

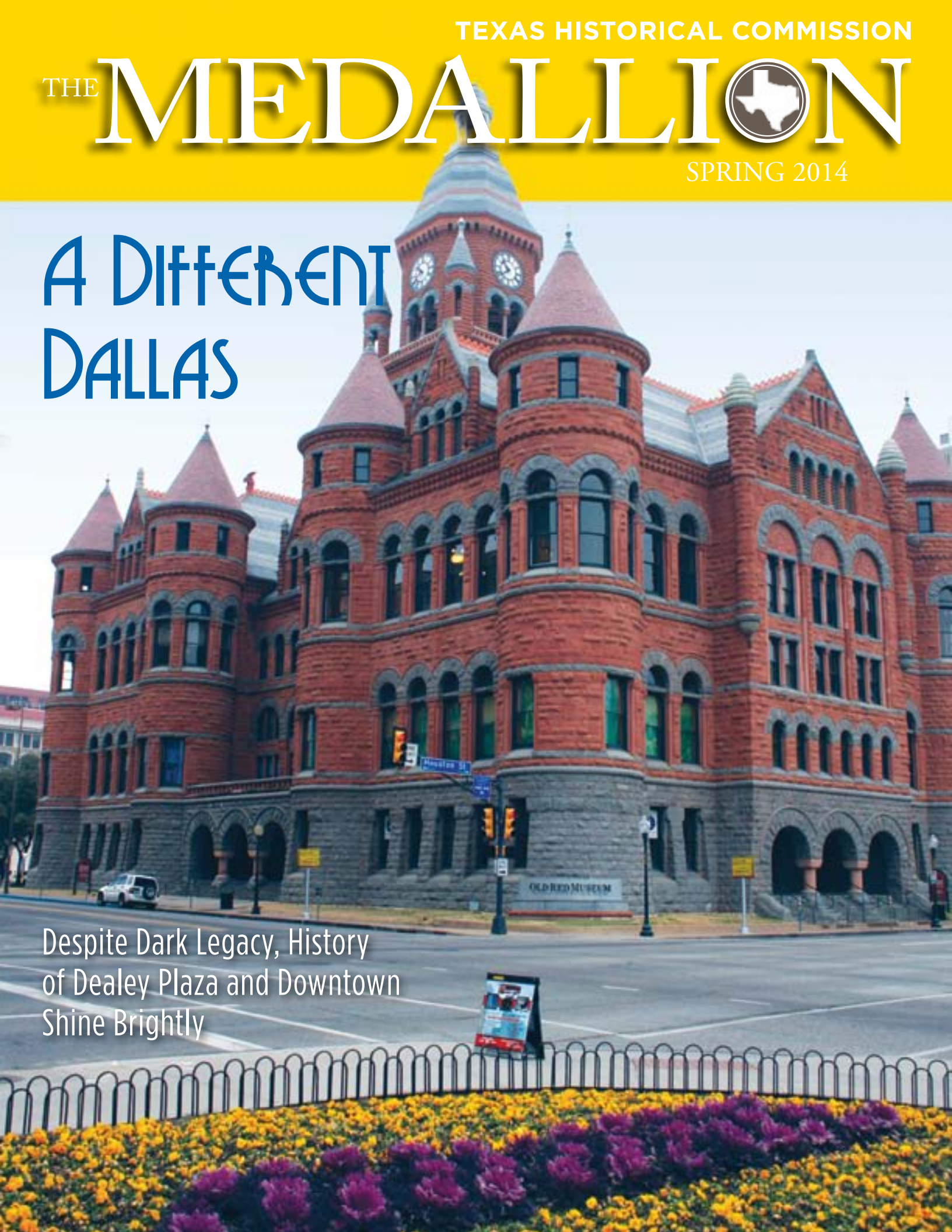
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

# THE MEDALLION

SPRING 2014

## A DIFFERENT DALLAS

Despite Dark Legacy, History  
of Dealey Plaza and Downtown  
Shine Brightly







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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
THE MEDALLION  
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Dark Legacy.



ON THE COVER:  
Dallas' Old Red Museum overlooks Dealey  
Plaza. Photo: Andy Rhodes

FAST FACTS

These numbers show the significant economic impact of the  
THC's Historic Sites Bond Program.



**JOBS**  
supported



**MILLION**  
in income  
generated



**MILLION**  
in state taxes  
generated



**MILLION**  
in local taxes  
generated

# 30 Years of Stewardship

Archeological Network Celebrates  
Three Decades of Preserving Texas History

By THC Archeology Division Staff

From modest beginnings with 10 participants, the Texas Archeological Stewardship Network (TASN) now boasts more than 100 members dedicated to helping the state preserve invaluable resources.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the TASN, an innovative program comprised of highly trained and motivated avocational archeologists who work closely with THC's staff archeologists. These individuals are essential to the THC's mission to preserve and protect significant archeological sites that shed important light on Texas' prehistoric and historic past.

Stewards reside in communities across the state, alert THC staff about local archeological matters, and frequently serve as intermediaries between private landowners and the THC. The TASN is the oldest and most diverse program of its kind in America.

"The idea of working with archeological volunteers wasn't new 30 years ago, but what Bob Mallouf (then-state archeologist) conceptualized was unique—a formal network of archeological volunteers to expand the reach of THC's archeological program," recalls Pat Mercado-Allinger, Archeology Division director and state archeologist.

Remarkably, four of the founding members remain active participants in the program. With an estimated two million archeological sites throughout the Lone Star State—most on private lands—the THC relies heavily on this group of skilled volunteers to carry out



Texas Archeological Steward Bob Ward conducts fieldwork at the Bernardo Plantation in East Texas.

field investigations, document artifact collections, and help landowners obtain protective designations for important sites.

