

## TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

*real places telling real stories*

The following project descriptions are taken from County Historical Commission (CHC) annual reports for the 2016 year of service.

### **Bexar CHC—Symposium Partnerships**

Bexar CHC worked with Texas A&M at San Antonio in the past when placing a historical marker on University property, which honored Spanish and Mexican Land Grants. This partnership was reinforced while planning the CHC's Tricentennial Conference that celebrated the founding of the City of San Antonio 300 years ago. This event is one of several celebrations held in 2017 to celebrate San Antonio's Tricentennial.

This symposium was organized and hosted by the Bexar CHC in the new courtroom at the Bexar County Courthouse. To prepare, the county judge issued personal invitations to universities and colleges to gain support for these symposiums. CHC appointees, many of whom are professionally associated with San Antonio universities, participated in planning and in the symposium. These individuals, along with invited speakers, represented the following schools and organizations: University of New Mexico, St. Mary's University, Texas A&M at San Antonio, St. Edward's University, San Antonio Historical Association, Archives of San Juan Bautista (Coahuila, Mexico), and the Bexar CHC.

The symposium provided educational sessions, meals and refreshments, free parking, and translation services. This two-day event was paid for by the County and hugely successful with approximately 400 attendees.

### **Burleson CHC—Somerville Homecoming Weekend**

Burleson CHC worked with the Somerville School District, Somerville Ex-Students Association, and City of Somerville in the annual Somerville Homecoming Weekend Celebration. Planned events included a football game, ex-student activities and dance, a parade, and historical markers dedications. CHC assisted in planning the historical marker dedication for the Somerville Stadium and Yegua Center WPA structures used by the Somerville ISD. CHC chair participated in the program and assisted with invitations, dedication program preparation, and press releases.

The City prepared resolutions for the day and the school coordinated with the Ex Students Association the weekend activities. Current and former students participated and the history of the facilities was shared with approximately 250-300 people in attendance. The event was covered by local newspapers, radio stations and television stations. The school continues to use and preserve the stadium and gym. Homecoming Weekend is a big event in Somerville and this weekend was a super success by bringing many people back to Somerville for the weekend.



## **Cherokee CHC—Multiple Heritage Events**

Rededication of Spanish Mission San Francisco—established 300 years ago in 1716 by Spanish Captain Domingo Ramon and Father Isidro Felix de Espinosa. The groundwork was laid in 2015 when the Cherokee CHC chair began to attend regularly scheduled meetings of the Tri-centennial mission project, spear-headed by the Nacogdoches CHC Reenactment Planning Committee.

Four missions on Highway 21 were rededicated in 2016; the first was the Cherokee County event held Tuesday, July 5, 2016. Next, was Mission Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe in Nacogdoches on July 9th. Later, two more missions were rededicated. Although located on private property and not open to the public, archeologists, such as Dr. Tom Middlebrook, spoke and shared recovered items from these sites.

Cherokee CHC was represented at all four rededications and, in total, approximately 100 people from the region attended the Cherokee County July 5th rededication. Reenactors participated in a short play—the script was written by Dr. Morris Jackson using original Spanish documents so as to recreate the original ceremony from 1716. Cherokee CHC developed and printed the July 5th program and handed out bells with mission and county logo to each attendee. CHC appointees contacted the Catholic Dioceses in Tyler for publicity; they sent a videographer to record the Cherokee CHC event and the Nacogdoches one, too—both were highlighted in the Catholic magazine. Cherokee CHC program presenters included Mary Germany, founder of the Venerable Antonio Margil Catholic Mission in Alto, and Rev. Mark Kusmirek, Pastor St. Mary's in Longview, Texas.

Also included in the July 5th Cherokee CHC event was the relocation of a 1936 Texas State Historical Marker for Mission San Francisco. The marker had been located on private property but the family agreed to move it to Hwy 21 (El Camino Real) near Alto for public access. Site manager of the Caddo Mounds State Historic Site, Tony Souther, and his crew erected the marker, and members of the Friends of Caddo Mounds partnered with the Cherokee CHC to provide a reception held after the event at the Caddo Mounds Site Museum.

