

JCHC JOURNAL

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION VOLUME 2016, ISSUE 2

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Members,

Recently JCHC submitted our annual report to the Jefferson County Commissioner's Court and the Texas Historical Commission for our work in 2015. Highlights of the report include the Magnolia Cemetery tour, our website redesign, involvement with local preservation partners, attendance at regional workshops, and the almost 3000 volunteer hours performed by our members. 2015 was a good year and this year is shaping up to be even better with the commission's decision to conduct an historic resources survey.



Jefferson County Courthouse Entrance

Photo Credit: Theresa Goodness

Thank you to our members for your time and service in preserving our history.

Theresa Goodness, JCHC Chair

VOLUME 2016, ISSUE 2

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MARCH, 2016

Special points of interest:

- * Jefferson County Fast Facts
- * Beaumont Landmark Commission
- * Port Arthur Landmark Commission

JEFFERSON COUNTY FAST FACTS

11/7/1922

Date of General Election and the candidates for Judge of the 58th Judicial District and their respective votes totals:

George C. O'Brien - 3,675
H. C. Sterling - 679
W.H. Davidson - 2

2/25/1928

Date of Special Election for the purpose of abolishing the corporate existence of the City of Port Neches.

For - 150
Against - 179

12/6/1952

Date of Special Election to incorporate the City of Groves.

For - 1079
Against - 262

JCHC TIDBITS

- The historic marker application for St. Paul Methodist Church was not approved by THC. The supporting documentation was insufficient for approval at this time.
- The [East Texas Historical Association 2016 Spring Meeting](#) was held on February 18-20, and was well attended by members of JCHC including Linda McMahan, Sarah Bellian, and Paul Prosperie. The event was a great success with fifteen interesting sessions on Texas history including “Building African-American Communities in Southeast Texas”, “Formidable Texas Women”, and “East Texas and the Second World War”.
- The [Beaumont Enterprise](#) published a story on March 3, 2016, about the ongoing Jefferson County Courthouse restoration which now involves repair and restoration of termite damage in the Commissioner’s Courtroom and the 317th District Court.

JCHC MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS IN 2016

March 16, 2016	Noon	Ben Rogers Regional Visitors Ctr., 5055 I-H 10 South, Beaumont, TX
May 18, 2016	Noon	Ben Rogers Regional Visitors Ctr., 5055 I-H 10 South, Beaumont, TX
July 20, 2016	Noon	Ben Rogers Regional Visitors Ctr., 5055 I-H 10 South, Beaumont, TX
September 14, 2016	Noon	Ben Rogers Regional Visitors Ctr., 5055 I-H 10 South, Beaumont, TX
November 16, 2016	Noon	Ben Rogers Regional Visitors Ctr., 5055 I-H 10 South, Beaumont, TX

VOLUNTEER HOURS AND MEMBERSHIP

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.

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

PRESERVATION PARTNERS

Beaumont Heritage Society
Beaumont Landmark
Commission
Port Arthur Landmark
Commission
Texas Historical Foundation
Beaumont Main Street
Museum of the Gulf Coast

MATCHETT HERRING COE

SOUTHEAST TEXAS SCULPTOR

1907— 1999



Front entrance of historic Jefferson County Courthouse built in 1931 with carved panels designed by Matchett Herring Coe
Photo Credit: Theresa Goodness

Matchett Herring Coe was a renowned sculptor born in Loeb, Texas, (Lumberton) in 1907. He lived in Beaumont most of his life, never married, nor had any children, and died at the age of 91 according to estate records filed in Jefferson County.

The Jefferson County Commissioner's Court minutes of May 20, 1931, record that Fred C. Stone, the architect for the historic Jefferson County Courthouse, recommended to the Court "that a sculptor of some renown, who really knew how to give expression and life to the particular thought or subject under consideration, should be engaged to prepare the (plaster) models for the carver" (Texas Quarries) of the four sculptured panels for the main entrance. The cost for preparation of the models was estimated at \$1,600.00. Ultimately Matchett Herring Coe was the architect's choice.

