County Historical Commissions (CHCs) provide an annual report to the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Annual reports allow CHCs an opportunity to share projects which demonstrate an investment in historic preservation across the state. For the 2021 reporting year, the THC received 375 project descriptions from CHCs. The THC would like to highlight the following CHC projects which demonstrate exemplary historic preservation practices and concerted efforts to preserve Texas’ diverse history.
Menard CHC coordinated the first annual Spanish Colonial Heritage Day on September 11, 2021, at the Presidio de San Saba in Menard, Texas. The CHC, in collaboration with Dr. Tamra L. Walter of Texas Tech University, Angelo State University, the Texas Center at Schreiner University, the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Angelo, Menard’s Sister City of Cortegana, Spain, and the Texas forts Trail Region, brought to life the Spanish Colonial experience on the banks of the San Saba River as it was 265 years ago.

Opening remarks were given by the Consulate of Spain in El Paso, Texas, who extended personal greetings from their majesties, the King and Queen of Spain. Living history re-enactors portrayed Spanish soldiers and their family members, as well as Franciscan missionaries. The event also included representatives from the Tonkawa and Comanche tribes, and a Lipan Apache teepee. Firing demonstrations of cannons and flintlock muskets were held, and foods of Spanish colonists were authentically prepared and shared with visitors. In the afternoon, a performance of Menard CHC’s historical play, A Walk Through Time, was staged. The play portrays the rich history of the San Saba Valley from prehistoric times through the Spanish Colonial period.

The event drew over 200 guests and plans are underway for Menard CHC to host the event annually. Collaborations and partnerships were key to the success of Menard CHC’s efforts to educate the public about the Presidio de San Saba. You can see tips on hosting CHC events on our webpage here.
Cass CHC partnered with Collins Academy in Marion County to host a seven-week summer camp for twelve high school students during the summer of 2021. The summer camp was funded by a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department CO-OP Grant.

Students worked to install and rehabilitate native plant gardens and produced and narrated short films that share the history of Cass and Marion County. Cass CHC assisted in student recruitment, provided a historic summary of each historical site, and helped students research and produce their short films. In total, the summer campers contributed 1,680 hours of volunteer time. You can view the student’s films on the Talk of Jefferson webpage.

CHCs can advocate for and secure funding to create programming for their county’s youth and schools. To learn more about creating opportunities for youth to participate in historic preservation, view the THCs Youth Outreach Series here.

Pictured: Youth summer camp attendees participate in various activities. Photos courtesy of Cass CHC.
Wood CHC hosted a free seminar, “History of Caddo Indians in Wood County,” on October 23, 2021, at the Quitman Public Library in Quitman, Texas. The seminar was held to raise awareness of Texas Archeology Month (TAM), an annual celebration of Texas’ ancient past.

Wood CHC partnered with Dr. Thomas Guderjen of the University of Texas at Tyler Archeology Department, and Mark Walters, a volunteer for the Texas Archeological Stewardship Network. The focus of the presentations included proper care for Caddo artifact collections, tracing the Caddo’s presence in East Texas, and registering archeological sites with the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Wood CHC promoted the event on social media, local newspapers, and the THC’s TAM calendar of events. The presentations were recoded and made available to the public on the Wood CHC YouTube Channel. The seminar was also highlighted in Texas Archeology: The Newsletter of the Texas Archeological Society.

Raising awareness of Texas’ archeological resources is a key component of every CHC’s mission. Working with subject matter experts and local partners to reach new audiences in your community benefits everyone involved. You can learn more about the advantages of partnering with colleges and universities on historic preservation efforts here.

Pictured (left to right, top to bottom): Event attendees listen in on presentation, Mr. Mark Walters, volunteers man event table, visitors examine artifacts, Dr. Thomas Guderjen, display of artifacts. Photos courtesy of Wood CHC.
Polk CHC organized a Texas Historical Marker dedication ceremony for Lieutenant Colonel James M. Parker, Jr., a Polk County resident and member of the Doolittle Raiders.

On April 17, 2021, over 100 people gathered at Lt. Colonel Parker’s gravesite at Restland Memorial Cemetery in Livingston, Texas, for the dedication of a Texas Historical Marker commemorating his military service. The event was planned to coincide with the 79th anniversary of the Doolittle Raid. Among the participants were three United States Air Force Generals, United States Congressman Brian Babin, Livingston High School ROTC, the Polk County VFW, and the American Legion. Following the dedication ceremony, an exhibit opening for Lt. Colonel Parker and the Doolittle Raid was held at the Polk County Memorial Museum.