In 2001, Texas' program incorporated a Marine Archeology Stewards component and is still the only state in the U.S. to have such a corps of volunteers. There are currently 108 TASN members who have accepted the invitation to participate in the program and agreed to abide by the TASN's procedures (for more information, visit [www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us)).

The TASN stewards devote thousands of hours each year to a broad range of tasks, including:

- Recording new archeological sites
- Monitoring and protecting known sites
- Seeking protective designations for significant sites
- Recording private artifact collections
- Conducting emergency or "salvage" archeology on threatened sites

- Assisting in surveys to assess potential sites
- Conducting events during Texas Archeology Month each October

State Marine Archeologist Amy Borgens seeks assistance from the marine stewards with underwater investigations, archival research, and public outreach. Each steward brings unique talents and strengths to the TASN program. Their efforts in preservation, education, and research are an essential part of the THC's state archeological program.

To date, only a handful of states have comparable stewardship programs, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, and Utah. Notable among these is the Arizona Site Steward Program, created in 1986 in response to Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt's interest in the Texas program.

The commitment of the stewards and the positive impact of the TASN received national recognition in 2010 with its designation as an official Preserve America Steward ([www.preserveamerica.gov/stewards.html](http://www.preserveamerica.gov/stewards.html)).

"We're honored to have received this recognition from Preserve America, because it acknowledges our volunteer stewards and their firm dedication to saving these real places for the benefit of future generations of Texans," Mercado-Allinger says. "TASN stewards are true ambassadors for historic preservation, promoting the scientific study and conservation of our shared archeological heritage." ★



# Gifts of Granite, Bequests of Bronze

THC Centennial Markers Remain Vital Sentinels, Despite Some Damage and Neglect

By Bob Brinkman  
State Historical Markers Program Coordinator

In the depths of the Great Depression, Texans looked to the heights of what they could achieve.

While circumstances around them in 1936 seemed far from a reason to celebrate, citizens of the Lone Star State commemorated 100 years since independence in a big way. Between huge expositions in Dallas and Fort Worth, a towering monument at San Jacinto, and memorial museums, community centers, statues, monuments, and historical markers throughout the state, Texas spent millions of dollars entertaining and educating Texans and visitors from around the world.

Among the lasting legacies of that extraordinary effort are the historical markers and monuments which populate nearly all of Texas' 254 counties. They remain an unprecedented effort toward public history, documenting

the stories of Texas along well-worn highways and little-known backroads.

The state selected several monument workers, sculptors, architects, and other craftsmen to design and produce these permanent memorials to Texas history. Some of the companies—including Rodriguez Brothers and the Southwell Company, both of San Antonio—are still in business today. In the 1930s, the arrival of these granite and bronze objects and their subsequent dedication ceremonies became causes to celebrate and display community pride.



ALLRED, SPEAKING, NEUBRUSER, DIELMANN, PAUL HERTTING, JULIUS REAL, LEFT TO RIGHT. German Day Centennial celebration draw nptables and descendants of pioneer families. Choral music added color

In July 1936, the *Abilene Daily Reporter* mentioned that Ed Hollar, a Texas Highway Department division superintendent, supervised placement of Haskell County's Centennial highway marker near the north city limits. The "stone marker with inlaid bronze plates, situated on a slight rise in the level surrounding country, is easily seen by passing motorists." Later, this pink granite block with bronze plates telling the story of Haskell County was moved to the grounds of the Haskell County Courthouse, where pedestrians could better appreciate its story and artistry.

In October 1936, more than 3,500 Texans of German descent witnessed Gov. James V. Allred speak and break ground in New Braunfels for a German pioneer memorial. Included in the crowd were more than 1,100 schoolchildren, who that morning dedicated Centennial markers for Dr. Frederick Lindheimer and John F. Torrey, important early residents of the town.

The *San Antonio Light* reported that "dancing and entertainment came after the more solemn parts of the program," and that "after the speeches and singing, a dance was held at Landa Park. Barbecue and refreshment stands did a heavy business." *The San Antonio Express* added that "Governor Allred's address was an appeal to be inspired by Texas history for better citizenship and ended with a poem dedicated to Texans."

Two weeks later, a crowd estimated at 10,000 descended on Refugio for a Centennial celebration, which included a morning Mass and a history parade through downtown. *The San Antonio Express* recorded parade entrants from Gonzales to Palacios, including police and fire departments, heavy field artillery from the Texas National Guard, and hundreds of schoolchildren. The students ranged from the Refugio high school drum and bugle corps to 96 pupils from Woodsboro in costume as bluebonnets, other wildflowers, cowboys, pirates, Native Americans, and Spaniards.

The work to raise funds to reclaim the legacy of the Texas Centennial is ongoing. Visit the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission website at [www.thcfriends.org](http://www.thcfriends.org) to learn more about the project and how you can help. You can also visit the THC website at [www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us) to learn more about the Texas Centennial and the history of Official Texas Historical Markers.

Today, the majority of the more than 1,100 historical markers and monuments placed in 1936 remain sources of information and inspiration to new generations each day. But time has not been so kind to some of these Centennial sentinels.

Vandalism, weathering, erosion, and new development have left some Centennials marred, pockmarked, overgrown, toppled, and forgotten. One by one, these markers are receiving attention and being restored to their former glory.

In 2011, the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) Tyler district coordinated the restoration and re-installation of Smith County's Centennial highway marker. Originally located two miles west of downtown on State Highway 64, the marker was vandalized at some point, with the bronze seal of the Texas Highway Department removed.

The marker was eventually found at the Smith County Road and Bridge yard, with a metal insignia for that county office taking the place of the missing seal in the circular space incised in

the granite. The marker was no longer visible to the public, and few people realized the age or significance of the block of pink granite locked behind a fence.

