THC for digital engagement and virtual tours with supporting material utilizing specific themes tied to state historic sites. He further detailed that the curriculum themes are 4th grade, Indigenous Texas, Texas Revolution, the Republic of Texas; and 7th and 11th grades, WWII and the world it made, entrepreneurial Texas, Civil War and Reconstruction.

The Crisis Response Toolkit will provide actionable resources to sites and will be available to the broader cultural institutional community. Bell said that the products will include a dedicated learning portal under development with Communications; A URL; Housing for digital content including the Crisis Toolkit. He expects it will have expandability to meet future needs and be the landing platform home for all THC learning resources.

Bell said that the Levi Jordan Advisory Committee continues to meet to review two design concepts on the new Visitor Center with large exhibit galleries. As part of the overall master planning underway is an analysis of land around the plantation that was part of the original land holding. He noted that three parcels are under review with the current owners. Two are adjacent to the historic site. The third, Tract C is the location of the slave cemetery that we are in discussions with the family on its acquisition.

Bell stated that a Trademark and Licensing agreement was finalized with Live Oak Brewing Company concerning the use of the name Kreische Brewery State Historic Site and Texas Historical Commission. He said that the beer is based upon on-site chemical analysis of the beer brewed at the location. The licensee fee is \$0.25 per case.

Bell noted on the retail front that LAS Architects, the designer of the San Felipe de Austin Visitor Center is working with staff to craft Historic Sites retail design guidelines and standards. He said that the design prototype will be the San Felipe de Austin store and currently used as the main headquarter store. Bell said that the other initiative underway in retail is identifying products for a holiday launch this fall. A broad selection of iconic brand images will be used in product development as well as potential e-commerce platforms. He said that the products will be developed to strengthen the Texas Historical Commission's brand identity as operator of Historic Sites statewide. Bell said that staff is in discussion with the Bob Bullock

Texas State History Museum and the State Preservation Board regarding their e-commerce platforms and seeing how they conduct business.

Bell stated that staff is currently conducting a Phase I assessment of Fort Parker in Mexia for possible inclusion into the THC network of historic sites. The existing facility is a reconstruction. He said that a complete report will be presented to the commission at the July quarterly meeting.

Bell concluded by describing several artifacts of recent acquisitions added through donation or finds to the San Felipe de Austin collection.

#### **8. Adjournment**

At 10:10am, Commissioner Crain asked for any other business to be brought before the committee. There being none, he stated without objection that the Historic Sites Committee meeting was adjourned.

## Quarterly Report

Historic Sites Division  
April–June 2021

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### OPERATIONS

Visitation and outreach at the sites this quarter was 199,480, 12.7 percent lower than this time last year. Visitation and earned revenue have increased—and at some sites surpass—2019 levels for this time.

The San Jacinto Day event on April 17 was scaled down due to not enough parking within walking distance of the monument.

The IMLS grant project to support the development of digital engagement tools is well underway. The Virtual Learning Portal is being built and staff is working with new software applications to build cross-site themed virtual field trips, online experiences and exhibits, and other resources for lifelong learners.

A vendor contract to provide food, retail, and catering services at the French Legation has been awarded to Foodworks and is in final review and pending execution.

The Aquila Commercial, LLC developers in Austin are about to begin the construction project near the French Legation. Per the 2019 agreement with the THC, they will donate a parcel of adjacent land that was originally within the Legation’s boundary.

### FRIENDS GROUPS

The Community Partnerships Coordinator has contacted each Friends Group to assess specific nonprofit issues and ensure that annual plans and reports are submitted per the THC-MOA.

Friends Alliance Awards nominations opened in May. In July, the Friends of the THC’s Liaison Committee will select award winners to be honored at the 2022 Real Places conference.

A new Friends Group listserv was established, intended for board members across the state to communicate with each other, share best practices, and promote

partner site’s programs. In addition, planning is underway for the second Friends Group virtual happy hour, where board members may share projects and resources via Zoom.

The monthly e-newsletter, “First Friday News for Friends,” has continued delivering nonprofit training opportunities, Friends events at historic sites, THC and Friends of the THC news, and MOA reminders.

### CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Caddo Mounds: Construction began in mid-March but has been greatly impacted by persistent rain. The December 2021 Substantial Completion date will likely change.

Fanthorp Inn: We are developing an exterior preservation project for this historic structure.

Levi Jordan Plantation: The Learning Center Complex project broke ground in December and is now 65 percent complete. The architectural and exhibit design work for the visitors’ center project is moving forward. The design team is actively collaborating with the African American Advisory Group.

Landmark Inn: We are weighing preservation treatment options of the historic dam.

Magoffin Home: A contractor has been selected for the visitors center structural repairs, and the contract review is in progress.

Palmito Ranch Battlefield: An engineer has been selected to design an elevated viewing platform.

Fort Griffin and Fort Lancaster: The contract for ruins stabilization was awarded in mid-June and work will begin soon.

Sabine Pass Battleground: Construction documents for repairs to the seawall are in development.

San Felipe de Austin: Phase 2 of the interpretive evocations project known as Villa de Austin will be completed this summer. Work has begun to rebuild the burned courthouse.

Varner-Hogg Plantation: Construction documents for foundation repairs and exterior preservation of the plantation house are in development.

## **INTERPRETATION**

The Mission Dolores permanent exhibit's installation has been completed, except for the addition of extra gallery lighting in the historic timeline area and orientation video room. Site staff is coordinating with local contractors to complete that work.

The initial sections of the new interpretive master plan for Fulton Mansion have been reviewed and returned to the contract team. There will be two additional section submissions before the final draft is reviewed in November.

The Caddo Mounds exhibit fabrication is well underway. Site Manager Tony Souther is coordinating with several Caddo artisans for the reproduction of items lost in the tornado.

The major exhibit and interpretative redesign project at the Star of the Republic Museum has proceeded. The contract team presented its 50 percent interpretive plan documents, and THC comments were returned in late June.

Additional interpretive education collection items are being purchased to assist with programming needs at several sites, including the French Legation, Fort McKavett, and San Felipe.

All outdoor interpretive panels at Fort Lancaster are being refabricated due to sun damage. A new outdoor interpretive panel for Fort McKavett will assist in orienting visitors as they begin their tours.

## **COLLECTIONS**

House Bill 2660/Senate Bill 881 was approved to amend language to extend jurisdiction of the Star of the Republic Museum's permanent collection and building to the THC. Senate Bill 1177 approved the establishment of a task force to evaluate state-owned artifact collections.

The Austin collections team worked with UT's I-school IMLS students to complete their final graduate capstone projects. Curatorial staff also worked with Catherine Jalbert, lecturer at Rice University and archeologist for Levi Jordan and Varner Hogg Plantations, to implement historic sites legacy collections processing projects at Rice. The university allocated a full-time, paid student to work on THC collections for the entire spring semester.

This summer Remi McCoy, an undergraduate student at Texas A&M University in Anthropology and Mechanical Engineering departments, is interning at the Curatorial Facility for Artifact Research. He is prepping archeological collections for conservation and processing collections from San Felipe de Austin.

Collections staff continue to prepare for grant project submissions in fall 2021 and provide necessary reporting for the HIM grant received last year for Fulton Mansion through the National Park Service.

Historic Sites curatorial team worked with staff interpreters and site staff to make historic and archeological collections available to the public. This spring such support took the form of exhibit development and completion at Mission Dolores and the French Legation. These projects required extensive planning and coordination to develop exhibits, carry out conservation needs, and document collections relocations. Collections staff is actively participating in the Fulton Mansion and Washington-on-the-Brazos interpretive master plans. Seasonal exhibit changes and all corresponding documentation for summertime exhibits have been completed by our site staff and regional collections team.

