

JCHC JOURNAL

J E F F E R S O N C O U N T Y H I S T O R I C A L C O M M I S S I O N

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- March 16, 2022
3:00pm
- April 12, 2022
3:00pm - Special Meeting see pg.2
- May 18, 2022
3:00pm
- July 20, 2022
3:00pm
- September 21, 2022 3:00pm
- November 16, 2022 3:00pm

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SABINE PASS

BY KATE HAMBRIGHT, LES MCMAHEN AND THERESA GOODNESS

The City of The Pass, developed by Dr. Stephen H. Everett, John Bevil, and son John R. Bevil of Jasper County, was laid out in April 1839 in the general area of the Sabine Pass Historic Battleground Park. The venture proved to be unsuccessful as few of the 2,500 lots were sold.

The City of Sabine, founded by Sam Houston's Sabine City Company in 1839 in the main developed area of present-day Sabine Pass, had its first doc-

umented land sale in April 1839, and became successful. At least 2,060



Sabine, TX T&NO Depot
Photo from Port Arthur Library History Center Collection

platted lots were eventually sold for residential and commercial purposes.

In July 1856, Sabine City's residents petitioned the State for an act of incorporation and asked that the name of Sabine City be changed to Augusta (an unincorporated settlement of the same name also existed in Houston County). The Act to incorporate as Augusta was passed by the State Legislature on September 1, 1856. The Act included a charter for the city, defining its boundaries and providing for its government.

(continued on page 2)

A NOTE FROM THE COORDINATOR

J E N T R E N B E A T H

As a multi-generational, life-long Beaumont, I was fortunate to be raised on local history. Preservation has always mattered, but I, like many didn't know how to be involved. In 2016 I owned an antique store and became friends with Bruce Hamilton, past chair of

JCHC. He invited me to join the JCHC and since then, I've had no problem finding ways to be involved. I never imagined that my path would lead me to a role as Coordinator, but I'm so thankful that it did. I am following a long line of

dynamic coordinators, and Linda McMahan left big shoes to fill, but I'm excited to take on the challenge. I am looking forward to new opportunities to be involved in preserving our local history, and getting to know the preservation community better.

HISTORY OF SABINE PASS, CONTINUED

Several advertisements in the Galveston Weekly News during November 1857 and October 1858 indicate a shipyard and a contract mail carrier were using the Augusta name at that time. One of the advertisements parenthetically referred to the town or the area as Sabine Pass.

Presumably at the request of the citizens of Augusta, the State Legislature passed an Act on February 14, 1860, decreeing that the town would henceforth be known as Sabine Pass and providing for its incorporation under the provisions of a general incorporation Act passed by the State Legislature on January 27, 1858. On August 31, 1860, the Jefferson County Commissioners Court received a petition from the qualified electors of Sabine Pass to call an election to vote on the incorporation and re-organization of the city as Sabine Pass.



**Texas Historical Marker At
Fort Manassett in Sabine
Pass**

The election to decide the issue was ordered by the Chief Justice of Jefferson County to be held on December 11, 1860. There is no evidence that the election was held as called, but Commissioners Court records indicate that the Sabine Pass electors voted favorably to incorporate in an election held on June 15, 1861, and by inference would have adopted a charter provided by the general incorporation Act of January 27, 1858.

Photo from Tyrrell Historical
Library Archives

On May 8, 1897, the Kountze Brothers' Sabine Land and Improvement Company filed their plat for Division "A" of the Townsite of Sabine Pass, which was in the general area where the City of The Pass had been originally laid out. The Texas & New Orleans Railroad had a depot there named "SABINE". Eventually, Divisions "B" and "C", lying between Division "A" and the City of Sabine Pass, were proposed but were later cancelled. The new townsite was only marginally successful and developed more as an industrial and shipping area, with only a minimal number of residential units, and eventually morphed into being a part of the City of Sabine Pass. The area comprising Sabine Pass, plus additional land and Gulf of Mexico area, was annexed by the City of Port Arthur in 1978.

JCHC HISTORICAL RESOURCE SURVEY

The Jefferson County Historical Commission is working on an exciting project thanks to a grant from the Texas Historical Commission and the National Park Service. Surveyors with expertise in architectural history will photograph and map buildings, structures, objects, and sites that were built at least 45 years ago. The

survey boundaries will encompass most of the County, excluding the city limits of Beaumont and Port Arthur. A series of public meetings will be included as part of the project. A preservation plan also will be developed within the scope of the project. A public meeting to discuss the project will be held on April 12, 2022

at the Conference Room in the Jerry Ware Terminal of the Jack Brooks Regional Airport. To receive updates on this project, please visit the following link: <https://forms.gle/ygJaZpVJDjrLPik9> or email Emily Payne at epayne@hhminc.com.



**Highway in Jefferson
County**

Photo from Tyrrell Historical
Library Archives

UPCOMING EVENTS

Keep your calendars open for this exciting event brought to our area by the Spindletop-Gladys City Boomtown Museum. The **Country Life Festival**, will feature soap making, but-tery churning, archery, vendors and live music and is to be held on April 9th on the museum grounds at 5550 Jimmy Simmons Drive, Beaumont, TX



"These pivotal years mark the transition from Spanish and Mexican sovereignty to independent Texas"

SAN JACINTO SYMPOSIUM

Presented by The Texas State Historical Association and the San Jacinto Battle-ground Association. The annual Battle of San Jacinto Symposium is the preeminent conference on the Texas Revolution era.

The objective is to promote public awareness and scholarship on the Mexican national era in Texas (1821-

1835), the Texas Revolution (1835-1836), the Battle of San Jacinto (1836), and the Republic of Texas (1836-1845). These pivotal years mark the transition from Spanish and Mexican sovereignty to independent Texas and annexation to the United States.

