

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Members,

Railroads have made an enduring impact on the history and landscape of our county since lines were first laid. Currently the KCS railroad bridge across the Neches River is undergoing repairs with the help of helicopters and cranes. This month's newsletter features a very informative article by Les McMahan on the history of railroad bridges in downtown Beaumont.

Thank you to our members for your time and service.

Theresa Goodness, JCHC Chair



KCS vertical lift bridge repairs being made in October, 2019.

Photo Credit: Theresa Goodness

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NOVEMBER, 2019

Special points of interest:

- * Jefferson County Fast Facts
- * Area Museum Upcoming Events

JEFFERSON COUNTY FAST FACTS

1903

Year community of Helbig established. It was a mill town in northeast Jefferson County on the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad until 1905.

\$15.00

Amount paid by first-class passengers for a ticket from Angelina to Sabine Pass on the *Laura*, a steamboat built in 1871 and operating until 1886 on the Neches River. The trip took 18 to 22 days.

1897

Year the Port Arthur Rice and Irrigation Company began planning to build a steam pumping plant on the Neches River just north of Nederland. By 1899 this operational plant fed canals that irrigated 5,000 acres of land.

FALL REGIONAL CHC MEETING A SUCCESS

The [Montgomery County Historical Commission](#) hosted a regional conference of the Southeast Texas county historical commissions on Saturday, October 5 in Tomball.

This training and networking conference included presentations from Amy Hammons and Emiliano “Nano” Calderon from the Texas Historical Commission’s CHC Outreach Program. Also Leslie Wolfenden, THC’s Historic Resources Coordinator, gave a very informative overview of the historic resources survey process. Each of the participating CHC’s were invited to speak about their individual projects and challenges, and there were quite a few including Harris, Montgomery, Waller and Grimes counties. In attendance at this conference on behalf of JCHC were Linda and Les McMahan and Theresa Goodness.



Linda and Leslie McMahan, and other attendees, including THC’s Leslie Wolfenden, at the Fall Regional CHC Meeting in Montgomery County

Photo Credit: Theresa Goodness

UPCOMING JCHC MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS IN 2019

Meetings to be held at Jefferson County Courthouse, 1149 Pearl Street, 3rd Floor, Beaumont, TX 77701 in the JCHC Conference Room.

- November 20, 2019

VOLUNTEER HOURS AND MEMBERSHIP

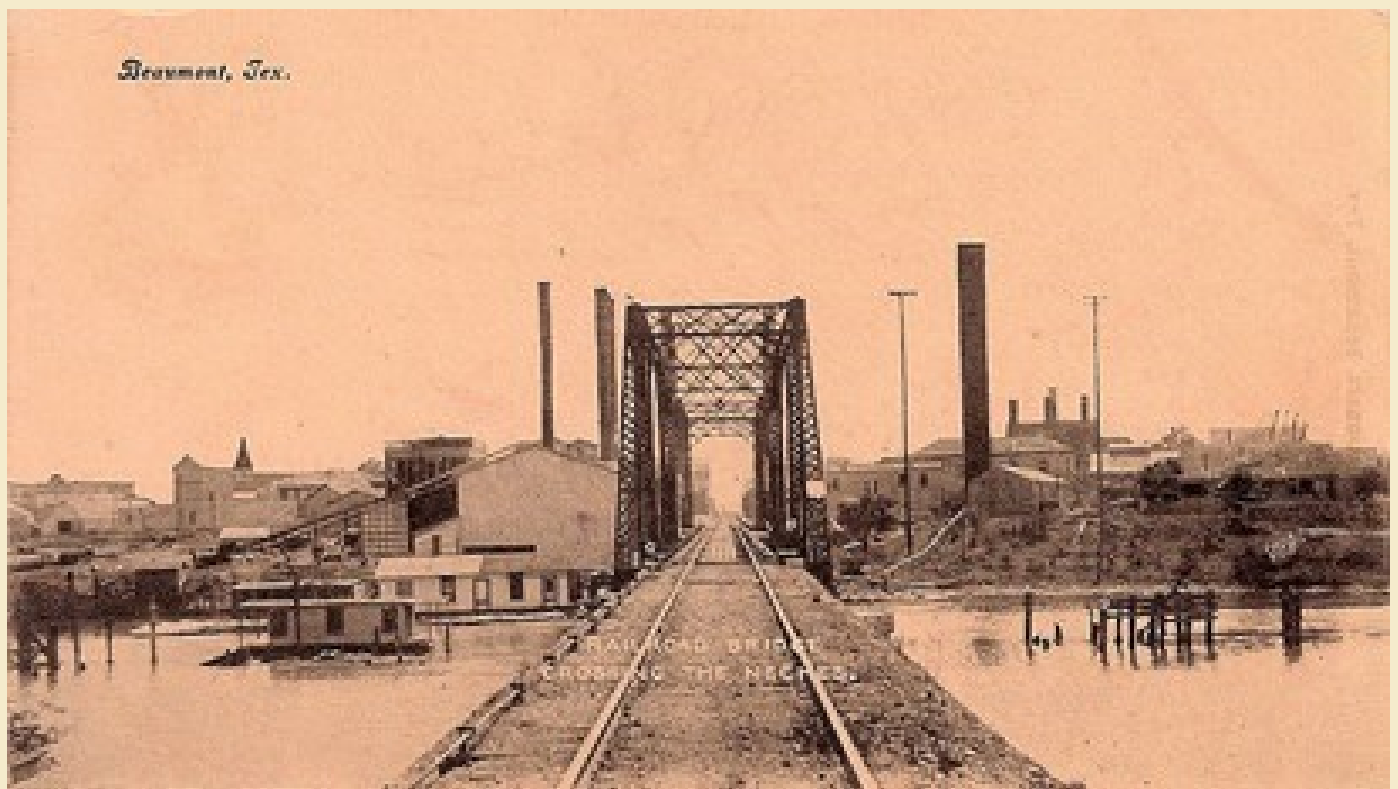
Any work in the preservation or promotion of Jefferson County History may be counted toward your volunteer hours. JCHC meetings and travel time to and from meetings also count as volunteer hours. Members are reminded that at least 50 hours of volunteer work per year is required of each member. Also with 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
Tyrrell Historical Library