Marker dedication ceremonies are great opportunities to share CHC preservation success stories with officials at the county, state, and federal level. Visit the marker dedication ceremony webpage for resources including a sample press release and program, marker dedication ceremony guide, and details about promoting your event on the THC website.

_Pictured (left to right, top to bottom): Scenes from the marker dedication and memorial ceremony, historical marker, Colonel Eddie Boxx addresses the crowd._
_Photos courtesy of Polk CHC._
Fannin CHC celebrated Women’s History Month and women in Fannin County using their Facebook page, the Fannin County Historical Group. Women’s History Month commemorates and encourages the study, observance, and celebration of the vital role of women in American history.

Throughout March 2021, Fannin CHC shared a series of posts titled, “Fannin County Women.” The women commemorated included musicians, educators, artists, entrepreneurs, writers, benefactors, and lawyers. Each post included photographs and a short biography of the women. Articles recognizing the contributions of women’s organizations, including missionary societies and home demonstration clubs, were also posted. Fannin CHC also shared articles from partner organizations including *The Bonham Daily Favorite*, which documented Fannin County women registering to vote following the passage of the 19th Amendment.

When used appropriately, social media and online publications can be vital tools for CHCs to reach audiences inside and outside their communities. You can read more about CHC’s social media projects, and get tips for using social media and webpages, on the CHC Game Changers webpage.
Lavaca CHC collaborated with local volunteers to upgrade the Lavaca County Courthouse clock. The clock’s bell had been inoperable for five years. Lavaca CHC met with local engineers who expressed their interest in fixing the county courthouse clock and began meeting on a regular basis to plan out the project.

During the early stages of planning, it was determined the original clock mechanism could not be fixed. Many of the parts in need of repair could not be found or would be too costly to have manufactured. In turn, the CHC purchased a new central controller from a company in Missouri to upgrade the clock. The CHC then contacted Texas Courthouse Stewardship staff to gather necessary permits for installation. Schematic plans drawn by the engineers were submitted and approved by THC’s review staff.

By December 2021, the Lavaca County Courthouse clock was restored and operational. The CHC and their partners estimated they saved Lavaca County over $75,000 upon completion of the project. Lavaca CHC’s preservation project would not have been possible without the help of their local partners and the assistance of THC staff. You can learn more about navigating preservation issues with the help of THC staff by visiting the Recommendations for CHCs webpage.

Pictured: Volunteers engaged in courthouse clock restoration projects. Photos courtesy of the THC.
Jim Hogg CHC partnered with county officials to host County Government Day on April 30, 2021. Students and teachers from local schools were invited to tour the Jim Hogg County Courthouse and take part in a presentation by county officials and CHC appointees.

Students learned about their county’s history and historic landmarks during the presentation. Historic photographs were displayed in the hallways and the district courtroom where the presentation took place. The CHC provided preservation booklets for the students to reference during the presentation and share with their families. Booklets for middle and high school students focused on places of historic significance in the county. Coloring books of local historic sites with short descriptions were provided to elementary age students. The day-long learning opportunity received positive feedback from teachers and students who attended.

Being part of county government, CHCs are obligated to work with elected officials to educate the public about the importance of preservation and their county’s historic resources. Elected officials can play valuable roles in CHC’s preservation efforts. Read more about developing relationships with county officials here.
Wheeler CHC raised funds for the Rock School Restoration Project; an effort to restore the county’s one room schoolhouse built in 1886. With support of the Wheeler Economic Development Corporation, tea towels and tote bags with images of the 1886 Rock School and other Wheeler County historic landmarks were purchased to sell as part of fundraising efforts.

Wheeler CHC participated in three local events, “Shop Small,” “Wild and Free on HWY 83,” and “Panhandle Hand Made Marketing.” At each event a booth was set up to display photos taken in 2018, when the restoration project began, as well as photos of the restoration work completed to date. Wheeler CHC requested event organizers waive the booth fee, so all proceeds from the events could go directly to the project. In addition to local support, Wheeler CHC applied for and was awarded grants from two area foundations to assist in the project.

Cultivating support for preservation projects is a task many CHCs take part in on a regular basis. Every CHC must make the case for historic preservation and strive to cultivate support from their communities. You can read more about making your CHC’s case for funding and doing more with fewer resources here and here.

Pictured (top to bottom): Exterior of school, Miss Jewel Reed (second from left) photographed with school attendees (1929), group gathered inside the school. Photos courtesy of Wheeler CHC and Wheeler CHC Facebook.
Washington CHC partnered with the Washington County Boys and Girls Club and Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site, to coordinate the first ever ‘Gone to Texas’ Youth History Camp. The camp’s goal was to spark youth interest in history by offering opportunities to experience life during the early years of the Republic of Texas.