## **Comal County—Comal County Courthouse Display Case Project**

The Comal CHC was asked by Judge Sherman Krause and the Commissioners to design exhibits to be placed in display cases in the newly restored courthouse. There were seven cases placed throughout the building and several easels. The exhibits tell the story of the courthouse's construction through the restoration, displaying some of the interesting items discovered in the process. The cases highlight the building's beautiful architectural features of paint color, wallpaper, tile, window and door hardware, and wood. One case tells the purpose of the CHC, showing the location of designated historical properties. Another case details the January 21, 2013, day the courthouse was rededicated after the restoration. A video is in the planning stages to be added to the public experience when one visits the courthouse.

This project was a combined effort involving Tharp Photographic Services, The Sophienburg Museum and Archives, the Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce, the Comal County Commissioners Court and the Comal County Historical Commission. The county provided the display cases and memorabilia, Dan Tharp provided high-quality large-scale photos and maps, the Sophienburg Museum staff helped set up the displays and provided the narratives, the county public



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information officer along with the judge approved all of the wording, the chamber provided some of the funding and the CHC coordinated the effort. Our CHC conducts tours for groups visiting the courthouse. These visual displays will aid in that experience as well as allowing individuals self-guided tours. The displays showcase the beautifully restored courthouse that the community is proud of.

### **Franklin County—Library Rehabilitation.**

We want to have a quality Texas history collection and we have one very nice room in the fire station museum. We purchased 3 new Dell computers in October 2016 with printers. We have the local newspaper on microfilm; we paid for CDs. Now you can read the local newspaper and even print out a page. You can also access the archival records for all materials held in our storage/curation facility (we also surveyed and prepared digital record of all furnishings in all facilities with donor and further information). Members can facilitate research as appropriate in all facilities.

We make complete photocopy and digital scan of a box of historic land records from a local title company. We gave digital version and photocopy to local genealogy society (a 501 c 3 group attracting large numbers of visitors to the county and operating in an 1894 dry goods store on the town square). The genealogy society has published the records in a 4-volume set (partnership). We gave the original fragile documents to the Texas General Land Office (responsible preservation. Our librarian organized books to allow for ease of reference by subject, author, etc. (one CHC member is retired librarian).

The project will be ongoing but it is one of responsible stewardship for preserving our local heritage. We also have cooperated with local genealogy society toward updating a 2005 publication (update date in 2016) which has narratives written by CHC members describing cemeteries and data now entered regarding GPS locations and other information complying with THC standards for information and recording.

### **Harrison CHC—2016 Cemetery Cleanup Project**

In the fall of 2016, a schedule was developed by the CHC, and made public, to help local cemeteries and their associations to conduct cleanups without conflicting their schedules with other cemeteries efforts in other parts of the county. In many cases, certain groups were called upon by the CHC to lead the cleanup of a specific cemetery on a specific Saturday.

A Cub Scout troop from Elysian Fields took charge of the cleanup of the Marshall Hebrew Cemetery on Oct. 29th, having been informed of what type work was required. The local Camp of the Sons of Confederate Veterans became responsible for the cleanup of the Marshall Memorial Cemetery, including trimming the shrubbery along the main highway downtown. They hosted several cleanup days in which the public was invited to help.

Local colleges were also tapped for man-power, including East Texas Baptist University and Wiley College. Three African-American cemeteries in various parts of the county, all in varying stages of



neglect, were targeted for cleanup. Some required cleaning fence lines, while other required robust labor involving fallen trees and limbs.

These cleanups occurred on Saturdays, starting in September and ending just prior to Thanksgiving. All groups and organizations that sponsored these individual cleanups were provided by the CHC a comprehensive list of safety warnings to follow for the benefit of the volunteers.