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF KANSAS CITY, PITTSBURG AND GULF/
TEXARKANA AND FORT SMITH/KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN AND
TEXAS & NEW ORLEANS/SOUTHERN PACIFIC BRIDGES IN
DOWNTOWN BEAUMONT BY LESLIE MCMAHEN**



Photograph of what is believed to be the original Texas & New Orleans (Southern Pacific) swing bridge on the Neches River into Beaumont, roughly in the Crockett Street area, looking west. Date of construction is unknown, but the T&NO (SP) line through Beaumont went into service in 1860. The date of the photograph is circa 1905, and the postcard it is on has a postmark of 1909. The dark spire to the distant left in the picture is the tower of what was then the First Baptist Church (built 1903; outgrown and sold in 1923; the Tyrrell Library since 1926). According to War Department records, a new T&NO (SP) swing bridge opened on June 24, 1924, but no picture of the 1924 span is available.



Colorized postcard showing the original T&NO (SP) swing bridge, looking east into Orange County, 1909. The vertical structures on each end of the main span (look like ladders) are thought to be navigation aids to show upstream and downstream river traffic when the bridge was in the open position.

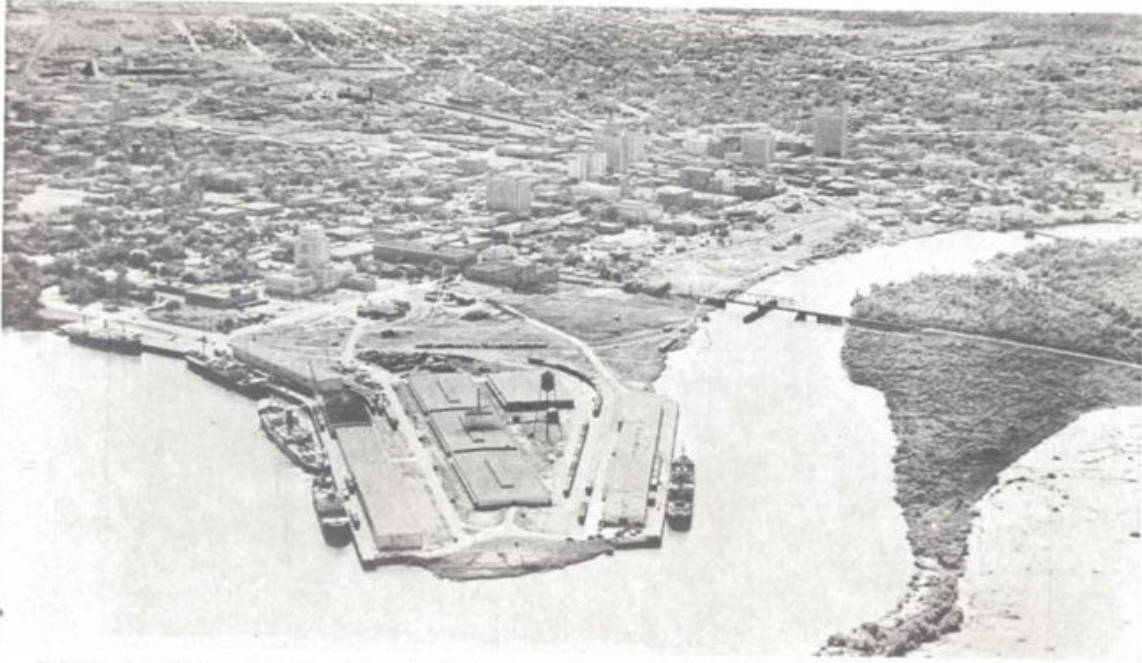
A BRIEF HISTORY CONTINUED



Photograph of the Texarkana & Fort Smith's (Kansas City, Pittsburg and Gulf, Kansas City Southern) original swing bridge on the Neches River, dated circa 1910, looking east into Orange County. The War Department approved the plans for the bridge in September, 1896, and though no completion date is known, it would have had to be in service prior to the completion of the Beaumont-DeQuincy, LA segment of the T&FS (KCP&G, KCS) on September 11, 1897.