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First National Bank Building, downtown Beaumont

Photo Credit: Theresa Goodness

Dick Dowling Centennial Marker at Sabine Pass Battleground taken during the Laying of the Wreaths Ceremony in 2011 during Dick Dowling Days

Photo Credit: Theresa Goodness



MATCHETT HERRING COE

CONTINUED



(Matchett) Herring Coe's headstone at Magnolia Cemetery. He carved the marker himself along with headstones for each of his family members.
Photo Credit: Theresa Goodness

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Other works by the artist include reliefs of workers and business professionals on the First National Bank Building in downtown Beaumont, which is on the National Register of Historic Places; the Dick Dowling Texas Centennial marker located at Sabine Pass Battleground commissioned in 1936; the New London cenotaph commemorating school children killed in an explosion; architectural sculptures at the Houston City Hall; and reliefs on Fondren Library at Rice University. Coe was also commissioned to create the 1961 Texas Confederate Veteran displayed at Vicksburg National Military Park in Mississippi.

(Matchett) Herring Coe's grave marker at Magnolia Cemetery in Beaumont, pictured at left, was carved by the sculptor himself, as was each of the markers for his family members. Coe carved symbols of his family member's favorite activities on the top of the flat stones.

Coe's sister, Callie Coe Wilson, donated a number of his works to the Clifton Steamboat Museum where they are on exhibit.

Credits: Wikipedia, Paul Prosperie's Rediscovering Southeast Texas website, Commissioner's Court Minutes Vol. 13, Page 265, Jefferson County Probate Records No. 77643



The grave marker for Ida Herring Coe, Matchett Herring Coe's mother

Photo Credit: Theresa Goodness



Top of Matchett Herring Coe's grave marker

Photo Credit: Theresa Goodness

The grave marker for Burrell Coe, Matchett Herring Coe's father
Photo Credit: Theresa Goodness



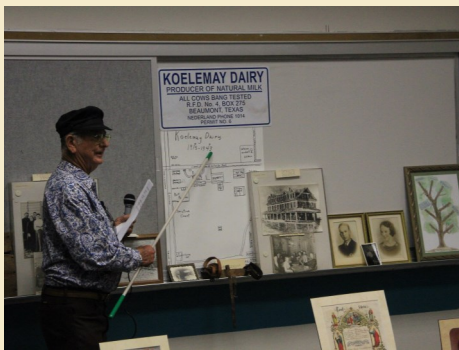
NEDERLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY MEETING

BY PAUL PROSPERIE



Nederland Heritage Society Quarterly Meeting

Photo Credits: Paul Prosperie



I had the pleasure of attending the Nederland Historical Society's quarterly meeting last week and thoroughly enjoyed all three speakers' talks on the rich history of their city. It was fascinating to listen to their detailed accounts of the families that journeyed here from Holland and what they had to endure. It was also interesting to learn about what life was like growing up on the farms and dairies of mid Jefferson County. Many people attended, and some even dressed in traditional Dutch costumes to mark the occasion. It was also good to see several children in the audience.

One of the speakers, Robert Franke, provided intriguing insights into the lives of his grandparents, C.H. and Mary Spurlock, and their farm life in the early days. Most mid-county residents will recognize the Spurlock name from the road located north of Nederland where their farm was originally located. I was also interested to find out that Mr. Franke has a copy of the deed in which the Spurlock's sold their land to the Jefferson Traction Company to give the Interurban right of way. Glen Koelemay's talk on the Koelemay Dairy (1915–1943) offered an in-depth and detailed account of early life on a dairy farm, while Gale Koelemay gave an instructive talk on the Reinstra and Koelemay's difficult journey from Holland and the subsequent founding of Nederland.

For those of you who do not attend these types of meetings, you are missing out on a wealth of fast-disappearing knowledge about our local heritage. Fortunately, in Nederland historical records are being preserved for future generations.

