

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

- May 15, 2024
- July 17, 2024
- September 18, 2024
- November 20, 2024

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PRESERVATION MONTH

MAY 2024

The National Trust for Historic Preservation celebrates Preservation Month each year in May. While the official theme for 2024 is “People Saving Places”, we wanted to give insight to what preservation means to the JCHC.

The mission of the JCHC is to “preserve, protect and promote the rich history of Jefferson County”. What an umbrella term for all things history! Within that broad scope, here is what preservation means to the JCHC.

“SO MUCH OF OUR LOCAL HISTORY HAS BEEN LOST THAT IT’S IMPERATIVE TO MAINTAIN, EXPLORE, AND EXTRAPOLATE WHAT LITTLE WE DO HAVE.”- MATT REEVES

The JCHC is immensely proud of the recent completion of the Historic Resources Survey and Preservation Plan for Jefferson County. The completion of this survey means that Jefferson County, for the first time ever, has a comprehensive resource to reference for historic buildings, grounds, structures and more. The JCHC will be able to use this document to plan future preservation projects, and the public will be able to use it for research or as a reference when planning their own projects. The survey is available on the JCHC website at https://.co.jefferson.tx.us / Historical_Commission/JeffCo_Govt.html under “Historical Resources Survey, Final” or by scanning the QR code on the following page. The Survey contains exceptional information about Jefferson County, our agrarian past, and those who came before us.

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Historic Resources Surveys are commonly used to identify properties and districts that are potentially eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, structures that are potentially eligible for nomination as Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks, and properties that could be impacted by large-scale development and industrial projects. A special thanks is due to the Texas Historical Commission for their guidance through the process and to the Jefferson County Commissioners Court for their support of the JCHC's application to the HIM-ESHPF grant program, which ultimately allowed this project to come to fruition.

PRESERVATION HELPS TO ENSURE THAT STRUCTURES, EVENTS AND STORIES ARE SAVED, NOT SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY'RE OLD, BUT BECAUSE THEY TELL IMPORTANT STORIES FROM OUR PAST THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE BE LOST. -JUDY LINSLEY



Scan the QR code to view the
Historic Resources Survey

Members of the JCHC recently began a clean-up project at Lincoln Rest Cemetery, originally known as Lincoln Burial Park. In the nearly ten years that have passed since the last clean-up attempt, the tall trees, blackberry vines and even poison ivy have made themselves at home in the cemetery. In 2015, three acres of the nearly 11 acre total area were cleaned by Jefferson County Precinct 4 workers, under the direction and guidance of Commissioner Bo Alfred. Earlier this year, with careful



L-R: Theresa Goodness, Don Smart, Paul Prosperie, Kate Hambright.

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guidance from the Texas Historical Commission's Cemetery Division, six JCHC appointees donned their snake boots and work gloves and went to work.

It is important to note that cemetery cleanup projects involve research, planning and strategy before the cleanup can ever begin. The Texas Historical Commission has guidelines for cleanups, and heavy equipment is nearly always discouraged until the end. In this instance, because the research and identification of the burials on this portion of the cemetery had been completed before the previous cleanup, appointees were able to employ heavy equipment from the outset, something that will not be permissible when the project reaches the previously un-cleared areas.



Bruce Hamilton provided a bush hog, allowing the project to move much faster than cemetery cleanups typically can.

Much work still needs to be done, but the JCHC is encouraged that the initial preservation goal of re-clearing the three previously-cleared acres is attainable. When the first goalpost is reached, the Cemetery Committee will regroup and consider their path forward to sensitively address the condition of the remaining over 7 acres of the cemetery.

Preservation methods often overlap, and Lincoln Rest was no different. After the workday, a RediscoveringSETX.com post talked about the cleanup effort and subsequent conversation with readers brought to light that the popular, crowdsourced website, "findagrave.com" lists 341 burials for Lincoln Rest! With much effort on the part of the reader and JCHC appointees, death certificates were collected, and we can now say with certainty that many of the 341 interred people are not at Lincoln Rest. More will be written in the future as we work to identify where the final resting places truly are of many of

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these people, but the preservation work is ongoing, both physically at the cemetery, and in behind-the-scenes research.

"PRESERVATION MEANS MORE THAN SAVING BUILDINGS TO ME. IT MEANS DOCUMENTING AND TELLING THE STORIES OF THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS WHO HAVE MADE AN IMPACT BOTH LARGE AND SMALL ON OUR HISTORY, SHAPING OUR STATE IN MYRIAD WAYS THAT OFTEN ARE UNKNOWN OR HAVE BEEN FORGOTTEN."