Once the marker's identity was rediscovered, many groups met to discuss its disposition, including: the Smith County Historical Society, county commissioners, representatives from the county road and bridge department, TxDOT, descendants of county namesake General James Smith, and members of local chapters of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, Daughters of the

American Revolution, and Daughters of 1812. After discussion of whether to move the marker to the county courthouse grounds or near its original site, all parties agreed to install a replacement bronze seal and return the marker to the highway.



In 2011, TxDOT's Tyler district coordinated the restoration and relocation of Smith County's Centennial highway marker.

A rededication ceremony 75 years after the original dedication was well attended, and helped a wide spectrum of participants realize the value of heritage tourism initiatives in the county.

Sam Kidd of the Smith County Historical Society credited the interested parties' unity and action plan in getting the project done.

"Christine Crosby, environmental specialist for the local TxDOT office, deserves a lot of credit for her help and perseverance on this project over the past few years," Kidd said. Crosby added that TxDOT was glad to work with a fellow state agency and benefit the public at the same time.

Fundraising to help restore and repair the damaged legacy of the Centennial is a special project of the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission. Donations from individuals and foundations will allow the THC to order and install replacement bronze parts for dozens of markers and monuments across the state, as well as hire conservators for restoration work that requires professional intervention.

"If the markers are lost, the stories they tell are lost too," said Sunny Howard, development specialist for the THC. "With participation from Texans today, we can pass on the inheritance of the Texas Centennial to generations yet to come." ★



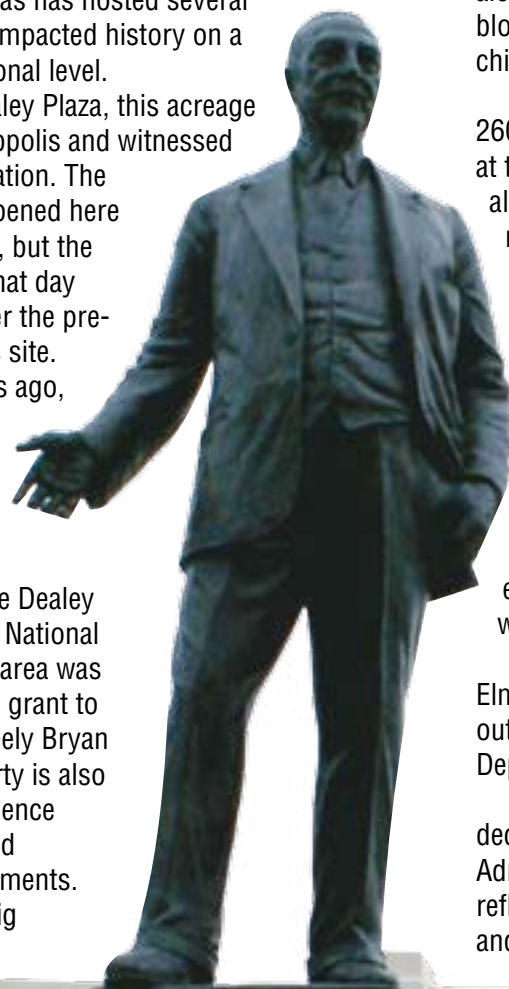
The Centennial marker for Espantosa Lake, once a source of pride for Zavala County, lacks the grandeur of its original design.



Over the course of a century, a small area near the Trinity River in downtown Dallas has hosted several significant events that impacted history on a statewide and international level.

Now known as Dealey Plaza, this acreage launched a major metropolis and witnessed a presidential assassination. The world knows what happened here on November 22, 1963, but the devastating events of that day cast a dark shadow over the pre-existing heritage of this site.

Thousands of years ago, the area served as a Native American burial ground, and mammoth remains were also discovered nearby, according to the Dealey Plaza Historic District's National Register file. The plaza area was part of the original land grant to Dallas founder John Neely Bryan in 1843, and the property is also believed to include evidence of Dallas' first Anglo and African American settlements. A 1988 archeological dig



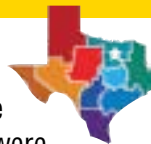
unearthed part of Bryan's cornfield, along with evidence that the red sandstone blocks of the nearby Old Red Courthouse were chiseled into shape near the plaza.

By the 1930s, Dallas' population had grown to nearly 260,000 residents, resulting in considerable congestion at the intersections of railroad tracks and busy streets along the flood-prone Trinity River. The city acquired nearly three acres in this area to re-engineer the flow of transportation and create an impressive gateway for those arriving to Dallas from Fort Worth and other westward locales.

"This was an industrial part of town with railyards and warehouses for Chicago-based agricultural companies," explains David Preziosi, executive director of Preservation Dallas. "They removed several of those blocks and re-graded the site to have three main roads (Elm, Main, and Plaza) go under the railroad bridge. That ended up being known as the 'triple underpass,' which was quite innovative at the time."

As part of the new design, city engineers rerouted Elm Street as a one-way curved road heading eastward out of the city adjacent to the Texas School Book Depository building.

The new plaza's resulting lawn areas received several decorative concrete elements, primarily Works Progress Administration structures such as Art Deco-style reflecting pools, colonnades (curved peristyles), obelisks, and planters.



# A DIFFERENT DALLAS

Despite Dark Legacy, History of Dealey Plaza, Downtown Shine Brightly

Text and photos by Andy Rhodes, The Medallion Managing Editor

In 1935, the area was named Dealey Plaza in honor of George Dealey (1859–1946), a highly respected civic leader who emigrated from England with his family via Galveston at 11 years old. In addition to advocating for visionary city planning, Dealey was an influential owner of the *Dallas Morning News*, helped establish Southern Methodist University, was instrumental in founding the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, served as director of the Children's Hospital of Texas, and was a lifetime president of the Dallas Historical Society.

"His amazing legacy lives on with the famous plaza that carries his name," Preziosi says, adding that a statue honoring Dealey was erected in the plaza in 1949. "It's unfortunate that his name is also associated with such a terrible tragedy, but I think most people in Dallas are aware of his tremendous positive impact on this city and its progress."