The Nederland Historical Society meets quarterly on the first Thursday of March, June, September, and December at 10:00 am at the Marion & Ed Hughes Public Library.



BEAUMONT LANDMARK COMMISSION

Beaumont Landmark Commission meetings are held the second Monday at 3:30 p.m. in Council Chambers, located on the 1st floor of City Hall, 801 Main Street, Beaumont, TX. Meetings are open to the public.

The latest agenda from the February 8, 2016, meeting is posted [here](#).

Jessie Davis is JCHC's latest representative to be submitted by the commission. Her appointment will be considered by Beaumont City Council at their next meeting.

PORT ARTHUR LANDMARK COMMISSION

Port Arthur Landmark Commission meetings are held in Council Chambers, located on the fifth floor of City Hall, Council Chambers, Fifth Floor, 444 Fourth Street, Port Arthur, TX. Meetings are open to the public. The latest agenda from the February 25, 2016, meeting is posted [here](#).

Les McMahan is JCHC's representative on the commission.

CLG NEWS

On March 8, 2016, at 6:00 p.m. the Certified Local Government (CLG) Committee will hold its first community outreach meeting of the year in Port Neches at Effie and Wilton Hebert Library, 2025 Merriman, Port Neches, TX. Sarah Bellian, Jefferson County Historic Preservation Officer and CLG Chair, will speak to the community members in attendance about the Commission's plan to conduct an historic resources survey in the areas of the county outside the existing CLG cities of Beaumont and Port Arthur.

Introductory packets are to be distributed with a simplified project description and contact sheets to record persons, places and collections of interest for preservation. The public will be invited to complete the forms and submit them to the CLG committee for review for inclusion in the historic resources survey.

The public, members of JCHC, the media, and any interested persons are invited to attend.

Check out the new [Jefferson County Historical Survey website](#) created by Sarah Bellian. The site will help generate interest and inform the public about our project. A link to the website is now available on the CLG page of the JCHC website.

PUBLIC WORKS OF ART PROJECT MURAL IN JEFFERSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE *DID IT REALLY EXIST?*

In the Jefferson County Commissioner's Court minutes of January 5, 1934, is recorded a letter to then County Judge George O'Brien from Adalun Wellborn, the Secretary to the Director of the Houston Museum, James Chillman, Jr. The Director had been appointed by the federal government to the Advisory Committee for the 12th region of the U.S. for the purpose of assisting artists in obtaining immediate work, and the federal government proposed to allow artists to decorate buildings supported by taxation. The letter goes on to state the work of Mr. Watson Neyland of Liberty, Texas, had been approved by the committee, and that Mr. Neyland was charged with finding such a building in Texas and to begin work immediately provided permission was obtained from the appropriate officials overseeing the building. The secretary stated Mr. Neyland was interested in decorating the spaces on either side of the doorway at the end of a long hall on the second floor of the courthouse, which comprised four spaces approximately 4 feet by 8 feet high, and that he would furnish all necessary materials. The government would pay him a weekly salary if the court approved of the project.

Immediately after this agenda item appears a letter of support for the project from Fred C. Stone, the architect of the historic Jefferson County Courthouse. He states he believes the murals would be of appropriate subjects and executed in a manner harmonious with the existing character of the building, and he offered to confer with Mr. Neyland in regards to the location and subject matter.

The minutes of January 5, 1934, reflect the Jefferson County Commissioner's Court entered an Order granting permission to Watson Neyland, "to decorate certain panels in the second floor corridor of the Jefferson County Courthouse with Murals, as a Public Works of Art Project, and that Judge Geo. C. O'Brien, Judge R. L. Murray and Judge J. D. Campbell, together with Fred C. Stone, be appointed as a committee to work with Mr. Neyland and the Commissioner's Court in approving designs and determining location for the subject matter of said Murals."