THERESA GOODNESS

The Texas Historical Commission Markers Program is an excellent way to document and tell the stories of those who shaped Texas. In Jefferson County, the JCHC Markers Committee, led by Marker Chair Kate Hambricht is the first step in the historical marker application process. The THC has strict guidelines for the research and format of the marker narrative, and strict deadlines. The Marker Chair leads applicants through the process, and passes the applications through to the THC once they are complete. This is a lengthy process, and applicants are encouraged not to become disheartened; the preservation of important historical stories is a worthwhile goal!

"PROTECTING THE PAST IN ORDER FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO LEARN."

JERRILYNN MILLER

Dedicated readers will recall our past features covering the Annual Historic Magnolia Cemetery Tours that the JCHC hosts each year. While the cemetery tours provide an opportunity for attendees to get outside, enjoy the beautiful and serene location, and meet other history enthusiasts, the central goal of the cemetery tours are to preserve the stories held within. It's been said that we die twice, once when we physically perish, and once the final time that someone speaks our name.

There are so many stories contained within not only Magnolia Cemetery, but every cemetery in Jefferson County. The JCHC aims to tell as many of those stories by whatever methods are available, with the hopes that current and future generations will continue to tell those stories as well.

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"Preservation is important to keeping our rich past alive for future generations, and to keep alive current people, places and things that become our past."
Les McMahan

A lot of behind the scenes research happens by the hands of JCHC appointees. We can't preserve stories or places if we don't know about them. The JCHC is fortunate to have some of the best researchers in the county as appointees and advisors. With a variety of talents, interests and research methodology, odds are good that if one JCHC appointee can't answer a history related question, they know who can! Efforts are constantly being made to verify, enhance and discover stories of the people of Jefferson County who came before us.

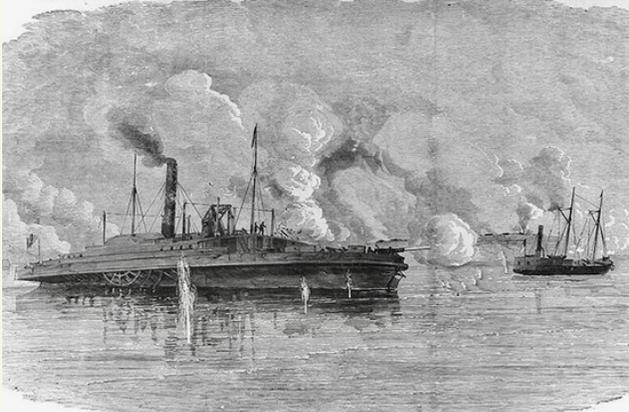
So, while Preservation Month is a wonderful way to focus on specific aspects of preservation, and to encourage renewed interest from the public, the Jefferson County Historical Commission and its members have preservation year, every year!

HISTORY OF MONUMENTS IN KEITH PARK — WALKING BEAM, USS CLIFTON (UPDATED):

The USS *Clifton*, a side-wheel steamer ferryboat, was constructed in 1861 by Bishop & Simonson Shipyard in Brooklyn, New York for the New York Union Ferry Co. as a civilian craft. The 892-ton, 210 foot shallow draft vessel was purchased on December 2 of that same year by the U.S. Navy and converted for military use during the Civil War.¹ On September 8, 1863, the *Clifton* was captured from Union forces during the battle of Sabine Pass, Texas after being bombarded by Confederate gunfire from Fort Griffin.² The federal gunboat was repaired and modified for use as a blockade runner, the CSS *Clifton*, by the Confederates. After subsequently becoming grounded on a sand bar with a heavy load of cotton on March 21, 1864, she was scuttled and burned to prevent her recapture by Union forces. In the early 1900s, the remains of the steamer, including its diamond-shaped walking beam, were still clearly visible about a mile offshore near the jetties at Sabine Pass.

The walking beam was part of the *Clifton's* steam engine. It operated similarly to a pump-jack. With a steady rocking action, the beam shifted power from the up and down (vertical) motion of the engine's steam activated piston to the connecting rod that turned the boat's two paddle wheels.³

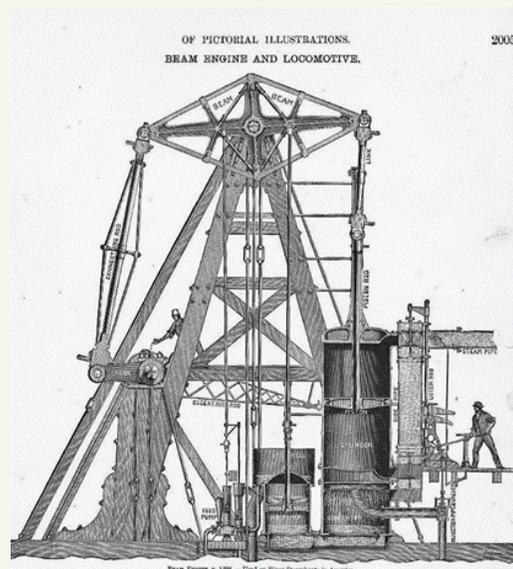
Photo # NH 59143 "The Disabling and Capture of the Federal Gunboats 'Sachem' and 'Clifton' ..."



