



JEFFERSON COUNTY

Historical Commission

Theresa Goodness

Chair

Jen Trenbeath

Coordinator/Secretary

Treasurer

Steven P. Lewis

1st Vice-Chair

Don Smart

2nd Vice-Chair

The Regular Meeting of the Jefferson County Historical Commission (JCHC) will be held on Wednesday, January 15, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. at the Jefferson County Historical Commission Library, 1149 Pearl Street, Third Floor, Beaumont, TX 77701

Order of Business:

1. Call to Order at 10:03 a.m.
2. Determination of Quorum. In attendance were appointees Jessie Davis, Theresa Goodness, William Gray, Brenda Jackson, Katherine Leister, Dr. Steven P. Lewis, Paul Prosperie, Don Smart, Jen Trenbeath. Also in attendance were advisors Les McMahan, Linda McMahan, Lynn Simon and Gordon Williams as well as guests Shelby Brannan, Elayna Luckey, Mr. Bailey, Mr. Jackson and Paul Clarkson.
3. Citizens' Communications.
4. Call, Receive Information and Take Appropriate Action on:

Introduction of Guests

ACTION ITEMS:

Secretary's Report – Jen Trenbeath

5. Consider and possibly approve minutes of previous meeting. A motion to approve the meeting minutes as submitted was made by Don Smart and seconded by Paul Prosperie. The motion passed unanimously.

Coordinator's Report – Jen Trenbeath

- Staff report from Coordinator. See attachment A.

Treasurer's Report – Jen Trenbeath

- Report of Expenditures and remaining Budget. See attachment B.

Chair's Report – Chair Theresa Goodness

6. Discuss, consider, and possibly approve hosting at the Tyrrell Historical Library a regional cemetery preservation training workshop on February 12, 2025, in conjunction with the Texas Historical Commission and the Tyrrell Historical

Library Association. A motion was made by William Gray and seconded by Jessie Davis. The motion passed unanimously. A discussion was held about the possibility of an ongoing history harvest via online portal, and Elayna Luckey with the City of Beaumont offered to incorporate that into a City website if it is something the JCHC is able to create.

Committee Reports

Historical Preservation:

7. Discuss status of Gilbert Building in downtown Beaumont following a fire. Elayna Luckey with the City of Beaumont reported that no new progress had been made on the stabilizing of the Gilbert Building.

Beaumont Historical Landmark Commission – Theresa Goodness

- Report on Applications for Certificates of Appropriateness considered by Beaumont Landmark Commission. Three requests were considered at the January meeting, one for a Certificate of Demolition and two for Certificates of Appropriateness.

Tyrrell Historical Library – Steven P. Lewis

- Report on activities of the Tyrrell Historical Library Association. See Attachment C.

Photos of Historic Buildings - Steven P. Lewis

- Report on historic building photography project. See Attachment C.

Sam Houston State Library – Don Smart

- Report on research projects conducted at the state library. Don reports that there was a good turn out for the Holiday open house at the Sam Houston State Library.

Caroline Gilbert Hinchee House Restoration – Theresa Goodness

- Report on status of restoration of the historic home. See Attachment D.

Historical Markers and Research – Kate Hambright

8. Discuss, consider, and possibly approve sponsoring a Texas Historical Commission (THC) marker application for Matchett Herring Coe (1907-1999), a local sculptor whose body of work includes friezes on the historic Jefferson County Courthouse, on the First National Bank Building in downtown Beaumont, and other important works. The cost is \$100 for the application fee and \$2300 for the marker, if approved by THC. A motion to approve was made by Katherine Leister and seconded by William Gray. The motion passed unanimously.
 - Report on Status of Marker Applications/Dedications. See Attachment E.
 - Report on Marker Survey/Maintenance. See Attachment E.

History Appreciation:

- Report on current Courthouse Mini-museum exhibits and discussion of proposed exhibits. – Jen Trenbeath. New exhibits are requested. Steven Lewis offered to create an exhibit of Courthouse postcards to be installed in February.
- Report on updates to JCHC website and social media. – Jen Trenbeath. Nothing to report.
- Report on history articles in newspaper and events at the Stark House Museum. – Katherine Leister. No new articles have been published in the Beaumont Enterprise, however Katherine is working on one that will perhaps run at the end of the month. The Stark House is closed for planned restoration work and will reopen at the end of February. The Stark Museum of Art is holding an exhibit of children's literature featuring pieces from the Stark House collection that belonged to H.J. Stark during his childhood.
- Report on Coastal History. – Jay Camp. No report submitted.