Curatorial staff collaborated with Communications Division on the Media Production Application for Historic Sites in partnership with the Texas Film Commission. Staff completed a thorough report outlining and analyzing the last several years of deaccessioning activity completed by the HSD collections team. Curatorial staff updated Coronavirus Awareness Operating Guidelines for Historic Sites.

## HISTORIC SITES - VISITATION / OUTREACH - FY2021

	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	TOTAL
Acton													0
Caddo Mounds	320	528	428	298	229	123	564	394	399	0	0	0	3,283
Casa Navarro	0	101	55	26	27	220	0	0	1	0	0	0	430
Confederate Reunion Grounds	62	109	36	42	36	15	232	121	104	0	0	0	757
Eisenhower Birthplace	1,193	1,366	800	479	403	507	997	684	822	0	0	0	7,251
Fannin Battleground	77	133	101	115	96	89	212	166	112	0	0	0	1,101
Fanthorp Inn	56	71	56	49	71	20	163	46	193	0	0	0	725
Fort Griffin	683	754	647	351	321	404	1,274	3,744	882	0	0	0	9,060
Fort Lancaster	115	191	135	148	93	68	347	271	278	0	0	0	1,646
Fort McKavett	273	572	349	235	201	124	1,124	409	402	0	0	0	3,689
French Legation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fulton Mansion	301	427	219	412	545	279	1,156	1,173	923	0	0	0	5,435
Goodnight Ranch	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	288	0	0	0	288
Landmark Inn	402	363	529	458	371	570	906	822	891	0	0	0	5,312
Levi Jordan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lipantitlan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Magoffin Home	70	93	15	24	16	49	279	209	341	0	0	0	1,096
Mission Dolores	112	112	157	95	79	47	113	224	181	0	0	0	1,120
Kreische Brewery/Monument Hill	1,058	1,584	1,219	4,110	1,322	556	1,460	1,486	1,283	0	0	0	14,078
Ntl Museum of the Pacific	4,452	4,126	3,429	6,053	4,505	2,386	10,046	9,239	9,676	0	0	0	53,912
Port Isabel Lighthouse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	97	2,434	0	0	0	2,531
Sabine Pass Battleground	712	2,791	2,824	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,327
Sam Bell Maxey	73	329	11	60	41	23	120	132	112	0	0	0	901
Sam Rayburn House	978	1,229	18	40	131	18	179	390	107	0	0	0	3,090
San Felipe de Austin	465	491	571	419	604	544	1,261	712	626	0	0	0	5,693
San Jacinto Battleground	13,463	20,042	17,019	17,894	20,048	12,260	22,149	19,016	21,890	0	0	0	163,781
San Jacinto Monument	2,180	2,189	1,955	1,255	2,428	494	0	4,118	1	0	0	0	14,620
Starr Family Home	20	31	20	11	13	10	33	59	54	0	0	0	251
Varner-Hogg Plantation	501	1,282	453	240	208	207	556	1,161	141	0	0	0	4,749
Washington-on-the-Brazos Complex*	7,899	8,544	7,686	3,727	6,417	9,977	15,353	18,288	10,460	0	0	0	88,351
Monthly totals	35,465	47,458	38,732	36,541	38,205	28,990	58,524	62,961	52,601	0	0	0	399,477
Quarterly totals			121,655			103,736			174,086			0	

\* The WOB Complex consists of Washington-on-the-Brazos, Star of the Republic Museum, Independence Hall, and Barrington Plantation.

**Long-term Closures:**

\*Casa Navarro closed due to county jail demolition (Sep-Oct-Nov)

**Weather Related Closures:**

Fulton Mansion was closed 3 days in preparation for Hurricane Beta.



## TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Item 14.2  
Texas Historical Commission  
Quarterly Meeting  
July 26, 2021

### **Consider staff recommendation regarding the Phase I Evaluation of Old Fort Parker**

#### **Background:**

In a letter dated January 2021, the Old Fort Parker Historic Site requested that the Texas Historical Commission (THC) consider receiving Old Fort Parker into its historic sites program. Per Title 13, Part 2, Chapter 16 of the Texas Administrative Code, a staff committee conducted a Phase I assessment and evaluation of the property in May 2021. Based on the Phase I evaluation, the THC staff finds that Old Fort Parker does not meet the criteria for acceptance as a THC state historic site and recommends that a Phase II study should not be authorized.

#### **Suggested Motion:**

Move to accept the Phase I recommendation that the Old Fort Parker Historic Site does not meet the criteria for acceptance as a THC state historic site and that a Phase II study should not be authorized.

## Phase I Assessment of the Old Fort Parker Historic Site

Limestone County, Texas  
For Addition to the Texas Historical Commission's  
Historic Sites Program



May 2021  
Texas Historical Commission

# **Phase I Assessment of the Old Fort Parker Historic Site**

## **Limestone County, Texas For Addition to the Texas Historical Commission's Historic Sites Program**

### Assessment Team:

Bill Irwin, Director of Historic Sites Operations

Hal Simon-Hassel, Chief of Interpretation

H. Glenn Reed, Chief Architect

Brit Barr, Architect

Cody Mobley, Site Manager Ft McKavett SHS

May 2021

Texas Historical Commission  
P.O. Box 12276  
Austin, TX 78711

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## INTRODUCTION

In a letter dated January 2021 addressed to the Texas Legislature and Texas Historical Commission, Old Fort Parker Historic Site requested that the Texas Historical Commission (THC) consider receiving Old Fort Parker into its historic sites program.

As put forward in the THC rules (Title 13, Part 2, Chapter 16 Rule §16.3), potential THC historic sites must meet specific criteria. To make this determination, the candidate site undergoes two phases of evaluation and assessment conducted by THC staff.

This report represents the Phase I assessment of Old Fort Parker. The report discusses each of the evaluation requirements as established in the THC rules. Should the candidate site meet the requirements set forth by the THC rules, the Commission may then authorize a more detailed “Phase II” study that comprehensively evaluates the context and interpretive potential of the site and provides specific details regarding how the site would be developed and operated, as well as the funding needed to make that plan a reality.

This report also contains a Conclusions section that addresses what is presently known about the Old Fort Parker Historic Site relative to the Chapter §16.3 rules criteria, which are the overarching conditions a site must meet to be considered for the THC’s historic sites program.

Based on this Phase I assessment, the THC staff finds the stories associated with Cynthia Ann Parker, the Parker Family and Quanah Parker are compelling and significant. While the reproduction Fort is compelling visually, it lacks documentation for design, location, and orientation. The integrity of the site has been impacted by poor operational planning. Available resources are not sufficient to sustain the long-term viability of the site. The staff recommends that a Phase II Assessment of Old Fort Parker Historic Site not be authorized by the Commission.

Letter requesting Phase I Assessment received from Old Fort Parker Historic Site:

Old Fort Parker Historic Site  
866 Park Road 35  
Groesbeck, TX 76642  
254-729-5253; 254-747-1144  
oldfortparker@aol.com



January, 2021

Dear Texas State Legislature and Texas Historical Commission,

Old Fort Parker Historic Site has a long history in Texas. Originally built by pioneers who risked their lives, venturing into Mexico and buying land grants and building the fort in hope that Texas became a Republic. They endured a famous Comanche Indian attack, and one captured survivor became a legend in Texas, Cynthia Ann Parker.

Through the years the fort was rebuilt by the Civilian Conservation Core during the Depression in the 1930's to commemorate the Texas Sesquicentennial.