THE DISABLING AND CAPTURE OF THE FEDERAL GUNBOATS "SACHEM" AND "CLIFTON" IN THE ATTACK ON SABINE PASS, TEXAS, SEPTEMBER 8th, 1863
From a picture of an officer.

USS *Clifton* (left) and USS *Sachem* (right).
"The Soldier in Our Civil War," Vol. II Photo courtesy of U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command

Line drawing of a beam engine. Photo courtesy of Jefferson County Historical Commission



A September 11, 1911 article in the *Beaumont Journal* states: "Suggestions have been offered by a number of people that the walking beam and a portion of the machinery of the war vessel, "*Clifton*," now lying in the waters off Sabine Pass, be brought to Beaumont and placed in a public park prior to the U.C.V. [United Confederate Veterans] reunion next week."⁴ In later expanding upon the history of moving the walking beam, subsequent *Beaumont Journal* articles all credit local businessman Frank W. Godsey⁵ for having conceived of the idea of raising the beam. Godsey brought his vision to Florence Stratton, the *Journal's* managing editor, who

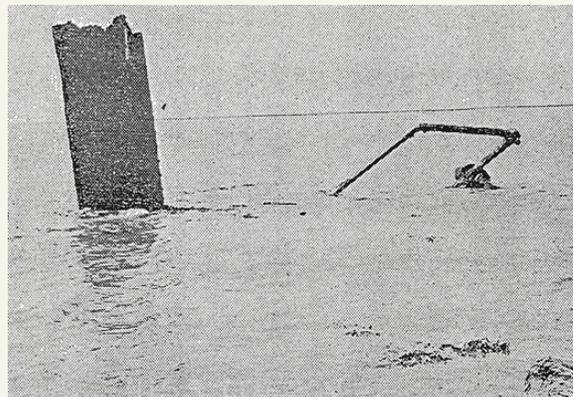
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then ran the story in support of the movement.⁶

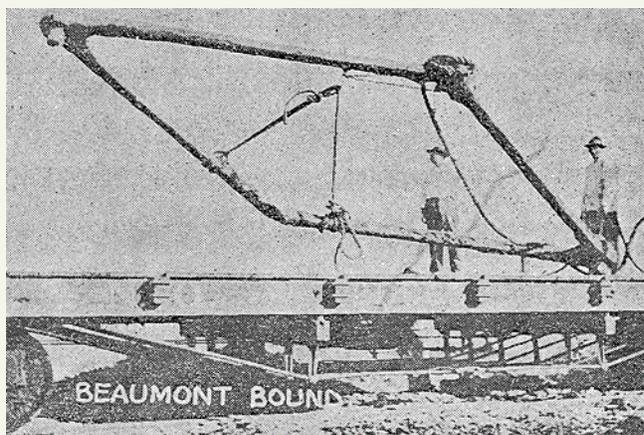
The *Journal* estimated that \$100 would be necessary to salvage and tow the beam to Beaumont and opened a campaign to raise the necessary funds with a \$5.00 donation of its own money. The newspaper asked for popular subscriptions from the citizens of Beaumont and surrounding community. The project had the support of many local veterans including Frank W. Godsey and Judge W. H. Pope. Further contributions became unnecessary, however, when Frank Godsey personally paid \$75 for Texas Dredging Company to recover the walking beam. The Beaumont Chamber of Commerce subsequently became intrigued with the venture and Chamber Secretary Tom Larkin reimbursed Godsey for his expenses.⁷

USS *Clifton* in situ in waters off Sabine Pass in 1911; walking beam visible on right hand side of photo.

Beaumont Journal, March 5, 1927



The walking beam was raised from the waters off of Sabine Pass on Sunday, October 1, 1911. R. A. Nichols, manager of the Texas Dredging Company; R. L. Martinfield, superintendent of the Texas Dredging Company; Captain H. M. Frederickson; Robert Wood; J. F. McCall; H. M. Bradley; Frank Godsey; and a crew of 15 men aboard the tugboat *Viva* traveled out to the site of the sunken USS *Clifton* and worked all day to remove the vessel's beam. They secured the 9x18 feet, approximately 5,000 lb. walking beam intact, placed it aboard a boat and towed it to Sabine Pass, where it was then loaded on a flat car of the Texas & New Orleans railroad for transport to Beaumont in anticipation of erecting it on a concrete base in Keith Park as a monument.⁸



USS *Clifton* walking beam aboard railroad car bound for Beaumont, 1911. *Beaumont Journal*, March 5, 1927

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On the morning of October 3, 1911, Capt. Rogers and a committee of the local United Confederate Veterans Camp approached Mayor Emmett Fletcher and the Beaumont City Council with their proposal to place the walking beam in Beaumont's "principal park" prior to the upcoming 20th Annual Reunion of the Texas Division of the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) to be held later that same week.