Note the plate girder span between the timber trestle and the main bridge span – the original or its replacement is still in place today.

A BRIEF HISTORY CONTINUED



PORT OF BEAUMONT, BEAUMONT, TEXAS, U. S. A., "WHERE THE GREAT EAST TEXAS MEETS THE SEA."

This aerial photograph of the downtown/port area of Beaumont was furnished by the Port of Beaumont, and has been dated to about mid-1931. It shows the T&FS (Kansas City Southern) swing bridge in the lower portion of the picture and the T&NO (SP) swing bridge in the upper portion of the picture. Knowing that the new courthouse was completed and accepted on December 27, 1931, it appears to be missing its short spire in the picture, and the new T&NO (SP) bascule bridge was not opened until early 1940, it is thought that the aerial photograph probably dates to about mid-1931.

The new T&NO (SP) bascule bridge opened on April 1, 1940, approximately one year before the T&FS (KCS) built its existing vertical lift bridge, indicating that the replacement of the two swing bridges may have been mandated by the War Department. Otherwise, why would T&NO (SP) have replaced a 16-year-old bridge built in 1924?

A BRIEF HISTORY CONTINUED



War Department records indicate that the existing T&FS (KCS) lift bridge was completed on July 7, 1941. The above photograph from the TxDOT Photo Library dated April 28, 1941, shows the center span for the new bridge sitting on barges prior to its installation. Note the courthouse in the background, as well as the two lift towers for the new bridge.

A BRIEF HISTORY CONTINUED

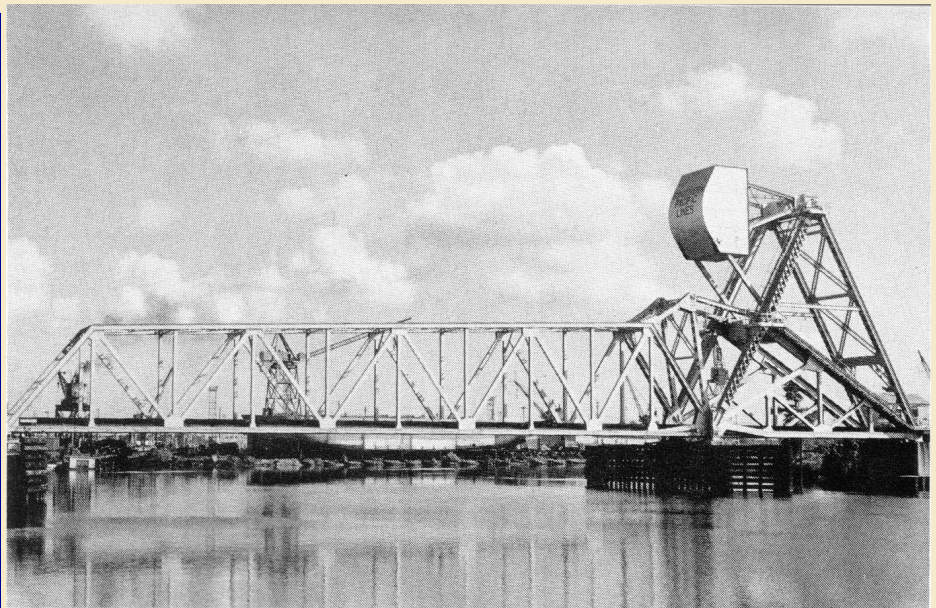


Big, industrial Beaumont, Texas, has four railroad lines slicing through its business and residential areas, is circled on three sides by train tracks.