Archeology Committee – Brenda Jackson

- Report on activities that promote the preservation of archeological resources. Brenda attended the Ice House Museum's exhibit "The Dog People of Caneyhead" and reported that it was extremely interesting.

Cemetery Committee – Paul Prosperie

9. Discuss, consider, and possibly approve conducting an abbreviated Magnolia Cemetery Tour on March 20, 2025, in conjunction with Beaumont Heritage Society's Happy Hour programming. A motion was made by Paul Prosperie and seconded by Don Smart. The motion passed unanimously. The tour will be a rotating 30 minute walking tour.
- Report on pending applications for Historic Texas Cemetery Designations, cemetery surveys, clean-up days or other similar activities. See Attachment E.

Courthouse and Sub-Courthouse Oversight Committee – Jen Trenbeath

- Report on status of Jefferson County Courthouse or Sub-Courthouse buildings. See Attachment F.

Certified Local Government (CLG) – Theresa Goodness

- Report on status of online GIS map of our historic resources survey data.

Other Business

10. Discussion on any other item not on agenda without taking action. Receive reports on matters of community interest from elected officials, staff, or members without taking action.

Coordinator's Report

Jefferson County holds a shredding day for disposition of records which are no longer needed in January and a large portion of my time in the office has been spent assisting the HR department on creating a Records Management policy that is compliant with the retention schedule issued by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission on behalf of the Texas Legislature. Theresa and I have also been compiling information for our annual reports and will meet at the end of the month to complete those reports.

Attachment B

JCHC Budget Report
January 15, 2025

The JCHC Budget year runs from October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025. Of the \$13,400 budgeted, \$631.00 has been spent, with a remainder of Expenditures so far include \$122.00 for postage for calendars. Upcoming anticipated expenses will be registration fees for the Real Places Conference in the amount of \$985.00

Meeting Notes 15 January 2025

Tyrrell Historical Library: There are still 549 images on the Weber Collection online (up from 547) but the changes that have been entered by David Greer **still** have not been added. I am debating whether I want to go through the entire collection again and note the changes that still have not been made.

Historic Buildings Photography: On 25 August I took a final photograph of the AT&T Building site, completing the demolition of the building. However, on 8 January, I revisited the site to see if any new construction has begun. It still is just a vacant lot.

I had not photographed the Gilbert Building since 18 November, 2024. The building is completely gutted and the walls are supported by scaffolding up to the second floor. The Beaumont City Council has given Tom Flanagan until March to come up with an engineering plan for the building. I photographed the building on Monday and it looks pretty much the same as the last time I was there.

The only HUD house construction I had found was at 3435 Corley Street, which is now complete. However, I located a second house at 3235 Corley. I photographed it yesterday as the contractor was picking up some tools. The house is complete so I figured that I would not have any HUD houses to photograph for now. However, the contractor told me that he was getting ready to start a house on Atlanta. I found stacks of pilings and other building materials at 2785 Atlanta. To date, I have photographed 689 HUD houses: 607 on pilings, 74 on slabs, and 8 concrete houses on slabs.

The cleared lot on the corner of Adams and Highland still has no activity.

A further note on the collection of 155 negatives of the Cribbs family of Beaumont. The seller found that she had another 1923 flood photograph print and included it with the negatives. The photo shows four children in knee deep water. Two of the children are holding a wash tub with a small girl in it. The fourth child is a boy in a wash tub behind them. The back is labelled "A speed Race. Mary Louise & Willie." The seller indicated that the Willie in the photograph was Uncle Willie, a television celebrity on KFDM television from the 1950s. Searching Find a Grave, I found that Mary Louise *Choate* Cribbs was born on 4 Jan 1921 and died on 12 Nov 1992 at the age of 71. She is buried at Magnolia Cemetery. Her husband was Clarence Haden Cribbs Sr (1918-1999). They had a son Clarence Haden "Sonny" Cribbs Jr (1938-2017). No luck on looking for Willie Cribbs. The photograph and the Find a Grave document are being passed around.

I left messages at KFDM television station and on the third call, I received an answer from Gina Hinson. She said that Uncle Willie's surname was Hammond. No success on Find-a-Grave. She also revealed that he had a daughter named Julie Hammond.