At a regular session of the Beaumont City Council held that same day (October 3, 1911), the Albert Sidney Johnston Camp, United Confederate Veterans was granted permission to exhibit the walking beam from the USS *Clifton* in Keith Park at a location to be designated by the Parks Commissioner.⁹ The Confederate Reunion convened in Beaumont on October 5, 1911 with the newly installed monument in place. The *Galveston Daily News* reported that the walking beam was an "object of unusual interest" and would have a "permanent resting place" in Keith Park.¹⁰



Walking beam, USS *Clifton*, Keith Park. Pictured: Battle of Sabine Pass survivor T. C. Hatch standing inside beam. Photo courtesy of Tyrrell Historical Library Digital Collections

At a meeting of the Albert Sidney Johnston Camp, UCV on October 15, 1911, the veterans decided to retain the walking beam permanently in Keith Park. A committee was established to prepare an inscription pertaining to the "memorable engagement of Dick Dowling and his men at Sabine Pass" and place it upon the new monument.¹¹ The bronze memorial tablet was installed on the walking beam just over one year later, on November 18, 1913, during the Southeast Texas Fair. The ceremony followed a parade given by the Confederate Veterans, the Daughters of the Confederacy and Sons of Veterans that included about 200 old soldiers from counties all over southeast Texas as well as from Alabama and Georgia, 50 Boy Scouts, three bands and the squadron of the Sixth Calvary.¹² The Young Men's Business League paid for the plaque.¹³

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Jim Bell Texas Architecture Photograph
Collection, Private Collection of Jim Bell,
The Portal of Texas History



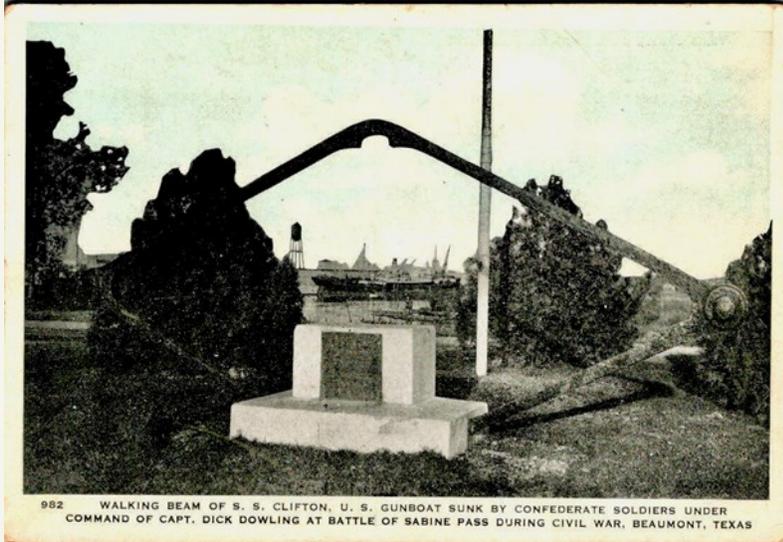
In February 1927, City Parks Superintendent Frank L. Bertscher recommended the removal of three war memorials then located in Keith Park, including the USS *Clifton* walking beam,¹⁴ to alternate sites in order to make way for Beaumont's new City Hall then being constructed on the park grounds. He requested the Young Men's Business League (Y.M.B.L.) to appoint a committee to look into the issue. On February 15, 1927, the committee, consisting of Frank Anderson and C. A. Pickett, surveyed local citizens and made its recommendations regarding new locations for each of the three monuments to the Y.M.B.L. Executive Board, which approved its committee's recommendations that same day. The walking beam would be moved to Pipkin Park by the City Parks Department. A site near Riverside Drive, which ran through the park's grounds,¹⁵ would be prepared "within the next few days."¹⁶ A March 5, 1927 editorial in the *Beaumont Journal* noted the appropriateness of moving the walking beam to Pipkin Park:¹⁷

"It is fitting that the old relic should be re-erected in Pipkin Park, where 'men who go down to the sea in ships' can see it as their vessels enter or leave the port of Beaumont. It is an enduring monument to the undying valor and lofty patriotism of a little handful of men, who, against absolutely overwhelming and seemingly unsurmountable odds, won what should rightfully be considered one of the decisive battles of the American civil war. ..."