The fate of the plaza's most famous landmark, the Book Depository building, was uncertain during much of the 1970s. According to the National Register file, it was sold in 1970 to Nashville-based music producer Aubrey Mayhew for use as a "commercial attraction" focused on John F. Kennedy's assassination (Mayhew ultimately defaulted on his payments). Plans were later discussed to raze the building, although the city refused to issue a demolition permit.

Dallas County purchased the building in 1977 and sealed off the sixth floor until 1989, when an independent organization opened the Sixth Floor Museum in response to Dealey Plaza visitors frequently seeking information about the Kennedy assassination.

Preziosi says the plaza remains Dallas' top heritage destination, with 2013's events related to the assassination's 50th anniversary drawing increased attention and visitation.

"Every time I'm at the plaza I notice all kinds of languages being spoken—it's a testament to the international impact of the events that occurred here," he says.

"For some Dallasites, it's still a shameful place because of what happened here and how it reflects on the city. But

“...we’re pretty fortunate that this part of the city hasn’t been significantly altered in the past 50 years.”

—David Preziosi, Preservation Dallas

time has had an impact—not as many people these days are as embarrassed by the events as previous generations.

"I think we're pretty fortunate that this part of the city hasn't been significantly altered in the past 50 years," Preziosi adds. "The visitors who want to witness where history occurred can get a pretty authentic feel for what it was like in Dealey Plaza at the time."

## DISCOVER DALLAS

For heritage travelers interested in further exploring Kennedy's story, the **Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza** (214.747.6660, [www.jfk.org](http://www.jfk.org)) is a remarkable resource that

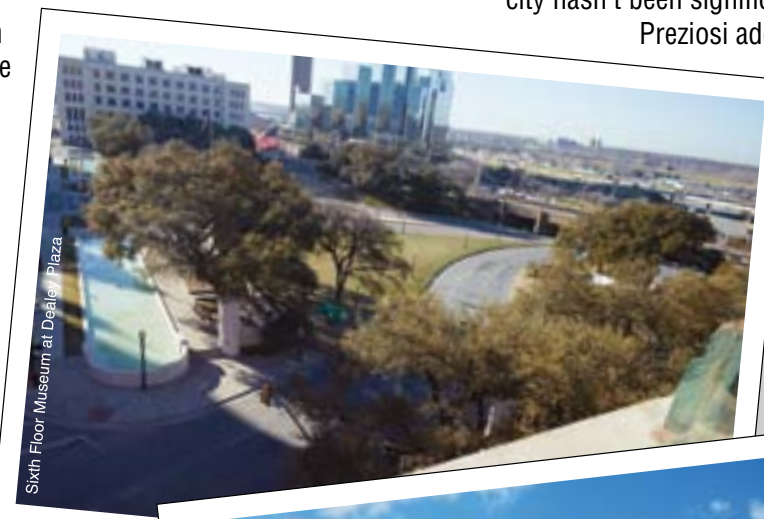
places the president's legacy in historical context. Visitors have the option of using a portable audio device to hear detailed insight about Dallas, Texas, and the entire world in November 1963 as they stroll throughout the sixth floor's compelling exhibits and video displays.

The museum's centerpiece is a Plexiglas-encased

"sniper's perch," which recreates specific details (stacked book boxes, window frames, paint colors) of the scene surrounding Lee Harvey Oswald when he fired the fatal shots from this exact location. According to Carol Murray, the museum's associate director of marketing and public relations, visitors typically have an emotional response to the display, although there has been a notable demographic shift.

"We opened 25 years ago on President's Day, and at that time, two-thirds of our visitors were what we called 'rememberers.' Now it's flipped—only about one-third

Opposite: A statue of George Dealey overlooks his namesake plaza. Above: The view of Dealey Plaza from the "sniper's perch." Below: The plaza remains remarkably similar to its 1963 appearance.





remember where they were on that day,” Murray says. “We’re working on updated ways to tell our story. For instance, we had to make some modifications to our legacy film, since we found that some of our visitors didn’t recognize Walter Cronkite.”

At the other end of the Dealey Plaza stands “Old Red,” the 1892 Romanesque Revival courthouse that now serves as the **Old Red Museum of Dallas County History & Culture** (214.745.1100, [www.oldred.org](http://www.oldred.org)). From the rich red sandstone exterior to the neon-red Magnolia Petroleum sign that welcomes lobby visitors, the building—partially restored through the Texas Historical Commission’s (THC) Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program—is an attention-grabber.

Exhibits cover an impressive range of Dallas’ history, tracing the city’s progression from a prominent regional trading center to national powerhouse to worldwide cultural icon. Historic photos, artifacts, and displays await around each corner, telling the city’s diverse story with objects ranging from Quannah Parker’s pipe bag to Tom Landry’s fedora.

Across the street, the 1915 **Dallas County Criminal Courts Building** (509 Main St., 214.653.7131) welcomes visitors



Above: The 1912 Adolphus Hotel. Right: Founders Plaza.

with a historic and modern twist. At the entry, a THC marker documents the building’s history (noting that Oswald’s assailant Jack Ruby’s trial was held here), while a replica miniature marker displays a QR code connecting smart-phone users to an audio tour. Developed by the Dallas County Historical Commission (CHC), the tour offers heritage travelers fascinating historical tidbits about the significant surrounding sites. A web-based version of the tour is available at [www.dallascounty.org/plazatour](http://www.dallascounty.org/plazatour).

Visitors can continue using the CHC’s tour to gain valuable insight about the adjacent **Founders Plaza**. A THC marker commemorating the county’s log-cabin pioneers stands adjacent to a replica of founder Bryan’s cabin.