Then in the 1960's it was rebuilt by a Huntsville prison encampment. At the end of the 1980's, the Texas legislature did not approve additional money to the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department so seventeen Historic Sites were dropped from their budget, the old fort being one of them, but it has survived.

Since that time of almost 30 years the City of Groesbeck, the City of Mexia and Limestone County have kept the fort open. In the early 1990's Texas Parks & Wildlife Department granted the fort a little over \$500,000.00 in a grant process to keep the fort from falling down. That was almost 30 years ago and the fort is really needing some major repairs. Private individuals have donated the majority of money used on recent repairs. The fort is supplied with \$60,000.00 a year from the two cities and county and that includes salaries. Dedication, lots of events and hard work have kept this old site open and viable.

It would be a great honor for the Texas Historical Commission to adopt this site and be responsible for it's future. I have given 30 years of my life to this endeavor and would like to retire in the next few years with this site in good hands and with a secure future. The Comanche Parker Family as well as the Anglo Parker Family are still involved in this site as it is an important statement to the mingling of two cultures. They are willing to donate artifacts and original furniture to the site if made secure with much needed museum quality cases and archiving.

Please consider adopting this site and saving an integral part of Texas history, both Anglo and Native American. It is so important for both cultures to be preserved in history.

Handwritten signature of Sarah McReynolds in black ink.

Sarah McReynolds, Director

Handwritten signature of Dixie Hoover in black ink.

Dixie Hoover, Old Fort Parker Board President

Handwritten signature of William Reagan in black ink.

William Reagan, Limestone County Historical Commission Chair

Handwritten signature of Richard Duncari in black ink.

Richard Duncari, Limestone County Judge

## PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Silas and John Parker families immigrated to Texas along with a like-minded group from Illinois ca 1834 and established land grants in the Austin & Williams Colonies. The brothers established a fort for protection that included a log palisade 12' high with blockhouses at opposing corners. On May 19, 1836, Fort Parker was attacked by a force of raiding Kiowa, Caddo and Comanche tribesmen. Several occupants at the fort were killed in the raid and five community members were taken captive, among them Cynthia Ann Parker, mother of future Comanche Chief Quanah Parker. During the Texas Centennial in 1936, the Fort was reconstructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as a part of the Fort Parker State Recreation Area and operated by a Parks Board along with Fort Parker State Park. The site was subsequently reconstructed/refurbished in 1967 by inmates from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. The successor to the original Parks Board, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, operated the site until it was transferred to joint ownership and operation by Limestone County, the City of Mexia and the City of Groesbeck. These three entities provide financial support and appoint a seven-person Board of Directors to oversee operations.

The dominant feature of this roughly 40-acre site is the reconstructed Fort dating from 1967. The 12' high palisade walls form an irregular rectangle, roughly 246 feet x 178 feet. The current location of the Fort is based on a Parker family diary positioning it a certain number of paces east of a nearby spring, roughly located in *Figure 1*. As of the time of this writing, the actual location of the original Fort has not been confirmed by archeological investigations.



Figure 1 Aerial view of Old Fort Parker Historic Site

At the northeast and southwest corners of the compound are 2-story blockhouses, positioned partially overhanging the palisade walls. This made it possible to defend the fort from attack by firing through gun ports in the log walls and overhanging floors.

Along the north and south interior palisade walls are several cabins and sheds. Those located along the south wall recreate settlers' homes and are furnished and equipped as such. Those located along the north wall are similar to the others in exterior appearance but provide public restroom facilities and a small exhibit gallery with video presentation. The west end of the compound is almost entirely occupied by a livestock corral, with a blacksmith's shop and bake oven contained within the fence.

The blacksmith's shop was totally rebuilt in 2020. Three roofs on the cabins within the fort were redone within the past three years. Additional roofing projects are planned and materials have been stockpiled.

The southwest blockhouse is empty and offers visitors access to the second floor with excellent views through gun ports of the compound and site to south and west of the Fort. The stairs to the second floor have open risers and irregular edge treads. Handrails and guardrails



**Figure 2 Southwest Blockhouse exterior and interior views.**

are non-compliant with current codes; however, the stair and entire structure feels generally solid. The northeast blockhouse is used for maintenance storage and off limits to visitors. The stair to the second floor is on the exterior.

There are separate men's and women's restrooms within the fort walls. They do not meet the requirements of the Texas Accessibility Standards for accessible route or interior clearances. Each has a wall heater, electric lights, and a ceramic tile floor. Lavatories have cold water only. Fixtures have flush valves, which indicates ample water pressure. Both restrooms have storage closets behind the entry doors for supplies.

The cabin between the two restrooms contains an exhibit gallery with eight glass-front display cases, plus a video playing on a TV monitor. The exhibit is in good condition, but very dated.

In addition to the Fort, there are several other buildings and features on the site, some of which are directly related to the Fort:

Parker Spring is located a short walk into the woods from the southwest corner of the Fort. It still produces fresh water. Without this water source, the fort would have likely been located elsewhere.



**Figure 3 Spring Site**

The Visitor Center, constructed in 2001, houses accessible public restrooms, a gift shop, kitchen, display cases, storage rooms, and a seating area suitable for public meetings and dining. It is in good condition and is connected directly to the Fort by a wooden walkway and arbor. The walkway is enclosed with steel wire grid to prevent entry into the Fort without going through the

Visitor Center. The arbor supports climbing vines and provides entry to the Fort at the northwest corner near the corral.



**Figure 4 Visitor Center Interior**

The Yell Cabin (1830s) the home of Mordecai Yell, an early itinerant Methodist preacher in Texas, is a 2-story structure dating from the same construction period as the fort and may have been build using scavenged timbers from the original Fort. The Yell cabin is in poor condition. The east wall is in an arrested state of collapse and is shored up with tube-steel columns and braces.



**Figure 5 Yell Cabin**

The Spring, Fort, Visitor Center and Yell Cabin form the historic core and educational potential of the site. Other buildings with no historic connection to the place or story have been moved onto the site over the years. These buildings have some use and income-producing potential as rentals for camping and special events:

- Site Manager Residence: Not currently occupied by the Site Manager, offered for overnight rental to site visitors.
- Anna Rogers House (1880): Moved to the Fort Parker site in recent decades, this house is also rented to site visitors.
- Barracks (1940s): These two barracks, originally located elsewhere in Limestone County near Mexia, housed German prisoners of war during World War II. Also moved to the site in recent decades, the barracks contain well-decorated individual sleeping rooms, bathrooms, and HVAC systems, but no automatic fire sprinkler systems. The small barracks has eight guest rooms and one bathroom. The large barracks has 11 guest rooms, two large bathrooms, and a kitchen. The barracks are used for overnight rentals.

- Heritage House: Dr. Frank M. Taylor memorial. This structure is a dilapidated wing of a larger house, relocated to Old Fort Parker in 2010 from the nearby Confederate Reunion Grounds. It is currently used for storage.
- Holmes Chapel (1990s): Replica log-cabin chapel built for cowboy weddings.
- SASS Shooting Range: Live fire range with earthen berm backstop is also referred to as The Village, for the use of the Single Action Shooting Society. This feature has potential to be viewed as a hazardous waste site requiring remediation due to lead contamination of earthen berm.
- Steel Truss Bridge, relocated from other Limestone County location
- Restrooms/showers: Located at the north & south ends of the site, these are identical satellite restroom buildings. In each building, the women's restroom has two shower stalls, two lavatories, and three water closets. The men's side has two shower stalls, two lavatories, one urinal, and two water closets. The south restroom serves the shooting range. The north restroom is primarily used by RV guests camped along the east and west sides of the large pasture north of the Visitor Center.