At the time the walking beam was relocated to Pipkin Park in early March 1927, Park Superintendent Frank L. Bertscher stated, "information with reference to the steamer *Clifton*, the removal of the walking beam of the ship to Beaumont, and the Battle of Sabine Pass, when the boat was sunk by Dick Dowling and his men" as well as "accurate information as to the boat, the battle and walking beam, together with pictures recently published in *The Journal*" was to be placed in a bronze box on the base for the monument.¹⁸

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USS *Clifton* walking beam near Riverside Drive in Pipkin Park, overlooking Harbor Island.

Late 1920s postcard

In 1962, Henry Beetle Hough, editor of *The Vineyard Gazette*, published at Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard, published a startling editorial entitled "In Memory of a Gallant Captain" in which he argued the walking beam should be returned to the north.¹⁹ He stated, in part,

"A Martha's Vineyard hero who has been neglected too long was Capt. Frederick Crocker, one time master of the whaleship *Mary*, of Edgartown, who commanded the federal warship *Clifton* in the Battle of Sabine Pass, Texas on Sept. 8, 1863. The *Clifton* was the flagship of an expedition ... dispatched to seize and cut off from the Confederacy the great southeastern reaches of Texas. Captain Crocker exhibited not only valor but judgment, and it was not his fault that 43 Confederates (Dick Dowling and his Irish born artillerymen) in a mud fort frustrated the sea-borne assault. Captain Crocker was made a prisoner, the *Clifton* was repaired for use as a blockade runner ..." etc.

The editorial then described the subsequent burning of the vessel by the Confederates after its grounding on a sand bar and the later resurrection and placement of the ship's walking beam in Pipkin Park. Mr. Hough reasoned:

"Surely in this centennial year of the Civil War, the people of Beaumont cannot ignore the obvious courtesies of the situation. If the walking beam of the old *Clifton* can be removed from Beaumont and enshrined in Edgartown, an important propriety of history will have been observed."

Hough felt the beam would be better appreciated by the citizens of Edgartown. His remarks were met with a sharp rebuff from Ed Bryson, an editor of the *Beaumont Journal*, who said, "Hough (pronounced "Huff") should keep his cranberry-picking fingers out of Beaumont's business." Various other journalistic shots were fired across the bow.

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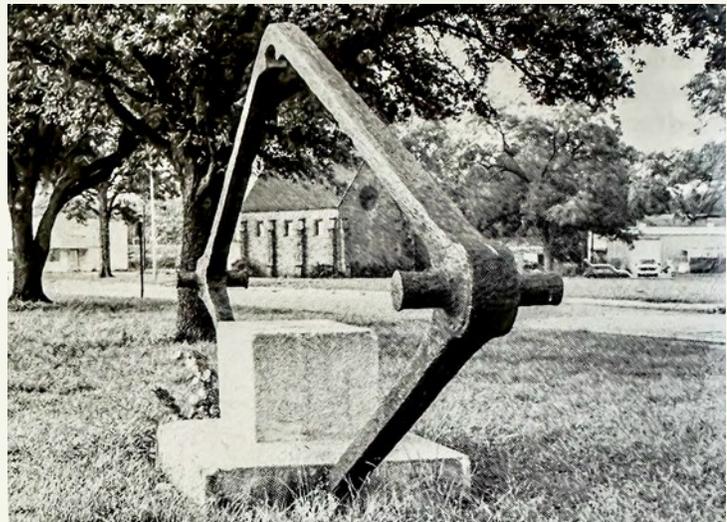
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The Whaling Museum and Old Dartmouth Historical Society of New Bedford began to take an interest in the proceedings and accusations were made that Frank Tolbert, a Dallas newspaper columnist, had helped to stir up the controversy with some meddling articles of his own. Finally, Beaumont's City Council intervened on May 15, 1962 when the request from a "gentleman from north of the Mason-Dixon Line"²⁰ to let them have the walking beam from the USS *Clifton* was brought to their attention by Councilman Christopher. The City Council passed a resolution "denying and condemning" the request,²¹ or, as the *Beaumont Journal* more lyrically expressed it, "forbidding any further fooling around by anyone bent on walking off with the city's walking beam," which would "remain firmly anchored in Pipkin Park."²² There the matter officially dropped, although the editor of *The Vineyard Gazette* subsequently issued one final appeal in his columns, "If their hearts were as big as their heads down in Beaumont that walking beam would be on its way to Edgartown by this time."²³

During March 1964, the walking beam and its concrete base were repositioned on the grounds of Pipkin Park in connection with the Pennsylvania-Orleans Street connector project.²⁴ An August 11, 1964 article in the *Beaumont Journal*, discussing the Chenault O'Brien Camp of Spanish-American Veterans, references the "recently once-again – moved monument [of the USS *Clifton* walking beam] on Riverside Drive."²⁵ Of particular interest, this article also refers to the "copper" box containing "documents, newspapers, and photographs" which was located in the corner of the base of the monument. This box and its contents, formerly described as "bronze," was first mentioned when the walking beam was moved from Keith Park to its original location in Pipkin Park in 1927. A 1971 photo in the *Beaumont Journal* points out the monument's close proximity to the "stately O'Brien Oak on Riverside Drive."²⁶ Following a 1971-1972 port expansion project, the portion of the Neches River turning basin adjacent to the park grounds was filled in, severely impacting if not eliminating the visibility of the walking beam by maritime traffic.