Across the street is the John F. Kennedy Memorial, with stark limestone walls surrounding a black marble slab engraved with Kennedy’s name. Internationally recognized architect Philip Johnson, who designed the Fort Worth Water Gardens, described the structure as an open tomb symbolizing Kennedy’s freedom of spirit.

Continuing eastward, travelers will enter the Dallas Downtown Historic District, anchored by bustling Main Street. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the district contains an eclectic mix of architectural styles, from late-1800s two-story commercial buildings to Classical Revival, Art Deco, and Mid-Century Modern structures.

Especially intriguing are two historic hotels—the Adolphus and the Magnolia—on Commerce Street, a block east of Main Street.

The **Adolphus Hotel** (1321 Commerce St., 214.742.8200), commissioned by beer magnate Adolphus Busch, is a 1912 architectural gem featuring faces carved on the stone exterior and an opulent lobby area with elaborate French

Renaissance detailing. According to the THC’s Recorded Texas Historic Landmark medallion on the hotel’s façade, the Adolphus dominated Dallas’ skyline for years, and hosted many important social events.

Next door, the magnificent **Magnolia Hotel** (1401 Commerce St., 214.915.6500) is one of Dallas’ most treasured buildings. The 1922 Renaissance Revival-style structure originally housed the Magnolia Oil Company (later known as Mobil), and became a focal point of Texas’ oil industry. Pegasus, the flying red horse atop the 29-story building’s roof, has become a city icon, and its likeness is currently used as a visual brand representing the downtown historic district.

Just around the corner on Main Street stands the historic 1914 **Neiman-Marcus** department store building (1618 Main St., 214.741.6911), a popular shopping destination for more than a century. Its THC historical marker notes that many of the innovations instituted here had a profound influence on similar retail businesses throughout the country.

Located about a mile east of the historic downtown district is Dallas’ other main heritage destination: **Fair Park** (214.426.3400, [www.fairpark.org](http://www.fairpark.org)). The 300-acre site hosted the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition, and it is perhaps best known as the home of the State Fair of Texas each October.

Fair Park’s centerpiece is the stunning Hall of State, a National Historic Landmark building

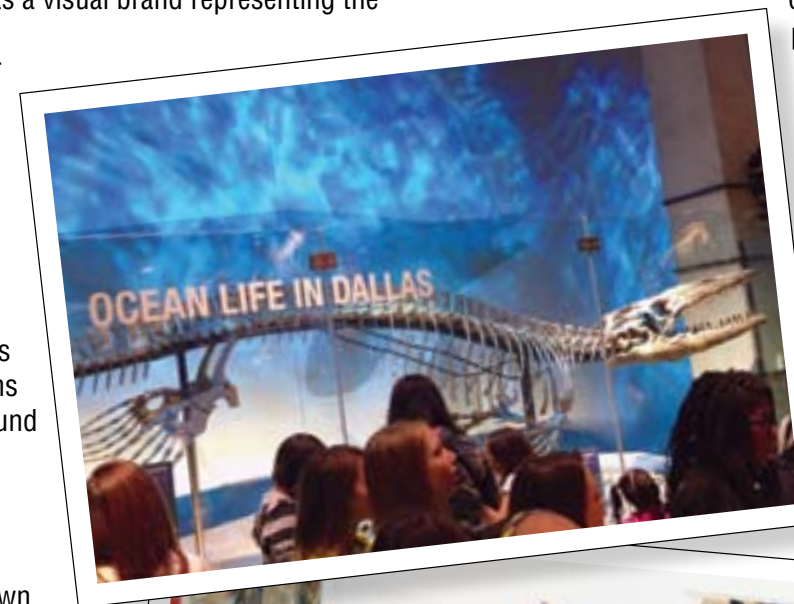


Above: The 1922 Magnolia Hotel once housed Mobil Oil.

featuring Texas history exhibits and tours of the remarkable Art Deco structure. Also on the grounds are the 1930 Cotton Bowl (the legendary stadium that served as the first home of the Dallas Cowboys) and several cultural attractions, including an aquarium and discovery garden. Notable is the **African American Museum** (214.565.9026, [www.aamdallas.org](http://www.aamdallas.org)), which showcases artistic, cultural, and historical materials, and features one of the largest African American folk art collections in the country. Four galleries highlight the cultural heritage of African American art and history; other features include a research library, theater, studio arts area, and classrooms.

On the northern edge of downtown is Dallas’ newest cultural site, the **Perot Museum of Nature and Science** (214.428.5555, [www.perotmuseum.org](http://www.perotmuseum.org)). Ancient and pre-history are focal points of this impressive facility, which offers five floors of educational displays and activities in 11 exhibit halls. Heritage travelers can step back in time through state-of-the-art learning kiosks and hands-on exhibits depicting the Dallas area’s natural and cultural amenities from millions of years ago to modern times.

Another new Dallas cultural destination north of downtown has strong ties to a Texas legacy. The **George W. Bush Presidential Center** (214.200.4303, [www.bushcenter.org](http://www.bushcenter.org)) is dedicated to the 43rd president’s life and presidency. Visitors interact with displays and videos, including a full-scale Oval Office replica, wide-screen theater, and exhibits related to Bush’s eight years as president. ★



Right: A prehistoric display at the Perot Museum (top). Visitors at the African American Museum (below).

These sites represent a sampling of the many historical attractions in downtown Dallas. For information about other heritage tourism destinations in the city and surrounding area, visit [www.texaslakestrail.com](http://www.texaslakestrail.com). To download a copy of the THC’s *Texas Lakes Trail Region* travel guide, visit [www.texastime travel.com](http://www.texastime travel.com).

Left: A neon Magnolia Petroleum sign in the Old Red Museum.