## INVENTORY OF COLLECTIONS

Statement from current Site Manager:

*There are very few artifacts associated with the site. Texas Parks and Wildlife took them, and they are supposed to be in the archives in Austin. Some of the Parker family have promised furniture when this becomes a secure site...but that remains to be determined. Most of the Parker Family artifacts were donated to Baylor.*

The items used in the Fort exhibit are reproduction or somewhat period representative with no provenance.

## BACKGROUND, SIGNIFICANCE AND INTEGRITY

### History of the location:

Fort Parker was situated on land included in a string of disputed land grants during the early 1830s. Initially included in the "Texas Association," the property shifted to the Leftwich Colony and "Nashville Company", before being bounced between the Robertson Colony and the Austin and Williams Colony. It was during the latter changes that James and Silas M. Parker arrived in Tenoxtitlan, Texas, near modern day Caldwell, to sign their applications to become citizens of the Austin and Williams Colony on May 22, 1834. In the legislative session of 1834, the contract

for the colony was awarded to Sterling C. Robertson and has since been known as Robertson's Colony. Families for the colony were recruited primarily from Kentucky and Tennessee.

Construction for Parker's Fort had already begun when the Parker brothers applied for citizenship and was completed prior to the land legally being granted to the Parker family. Silas Parker received his land grant on April 1, 1835 for one league of land (4,428.4 acres) on the Sterling Fork of the Navasota River in present-day Limestone County.

Native Americans in the near vicinity of Fort Parker during the 1830s included the Hueco (Waco), Tehuecano/Tawakoni (Wichita), Tonkawa, Caddo, Delaware, and the Texas Band of Cherokee. The Coushatta, Kickapoo, Shawnee, Kiowa, and bands of the Comanche were documented to have traveled through the area surrounding Fort Parker but were transient in their nature.

### **The Parker Family:**

Elder John Parker, a veteran of the American Revolution and contemporary of Daniel Boone, his first wife Sarah and their son Daniel moved to Georgia from Virginia in 1785. On January 19, 1802, Daniel was baptized and later ordained as a preacher in the Nail's Creek Church. In 1803 the Parker family, at this time including Elder John and his wife Sarah, Daniel and his new wife Patsy, and his brothers Isaac, James, and Silas moved to Tennessee settling on Turnbull Creek in present-day Dickson County. It was here that the family helped organize the Turnbull Baptist Church in the home of Elder John Parker in April 1806. Daniel and Patsy moved to Crawford County, Illinois in December 1817.

Daniel Parker remained extremely influential in early Predestinarian Baptist Protestantism. In 1826 he published the booklet "*Views on the Two Seeds*" in which he became one of the earliest documented proponents of "Serpent Seed" doctrine among Protestant Christianity. This belief stated that a person was either good or bad at birth and nothing could change that. While it never gained the majority, this belief spread to the point that Daniel Parker had a small following which agreed to move to the frontier of Texas and establish a church. He and his father organized the Pilgrim Predestinarian Baptist Church of Crawford County, Illinois on July 26, 1833 and

travelled to Texas with the thirty-eight-member congregation. As of 2021, this church is still active in Elkhart, Texas.

While Elder John and Daniel were organizing churches in Illinois and Indiana, James Parker moved with his family to Conway County Arkansas. From Arkansas James began exploratory trips into Mexican Texas and in 1832 composed a letter to Stephen F. Austin proposing that the Parker family be allowed to settle fifty families north of the Little Brazos River. He received no response from Austin on the matter.

In 1833 Elder John, his wife Sarah, his son Daniel and wife Martha (Patsy), his daughter Abigail Dixon and husband Levin Dixon, his son Benjamin, his son Isaac and wife Lucy, son James and wife Martha, son Silas and wife Lucinda, daughter Susannah Starr and husband John Starr along with their families made the move into Texas and quickly began construction of their family fort.

In 1835, Elder John Parker succeeded in negotiating treaties with local Native American tribes, though no known interaction with the Comanche bands operating in the vicinity of Fort Parker had occurred at this time. The evidence suggests that the Parkers believed that these treaties and the creation of a defensive fort on the border of Comancheria would deter the raiding on the Mexican colonists and at the minimum provide protection against any incursion for the Parkers and their neighbors.

### **Fort Parker:**

Fort Parker was established by Elder John Parker and his sons Benjamin, Silas, and James, as well as other members of their Church. The wooden fort was constructed two miles north of present-day Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas near the headwaters of the Navasota River. The fort itself was an impressive structure enclosing one acre with a twelve-foot tall, palisaded wall and two blockhouses for defense. Within the walls six cabins were constructed with the external wall shared with the palisade. Fort Parker was constructed with two entrances: a large double gate facing to the South and a small gate for direct access to the freshwater spring. The fort was completed in March 1834.

The followers of the Parkers soon began farming the land and building individual cabins on their own homesteads surrounding the Parker's property. Those families that did not build cabins continued to sleep within the walls of the fort for protection. Silas Parker raised a local company of Rangers for defense and had used the fort as a base of operations. This use of Fort Parker by the local Ranger company may have led to the actions of May 19, 1836.

### **The Raid on Fort Parker:**

May 19, 1836 began as any other day; the men went to cultivate the fields and cut timber for construction and fuel, while the women and children worked in and around the fort. Five men were still present in the fort when, as one of the inhabitants of Fort Parker later noted, "*one minute the fields were clear, and the next moment, more Indians than I dreamed possible were in front of the fort.*"

This large party of Native Americans, including warriors from the bands of Comanche, Kiowa, Caddo, and Wichita, approached the open gates of Fort Parker with a white flag. The men within the fort, including Elder John, Silas, and Benjamin Parker, discussed the best way to proceed. Silas wanted the men to barricade the gates and fight to the best of their ability to defend the women and children within the walls, but Benjamin felt that if he approached the large party, he would be able to buy a few minutes of time for an escape through the back gate. Elder John agreed with him and Benjamin left the general safety of the fort to parlay with the mounted men.

When Benjamin returned to the fort, he told Silas and Elder John that he believed that they would all be killed and that they should run swiftly to the woods for protection. Silas insisted that the men close the big gate and defend those within. Silas told the women to watch for Benjamin to exit the large gate and then run for protection. This short distraction was sufficient to allow for most of the women and children to escape from the walls. One of the inhabitants, Rachel Plummer, was pregnant and stayed behind with her two-year-old son. After witnessing the war party kill Silas and Benjamin outside the fort gates, she attempted to escape and was joined by Elizabeth Kellogg, and Lucy Parker with her small children.

During the next few moments Elder John Parker, Silas Frost and his son Robert were killed within the walls of the fort. Lucy Parker and her youngest two children were initially captured by the war party but were wrenched free by David Faulkenberry as he ran from the fields where he had been working. Rachel Plummer and her young son James, Elizabeth Kellogg, and Silas Parker's two young children: Cynthia Ann and John Richard Parker were all taken during the raid.

James Parker spent the next nine years relentlessly searching for the captives. He would travel alone into Comancheria searching for any trace of his grandson, nephew, and niece narrowly escaping capture or certain death on five documented occasions. His constant pressure on the Texas government for the return of captured women and children is one of the causes of the Council House Fight in 1840.

The captives were all eventually ransomed or recaptured, with Cynthia Ann being the last to return to the Parker family in 1860.

Elizabeth Kellogg was purchased from her captors by members of a band of Delaware who sold her back to her brother-in-law James Parker in August 1836. President Sam Houston had forwarded \$150.00 for the purchase.