USS *Clifton* walking beam on Riverside Drive in Pipkin Park, looking southwest towards Temple to the Brave war memorial.

Photo by Dr. L. Wesley Norton



In the early 1980s Beaumont built a new city park on the banks of the Neches River behind its downtown Civic Center, officially dedicating Riverfront Park on Tuesday, April 12, 1983.²⁷ On May 27, 1987, the city moved the USS *Clifton*'s walking beam to the new park to commemorate Beaumont's Sesquicentennial, rendering the monument once again visible by both land and water.²⁸

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USS *Clifton* walking beam in Riverfront Park.

1989 SPARE Photograph

On June 11, 2007, the Jefferson County Historical Commission (JCHC) requested permission from the City of Beaumont to move the walking beam to the Texas Historical Commission's Sabine Pass Battleground State Historic Site, where the JCHC and other historic preservation groups were collaborating with the park on a new memorial to be dedicated to the soldiers and sailors killed aboard the USS *Clifton* and other naval vessels during the September 8, 1863 Battle of Sabine Pass.²⁹ It was felt that the walking beam, reunited to the site of the *Clifton's* capture, would serve as a tangible and significant interpretive tool for this important Texas battle site. The City of Beaumont granted the JCHC's request on June 29, 2007.³⁰ Unforeseen delays caused by damages at Sabine Pass Battleground State Historic Site from Hurricane Ike as well as various planning considerations halted the removal of the walking beam for several years and it remained at Riverfront Park until 2011. Finally, however, following a two-year conservation and stabilization process at the Conservation Research Laboratory at Texas A&M University at College Station to address corrosion issues, the walking beam was installed at Sabine Pass Battleground State Historic Site by January 2013 near the location of the *Clifton's* 1863 encounter with Lt. Dick Dowling and his Confederate forces at Fort Griffin. Members of the Texas Historical Commission Historic Sites staff worked with Matt Kaser of Kaser Design to design a mounting bracket system consisting of stainless steel materials and Teflon-lined supports for the beam. Kaser Design then mounted the walking beam, canting it off center to suggest its original orientation while in use as part of the gunboat's engines.³¹ Photos of the completed project reveal that the box with documents relating to the battle and the ship, which was located in the base supporting the walking beam at each of its two locations in Pipkin Park near Riverside Drive and possibly also later at Riverfront Park, is conspicuously absent. The current location of the box and its cache of enclosures is unknown (2024).

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¹Conservation Assessment and Treatment report for the USS *Clifton* Walking Beam, May 4, 2010; USS *Clifton* (I) (1861-1863), <http://www.navsourc.org/archives/09/86/86075.htm>, *Beaumont Enterprise*, October 4, 1987, pg. 77

²Fort Griffin, Sabine Pass, Texas, was under the command of Lt. Richard W. “Dick” Dowling.

³Conservation Assessment and Treatment report for the USS *Clifton* Walking Beam, May 4, 2010. Records, Jefferson County Historical Commission; Sabine Pass Beacon, Vol. 4, Issue 2, July 2012

⁴*Beaumont Journal*, Tuesday, September 26, 1911, pg. 1

⁵Owner of Texas Abstract Company. *Beaumont City Directory*, 1909, pg. 108

⁶*Beaumont Journal*, Wednesday, February 16, 1927, pg. 2. See also *Beaumont Journal*, Friday, October 30, 1925, pg. 3

⁷*Beaumont Journal*, Wednesday, February 16, 1927, pg. 2; *Beaumont Journal*, Thursday, September 2, 1976, pg. 39

⁸*Beaumont Journal*, Monday, October 2, 1911, pg. 1

⁹Beaumont City Council Minutes, October 3, 1911, Vol. 9, pg. 299, Tyrrell Historical Library; *Beaumont Journal*, Tuesday, October 3, 1911; *The Houston Post*, Wednesday, October 4, 1911, pg. 4

¹⁰*The Galveston Daily News*, Friday, October 6, 1911

¹¹*The Houston Post*, Monday, October 16, 1911, pg. 3

¹²*The Houston Post*, Wednesday, November 19, 1913, pg. 3

¹³*Beaumont Journal*, Wednesday, February 16, 1927, pg. 2

¹⁴The other two memorials were the Confederate monument and the World War One monument. At that time (1927), this latter monument was simply called the “World War” monument. There had only been one world war prior to 1927. The second world war would not commence until 1939.