The camp was held every morning for one week in August 2021. Staff and volunteers from the Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site, Star of the Republic Museum, and Fanthorp Inn State Historic Site provided interpretive demonstrations and learning activities for the thirty students in attendance. Due to the success of the program, the CHC plans to hold the event annually.

Washington CHC’s collaborative efforts demonstrate the unique role CHCs can play in bringing organizations together with the goal of interpreting the history and heritage of their communities. Learn more about the benefits of CHC partnerships with history organizations here. If you would like to learn more about a Texas State Historic Site near you, click here.
Franklin CHC- Agriculture Equipment Restoration

Franklin CHC restored agricultural equipment dating back to the early twentieth century to display for the public outside the Cotton Belt Depot Museum in Mt. Vernon, Texas. The CHC took on the restoration project to preserve the history of early farming techniques in the region and improve accessibility to the public.

During the restoration process, Franklin CHC and local volunteers researched and purchased replacement parts such as wooden handles and seats. The equipment was also painted in rust-free paint in color schemes original to the manufacturer’s specifications. Franklin CHC appointees and volunteers contributed over 150 hours to restoring the John Deere, Allis-Chalmers, and Farmall equipment which include a hay rake, stalk cutter, plows, and excavation tools. Additionally, the grounds of the Cotton Belt Depot Museum were cleaned to provide an inviting space for visitors. The museum is located only one block from Franklin County Courthouse and main square, a regular gathering place for families and visitors to the community.

Hands-on projects are great ways to work with members of your community interested in historic preservation. CHCs both large and small undertake these efforts as part of their missions to preserve their county’s historic resources for the public. You can read more about building partnerships with communities [here](#).

Pictured (left to right, top to bottom): Ken and Shawn McDonald restore the agricultural equipment using original paint colors. Restored equipment outside of the 1894 Railroad Depot (photos courtesy of Franklin County Historical Assoc.) Franklin CHC gather outside the Franklin County Historical Museum and in front of restored equipment (photos courtesy of Franklin CHC).
Hays CHC advocated for the preservation of the Naomi Cephas Wade House in San Marcos, Texas. Threatened with demolition, the Hays CHC sought to preserve the Naomi Cephas Wade House as a historically significant part of the Dunbar Historic District.

Naomi Cephas was the daughter of Ulysses Cephas, a prominent African American leader in the Dunbar Neighborhood. Naomi’s house was built directly across the street from the Ulysses Cephas House, previously restored with funds from a Community Development Block Grant.

In collaboration with the Dunbar Heritage Association and the Calaboose African American History Museum, the Hays CHC mailed letters to the San Marcos Historic Preservation Commission and the San Marcos City Council detailing reasons for opposition to the demolition. Additionally, the Hays CHC worked with the Hays County Commissioners Court to pass proclamations urging for the preservation of the property. Hays CHC’s advocacy efforts led to record attendance by members of the public at their June 2021 meeting to speak on behalf of preserving the Naomi Cephas Wade House.

As a result of their combined efforts, the request for a demolition permit was denied. The Hays CHC continues to advocate for the preservation of the Naomi Cephas Wade House and the Dunbar Historic District. CHCs can advocate for positive preservation outcomes and educate the public about undertold histories through partnerships with community organizations. You can learn more about the benefits of community partnerships and positive preservation outcomes here.
El Paso CHC partnered with PlaceEconomics to host a virtual webinar titled “24 Reasons Historic Preservation is Good for Your Community.” The webinar’s goal was to identify and advocate for the economic, social, and cultural benefits of historic preservation. In their efforts to support the Downtown National Historic Register District, El Paso CHC invited business owners, preservation-focused partners, educators, students, and the public to attend.

The CHC’s Architectural Preservation Committee worked with PlaceEconomics to research El Paso County and tailor the webinar to the concerns of residents. The CHC’s Outreach Committee worked with the El Paso County Economic Development Department to identify and plan ways to reach stakeholders in targeted communities. The CHC’s Marketing Committee then implemented the plan with the help of the county to reach the broadest audience possible.

The webinar was successful in communicating with community stakeholders and the El Paso CHC hopes to continue using it as a tool to explain the benefits of historic preservation projects. CHCs must make the most of opportunities to educate stakeholders about their projects and advocate for preservation. You can read more about providing opportunities to educate and influence here.

Pictured (top to bottom): Event flyer photo courtesy of El Paso County Economic Development Facebook page, PlaceEconomics report cover photo courtesy of PlaceEconomics.com