Rachel Plummer and her son James were separated shortly after the raid and she was held as a captive by the Comanche until her father was able to purchase her back in 1838. Her book "*Twenty-one Months' Servitude as a Prisoner Among the Comanche (sp) Indians*" was the first narrative about a captive among Texas Indians to be published in the Republic of Texas. Rachel passed away due to complications during childbirth in 1840.

John Richard Parker and his cousin James Plummer were both ransomed back in late 1842. John was unable to adapt back into Anglo civilization and returned to the Comanche. After contracting smallpox during a raid into Mexico, he was abandoned and left with a captive Mexican girl to care for him. He made a full recovery and returned her to her family. He stayed

in Mexico after marrying her and became a successful cattleman in the later decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He lived in Mexico the remainder of his life and died in 1919.

After being separated from his mother during the raid, James Plummer was traded to another band of Comanche. He was ransomed back in a deal negotiated and paid for by his grandfather James Parker. James Parker refused to return him to his father and raised him. James Plummer died of pneumonia in 1862 while serving in the Civil War.

The best known of the captives from the Fort Parker Raid was Silas Parker's nine-year-old daughter Cynthia Ann.

### **Cynthia Ann Parker and the Noconis:**

Cynthia Ann Parker stayed with the small band of Noconi Comanche for twenty-five years. Her son Quanah later shared information about their travels during his childhood and adolescence, but her early years with the Noconi band of Comanche will unfortunately remain unknown.

By December 18, 1860, Cynthia Ann Parker had ceased to exist. The Parkers stopped actively looking for her in 1845, and she was known to the Noconi as Nadua. She had married into the tribe and was the wife of war chief Peta Nocona, as well as the mother to three of his children. Their oldest sons Quanah and Pecos (Pecan) were away hunting with Peta Nocona when Nadua was captured by Texas Rangers.

During a retaliatory attack on a Noconi camp located on the Pease River in Foard County, Texas, Captain Sul Ross and his company of Texas Rangers pursued a man and woman on horseback. The Rangers believed the man to be the war chief Peta Nocona. The woman riding behind the man held up a small child to indicate that they were unarmed and to not injure them. The man was killed in the saddle and the woman with child were captured. It was later determined that the man was a Mexican captive slave of Cynthia Ann's named Jose. After being taken into custody by the Rangers her light-colored eyes were noted and after an interrogation, she was discovered to be the missing Parker family member.

She and her two-year-old daughter Topsannah were taken to Camp Cooper and then to Fort Belknap in Young County to be held until her uncle Isaac Parker could arrive. Her uncles Isaac and Benjamin Parker were named as her legal guardians and during the Civil War years she was



**Figure 6 Nadua (Cynthia Ann Parker) and  
Topsannah ca 1860**

shifted between family members. The State of Texas granted her a league of land and a yearly pension of \$100.00 for the next five years.

After being with the Noconi for such an extended period, Cynthia Ann had a difficult time assimilating back into Anglo culture. In 1864, six-year-old Topsannah passed away due to complications from pneumonia. With the only tie she had to her life among the Comanche now gone, Cynthia Ann became depressed and stopped eating. Her death has been reported as 1864, but she shows up in the 1870 census records for Anderson County, Texas as a member of the O'Quinn residence.

## **INTEGRITY:**

The fort is a reproduction based on period descriptions from various sources. While the reproduction is placed within proximity to the original site the exact location, configuration and orientation of the original is unknown, and the reproduction is speculative at best. Originally constructed in the 1930's as a Texas Centennial project, the reproduction fort was rehabilitated in 1967 by inmates from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. The site has accumulated several historic structures from around Limestone County that have been repurposed in support of site operations, primarily as overnight rental facilities used to generate revenue during special events. Several groups, such as the Single Action Shooter Society, Society for Creative Anachronism, American Revolutionary War Reenactors, and Trail Riders have adopted the site and work with the administration to develop their own events, this is seen as a way to generate revenue and garner volunteer support for the site. Several examples exist, such as the installation of RV sites to cater to event participants or expand event opportunities. The Single Action Shooter Society has created a "Western Village" firing range where they hold monthly competitions. This village is composed of storefront facades along a line approximately 100 yards long with shooting tables and targets backed by an earthen berm. The earthen berm runs from the spring along the creek bank the length of the village and acts as a backstop for live fire competition. While this construction was welcomed and approved by the site administration, there may be future liability through EPA/TCEQ for hazardous waste in the form of expended lead shot left on site that might need to be addressed prior to transfer.

Since the transfer of the site from TPWD to the local authority, operations have been underfunded and site administration has had to resort to finding diverse means to generate revenue even to impacting the site's integrity. While the Parker family story, immigrant and native, has statewide significance and recognition, the integrity of the site and its reputation have been impacted.

# STATEMENT OF WILLINGNESS TO TRANSFER

Old Fort Parker, Inc.  
866 Park Road 35  
Groesbeck, TX 76642  
www.oldfortparker.org  
254-729-5253

May 2021

Dear Texas State Historical Commission,

Old Fort Parker Historic Site has such a valuable place in Texas history. Back in the early 1990's when Texas Parks and Wildlife Department had to close seventeen historic sites, due to lack of funds, unfortunately Old Fort Parker was chosen to close. Several years later the TPWD provided a grant to refurbish the old fort. The City of Groesbeck, the City of Mexia and Limestone County have worked hard since the state closure, to keep the site open.

When the Texas State Historical Commission received funds, they went back and adopted many sites. The two cities and county have patiently watched this process, with hope and anticipation, that the old fort would be returned back to the state. They have worked hard together with an appointed board to keep this site viable repaired and active for visitors.

It is now time for the two cities and county to return Old Fort Parker to the State of Texas as a viable piece of Texas history with a very good story of two cultures on the early Texas frontier. It is time to insure the history is maintained for generations to enjoy. If the Texas State Historical Commission would entertain adopting the site and preserving the future of the fort, the City of Groesbeck, the City of Mexia and Limestone County would welcome, the State of Texas to reclaim this valuable site. The financial burdens would be lifted and the site would be properly interpreted. Educational programs and archiving and preservation could be done.

Please consider this request,

City of Groesbeck



Title

06/25/2021

Date

City Of Mexia

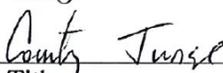


Title

6/30/2021

Date

Limestone County



Title

5/25/21

Date

## **COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

Limestone County, Mexia and Groesbeck each provide \$20,000 in operational support annually. In addition, the three entities appoint a seven-member Board of Directors to administer the site under the direction of a Site Manager and volunteer staff. There is significant support from user groups providing volunteer hours for events and maintenance projects as well as providing in-kind and financial support. Several local businesses have provided continuing operational support through in-kind donations of material and or discounted pricing. There appears to be great community pride in having Old Fort Parker in their back yard and these relationships can continue to flourish even under new management.

## **EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL**

In the 4-county region surrounding the site there are approximately 10,000 students grades K-12. Currently there is very little educational programming conducted on site and a number of excellent museums within an hour drive that provide high quality programming that would be in competition for the existing audience. Educational programming would be more effective in an online format for a niche audience.

