

# JCHC JOURNAL

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION VOLUME 2014, ISSUE 2

## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Members,

Hotel Beaumont is being placed at auction by the City of Beaumont. This historic structure has long been an anchor for downtown Beaumont. Hopefully the future owners of this property will be good stewards, and support preservation and restoration of the areas still in need of work. Placing the building back in use is the first step in assuring its legacy continues.

Thank you to all of our members for your time and service.

Theresa Goodness, JCHC Chair



Hotel Beaumont Ballroom—Top Floor  
Photo Credit: Theresa Goodness

### VOLUME 2014, ISSUE 2

#### In this issue:

Chairman's Letter	<b>1</b>
THC News	<b>2</b>
Courthouse Tree's Roots	<b>3</b>
Tyler County Tour	<b>4</b>

### MARCH, 2014

#### Special points of interest:

- \* Next Meeting.
- \* Volunteer Hours.
- \* Mini-museum
- \* CLG News

## HOTEL BEAUMONT AUCTION

The FUMC Estate Sale Committee will be selling furnishings and other contents of Hotel Beaumont from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, March 27, 28, and 29, 2014, at Hotel Beaumont, 625 Orleans Street. The building will be auctioned off by the City of Beaumont.

## TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION NEWS

### Texas Historical Commission Partners with UNT Libraries to Digitize Information on Historic Landmarks

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) commemorates the most historically significant places in Texas with a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL). The honor is awarded to historic structures worthy of preservation and is the highest honor the state bestows on such properties in Texas. Now the THC will partner with University of North Texas (UNT) Libraries to digitize and provide public access to more than 1,700 files related to buildings designated as RTHLs. The partnership is the result of a Tex-Treasures grant from the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, and will offer broad public access to the application and research files associated with the RTHL throughout five heritage regions of the state, including the Independence, Hill Country, Tropical, Pecos, and Mountain Trail regions. Sites such as Hotel Paisano in Marfa, Polly’s Chapel near Bandera, San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio, Ashton Villa in Galveston, or the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church in Houston are just a few examples of the seminal structures the public will be able to learn more about, including accessing images that illustrate architectural features of the properties. To get started, visit the Portal to Texas History. Learn more about RTHLs at our RTHL webpage, or contact the THC’s History Programs Division at 12.463.5853.

### NEXT JCHC MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS IN 2014

March 27, 2014	Noon	JCHC Conference Room—Third Floor
May 15, 2014	Noon	JCHC Conference Room—Third Floor
July 24, 2014	Noon	JCHC Conference Room—Third Floor
September 25, 2014	Noon	JCHC Conference Room—Third Floor
December 11, 2014	Noon	JCHC Conference Room—Third Floor

#### VOLUNTEER HOURS

Any work in the preservation or promotion of Jefferson County History may be counted toward your volunteer hours. JCHC meetings and travel time to and from meetings also count as volunteer hours. Members are reminded that at least 50 hours of volunteer work per year is required of each member. (Emeritus members do not have to meet this requirement.)

Also with the number of hours, JCHC needs a general description of work performed, for example: 3 Hours – Marker Survey.

If you have any questions, please call the office at 409-835-8701 or contact Linda via email at [histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us](mailto:histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us)

#### PRESERVATION PARTNERS

Beaumont Heritage Society  
 Landmark Commission  
 Texas Historical Foundation  
 Friends of Sabine Pass Park  
 Beaumont Main Street  
 Museum of the Gulf Coast

## COURTHOUSE TREE'S ROOTS REDISCOVERED

On October 14, 2003, students from St. Anthony Cathedral School, Odom Academy and Stephen F. Austin Middle School participated in a field trip to the Jefferson County Courthouse where they helped plant a tree in memory of Stephen F. Austin, "The Father of Texas". The oak tree came from the oaks in West Columbia, Texas, the place where Austin died on December 27, 1836.

