

Documenting History

Plan in Advance for Effective Event Photography

By Amy Hammons, County Historical Commission Outreach Coordinator

The phrase “a picture’s worth a thousand words” certainly applies to the images that document a historic place or an event celebrating Texas history. Texas Historical Commission staff recently posted a helpful photography guide on the agency’s website (search the words “photo tips”). These tips are summarized here as a “Top 10” list for taking high-quality photos at CHC events or other community heritage celebrations.

TOP 10 PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS

- 10. Select several people to take pictures of the event;** different eyes and vantage points will result in valuable options. Encourage them to take horizontal and vertical-orientated photos.
- 9. Take two types of pictures**—those that document the event, and others that show how the community responds to, or engages in, the event.
- 8. Check the image resolution setting** on your camera. The rule of thumb for printed images is 300 dots per inch (dpi), a size that will enable a variety of uses for the images.
- 7. Know the order of activities** and the circulation of those participating in the event so you can determine what vantage points you’ll need for photographers. Remind them to get close enough to the subject or activity to fill the viewfinder frame (avoid large



This photo from the THC’s archives shows good lighting and engaged participants at a marker dedication for Friona Schools near Amarillo.

areas of sky, grass, walls, etc.) since image quality is lost if cropping is needed later.

- 6. Peruse the event location** for unobstructed views of the audience and presenters.
- 5. Once you find the unobstructed views, notice the background,** and determine what will enhance the image (avoid cluttered or bland backdrops).

4. You may not be in control of the lighting, but you can **select a photography location based on the lighting conditions** and use a camera with settings that can be manipulated. Avoid low-light areas, which may produce blurry photos, and high-sun conditions that result in glare or shadows.

3. Photographing speakers often results in pictures with closed eyes, moving hands, and awkward facial expressions, so **increase the number of pictures taken** for improved acceptable image options. Be sure to approach the podium or stage to photograph the speaker from close range.

2. Audience pictures are effective if they **show a lively group of individuals** and contain enough background to provide clues about the event. Draw attention to the fact you’re about to take a photo (count to three, ask them to pose) to avoid images of solemn-faced people.

1. Capture the fun and engaging aspects of your event; identify activities and moments during your event that can express the positive energy and emotions surrounding the celebration. ★

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