# Making Main Street Matter

From Repainting to Rehabilitations, Upgrades Strengthen Historic Downtown Fabric

By Debra Drescher and Sarah Blankenship  
Texas Main Street Program staff

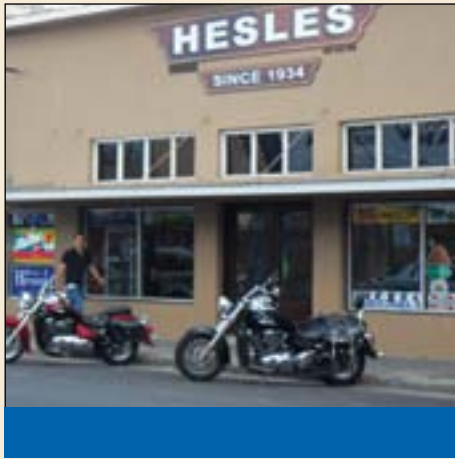
Is preservation-based downtown revitalization worth it? Does the investment of dollars and time to historic downtown improvement provide a significant return? These questions were at the forefront 30 years ago, when the national Main Street concept and Texas Main Street Program (TMSP) were officially launched. Although there were no definitive answers to the viability of this grand leap of faith, in retrospect, it has proven to be successful. In fact, as the years have passed, thousands of Main Street communities across the country have realized tremendous accomplishments, and many have been in Texas.



Hesles in Eagle Pass is pictured before (left) and after (right) participating in the Main Street program's façade restoration initiative.

Whether through the Main Street process or independent preservation-based downtown revitalization activities, all successful efforts have included a community-wide belief in the value of historic preservation; government willing to spur and support preservation activities; and proper stewardship of properties by owners. Much of the revitalization effort is visual—from

special events that bring people downtown, to quirky cutting-edge businesses that draw shoppers into historic buildings, to building rehabilitations that turn an eyesore into a source of community pride. “Each year, our Main Street design staff works on hundreds of projects for Texas’ 87 designated Main Street communities,” explains Terry Colley, the Texas Historical Commission’s (THC) deputy executive director. “One of their key responsibilities is assisting property owners with rehabilitations and other improvements that reflect the building’s heritage, its context, and business use.”



Colley adds that people are often surprised to learn that significant building improvements are not always expensive. While the TMSP design staff works on many high-dollar projects, they also work on improvements that cost a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. “Preservation work does not have to cost a lot to be effective as long as

sound preservation principles are applied—keeping a historic downtown vital is a constant and incremental process,” Colley says. “Changes may happen quickly, or take many years for even a small improvement. Each change, whether big or small, significantly adds to the fabric of Main Street—even something as simple and inexpensive as a new sign or window display can add vitality.” For example, Eagle Pass’ Main Street program recently upgraded several buildings in its historic business district. A recertified Main Street community since 2010, much of Eagle Pass’ success can be traced to significant support by the municipal government to spur downtown revitalization.

“We plan to take our downtown back one store at a time.” —Eagle Pass Main Street Manager Joe Cruz

According to Eagle Pass Main Street Manager Joe Cruz, the city and community focused their efforts on a façade restoration program. “So far, we’ve received a lot of positive feedback from the media and local residents about what these projects have created in our downtown. The benefits are visible,” Cruz said, adding that the TMSP design team has provided high-



From left: This sequence shows the transformation of Seguin’s Gift and Gourmet store on Main Street. The third image is a THC rendering.

quality renderings that significantly contribute to the preservation of downtown buildings. “Not only are these restoration projects creating a better image, they’re also recreating a pride of ownership in our store owners. We plan to take our downtown back one store at a time.” Eagle Pass resident Angelica Hesles, owner of Hesles Downtown, was proud to be the first participant in Main Street’s façade restoration program. Her company started as a dry goods store, and has developed into a combination of outdoor gear, dry goods, and a newly added ice cream and yogurt parlor. She said the restoration of her store has drawn positive attention from locals, surrounding communities, and media. “Some people come to visit thinking it’s a new store in the downtown, and many old timers pass by and tell me about the memories they have of it when they were just children,” said Hesles, whose family has been operating from the same location since 1934. “I encourage other downtown store owners to participate in façade restoration programs so they can also experience all these benefits.”

rehabilitation, including the removal of a large slipcover, which revealed second-floor and transom windows. Gift and Gourmet owner Mary Reiley said, “Moving downtown and restoring a historic building was basically a five-month advertisement. Every time people drove by, they would see the reconstruction and would want to find out what was going on and what was moving in.” She adds that it ultimately drew new customers, and the grand opening was a far greater success than she ever expected.



From left: The intense color of this downtown Decatur building was softened with the assistance of a Main Street rendering (center) that inspired its current appearance.

“As people come downtown, they notice our beautiful building,” Reiley said. “The color and the architecture strikes their attention, and they stroll in to shop. Sales have increased three-fold.”

With additional work on the property and plans for future work, she believes that if all goes well, she will pay for the building in about 10 years. Reiley adds that the restoration was a good plan financially, and it “made me feel like a proud parent—it feels good to give back to my hometown. I feel that the project is something the whole town can be proud of.” Another example of a successful Main Street project recently occurred in Decatur, although it wasn’t clear from the outset if the building’s color would become a controversial issue. The TMSP does not dictate a specific color palette; however, it recommends individuality for buildings and supports shades of color that are compatible with the rest of the historic downtown. Bright colors can be used, but TMSP staff suggests using them for accent colors rather than the entire façade. In Decatur, this philosophy was put to the test when Fuzzy’s Taco Shop moved into a historic Main Street building. The original bright paint scheme was a bit overwhelming for the downtown, so the local Main Street manager, business representatives, and TMSP staff worked together to find a solution—utilizing softer colors and complementary tones—that worked for everyone.



# Seeking Treasure

## THC Business Award Honors Historic Texas Companies

By Andy Rhodes  
Managing Editor, The Medallion

For those who’ve lived in a Texas community for several decades, it’s common to see a storefront change names and companies on a regular basis. Far less common is the business sign that remains in the same place for 50 or even 100 years.