The late Commissioner Jimmie Cokinos greeted the students, and introduced to them Sam Houston, IV, the great-grandson of the hero of San Jacinto and twice President of the Republic of Texas.

The Stephen F. Austin tree program was designed to plant a tree on every courthouse square in Texas with the help of school children. At the time of this planting, all but 78 counties had planted a tree in Austin's memory



Tree honoring the memory of "The Father of Texas", Stephen F. Austin, as it appears today on the courthouse square.  
Photo Credit: Linda McMahan

## TYLER COUNTY ON TOUR EVENT NEWS RELEASE

"Tyler County on Tour" is the theme of the first annual historical tour of this southeast Texas scenic area sponsored by the Tyler County Historical Commission. The tour will companion with the Tyler County Dogwood Festival of the Arts from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 22, 2014. The center stage of the Festival of the Arts is Heritage Village, located on U.S. 190 two miles west of Woodville.

"Tyler County on Tour" will include Heritage Village, with a focus on the formal opening of the Fiber Arts Building. Additional spotlights feature the Hicks Home Place and Pedigo Cemetery in the historic Town Bluff area and the W. T. Colmesneil House built by a railroad engineer in the Tyler County city which bears his name.

An added focus for this premier event is a book signing for JUST BETWEEN US, STORIES AND MEMORIES FROM THE TEXAS PINES, edited by Dan K. Utley and Milton S. Jordan. This beautiful anthology includes colorful, exciting stories written by Utley, Jordan, Francis "Ab" Abernethy, Thomas Charlton, Richard Donovan, William Seale, Jo Ann Stiles, and many other authors about experiences in counties throughout Southeast Texas. The signing is scheduled from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. on the front porch of the Heritage Village Museum.

At Heritage Village, visitors will have the opportunity to view spinners, weavers, and quilters all practicing their crafts in the Fiber Arts Building, the newest addition to the village complex. Children and adults will be invited to join the exhibitors as they display these pioneer skills. The formal opening of the new building will be Saturday, March 22, 2014, at 10:00 a. m. No visit to Heritage Village is complete without a stop at the train museum, where children (and those of us who remain children at heart) can experience the world of electric trains in action. A Village tradition that can also be enjoyed by all is the East Texas fare served family style at the world famous Pickett House.

Another historic showplace on the tour is the recently restored home of the person for whom the northern Tyler County city of Colmesneil is named. W. T. Colmesneil, a nineteenth century conductor for the Texas and New Orleans Railroad, built his home facing the railroad tracks, so that he might sit on his front porch and watch the trains go by. Twenty-first century visitors to this museum will take a step back in time to view memorabilia of early sawmill days. Displays also include a collection of train lanterns, telegraph equipment, furnishings from First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's Pullman car, and copies of early twentieth century newspapers printed in Colmesneil. Children will be introduced to early school materials and learn games played by their counterparts of yesteryear.

The earliest settlement in Tyler County was Town Bluff on the Neches River. Near Town Bluff, about twelve miles east of Woodville, are the Hicks Home and the Pedigo Cemetery. The Hicks Home Place has been owned and maintained by the same family since they settled in Tyler County in the 1860's. Visitors will tour the home, uniquely constructed with single-walls, which includes original furnishings and wardrobe items from six generations. Children can try their hand at calling workers in from the fields using Mama Hicks' cow horn. They may also take turns churning butter and doing laundry on an ancient scrub board. At the barn visitors will see hand-hewn posts and shingles and learn about vintage tools used to cultivate the soil and care for the livestock.

Just west of the Hicks Home Place is the Pedigo Cemetery dating back to 1857. This family cemetery established by A. B. and Julia Pedigo is maintained to this date by their descendants. It includes a native stone chapel built in 1938. While touring the cemetery with Pedigo family members as guides, visitors might also imagine the scents and sounds that once came from a nearby cotton gin and grist and sugar mills. Children will be invited to participate in a scavenger hunt to uncover stories told by the monuments in this peaceful, beautiful place.