### **Jefferson CHC—Ongoing Cemetery Preservation Efforts**

McGaffey Cemetery is located west of Sabine Pass in south Jefferson County. With history dating back to the 1880s, it has suffered times of abandonment and has been a popular site for grave robbers and other vandalism. The cemetery has withstood numerous storms that have destroyed or washed away many cemetery markers and identifying stones.

In 2002, the CHC enlisted a Port Arthur firm to survey the corners of the cemetery to determine when it was established. Then, a fence was installed and a CHC appointee inventoried the remaining headstones. The county re-installed the fence after Hurricanes Rita (2005) and Ike (2008) damaged the fence and displaced headstones.

In recent years, the Sons of the Confederacy along with Precinct 3 county commissioners have worked with the CHC to preserve the cemetery by mowing grass, clearing overgrown trees and shrubs, and keeping fences maintained to keep livestock out of the cemetery. In 2016, the present county commissioner used his staff, sheriff's deputies, and county prisoners to mow and trim inside the cemetery boundary lines, careful not to damage remaining headstones.

### **Jim Hogg CHC—Texas Treasure Business Award**

Jim Hogg CHC hosted a ceremony to honor the New York Store for its Texas Treasure Business Award. This local business, which has been active for more than 100 years, has made exceptional contributions toward local and state economic growth. Initially, the New York Store served as a general store, providing the community and surrounding area with groceries, hardware, and agricultural supplies/ equipment. Over the years, the store has evolved to serve the needs of the community. Recently, the store expanded its western wear department to offer a wider variety of jeans, boots, hats and other items that honor the lifestyle of area ranchers and Vaqueros. County officials, CHC appointees, and citizens from the surrounding area were in attendance for the ceremony to celebrate with the property owners.

### **Matagorda CHC—Bay City Depot Restoration**

Matagorda CHC joined with the Bay City Historical Commission and Bay City Main Street Program to restore the historic Bay City Missouri Pacific depot and caboose. The depot was an important community gathering place during the era of passenger trains. The depot restoration and



preservation included a new roof, flooring, and paint on the interior and exterior. The depot is used for meetings, parties, and various other events. The original paint on the caboose was restored and signs made to explain the different areas inside the caboose. It is opened for school groups and other tours where visitors can experience a time when train travel was a vital part of life.

## **Menard CHC—Presidio de San Saba Restoration**

Initiation of Phase II of the restoration of the Presidio de San Saba—The purpose of Phase II is to solicit support for the completion of the restoration of the Presidio, and especially the construction of an onsite Visitors' / Learning Center and Museum. Here, the most significant examples of the thousands of Spanish Colonial artifacts excavated since the 1990s at both the Presidio and the nearby Mission will be finally displayed in order to fully tell the story of the High Water Mark of the Spanish Empire in Texas.

This broadly-based community effort builds upon the Phase I Restoration completed in 2011 by Menard County with the help of a grant from the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Since then, the Menard County Historical Commission and the Presidio de San Saba' Restoration Corporation have been leading the final restoration effort, or Phase II. Continuing to work closely with THC, we now have an updated cost estimate for the completion of the effort. Armed with that, we are reaching out for corporate sponsorship and the support of our local state representatives in order to finish the job and transfer the Presidio site to the State of Texas, to be put under permanent THC management.

The Presidio de San Sabá has the following distinctions: Registered Texas Historic Landmark since 1971, National Historic Landmark since 1972, and Texas State Historical Site since 1972. For 260 years, since its founding in 1757, the Presidio has been the defining historical and cultural landmark for Central Texas, memorializing in stone the “High Water Mark” of Spanish Colonial Expansion in Texas. Today, 260 years after its founding by the Spanish Empire, visitors still come to the Presidio, averaging 600 per month, from all over Texas, the United States, and numerous foreign countries. The Presidio Facebook Page averages 1,750 site hits per week (4 – 8,000 on some weeks):

<http://presidiodesansaba.org/index.html>.