No other entries in the minutes regarding the existence of a mural have been located, and it is possible Mr. Neyland never painted one in the Jefferson County Courthouse. According to the website of the Art Museum of Southeast Texas, Watson Neyland painted a mural in the Tyrrell Historical Library in the 1930's which may mean the City of Beaumont got in line first before the county.

If anyone has information regarding the existence of a Public Works of Art mural in the Jefferson County Courthouse, please contact the JCHC office.

AREA MUSEUM UPCOMING EVENTS

Museum of the Gulf Coast

A Triple Middle Passage: The Angels Done Bowed Down

January 30, 2016 - April 1, 2016

Homecoming exhibition for Port Arthur Native, Harvey Johnson, featuring new work by the artist. February 28th a special program is planned which will highlight the accomplishments of African American artists and musicians in the Golden Triangle area.

Credit: [Museum of the Gulf Coast website](http://museumofthegulfcoast.org)



Museum of the Gulf Coast

Photo Credit: museumofthegulfcoast.org

The Chambers House Museum

Chambers House Lawn Party

April 2, 2016, at 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Bring family and friends to the beautiful grounds for old-fashioned games including croquet, badminton, and lawn bowling. The Traveling Murphy's will entertain with period music, and refreshments typical of the time period will be available. Casual 1920's - 1940's attire encouraged but not required. (Think whites and linens!)

Credit: [Chambers House Museum website](http://chambershouse.org)



Chambers House

Photo Credit: chambershouse.org

McFaddin Ward House

Wanted: Summer Intern for 2016

The McFaddin-Ward House, an AAM accredited historic house museum in Beaumont, Texas, is offering a paid summer internship in its collections and education department. Built 1905-1906, the Beaux-Arts Colonial mansion was the home of Mamie McFaddin Ward, who left the house as a historic house museum in 1982. The museum, which opened in 1986, ranges over three city blocks and includes the main house, a carriage house, a visitor center, an administrative office, and a collections office building.

Position Summary: The intern will gain experience in all areas of a historic house museum and will spend hands-on time in collections, archives, education, and public relations.

Credit: [McFaddin-Ward House Museum website](http://mcfaddin-ward.org)



McFaddin Ward House

Photo Credit: mcfaddin-ward.org

**JEFFERSON
COUNTY
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION**

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Linda McMahan, Coordinator



*To preserve and
promote history within
the County.*

We're on the web!
[http://co.jefferson.tx.us/
Historical_Commission/](http://co.jefferson.tx.us/Historical_Commission/)

First National Bank
Building, on National
Register of Historic Places,
Downtown Beaumont
Photo Credit: Theresa
Goodness



Jefferson County Historical Commission

Executive Board 2016 - 2017

Chairman, Theresa Goodness

1st Vice-Chairman, Les McMahan

2nd Vice-Chairman, Paul Prosperie

Secretary/Treasurer, Linda McMahan

Brenda Jackson

CELEBRATE MAIN STREET SWEEPSTAKES

FROM THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

2016 marks the 35th anniversary of our Texas Main Street Program, which began with four cities in 1981 and is now 88 strong. To celebrate this milestone we're offering a weekend getaway for two to one of our Main Street cities! By March 31, enter to win a weekend getaway to Marshall, the birthplace of Boogie Woogie. Don't miss your chance to wine, dine, and dance your stay away in Marshall!

Prize Package

The weekend getaway to Main Street Marshall will include:

Lodging: Two-night stay for two at Wisteria Garden

Dining: Lunch for two at Central Perks

Dinner for two at OS² Restaurant and Pub

Lunch or dinner for two at Pizzeria by Pietro's

Saturday brunch or dinner for two at the Blue Frog Grill

Wine tasting at Enoch's Stomp

Touring: Guided tour of Starr Family Home State Historic Site led by
THC staff

Tour of the restored 1901 Harrison County Courthouse, which
houses the Harrison County Historical Museum

Credit: Texas Historical Commission's webpage [Celebrate Main Street Sweepstakes](#)