"Tyler County on Tour" is self-paced and can begin at any location. Tickets, which are available at each site, are \$10.00 for adults and \$4.00 for ages 6-17. Children five and under are free. They may be purchased in advance at Heritage Village, Jarrott's Pharmacy, and Sullivan's Hardware in Woodville. Proceeds will benefit the restoration of the Tyler County Court House to its original 1891 grandeur. For additional information please contact Eleanor Holderman, chairperson of the event, at 409-283-5446, or Huntley Kenesson, chairman of the Tyler County Historical Commission, at 409-283-7257.

# TYLER COUNTY ON TOUR EVENT POSTER

Tyler County Historical Commission

~Presents~

## *First Annual Tyler County On Tour*

Benefitting the restoration of Tyler County Court House to its 1891 grandeur



*Experience the Past - Enrich the Future*

**Saturday, March 22, 2014 ~ A Self-paced Driving Tour**

**9 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

**Adults-\$10 \* Ages 6-17-\$4 \* 5 & under-Free**

Please make checks payable to:

**Tyler County Courthouse P.&R., Inc.**

**Fiber Arts Building**



**Hicks Home Place**



**Pedigo Cemetery**



**W.T. Colmesneil House**



Hello County Historical Commissions:

I'm writing to invite you to attend the Tyler County On Tour event that the Tyler County Historical Commission will be hosting on Saturday, March 22, 2014. This will coincide with the first weekend of Dogwood Festival. Tyler County On Tour is a self-paced driving tour of three historical sites plus the newly constructed Fiber Arts Building at Heritage Village; docents will be at each site to share the history. Also at Heritage Village, there will be a book signing of "Just Between Us: Stories and Memories from the Texas Pines" an anthology of stories edited by Dan Utlely and Milton Jordan. The tour will be held from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., with the book signing from 1-4 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$4 for ages 6-17, and free for 5 and under, and can be purchased in advance or at any of the tour sites. Ticket and book sales will benefit the restoration of the Tyler County Courthouse.

I am attaching a news release which provides additional details, as well as a poster. If you have any questions or comments regarding the tour or tickets, please contact either Eleanor Holderman, chairperson of the Tyler County On Tour Committee, at 409-283-5446, or Huntley Kenesson, TCHC Chairperson, at 409-283-7257. Please share this email with your commission members and anyone else who is interested in preserving Texas history. Thanks, and I hope to see you there!

Wanda Smith  
Secretary, Tyler Co. Historical Commission

**DID YOU KNOW THESE FIRSTS ABOUT BEAUMONT?  
BY LINDA MCMAHEN**

First Coffee Company

As a sideline to his grocery business, Charles J. Fertitta began roasting and grinding coffee beans. Coffee sales soon were more profitable than the grocery store, and in 1925 Fertitta and R.C. Maceo founded the Texas Coffee Company in a small building on the Port Arthur Road.

First Steamboats

As early as 1848, steamboats were taking freight and passengers up and down the Neches. The “Josiah H. Bell” and the 200-foot “Florilda” were the largest steamboats based in Beaumont.

First Fire Department

A town that relies on lumber for its prosperity had better guard against fire. After a lucky shift of wind averted a potential disaster, Beaumont Fire Company No. 1 was formed in 1881. A year later, the volunteers got their first piece of equipment: a rotary-engine force pump, pulled by two mules named Kate and Roddy.

First Post Office

The tide of mail that followed the Spindletop strike forced the construction of the city’s first post office building at Pearl and Liberty Streets in 1902.

First Telephone

The first telephone number in Beaumont – No. 1 – went to the Caswell-Preston Drug Store in 1894.

First Commercial Crop

Acadian settlers first brought rice to Beaumont around 1849. By 1886, the crop was being grown in commercial quantities. In 1892, rice farmers started a real estate boom when they rushed to buy up Southeast Texas farmland. That same year, Beaumont Rice Mill – the state’s first commercial mill, and Beaumont’s second oldest continuously operated business – was opened.