## **NEEDED AND AVAILABLE FUNDING**

The site currently operates on a budget of approximately \$130,000 per year with 1.5 FTE. The site receives \$60,000 in direct funding from Limestone County (\$20 K), Mexia (20 K) and Groesbeck (20 K) the remainder of the budget is derived from earned income including admissions, rental, and event revenue. The Site Manager maintains a building fund for projects, replenished by donations and grants. Minor and capital repair funding comes from this fund, specific grants, as well as corporate and private donations on a project basis. While there is currently no agreement in place, the THC would expect the local authorities to continue their financial support of the facilities and programs

## **OPERATING AND DEVELOPMENT COSTS**

Operational requirements anticipate a minimum staffing of 4 FTE with the potential to add additional educators as visitation expands. It is anticipated that operations would be 5 to 7 days per week and the proposed operational budget is based on existing THC operations in Limestone

County. There may be efficiencies that could be gained through a combined operation with the Confederate Reunion Grounds, however a minimum staff contingency of 4 FTE on site is recommended. Current annual visitation including special event attendance is 7,200. Admission has been set at \$2.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children, this is well under market rate and would be adjusted under a THC operation. Currently CRG charges \$4.00 and \$3.00 respectively.

**Projected Fort Parker Operational Budget**

Payroll Expenses (4 FTE)	\$	150,381.00
Travel In-State	\$	450.00
Fuel	\$	2,500.00
Professional Services	\$	700.00
Contracted Services	\$	5,900.00
Printing and Reproduction	\$	300.00
Consumable Supplies	\$	8,000.00
Utilities	\$	26,060.00
Rent	\$	1,200.00
Other Operating Expenses	\$	1,750.00
Computers and Furniture	\$	3,000.00
Repairs and Maintenance	\$	7,750.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 207,991.00</b>

Preliminary estimates for structural repairs to infrastructure and facilities based on initial site inspection is in the order of \$3.5 million. It is estimated that an additional \$1 million would be required for interpretive master planning, exhibit design, fabrication, and installation for a total capital need on site of \$4.5 million in support of acquisition.

## ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

As put forward in THC rules (Title 13, Part 2, Chapter 16 Rule §16.3), consideration for accepting a historic property for development as a Texas Historical Commission historic site must be accomplished through addressing the specific criteria listed below.

*(1) The property must have recognized statewide or national significance based on the standards of the National Register of Historic Places.*

### **Conclusion:**

It is agreed that this is the location of the historic events noted with the site, however the core historic site operation is based around a reproduction building. The structure may have standing as a commemorative work.

*(2) The property should be able to provide interpretation of a significant theme or event of Texas history that is not fully represented by the Commission's existing historic sites or other historic sites accessible to the public. The Commission will strive to maintain a geographic, cultural, and thematic balance in its program.*

### **Conclusion:**

The Cynthia Ann and Quanah Parker stories are well known and documented in Texas History. The stories provide unique perspectives from both the immigrant settlers to Texas and the native peoples. The site would be the only nonmilitary fortification represented within the THC system and would include themes of Comancheria and the Comanche Nation, Settler/Native relations, westward expansion, and Texas Indian Wars (1830's-1890's)

*(3) The property should have exceptional integrity of location (including surrounding environment), design, material, setting, feeling, and association.*

**Conclusion:** While the site is well established as the original Parker Fort site, the reproduction is speculative in its conformation and orientation. The integrity of the surrounding site has been heavily impacted by inconsistent development and operational need. There may also be the

potential for hazardous waste mitigation requirements with removal of the “Village” shooting range.

***(4) The property should have appropriate collections (objects, manuscript material, artifacts) associated with the historic site or necessary artifacts related to the site's history and period of significance should be identified and available.***

**Conclusion:** No significant collections are associated with the site; however, collections may be acquired through TPWD, Baylor University and the Parker Family. The existing items on exhibit are inappropriate to tell the story of the Parkers and the Comanche Nation. Existing exhibits are outdated and in need of replacement. Extensive research, interpretive planning and exhibit installation would be required prior to resuming public operations.

***(5) The property must be appropriate for use as an interpretive museum or historic site, have high potential to attract and accommodate diverse and new audiences, and be accessible to travelers as well as to the local community.***

**Conclusion:**

The site is well situated within the Dallas, Houston, Austin triangle with good access roads and stories that have the potential to attract diverse audiences. There has been local community support for the site and combined with TPWD’s Fort Parker State Park and THC’s Confederate Reunion Grounds as core attractions, the site is well placed to increase attendance. Once repaired, the facilities would support a unique opportunity for exhibits and educational programming.

***(6) The property must be available without restrictions that would limit the Commission’s options for preservation and interpretation as a historic site (for example, a life estate retained by the grantor, restrictions against future sale or conveyance, or limits on alterations deemed appropriate by Commission). The Commission encourages the use of easements or other restrictions to ensure the preservation of historic sites.***

**Conclusion:** Limestone County, City of Groesbeck and City of Mexia have provided a letter of support for the transfer of the operations and property from their joint ownership to the Texas Historical Commission.

*(7) Financial resources must be available or assured, including an endowment fund where appropriate, or sources of funding must be identified in a comprehensive funding plan to ensure the restoration, interpretation, development, long-term operation and preservation of the site.*

**Conclusion:**

There are currently no funds identified for the continued operation of this site outside Historic Sites appropriations and potential earned income. There may be some funds available through the current building fund held in an account by the City of Mexia totaling less than \$150,000. While it would be hoped that local entities would continue to support the site at current levels, it appears that they are interested in divesting themselves of financial responsibility through transfer to THC jurisdiction.

*(8) The property must have the potential for strong supporting partnerships including community support.*

**Conclusion:**

There is an existing Board of Directors that can transition into an operational Friends organization and significant volunteer participation from beyond the current geographic area. There is no reason to believe that the existing local community support from volunteers and businesses for site operations would not continue, however changes to programming and interpretation may impact certain volunteer interest.

**Recommendation:**

The stories associated with Cynthia Ann Parker, the Parker Family and Quanah Parker in his role as the last War Chief of the Comanche are compelling and have statewide if not national significance. These stories are only partially explored at other THC properties and the site would be a good addition from an interpretive standpoint. The property proposed for transfer to the THC is widely recognized as the original site of Parker's Fort and the May 19, 1836, raid by a party including members of the Comanche, Kiowa and Caddo tribes. While the reproduction Fort is compelling visually, it lacks documentation for design, location, and orientation. It is also in need of significant repair, having last received significant attention 30-50 years ago. The integrity of the site has been impacted by operational planning and the addition of historic structures unrelated to the site or the compelling interpretive story it could tell. While there is local support for the site's operation in the form of volunteers and donations, that support is not sufficient to sustain the investment required to make Old Fort Parker a viable long-term property within the Texas Historical Commission Historic Sites Division. The staff recommends that a Phase II Assessment not be authorized by the Commission.