¹⁵Pipkin Park, the former Neches Investment Company property, was completely bounded on its east side by the west margin of the Neches River, along which ran an unpaved section of Riverside, a shell path also known as “Lovers Lane.” The former private “Lovers Lane path” along the eastern side of the O’Brien property located immediately to the north of Pipkin Park as well as the section of Riverside known as Lovers Lane running along and close to the eastern boundary through the park property, was paved in 1924. The new route was opened as Riverside Drive on July 29, 1924. The “O’Brien Oak” was located just north of the northeastern corner of Pipkin Park, providing shade to a portion of Riverside Drive inside the park grounds.

¹⁶*Beaumont Journal*, Friday, January 14, 1927, pg. 17; *Beaumont Enterprise*, Thursday, February 10, 1927, pg. 1, *Beaumont Journal*, Tuesday, February 15, 1927, pg. 2; *Beaumont Enterprise*, Friday, March 25, 1927, pg. 3

¹⁷*Beaumont Journal*, Saturday, March 5, 1927, pg. 19

¹⁸*Beaumont Journal*, Tuesday, March 8, 1927, pg. 7

¹⁹Editorial reprinted in *Beaumont Journal*, May 14, 1962, pg. 6

²⁰Beaumont City Council Minutes, Vol. 13, pg. 1067, Tyrrell Historical Library

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²¹Beaumont City Council Minutes, Vol. 13, pg. 1067, Tyrrell Historical Library

²²*Beaumont Journal*, Saturday, April 28, 1962, pg. 4; *Beaumont Journal*, May 9, 1962, pp. 4, 22; *Beaumont Journal*, May 14, 1962, pg. 6; *Beaumont Journal*, May 17, 1962, pg. 6; *Beaumont Journal*, Friday, June 8, 1962, pg. 8; *Dallas Morning News*, Saturday, August 11, 1962, pg. 10; *Beaumont Journal*, Thursday, May 10, 1966, pg. 4

²³*Beaumont Journal*, June 8, 1962, pg. 8

²⁴*Beaumont Journal*, March 12, 1964, pg. 1

²⁵*Beaumont Journal*, Tuesday, August 11, 1964, pg. 24

²⁶*Beaumont Journal*, Wednesday, June 30, 1971, pg. 12

²⁷*Beaumont Journal*, Wednesday, April 13, 1983, pg. 1

²⁸Beaumont City Council Minutes, Office of the City Clerk, July 29, 1986 and May 31, 1988; *Beaumont Enterprise*, October 4, 1974, pg. 77

²⁹Records, Jefferson County Historical Commission

³⁰Letter, Jim Thompson, Director of Parks & Recreation to William D. Quick, Jefferson County Historical Commission, June, 20, 2007. Records, Jefferson County Historical Commission

³¹JCHC Records; March 26, 2013 Letter and Final Report dated March 2013 from Donna Williams, Director, Historic Sites Division, Texas Historical Commission to Harley D. White, President, Austin Civil War Roundtable, Inc., http://www.austincivilwar.org/clifton_walking_project.pdf; "Sabine Pass Civil War Battleground Site," Matt Kaser, Creative Director, <https://www.coroflot.com/mattkaser/sabine-pass-civil-war-battleground-site>

MARKER SPOTLIGHT

Andrew Smyth
1962 Star and Wreath State of Texas Grave Marker
Located at Magnolia Cemetery



Andrew Farney Smyth (1817-1879), riverboat captain, surveyor, mill owner, farmer, merchant, and judge, was the second eldest son of Andrew and Susannah Smyth. After living in Pennsylvania and Tennessee, the family settled down near Moulton, Alabama, in 1817. Andrew F. Smyth moved to Jasper county, Texas, in 1835, and initially aided in managing the affairs of his brother George W. Smyth, a congressman and signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence and Constitution. Andrew gradually found his own success, first as a surveyor then as a grist and sawmill owner, employing 80 people full time at the Smyth Mills by 1855.

Andrew is best known as a riverboat captain, a business he began in 1838 by building flatboats to ship cotton down river, then selling both the cotton and the timber of the boat upon arrival at the Gulf of Mexico. Around 1850, Andrew acquired the keelboat *Jasper*, for transporting cotton to the Gulf. Upon retirement, the *Jasper*'s hull was used to build a house on the Smyth acreage along the Angelina River. Andrew captained his first steamboat, *Camargo*, beginning in 1862, but persistent

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mechanical problems compelled him to replace it with the newly built *Laura* in the early 1870s. The best-known ship on the Neches for 25 years, the *Laura* hauled cargo and provided the first dependable passenger transportation in lower east Texas.