## **Milam CHC—Texas Archeology Month event**

The Milam CHC planned and sponsored Texas Archeology Month (TAM) events that centered around the El Camino Real de los Tejas National Trail (ECRT). The ECRT is an important historic national trail that impacts heritage tourism in Texas.

MCHC members visited every 4th grade class in Milam County presenting history of Milam County and the El Camino Real Trail. An additional component of the TAM presentation was working with the El Camino Real Trail Association and citizens of Gause presenting a program by archeologist, Sergio Iruegas, who is working on a survey for the El Camino Real Trail Association in Gause. The



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archeological survey, the history, and significance of Gause as part of the ECRT was presented. Gause citizens supplied the building and refreshments. The El Camino Real de los Tejas National Trail Association Director, Stephen Gonzales, brought materials and spoke about the national trail.

This event informed citizens in Milam County and surrounding areas about the vast, significant history of the El Camino Real Trail in the Gause area and Milam County. The slide presentation related the impact that the ECRT has on Texas and Milam County. This program informed citizens of the heritage tourism possibilities in Milam County. About 50 people came to the event. There was a question and answer time after the program with local historic landowners and others concerning the importance of historic surveys on the El Camino Real Trail.

### **Mills CHC—Old Jail Rehabilitation**

Mills CHC has initiated repair of the Old 1888 Jail, the first structure built by the county newly organized in March of 1887. It will be invaluable to the Tourism Project the City Council is planning since it is on the square with the renovated Courthouse. It was designated Recorded Texas Historic Landmark #33689 in 1965. It was placed on the National Registry in 1979 (#79002994), and was registered in the Antiquities Landmark Atlas as #82000000477 in 2002.

The building, created of limestone blocks, appears to be stable but repairs are needed to the wooden window and door frames inset in limestone openings. Other work is needed on the second story where leaks created crumbling concrete floor and rusting metal braces supporting the floor. The last repairs were done about 20 years ago according to Chamber of Commerce scrapbooks. Fortunately, they replaced the roof and stopped the leaking at that time.

We have removed debris and readied the building for repairs. We have collected the pictures and information needed for Antiquities Code approval to work on the building. We have made a preliminary request to the Commissioners' Court for a portion of the financing, but we have not yet gone to the public for donations. We have tried to lay a foundation by resending programs on the history of the Old Jail at Tuesday Study Club and Texas History at Retired Teachers.

### **Montgomery CHC—Multiple Efforts**

We help with the preservation of several historic structures owned by a variety of county non-profit organizations with the enthusiastic financial backing of our Commissioners Court, along with funds our CHC receives from the sale of the "Montgomery County, Texas Historical Timeline" books. In 2016, our CHC offered grants to 501c(3) non-profits such as the Fernland Park Historical Society for the restoration of a path leading to a historic log cabin in Fernland Historical Park in Montgomery; the repairs to the roofs of the historical Montgomery post office and commercial building owned by the Montgomery Historical Society; and the restoration project of the Strake- Gray Oilfield House, a new museum building owned by the Heritage Museum of Montgomery County which features the history of the Conroe Oil Boom of the 1930's. Our CHC Grants Committee and other members of



our CHC work carefully with the boards of each of these organizations to vet each project for importance and to further our CHC goal of preserving historic structures in our county. Working carefully with the County Auditor, we ensure that these funds are used only for reimbursement of funds expended by these organizations to preserve their historic structures. But for the supplemental funding our CHC can provide these non-profit organizations they would be limited in what they can do to protect, preserve and promote these structures.

### **Parker CHC—Bankhead Highway Celebration**

Parker CHC, as a co-sponsor of the 2016 Bankhead Highway Centennial Celebration, partnered with the THC, the City of Weatherford, Weatherford's Texas Main Street Program, the Theater Off the Square, and automobile clubs. Displays of vintage cars were displayed on the Weatherford square. CHC partnered with the Parker County Heritage Society for the Information Station—a booth with brochures and handouts. There was also a scavenger hunt of historic buildings on the square. The event brought attendees from counties associated with the Bankhead Highway, three of the Texas Trails Regions, and people who live in and around Parker County.