- excerpt from TSHA and the San Jacinto Battleground Association

The symposium will be held inside The Wilhelmina Cullen Robertson Auditorium

201 Girard Street, Houston Texas

Visitor Parking available in the onsite garage for \$8.

www.sanjacintosymposium.com



MUSIC IN THE GARDENS

The McFaddin Ward House will host a night of live music on March 31st from 5pm to 7pm, held on the museum grounds.

For more information, visit www.mcfaddin-ward.org/event/music-in-the-gardens-2/

MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

BY THERESA GOODNESS

In February 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation declaring the Week of March 8, 1980, as National Women's History Week following lobbying by the National Women's History Project. Subsequent presidents observed this week in March each year until 1987 when Congress passed a law declaring March as Women's History Month.

In Texas, an important project of the Texas State Historical Association is underway to create the Handbook of Texas Women. The goal is to update the nation's oldest and most suc-



Marker in French Family Cemetery

Photo Credit: The Beaumont Heritage Society

cessful digital state encyclopedia, The Handbook of Texas, with the stories of Texas Women making Texas History.

Throughout Jefferson County's history women have been equal contributors in the events that shaped our stories. From the earliest pre-historic times, women have been cultural influencers and willing par-

ticipants in historic events. From early Native American tribes that constructed the burial mounds at Grigsby's Bluff in present day Port Neches to current female leaders in local government, industry and education, women have worked to improve the lives of their families and neighbors.

Pioneering women like Sally Munson French worked alongside male family members to establish farms, tanneries and trading posts. They experienced the profound loss of children to illness, accidents and privation. Despite enduring many hardships women have been at the forefront of pivotal changes. Women like Nancy Nixon Tevis, who with her husband, Noah Tevis, received a land grant from the Mexican Government in 1835. After her husband's death Nancy Tevis had to fight for her land rights, appealing for help to Republic of Texas President Sam Houston, all while defending her profitable ferry service across the Neches River. In fact, Nancy Tevis was the first person to file a petition in a court of record (Liberty County) concerning an estate in present day Jefferson County asking the court to appoint her as Executrix of her husband's estate. Thanks to her donation of land, combined with that of two other pioneering families, the City of Beaumont was founded on the banks of the Neches River in 1837.

Native daughters of Jefferson County have made notable contributions in sports and music. One of the greatest female athletes of all time, Babe Didrikson, was born in Port Arthur in 1911. Babe won two gold medals in track and field at the 1932 Olympics. She excelled in many sports includ-



Babe Didrikson Zaharias

Photo Credit: The Babe Didrikson Zaharias Collection

ing baseball, bowling, tennis, and golf. She was inducted into the LPGA Hall of Fame in 1951 and was voted the Women Athlete of the Twentieth Century by the Associated Press in 1999.

Another Port Arthur native, Janis Joplin, the first female superstar in American rock music, left a lasting impact on our Texas musical heritage despite a tragic early death from a drug overdose shortly after attending her ten-year high school reunion at Thomas Jefferson High School. Governor Ann Richards issued a Proclamation declaring January 19, 1993, Janis Joplin Day in Texas and calling her "a true Texas original". Today Joplin is a blues icon revered by fans all over the world.

Other women like Beaumont native, Caroline Gilbert Hinchee, made fortunes in the oil business. Due to her family's independent oil company, The Gilbert Company, Hinchee

became a wealthy member of Beaumont's elite society, prominent in cultural and social events. She studied art at Waco Female College, graduating in 1882, and taught art in Beaumont for a number of years and chaired the art department of Beaumont's early fairs held at Nancy Tevis Market on Main Street. Caroline Gilbert married Martin Luther Hincee in 1900, a few years prior to her family making a fortune when the Sour Lake oilfield was found in 1903. Caroline desired to build a beautiful home on Park Street and enlisted the services of architect Henry C. Maurer. The home, completed in 1906, was a beautiful example of a modern home at the turn of the century, filled with Hincee's hand-painted stencils and murals, stained-glass windows, a music room with a pipe organ, and a glass conservatory. The home has sadly suffered much neglect and storm damage over the years; but a non-profit organization, the Caroline Gilbert Hincee House Project, has stepped up to make every effort to restore the home.

Countless women have contributed to Jefferson County's history; mothers, teachers, elected officials, war-time ship builders, business owners, refinery workers, and more. And let us not forget the women who have labored tirelessly in historic preservation to document these achievements, archive our records and books, save our historic buildings, and to research our history so that we can all benefit from knowing our past. Women's History month is a chance to recognize all of these untold stories and to bring focus before some of the stories are lost.



Pipe Organ in the music room of the Hincee House

Photo Credit: The Caroline Gilbert Hincee House

GET INVOLVED

Jefferson County's vibrant historic preservation community has many opportunities to get involved and be a part of preserving our county's history!

- Attend a meeting of the Jefferson County Historical Commission— we have committees covering a variety of interests and our members are involved with other organizations— if you don't know where to start, start with us!

- Volunteer as a docent at the McFaddin-Ward House

For more information Visit
www.mcfaddin-ward.org/about/get-involved

- Attend a city council meeting. Our community leaders need to know that people care about historic preservation , our voice can directly impact the future of our community.

- Spindletop-Gladys City Boomtown Museum can always use volunteers. To sign up or for more information Call 409-880-1750 or visit www.lamar.edu/forms/spindletop/vollunteer.html

GET IN TOUCH

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Beaumont, TX 77701

409-835-8701

www.facebook.com/FRIENDSofJCHC