First College Campus

In 1921, farsighted voters approved the creation of the second junior college in Texas. South Park Junior College first held classes on the top floor of the newly-build South Park High School in 1923.

## AREA MUSEUM UPCOMING EVENTS

### Museum of the Gulf Coast

**Step Right Up! Behind the Scenes of the Circus Big Top 1890 - 1965  
(Family Fun Day)  
Saturday, April 19, 2014  
10:00am - 2:00pm**

Have you ever wanted to run away from your responsibilities and "join the circus"? You might be surprised by how much work actually takes place behind the scenes of "The Greatest Show on Earth". Try your luck at classic carnival games, learn some tips and tricks for face-painting, and participate in many other "Circus" activities. This exhibit will include many unique objects including a trapeze bar and a head-dress worn by a performing elephant!



Museum of the Gulf Coast  
Photo Credit: museumofthegulfcoast.org



Chambers House  
Photo Credit: chambershouse.org

### Beaumont Heritage Society - Events

2nd Annual Moonlight Masquerade Ball

When: March 29, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.

Where: Chambers House Museum

Purchase your tickets now to attend this exclusive Prohibition-era masquerade ball on the grounds of the Chambers House Museum. It promises to be a magical evening! Ticket includes: valet parking, signature Prohibition-era cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, gourmet dinner, open bar, and dancing under the stars to the live music of the fabulous Night and Day Orchestra. Proceeds benefit the Beaumont Heritage Society and the John Jay French Museum. Members Only: \$100 each; Non-members: \$125 each Tickets may be purchased by sending a check to Beaumont Heritage Society, 2240 Calder Avenue, Beaumont, TX 77701 or pay online with the PayPal button to the left. Call 409-832-4010 for more information. Dress is black tie, evening wear, or period costume.

### McFaddin Ward House

**Free Lecture: Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden  
May 8 @ 6:30 pm - 9:00 pm**

The McFaddin-Ward House is excited to bring Peter Hatch to Beaumont, TX. With 38 years of experience in the restoration and care of historic landscapes, Mr. Hatch spent 35 years as the Director of Gardens and Grounds at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello estate in Virginia. While there, he was responsible for the maintenance, interpretation, and conservation of its 2,400 acre landscape. He has written a total of four books about the "revolutionary" garden, including his latest A Rich Spot of Earth.



McFaddin Ward House  
Photo Credit: mcfaddin-ward.org

**JEFFERSON  
COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
COMMISSION**

1149 Pearl Street  
Third Floor  
Beaumont, TX 77701

Tel: 409-835-8701

E-mail:

histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us  
Linda McMahan, Coordinator



*To preserve and  
promote history within  
the County.*

---

We're on the web!  
<http://co.jefferson.tx.us/>

---

Jefferson County Historical Commission  
Executive Board 2013 - 2014  
Chairman, Theresa Goodness  
Vice-Chairman, Les McMahan  
Secretary/Treasurer, Paul Prosperie  
Immediate Past Chairman, Ron Ellington

View from Hotel Beaumont  
Ballroom  
Photo Credit: Theresa  
Goodness



**“WHISPERS OF THE PAST”  
JCHC MINI-MUSEUM  
MARCH 2014**

The Jefferson County Historical Commission is sponsoring an exhibit by Bruce Hamilton housed in the Mini Museum. The exhibit, entitled “Whispers of the Past,” contains various pieces of Jefferson County History such as the wooden box which held the launching bottle for “M. V. Cape Faro” used by Mrs. John H. McGregor for the Pennsylvania Shipyards, Beaumont, January 17, 1944; souvenir cup and saucer from the Jefferson County Courthouse; and a small light tan zipper case with “Rita

Ainsworth” stamped in gold.

Thank you, Bruce, for sharing these special pieces of Jefferson County history. If you have a collection you would like to place in the JCHC Mini Museum, please contact Linda (409 835 8701 or [histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us](mailto:histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us)) for more information.