My maternal grandfather, Morris Barrilleaux, had a boatyard on Gulf States Road on the cutoff meander of the Neches River. In October 1970, a WWII minesweeper was being salvaged at the property next to my grandfather's yard. The ship broke loose from its moorings and wound up across the meander. My grandfather hooked his tugboat to the ship and moved it back to its mooring. My brother and I decided that it would be exciting to explore the relic ship. Most of the superstructure had been removed to salvage the diesel motor. I scavenged 202 blueprints, a document on the Mark 9 Depth Charge, and the instructions for damage control. I have been holding on to these items for over 50 years and would like to find a home for them. The depth charge document, the photographs of the minesweeper and of the Reserve Fleet are circulating.

I contacted the World War II Museum in New Orleans but they were not interested in the items. However, they did send me a link to a minesweeper museum in Omaha, Nebraska. I emailed them

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but never got a reply. Recently, I found that there is a minesweeper museum in Stockton, California. I will try communicating with them.

I have been curious about the name of the ship. Paul works around the Reserve Fleet office but claims that the people that work there will be of no help. On November 14, Brian Hill spoke at the McFaddin-Ward about the Reserve Fleet and the Maritime Administration. I talked to him before his talk and presented him information about the minesweeper and the Reserve Fleet. He said he would give it to Father Sinclair K. Oubre at the Seafarers Center in Port Arthur. I left him voice mails and he has not responded. Monday, I talked to Father Sinclair, he had not heard from Mr. Hill. I sent him the information on the minesweeper by email yesterday.

Back in May 2024, I started photographing an area that the Port of Beaumont is developing as a community center. A Buda bumping post was located at the corner of Blanchette (Austin) and Park. The 1904 Sanborn map shows that the Beaumont Ice, Light, and Refrigerating Company with a railroad siding ending next to the building. Les has convinced the Port to save the device and he is certain that it is the oldest of this type of RR device in Beaumont. Which made me wonder how many bumping posts are there in the city. So, I started a search for these end of track devices that are extant in Beaumont. I found the first one when I did not have my camera but when I had the camera, I could not remember its location. I drove around looking for it on several days. I rediscovered it when I was coming back from a doctor's appointment. There are three railyards in Beaumont. I found four at the KCS yard near Lamar. I found four at the Santa Fe railyard. One of the devices has its date of manufacture as August 2023. The largest railyard is the Union Pacific facility at Lindbergh Drive. There were no bumping posts there, only a pile of rocks at the end of a track. Photographs are circulating.

Report of Theresa Goodness, Board Member of Hinchee House Restoration Project January 15, 2025

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A Hinchee House Restoration Project Board meeting is scheduled for Saturday, January 18, 2025.
Grants are being sought to build a temporary exterior wall where the Solarium has been lost.
A second annual bingo fundraiser is in the planning phase and is tentatively scheduled for April 26, 2025.
Location to be determined.
The windows are still being repaired and installed, as well as the doors on the second floor.
Exterior security cameras have been installed.

New Marker Filings

We anticipate hearing from the THC on approval/rejection of three undertold marker applications and narratives filed from Jefferson County during this fall's application period, two locally and the third by an individual in Austin:

1. 1943 Beaumont Race Riot, marker sponsor Jen Trenbeath, with collaboration and research by Gordon S. Williams
2. Atakapa Community, Port Neches, 1700s-1800s, marker sponsor Professor Ted Campbell
3. Sadie Patillo, Patillo v. State, Texas Separate Coach Laws (Texas' First Bus Desegregation Case), marker sponsor Vince Leibowitz of Austin

Approved undertold applicants will receive a large 27" x 42" historical marker, free of charge.

We will next turn our attention to the regular (paid) historical marker filing application cycle, which runs from March 15 – May 15. A proposed marker application for nationally renowned Beaumont sculptor Matchett Herring Coe to potentially be sponsored by the JCHC and narrative to be written by marker chair Kate Hambright will be considered for approval by the JCHC today.

Report on Status of Current Marker Applications/Dedications

We have received both the HTC medallion/plaque for Pear Orchard Cemetery¹ and subject marker plaque for George O'Brien Millard and will install each marker when the weather is somewhat warmer/more cooperative.

As noted in my last report, Blanchette Cemetery, located in the Pear Orchard community, has received its Historic Texas Cemetery designation. The HTC declaration was filed with the Jefferson County Clerk's office on November 20, 2024 and returned to the THC that same date. An application for HTC medallion and plaque has been filed with the THC.

The draft inscription for Sprott Hospital, our second Undertold Marker application approved in November 2023 has been approved by our marker sponsor and returned to the THC for further processing.