The Texas Historical Commission’s (THC) Texas Treasure Business Award pays tribute to these types of companies that reflect the state’s history, having provided employment for at least 50 years and significant contributions to the state’s economic growth. More than 120 businesses have received the award since 2005, and the decorative decals indicating this distinction are increasingly being displayed on storefronts across Texas.

Businesses can be nominated for the award by an elected state official, business representative, or community organization—including Main Street managers and County Historical Commission members. They must meet the following criteria:

- Have been in continuous for-profit operation in Texas for at least 50 years.
- Continue to operate the same or very similar type of business as it did at least 50 years ago.
- Have a continuous record of employment for at least the past 50 years.

A recent Texas Treasure Business Award recipient was Mount Vernon’s *Optic Herald* newspaper, established in 1874 and located in its current building for more than 50 years.

The Reeves family has owned the paper since 1952.

Documented as the oldest business in Franklin County, the paper began as the *Optic* 140 years ago, and merged with the competing *Herald* publication in 1906. In its early years, the paper was produced on what was known as a George Washington Hand Press; by the 1970s, it was converted to the offset method, using plates and a lithographic in-house printing plant.

Another recent business award recipient is the 101-year-old Livingston Telephone Company in the East Texas community of Livingston. The company, Polk County’s oldest public utility, still operates from its original historic building.

The locally owned, independent telephone



Above: Presentation of Puddin Hill’s THC certificate. Below: Presentation of the *Optic Herald*’s certificate.

exchange started with 40 hand-cranked telephones in service, and operated a 24-hour switchboard on the second floor of a downtown building. By the time creosoted (tar-based) utility poles were installed in 1909, the company oversaw 124 telephones. In 1959, the exchange was converted to a fully automatic dialing system.

Many Texans may be familiar with another recent Texas Treasure Business Award recipient: Mary of Puddin Hill. The Greenville-based bakery, known for its famous fruitcakes, has been in operation since 1948.

The namesake Puddin Hill is a reference to the property on which the bakery sits, which has reportedly been in the family since the 1830s, when Mary Lauderdale’s great-great-grandfather received the acreage for his service in the Texas Revolution. The first year, Mary reportedly made 500 pounds of fruitcake from her home-based bakery.

For more information about the THC’s Texas Treasure Business Award or to download a nomination form, visit [www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us). For additional details, call 512.463.6092. ★



# Grounds for Reunions

## THC Site a Gathering Place to Celebrate Texas Heritage in Historic and Modern Times

By Andy Rhodes  
Managing Editor, The Medallion

Each April, people gather on the banks of the Navasota River near Mexia at the Confederate Reunion Grounds, one of the Texas Historical Commission’s (THC) 20 historic sites, to honor their Civil War-related heritage. The festive weekend aptly reflects the spirit of Texans who met here a century ago to celebrate the camaraderie and memory of veterans and community members.

The event is the site’s largest educational program of the year, co-sponsored by the Friends of the Confederate Reunion Grounds. The program features educational programming, historic artillery, crafts, and food. Battle reenactments are a highlight of the weekend, along with camping and social events.

Students from area schools attend the program on Friday, and the program is open to the broader public both days. Among the popular activities is the Saturday evening ball, held beneath the site’s 1893 Dance Pavilion, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Area home-school students spend the year before the event researching and creating special clothing for period dancing, and the ball serves as their spring prom.

Confederate Reunion Grounds is also celebrating the recent dedication of Old Val Verde Plaza. The new plaza was completed late last year for the Civil War cannon that was used by both the Union and Confederacy.

The cannon, known as “Old Val Verde,” has a colorful history. Referred to as a Three-inch Ordnance Rifle, it was manufactured in 1862 at the Phoenix Iron Works in Pennsylvania for the Union Army.

Old Val Verde was one of eight cannons captured by Confederate troops at the Battle of Mansfield, Louisiana, in 1864. With the Confederate surrender in 1865, the Val Verde Battery was notified to surrender all of its artillery pieces. However, while stopped at Fairfield on the way to San Antonio, the battery instead chose to bury four cannons. They stayed buried for the next 20 years, until they were recovered in 1885.

In 1894, Old Val Verde was acquired by R.J. Bryant, who had helped bury the cannon and was a member of the United Confederate Veterans. The cannon was later moved to its final home, where it became known as Old Val Verde.

From 1889 to 1946, the cannon was fired daily at dawn and dusk during the four-day reunion gatherings that occurred each year at the site. Today, Old Val Verde serves as a



Confederate veteran John Dies (right) fired the Old Val Verde cannon at reunion gatherings.

reminder of the sacrifices made by Union and Confederate soldiers alike, and honors the veterans who participated in the reunion gatherings at the site in the decades after the Civil War.

Other historic architectural attractions at the site include a 1920s water pump house, ruins of Miss Mamie Kennedy’s “Delight House,” rock and concrete barbecue pits, and rock chimneys, foot bridges, ponds, and fountains.

According to Dixie Hoover, the THC’s site manager, Confederate Reunion Grounds is a rare example of a site connected to Texas’ Lost Cause Movement, which sought to bolster camaraderie between Southern veterans and restore the honor of the fallen Confederate soldiers.

“Nearly 7,000 people would attend these annual events,” Hoover explains. “They were much like the site’s current living history gatherings, with families camping under the oaks, enjoying dances, food, and Texas history.” ★



A dance under the historic pavilion serves as a prom for local home-school students.



# Fulton Mansion Restoration Addresses Significant Preservation Issues



Restoration work continues at Fulton Mansion in Rockport.

The 1877 Aransas Bay residence of entrepreneur George Fulton is being lovingly restored with the same attention to detail that Fulton himself put into the home he built and lived in for 18 years.

The Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, in partnership with the Friends of the Fulton Mansion, is working to raise the necessary funds to restore this magnificent structure, acquired in 2008 by the Texas Historical Commission (THC). The Friends recently received a \$75,000 grant from the American Electric Power Foundation to assist with the restoration.

The \$3.4 million project addresses significant preservation issues that threaten the historic landmark's future. Accomplishments to date include replacing iron I-beam supports with new stainless steel components; injecting consolidating material into cracks in the foundation walls; and repairing windows, exterior siding, and interior finishes.

The Fulton Mansion serves as an educational resource for the students in the region and is visited by more than 25,000 people annually from around the world. For more information about the project and how to contribute, visit [www.thcfriends.org](http://www.thcfriends.org). ★

## PERRY COMMISSIONS STATE MARINE ARCHEOLOGIST TO TEXAS NAVY

State Marine Archeologist Amy Borgens with the THC was recently commissioned as an Admiral in the Texas Navy at a ceremony of the Texas Navy Association in Dallas. Commissions in the Texas Navy are granted by the governor of the State of Texas after a nomination and review process. The position is honorary.



"Amy's demonstrated dedication to the State of Texas through her service is invaluable to the community and the Historical Commission," Gov. Perry said. "I commend her for making a positive impact on our state."

Borgens was nominated for her work in Texas underwater archeology, most recently on the Monterrey Shipwreck Project in the Gulf of Mexico. Borgens was principal investigator and responsible for documentation and stabilization of artifacts recovered from Monterrey Shipwreck A, one of the deepest underwater investigations of its kind in the United States. ★

## TEXAS HISTORICAL FOUNDATION CELEBRATES 60TH ANNIVERSARY

This year marks the Texas Historical Foundation's (THF) 60th anniversary and its enduring commitment to preserving the Lone Star State's vast historic resources. In 1954, one year after the Texas Legislature formed the Texas State Historical Survey Committee (now the THC), the THF was founded to support common goals.

The THF and THC have been important partners for six decades. The current issue of THF's *Heritage* magazine (which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year) includes a letter from THF President David D. Martinez, stating: "Since 1954, THF has provided millions of dollars to support thousands of worthwhile historical preservation and educational projects across this great state." He adds that many of the foundation's supported projects are located in rural communities with limited resources.

To learn more about THF's continuing work, its grant programs, or to join the foundation, visit [www.texashistoricalfoundation.org](http://www.texashistoricalfoundation.org) or call 512.453.2154. ★



## LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH ONLINE!

Want to be informed of the most current preservation news in the Lone Star State? The THC will soon be launching a new, monthly e-newsletter and we want you to be a part of it.

By providing your email address, we will keep you updated on the latest news, activities, and programs from the THC. This information will also be shared with the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission.

To be added to this list, please email your name, home address, and email address to [admin@thc.state.tx.us](mailto:admin@thc.state.tx.us). Thank you! ★

# Educate Decision-Makers

## Cultivate Commitment to Preservation Through Education and Participation

By Amy Hammons  
County Historical Commission Outreach Coordinator

By developing relationships with elected officials, County Historical Commissions (CHC) cultivate leadership commitment to preservation. Texas' Statewide Preservation Plan promotes this proactive behavior as a way to preserve and promote historic resources for the betterment of communities statewide.



Judge David Wigley participates in Crosby CHC's Memorial Day service.

CHCs throughout Texas are educating decision-makers in their regions about the importance of preservation. For example, Bee CHC provides the county commissioners court with copies of "work product," such as their historic property inventories and historic homes calendar. CHC appointees also attend court and meet with officials to answer questions and explain details about CHC projects.

In Hood County, the CHC participated in the Texas Historical

Commission's (THC) Texas Treasure Business Award to promote businesses that have provided employment and supported the state's economy for at least 50 years. Awards were presented in county commissioners court, and legislators participated in the celebration.

The Matagorda CHC keeps county and local officials in the loop by providing a constant feed of

information about CHC activities. The CHC also used the Texas Treasure Business Award to connect state legislators to preservation projects in their county.

Other notable CHC initiatives across the state include:

- **Crosby CHC** identified a neglected historic cemetery and worked with the county commissioners court to plan appropriate repairs and provide manual labor for the work.

- **Sabine CHC** has a rotating pool of appointees who attend county commissioners court and select city council meetings to present CHC work and solicit preservation project ideas. The CHC follows up by reporting on actions taken to address officials' recommendations.
- **Waller CHC** has been successful in getting elected officials to attend CHC meetings. Additionally, they provide quarterly reports to elected officials documenting how CHC goals are met and county money is invested.
- **Wheeler CHC** visits monthly with the county judge to provide planning and activity updates, which has helped secure approval and funding from the county for CHC activities.
- **Wise CHC** repaired and repainted the THC historical markers located on the courthouse lawn, drawing the attention of county officials to CHC efforts.

If you have not already, help decision-makers in your area understand the impact of CHC work. Make the case for continued support for preservation across the state! ★

### Our Mission

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

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## WHERE ON EARTH...IN TEXAS

**Know your Texas history?** Put your skills to the test by identifying the pictured site! The first three people who correctly identify the location will receive a prize and be named in the next issue of *The Medallion*. Send your answer to: The Medallion, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276 or email to [medallion@thc.state.tx.us](mailto:medallion@thc.state.tx.us).

**Need a clue?** This now-abandoned site was once buzzing with activity and home to nearly 1,500 residents.

**Answer to the photo from the last issue:** The site pictured below is the central tower on the Denton County Courthouse in downtown Denton. Many readers correctly identified the site, but the first to respond were Sandra Calpakis of Houston, Tom Fraley of Galveston, Beth Rothermel of Brenham, and Mildred Jo Soward of Pleasanton. Special recognition goes to Christopher and Gabriel Jones (ages 7 and 5) of Aubrey, who also answered correctly! Thanks to all who participated. ★