### **Sabine CHC—Works with County Officials**

Sabine CHC encouraged the county commissioners court to reassess the way hotel/motel tax (HOT) revenue was disbursed. County officials, the City of Hemphill, and the Sabine Chamber of Commerce had several ideas about proposed development of the county's two incorporated towns—Hemphill and Pineland. To complement these efforts, the commissioners court appointed a tourism board of directors whose first duty was to recommend potential uses for HOT monies. The board is made up of the chamber president, another chamber representative, city manager for Hemphill, Sabine CHC chair, county treasurer, and two local business owners. By developing community partnerships, the Sabine CHC has been able to influence not only history-related projects, but also decisions related to area development and its impact on historic resources.

### **Sabine County—Sabine Cemetery Project**

For several years the CHC along other volunteers have been documenting all cemeteries and remote burial sites in the county. Some older individuals have been working on this effort for forty years. In 2016 after driving hundreds of miles and walking hundreds of miles on the Sabine National Forest, timber company land and private property most of this project has been completed. The effort resulted in a data base and paper copies of every known burial site in Sabine County. It includes driving directions from the courthouse and GPS coordinates for each. Participants included the Tourism office, Chamber of Commerce, county court members, several cemetery associations and the Jail House Museum board members. Many of the visitors to the county are hunting where ancestors are buried and the location of same. This completed project has proved invaluable in providing information to visitors hunting ancestors, but also to local citizens that become interested in their ancestors.



## **Sabine County—Farm to Market Highway 1**

Sabine County maintains a Facebook Page dedicated to county history, which highlights the rich history of the people, places and history along the first Farm-to-Market (FM) highway in Texas. FM Highway 1 runs through western Sabine County and extends into southern San Augustine County. Most of the land crossed by the route was granted by the Republic of Mexico or the Republic of Texas. The highway's first section was constructed in 1939 and was finished in 1956. Its Facebook page posts photos of people, historic structures, old cemeteries, and schools, along with documents related this highway and its history. The Facebook page has a huge following made up of people from across the United States who contribute photos and documents that celebrate the history of the area.

## **Webb CHC—Farmer's Market Booth**

Webb CHC expands communication and collaboration efforts by providing a CHC awareness table for the public at the Laredo Main Street's Farmers Market. A new local history photo exhibit was developed for 2015 to build on the success of our first exhibit in 2014. Visitors at the information booth were drawn to the exhibit and CHC appointees engaged in conversations with them about preserving local history. The booth also provided current educational materials on various historic preservation topics. Younger patrons were given local history activity sheets and crayons. This opportunity enabled the CHC to reach an audience who may not have been familiar with the CHC, history, or preservation. CHC promoted its projects while promoting local history.

## **Wheeler County—Red River War Summit**

The Wheeler CHC hosted a two day "Red River War Summit " event June 26-27 at the Old Mobeetie Jail Museum grounds. It was a gathering to commemorate the history of the Texas Panhandle during the 1874-1875 Red River Campaign and honoring both the Native American and the U.S. Military culture and a collaborative strategy work shop for interpretation, education and promotion benefiting museums, sites and communities within the Red River War region. The Summit was attended by over 100 people on June 26 and 80 people attended Monday's work shop. The Summit set into motion a movement to get this Panhandle of Texas story told in museums and visitors sits in the area. Partnering in this event was Panhandle Tourism and Marketing, Wheeler County Historical Commission, Old Mobeetie Jail Museum, Texas Plains Trail Region, Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Wheeler Historical Museum, and The Washita Battlefield Site, National Park Service Cheyenne OK. The event was blessed by the Quanah Parker Family of Cash OK and stories of eight clashes of the two cultures were told by Kiowa Native American James Coverdale and a military re-enactor group --Regiment of the High Plains.

