

Jefferson County Historical Commission
Bimonthly Meeting
Thursday, September 25, 2014
Ben J. Rogers Regional Visitors Center
Beaumont, Texas

Call to Order – Due to Chair Theresa Goodness returning from meetings in New Orleans, Vice Chair Les McMahan in meetings with the City of Port Arthur, Historical Commission Coordinator Linda McMahan called the meeting to order. In attendance were Bill Cummings, Brenda Jackson, Bruce Hamilton, Don Smart, Jef Russell, Jimmy Sparks, Paul Prosperie, Steven Lewis, and visitors Sarah Bellian and Bill Peavy.

Consideration of Minutes of Previous Meeting – A motion was made by Bill Cummings and seconded by Don Smart to accept the minutes as printed. The motion passed unanimously.

Budget Report – The Budget Report was shared by Linda McMahan. The Budget Year ends on September 30, 2014. There was money remaining in the 2013-2014 Budget. This year there was no money spent on Dick Dowling Days, travel or historical markers. Jefferson County's 2014-2015 Budget was approved and the JCHC will have the same amount next year. We received a \$100 memorial for Paul Tanner and Mildred Wright and this will be spent on books for the Library.

Coordinator's Report – Linda McMahan

- An invitation was presented to and accepted by Sarah Bellian (Museum of the Gulf Coast) for membership in the Jefferson County Historical Commission. A motion to accept Sarah was made by Jef Russell and seconded by Paul Prosperie. The motion was passed unanimously.
- The basement and first floor offices have been relocated due to work on the air-conditioning and fire alarm system. This work is being done two floors at a time. The County applied for and received an emergency grant for \$450,000 from the Texas Historical Commission which will pay for part of the work. The work will begin around the first of the year. The mini-museum will close after the present exhibit comes down on November 17th and will not reopen until the first floor work is completed and reopened to the public.

- Paul Prosperie will be the JCHC representative to a Regional County Historical Commission meeting to be held Saturday, September 27th in Liberty. These meetings are held several times a year and are a good way to learn what is going on in other Historical Commissions across the region.
- Saturday and Sunday, October 25 and 26, the Liberty CHC will host a “Whispers From the Past” Tours in the Liberty Catholic Cemetery. This is the second year to hold these tours. Those that attended last year are looking forward to additions that have been made in the scripts for this year.
- If you would like to own an eight foot by eight foot cardboard Jefferson County Courthouse, go by Parkdale Mall and purchase a \$2 ticket for a drawing for ownership the last weekend in September. The money is being raised to help C.A.S.A. in work they do with our foster and abused children of the county. It is a worthy cause and you may purchase as many tickets as you would like.
- At the July meeting, it was shared that Linda would be meeting with Judy Linsely concerning Bill Quick’s book on Sabine Pass. Judy said there are photographs that have been used in the book that need to be identified as to ownership and also additional pictures need to be added. It was suggested that additional chapters might be included also. Printing was discussed. Reviewing what is housed at Liberty is needed. We cannot get into the Liberty Library until spring at the earliest to inventory Bill’s papers and photographs, if we are allowed to do so. Sarah Bellian from the Museum of the Gulf Coast has already sent us a list of what is housed there of Bill’s papers and photographs and also what other items they have concerning Sabine Pass. It was discussed that it might be a good idea to form a committee and let them come back to the JCHC with some suggestions as how to handle this. Bruce Hamilton volunteered to chair that committee.
- Linda will be attending the East Texas Historical Association Fall 2014 Meeting October 2 – 4 at the Baker Pattillo Student Center at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. One of the sessions she is interested in will be with Mary L. Scheer from Lamar University presiding. The Portia Gordon Student Series Session: Southeast Texas in War, Oil and Peace will be presented by three Lamar students.

Committee Reports

Archeology Committee – Brenda Jackson - Each year the Texas Historical Commission, along with the Jefferson County Historical Commission, celebrate October as Texas Archeology Month. It is also appropriate that this is the month we are celebrating

the life of former member Paul Tanner who passed away in January of this year. For many years, Paul served as the Archeology Chair for the JCHC.

Paul, an amateur scientist, helped preserve Texas Prehistory. His records and collection of artifacts from McFaddin Beach are permanently curated at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory in Austin. Some of his personal finds were also donated to the Jefferson County Historical Commission archives.

Brenda Jackson has been inventorying some information and artifacts from Paul's estate. We are very appreciative of her expertise. She has put together an excellent exhibit that will be in the JCHC Mini-Museum from early September through November 15. This will be the last exhibit in the Mini-Museum because after early 2015, the public will no longer have access to that area of the Courthouse due to interior renovations.

Cemetery Committee – Marianne Petry – No report

Certified Local Government – Ramona Hutchinson – No report

Courthouse Oversight Committee – Linda shared that an application had been made and accepted to THC for emergency funding for help with expenses in installing a sprinkler system and fire alarm system. The work will begin after the first of the year.

History Appreciation / Film Commission – Jef Russell – No report

History Preservation – Charlotte Holliman – No report

Historical Markers – Les McMahan – The JCHC has been approached for information on a possible new marker in Port Arthur: Sacred Heart Catholic School. Also, the first round of the inscription for the West Beulah Missionary Baptist Church in Beaumont has been received. We have been working with this church for several years.

Website Committee – Bill Cummings – No committee meetings since last JCHC meeting. We have however made significant progress. Theresa Goodness worked with the MIS department to obtain a preliminary implementation of the committee's website design structure. The nine high-level screens have been laid out as defined and the links to external websites have been established. There are still some tweaks to be made to structure, but we are now in a position to begin populating internal content.

Some of that content is already available (for instance, the JCHC Minutes and FORUMs). Other content, like the General Land Office Maps, membership list need only to be

reformatted or converted to pdf files. Much of the information relating to JCHC markers needs to be collected and connected. THC has provided scanned versions of our marker narratives, so that is a big step that has been done. Much of the textual content and lists remains to be proofed and formatted and, in some cases, appropriate images need to be found and inserted.

Once the website structure is finalized and some basic internal content is included, we should be able to go live with the website and add remaining content incrementally.

Unfinished Business / New Business -

Bruce Hamilton reported that he is helping Mildred Wright's family with her estate and the distribution of her papers. Some of her papers will be donated to the JCHC. Bruce reminded everyone to please give serious thought to their estate planning and the distribution of any collections they may have.

Sarah Bellian shared she has been contacted by City of Port Arthur in regards to structures that are flagged for demolition. She has been asked to make suggestions as to any that are of historic significance. Several members said they would help. Sarah also shared about a project the museum is undertaking in 2015 in regards to the Viet Nam war. She is looking for veterans who would take part in being interviewed for oral histories concerning their involvement in the war.

Linda McMahan asked Don Smart to share about his interest in area baseball in the early and mid-twentieth century. Several years ago Don exhibited some of his collection in the JCHC Mini-Museum.

Linda asked Bruce to introduce William Peavy from Houston. William is very interested in Jefferson County history.

Adjournment – It was announced that the next meeting will be held Thursday, December 11, 2014 at Noon. Because of relocation of several basement and first floor departments due to renovations starting in the near future, the December meeting will be held at the Ben J. Rogers Regional Visitors Center. This news was well-received because of popcorn snacks provided by the Visitor Center. The meeting was adjourned.