## Appendix:

### Fort Parker inhabitants on 19 May 1836

Elder John Parker (aged 77 years 8 months, killed) and second wife, Sarah Pinson Duty

Daniel Parker (aged 55 years 4 months)

Benjamin F. W. Parker (aged 48 years, killed)

Isaac Parker (aged 43 years 1 month)

James William Parker (aged 38 years 10 months) and wife, Martha Duty

Sarah Parker (aged 18 years 9 months) and husband, Lorenzo Dow Nixon

Rachel Parker (aged 17 years 2 months, captured) and husband, Luther Martin Thomas Plummer (aged approximately 24 years 11 months)

James Pratt Plummer (aged 1 year 4 months, captured)

James William Parker (aged 6 years 10 months)

Francis Marion Parker (aged 4 years 5 months)

Silas Mercer Parker (aged 32 years, killed) and wife, Lucinda Duty (aged approximately 34 years 11 months)

Cynthia Ann Parker (aged 8 years 7 months, captured)

John Richard Parker (aged approximately 5 years 11 months, captured)

Silas Mercer Parker (aged approximately 1 year 11 months)

Orlena Parker (aged approximately 11 months)

Elizabeth Duty Kellogg (aged approximately 39 years, captured)

Elisha Anglin

Abram Anglin

Seth Bates

Silas Bates

George E. Dwight and wife Malinda Frost Dwight

Elizabeth Dwight

David Falkenbury

Evan Falkenbury

Samuel Frost (killed) and wife

Robert Frost (killed)

Other Frost children

Oliver Lund

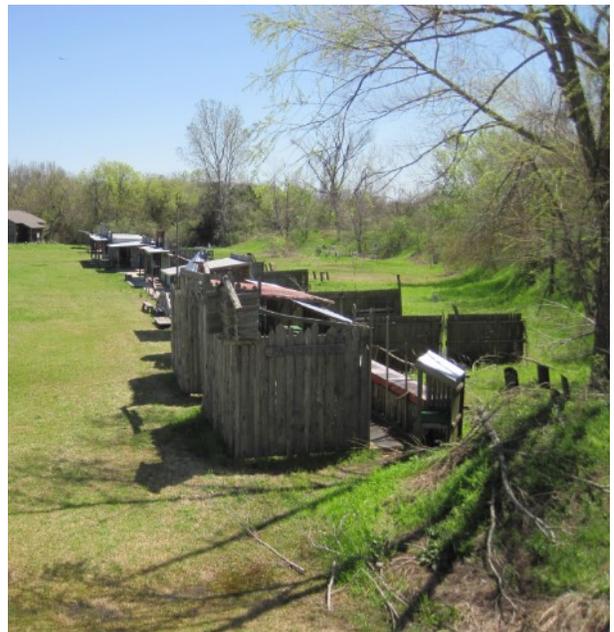
Site Photographs













**TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
*real places telling real stories*

## TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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### **Item 14.3**

Texas Historical Commission  
Quarterly Meeting  
July 26, 2021

### **Consider approval of a new utility easement at Caddo Mounds**

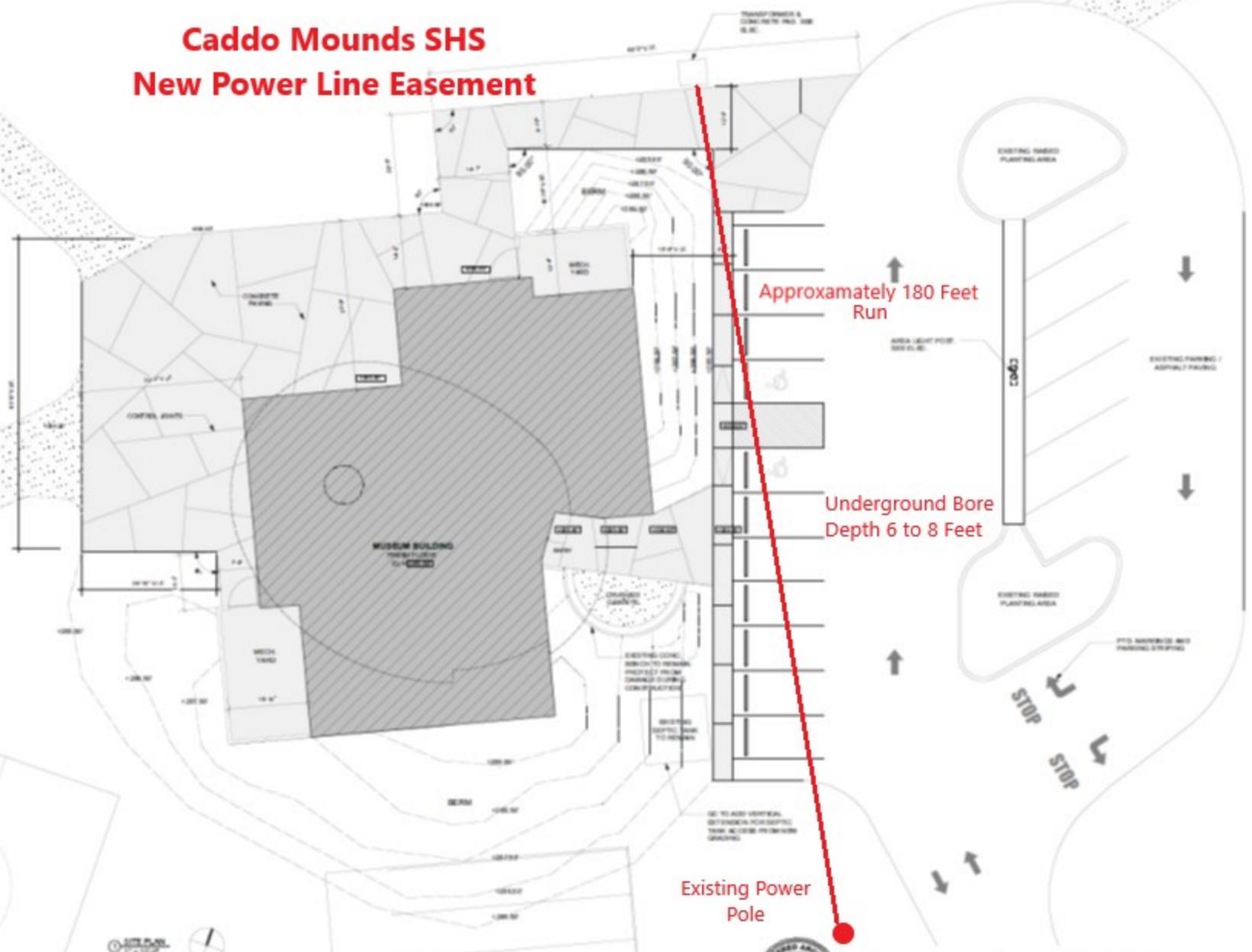
#### **Background**

The transformer to provide electrical power for the new museum at Caddo Mounds will be in a slightly different location than the transformer that serviced the previous museum building that was destroyed by the tornado in 2019. New underground power lines will run from the existing service pole to the new transformer pad and will cross the property along a slightly different route than the previous utility easement, thus requiring a new easement to Cherokee Electric Company.

#### **Suggested Motions**

Move to approve a new utility easement at Caddo Mounds State Historic Site, as shown on the attached map.

# Caddo Mounds SHS New Power Line Easement



## TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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### **Item 14.4**

Texas Historical Commission  
Quarterly Meeting  
July 26, 2021

### **Consider acceptance of transfer of a parcel of land adjacent to the French Legation State Historic Site**

#### **Background**

Following Executive Committee review at the January 24, 2019, quarterly commission meeting, the agency entered into an agreement with the Aquila Commercial, LLC in which the THC consented to a variance in the height limit established by the site's zoning. As part of this agreement, the development company agreed to donate a small parcel of land adjacent to the French Legation that had been part of the site's historical 21.5 acres. The trigger for this donation was identified in the agreement as the City of Austin granting the developers the variance and site development permits. This has occurred and Aquila Commercial, LLC is ready to transfer title upon acceptance by the Commission.

#### **Suggested Motion**

Move to accept the transfer of a parcel of land adjacent to the French Legation.



DONATED PARCEL

FRENCH  
LEGATION  
STATE  
HISTORIC  
SITE

AQUILA OFFICE  
BUILDING

## TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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**Item 14.5**  
Historic Sites Committee  
Quarterly Meeting  
July 26-27, 2021

### **Consider approval of update to the Eisenhower Birthplace Donor Recognition Plan for the Capital Improvements Project**

#### **Background**

The Friends of the Texas Historical Commission is coordinating a fundraising campaign for the Capital Improvements Project at the Eisenhower Birthplace State Historic Site. As part of this fundraising campaign, and consistent with donor recognition guidelines approved by the Commission in January 2017, the Friends of the THC developed, and the Commission approved at its July 2019 Quarterly Meeting, a Donor Stewardship and Recognition Plan.