We are awaiting the casting of the HTC plaque for Magnolia Cemetery, the RTHL marker for the Temple to the Brave, and subject marker for Pandit Mehar Chand and Sprott Hospital. Originally, we had expected delivery dates from the foundry for each of these markers in 2025. However, the THC has now entered into contract negotiations with their marker provider, and as a result, has not submitted some of our approved inscriptions for casting until negotiations are complete. Particularly disappointing is the lengthy wait time on the marker for Pandit Mehar Chand, our first undertold marker subject ever submitted – and approved – from Jefferson County in November 2023.

The THC currently contracts the casting of its markers with a foundry located in Indiana. Current production time for historical markers is taking nine to 15 months. It is important to note that In addition to the work it performs for the THC producing markers for all 254 Texas counties – sometimes multiple markers per county – the foundry also provides metalwork for business/personal customers nationwide on a first come,

¹ The inscription for this marker was approved in September 2024. The director of the THC received multiple calls from individuals advocating for its immediate production. Callers cited an upcoming "anniversary of the cemetery" as their reason for desiring the marker to be cast as soon as possible. In light of the urgency stressed to the THC director by members of this group, he then advised the THC marker department to submit a rush order to the foundry.

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first served basis. Marker sponsors are counseled to have patience during this lengthy process.

Potential New Marker Requests

We are still hoping to file a Historical Texas Cemetery designation application for Blessed Sacrament Cemetery, a/k/a Haven of Rest, in the Pear Orchard neighborhood. This cemetery adjoins the Pear Orchard Cemetery.

Father Tommy Williams of Fellowship Baptist Church, 1175 Isla Street, has reached out about a historical marker, as has Carolyn Guidry of Blessed Sacrament Church, 780 Porter Street. Each have been sent information but have not followed up during the holiday season.

NRHP Nomination

The Temple to the Brave National Register nomination, which was approved by the THC its State Board of Review meeting in Galveston one year ago on January 13, 2024, is currently at a standstill. It is unknown when this process will be completed and there has been no reply to my latest query on the subject this week to the THC.

Marker Relocation updates:

Site of Old Aurora: This marker remains in storage in Commissioner Sinegal's Pct. 3 warehouse for the duration of an anticipated six months-long improvement project along Woodworth Boulevard between Procter Street and Lakeshore Drive. The City of Port Arthur is aware of this project. They have not responded to queries for updates on this project.

Miscellaneous Marker Matters:

The damaged Port Arthur Refinery Marker near the Valero plant on Highway 87 has now been repaired by Triangle Metals and is currently in storage at the Pct. 3 warehouse pending its reinstallation. We first plan to refinish the marker at the warehouse once the temperatures warm up sufficiently.

Both the Historic Landmark Commission and City Council have now approved the proposed installation of each of the Nancy Tevis and Beaumont Lumber Mill City of the 19th Century replacement historical markers at the Event Centre. (These markers, in storage for the past five years, replace the markers that were washed away during Tropical Storm Harvey in 2017.) We will next file the marker relocation requests with the THC for their final approval prior to installation at the Event Centre.

Other items of interest:

Beaumont Police Department:

Thanks to everyone who came out to Evergreen Cemetery on Wednesday, December 11, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. for the Beaumont Police Department's dedication of a memorial plaque in memory of Special Police Officer George Frederick, who was killed in the line of duty in May 1902. He was one of Beaumont's first known Black police officers. The Beaumont City Council paid for Frederick's funeral in 1902 but the site of his burial is unknown. Frederick's surviving spouse was later buried at Evergreen Cemetery. Sandra Wilturner and the Evergreen Cemetery Association graciously donated a plot of land so that a plaque to George Frederick's memory could be placed in the same cemetery as his deceased wife's grave. A shield for Frederick was previously added to the Beaumont Police Department's Officers' Memorial on College Street and his name has also been added to the State of Texas and national police officer memorials. Operation Blue Remembrance provided the memorial plaque being installed at Evergreen and Beaumont Fire Chief Earl White provided funding for its frame.

Attachment F

Courthouse Oversight Committee

Precinct 1 Commissioner, Brandon Willis has started following up with the Risk Management department to assess the status of the claim for the roof damage which occurred in August, 2024. We will be kept up to date on all the progress as it is discussed so permit applications can be made.

Attachment G

Certified Local Government Committee Report
January 15, 2015

- Report on status of online GIS map of our historic resources survey data.

The County's GIS Dept. has been working on creating an online GIS map from our historical resources survey. The goal is to have a map with layers showing the surveyed properties in the county, along with the status, i.e. Possesses Integrity, Intensive Survey Needed, etc. The map should be completed soon and posted on our website.