Editor's note: This marker was put in place in 1962 as one of the earliest historical markers in Jefferson County (with the exception of the 1936 centennial markers). Early iterations of historical markers did not contain interpretive text. The marker program as we now know it, which features the recognizable tablet-shaped, cast aluminum plaque, displaying a narrative about Texas history, was introduced in 1966. As such, the above excerpt is courtesy of The Briscoe Center for American History at University of Texas Austin.

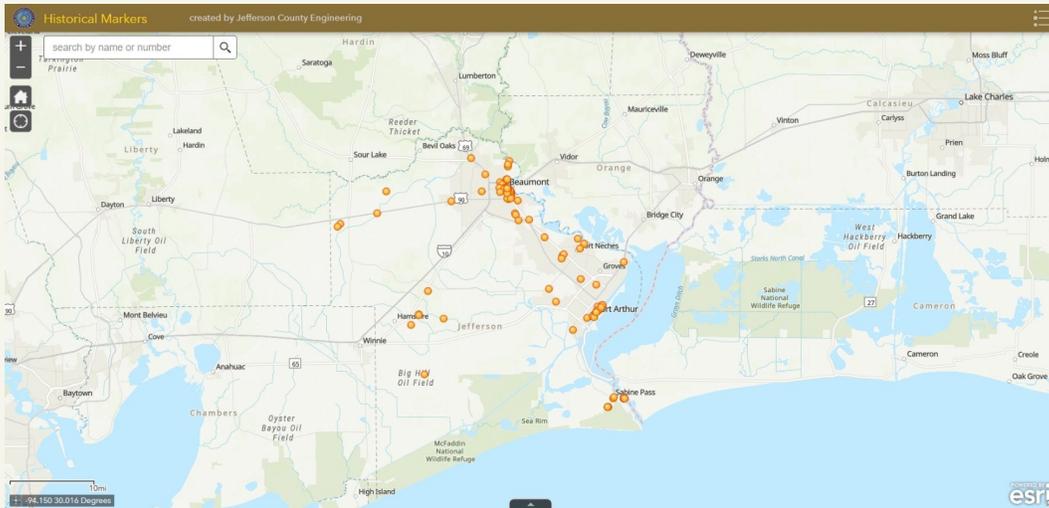
DID YOU KNOW?

For those interested in historic preservation, the JCHC website includes information on the JCHC and the history of Jefferson County including: past issues of the JCHC Journal, Meeting Minutes, Notices of Meetings and Agendas, Digitized copies of Mildred Wright's cemetery books, Sabine Pass Cemetery Association Minutes and Map, Information on the courthouses of Jefferson County, Historical Marker Info, historic photos of Jefferson County and some Jefferson County elected officials, and more! Visit Co.jefferson.tx.us/historical_commission or scan the QR code!



HISTORICAL MARKER MAP

Have you ever wondered where all the historical markers are in Jefferson County? Thankfully, The Jefferson County engineering department created an interactive GIS map of the historical markers in Jefferson County. The map can be found at co.jefferson.tx.us/eng/Engineering.html and selecting “historical markers” or using this QR code.



IN THE NEXT JCHC JOURNAL

- ◇ The JCHC courthouse mini-museum will be hosting an exhibit “Jefferson County Courthouse Artifacts” and a coordinating JCHC Journal article will take a deeper look at the Jefferson County Courthouse and its history.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **May 10, 2024**– Homeschool Workshop at the McFaddin Ward House. Pre-registration is required. Call 409-832-1906 to register.
- **May 16, 2024 @ 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.**– Heritage Happy Hour at the Jefferson Theatre. 345 Fannin, Beaumont. For more information visit www.beaumontheritage.org/events/
- **May 16, 2024 @ 6:30 p.m.** “USA vs Art Thieves: True Tales from the FBI's Real Indiana Jones,” a free public lecture presented by Robert Wittman. 1906 Calder Avenue, in Beaumont. Visit www.mcfaddin-ward.org/events
- **May 25, 2024 @10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.**– The Tyrrell Historical Library Presents Neches River Oral History Event. Participants will be given a tour of the library, a presentation about the Neches River and walked through a guided exercise as they record their oral histories. Personal, familial and all other histories welcome. Pre-registration is required. For more info or to RSVP, contact Kathryn.Mccarthy@utsa.edu
- **May 28,- May 30, 2024**– Ranching Roundup Summer Camp. Pre-registration is required. Call 409-832-1906 to register.
- **June 6, 2024 @ 7:30 p.m.**– Movies at the McFaddins’, featuring the “Parent Trap” (1998). Gather on the lawn and enjoy this family film. For more information, visit www.mcfaddin-ward.org/events

GET IN TOUCH

JCHC Offices: 1149 Pearl Street—3rd floor Beaumont, TX 77701
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