This plan, as approved, includes the listing of donors at \$5,000 and up on a donor wall at the site. With the availability of some public funds, the scope of this campaign is significantly reduced. In addition, matching grants awarded require the Friends to solicit and recognize gifts at levels lower than the minimum approved for listing on the donor wall in the donor recognition plan.

#### **Suggested Motions**

Move to amend the Eisenhower Birthplace Donor Stewardship and Recognition Plan, to include listing of donors at the \$1,000 and up level on the donor wall.



**Eisenhower Birthplace SHS Capital Improvements Project**  
**DONOR STEWARDSHIP & RECOGNITION PLAN**  
*Approved July 2019*

Recognizing donors, whether individual or organizational, is a crucial element of the Texas Historical Commission and the Friends of the THC's fundraising efforts. The following plan outlines the steps that the Texas Historical Commission and the Friends of THC will take to acknowledge, at the appropriate level and in a timely manner, the interest a donor has expressed in the project. This policy, guided by the THC policies and administrative guidelines, will apply to individual and institutional (foundation and corporate) donors who pledge and commit support through their contributions.

As part of this "Donor Stewardship & Recognition Plan", the Friends of the Texas Historic Commission will commit to the following stewardship best-practices:

**1. Major Gifts**

- a. For the purposes of this fundraising campaign, any gift of \$5,000 and above will be considered a major gift.

**2. Pledge Acknowledgment:**

- a. All major gift (\$5,000 and above) pledges will require a completed and signed pledge agreement.
- b. All pledges will be acknowledged as follows:
  - With a personal phone call from the lead solicitor of the gift, within 24 hours of receiving the gift;
  - By a personal call/email/note from the Campaign Advisory Committee chair/Co-chairs; and
  - By a thank you note from the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission Executive Director.

**3. Gift Agreements:**

- a. All gifts of \$5000 and over will be accompanied by a gift agreement. The agreement will include:
  - Donor(s) name(s) and preferred listing guidelines;
  - Donor intent – all gifts will be made to the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, for the Eisenhower Birthplace State Historic Capital Improvements Project, and not to a specific portion of the project;
  - The naming opportunity (including a listing on the donor wall for gifts \$5,000 - \$24,999) offered in recognition of the gift, the life of the naming opportunity, and conditions under which it will be terminated;
  - The type of gift (gifts of cash or stock);
  - The terms of the payment (one-time, installment, etc.); and
  - Signature of the donor(s).

**4. Gift Acknowledgement:**

- a. All individual gifts, of any amount, will be acknowledged as follows:

- With a formal acknowledgment letter from the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, sent within 7 days of receiving the gift. This letter will include the requisite IRS tax language required by the donor for the purpose of filing tax returns;
- b. In addition, all individual major gifts (\$5,000 and above) will be acknowledged as follows:
- With a personal phone call from the lead solicitor of the gift, within 24 hours of receiving the gift;
- c. All Foundation/Corporate gifts will be acknowledged with:
- A formal thank you letter from the Executive Director of the Friends of the THC, with the requisite tax language for the donor institution, sent within 7 days of receiving the gift. The letter will also include acknowledgement of all reporting requirements as applicable;
  - A phone call/personal note/formal letter from the Campaign Advisory Committee chair/Co-chairs, within 7 days of receiving the gift.

## 5. Formal Donor Recognition:

- a. Please see Attachment A – Draft “Donor Recognition – Naming Opportunities” for details about specific naming opportunities offered as part of the fundraising plan.
- b. Details about any naming opportunity offered to a major donor will be included in the gift agreement, with details about the life of the naming opportunity, and the conditions in which the naming rights will be terminated.
- c. The Eisenhower Birthplace SHS Capital Improvements Project will be featured in **Medallion**, the official Magazine of the Texas Historical Commission. Each publishing period, all major donors to the campaign shall be listed and acknowledged in the publication.
- d. The Friends of the Texas Historical Commission shall create a dedicated project fundraising webpage on its website, to regularly feature major donors to the campaign, and provide project updates. This will allow FTHC to expand the reach of the campaign beyond the immediately impacted areas.
- e. The Friends of the Texas Historical Commission’s annual report will also include a listing of all the Eisenhower Birthplace SHS Capital Improvements Project donors.



**Eisenhower Birthplace SHS Capital Improvements Project**  
**ATTACHMENT A: DONOR RECOGNITION – NAMING OPPORTUNITIES**  
*Draft March 4, 2019; Amended July 27, 2021*

The Eisenhower Birthplace Fundraising Donor Recognition – Naming Opportunities guidelines will be governed by two policies:

- The Texas Historical Commission’s Donor Recognition Policy, specifically as it addresses the “Donor Recognition Wall”, and “Capital Projects and Naming Opportunities” (attached); and
- Rule §16.11 of the Texas Administrative Code, which provides guidelines for the philanthropic naming of a property or a component of a property (attached).

**Note:** Naming opportunities detailed in this plan ~~are pending approval~~ were approved by the Texas Historical Commission on July 19, 2019.

**Donor Naming Opportunities Grid**

Gift Level	# Gifts Opportunities	Naming Opportunities	Recommended Donor Naming Element and Narrative
\$500,000	1	Statue Plaza	<u>Plaque</u> The interpretation and exhibits at the Eisenhower Birthplace sculpture plaza are generously underwritten by _____
\$250,000	2	Lost Neighborhoods Footprints – entire area  Rail Car Plaza	<u>Wayside panel</u> The Lost Neighborhoods (Rail Car Plaza and) interpretive exhibit is generously underwritten by _____
\$100,000	4	Birthplace Home Interpretive Exhibits (all)  Visitors’ Center Exhibits - All  The Red Store  Picnic Pavilion	<u>Plaque</u> The Eisenhower Birthplace home interpretive exhibits are generously underwritten by ____ (at the entrance)  The Visitors’ Center Exhibit is generously underwritten by ____ (at the entrance)  The Red Store/Picnic Pavilion is generously underwritten by _____ (on wall)
\$50,000	7	Birthplace Home Interpretive Exhibits – individual rooms (4)	<u>Plaque</u>

		Lamar Street Restoration Crockett Avenue Restoration Day Street Restoration	The ___ room interpretive exhibits are generously underwritten by ___ ( <i>in rooms</i> )  <u>Wayside Panels</u> The Lamar Street/Crockett Avenue/Day Street restoration is generously underwritten by ___
\$25,000	13	Lost Neighborhood Footprints – individual homes large and small (10) Statue Plaza Resting Area Site Entrance Improvements Landscape Improvements	<u>Small Waysides</u> The footprint of _____ family home is generously underwritten by _____ ( <i>will need stories for each home that has been identified</i> ) <u>Plaque</u> The Statue Plaza resting area (site entrance/landscape improvements) is (are) generously underwritten by ___
\$10,000	11	Visitors Center Exhibits – Individual (10) Flag poles in the Statue Plaza	<u>Plaques</u> This exhibit is generously underwritten by ___  The statue plaza flags are generously underwritten by ___
\$5,000	30	30 X Path Stones bordering East Day Street to the birthplace home	Stones/concrete paving with name of donor

**Note:** All donors of \$~~1,000~~5,000 and above will be listed on a Donor Recognition Wall at the site. This wall will be designed per the THC Design Guidelines for State Historic Sites Donor Recognition.