This picture of downtown Beaumont that appeared in a travel magazine was taken in 1951, and clearly shows both bridges – T&NO (SP) as a bascule bridge and T&FS (KCS) as a lift bridge. For reference: (a) T&NO (SP) runs in the foreground by its depot (red roof) and the REA depot (green roof), and the downtown yard. Bridge is in down position; (b) ATSF downtown freight depot is just above the SP yard (slender building with red roof); (c) T&FS (KCS) Gilbert Street depot in mid-upper right is not readily visible along joint KCS/Missouri Pacific route. Bridge is in down position; and (d) the Federal Court House is in the left foreground.

[T&NO (SP) bascule bridge]

This is perhaps the best photo of the T&NO (SP) bascule bridge in use, and it appeared in the October 1988 issue of Model Railroader magazine as an example of a bascule bridge. Unfortunately, the photo is undated, but note SOUTHERN PACIFIC LINES on the face of the counterweight.



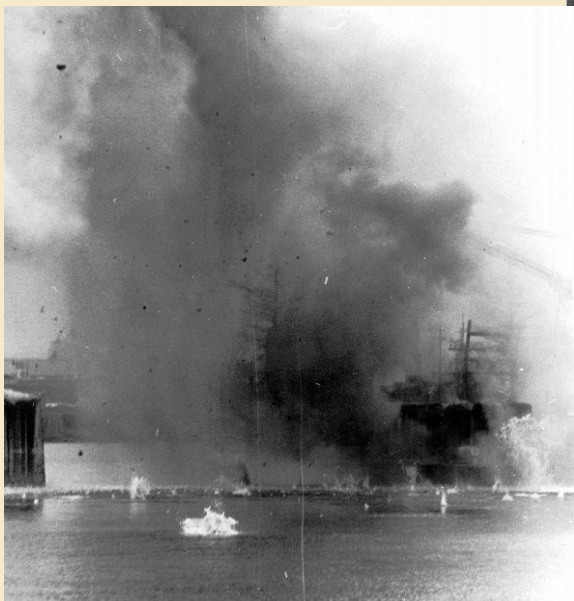
Donald Sims

A BRIEF HISTORY CONTINUED



The three photos of the demolition of the T&NO (SP) bascule bridge are from the files of the Port of Beaumont, and were published in the January 1970 issue of the Port's magazine.

The first two, believed to have been taken in November or December of 1969, show the main span sitting on a barge, and the third shows the explosive demolition of the concrete counterweight.



Southern Pacific rail traffic had been previously transferred to the KCS bridge by means of a track connection between the SP and KCS in Orange County east of the KCS bridge. Once the transfer was made, the SP bridge was left in the open position until it was demolished, and these actions facilitated the removal of a number of SP grade crossings in downtown Beaumont.

A BRIEF HISTORY CONTINUED



Current aerial photograph showing the locations of the existing KCS vertical lift bridge and the location of the long-demolished SP bascule bridge. The Tyrrell Library is in the yellow circle.



The KCS vertical lift bridge continues to serve Kansas City Southern, Union Pacific, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, and Amtrak trains to this day.

AREA MUSEUM UPCOMING EVENTS

Museum of the Gulf Coast

November 2, 2019 - January 4, 2020

Rolling Stone Magazine Exhibit: Back Stage Pass
Rock & Roll Photography

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



Museum of the Gulf Coast

Photo Credit: museumofthegulfcoast.org

French House Museum

Christmas Candlelight Tour
December 6, 2019 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

You'll have the chance to view the museum by candlelight while filled with rich poinsettias. Choose one to purchase and bring it home to fill your house with Christmas cheer, but not before taking a few family photos in the beautifully decorated home! All proceeds from poinsettias sales will go directly to the care and maintenance of the 1845 John Jay French Museum. The event will include a visit with St. Nicholas and a caroling hayride around the historic grounds. A children's craft will also be provided, with warm wassail and Christmas cookies for refreshments. Admission is \$5 for ages 4 and over, with three and under attending free.

Credit: [Beaumont Heritage Society website](http://BeaumontHeritageSociety.org)



Photo Credit: [Beaumont Heritage Society website](http://BeaumontHeritageSociety.org)

McFaddin-Ward House Museum

Eggnog Open House
December 13, 2019 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Our house is open to the public from 5:00 to 7:00 for an evening of magical splendor. View our gorgeous historic mansion like you've never seen in before, in the evening decorated for Christmas. Please bring the children! We'll have cookies, eggnog and special holiday entertainment.

Credit: [McFaddin-Ward House Museum](http://McFaddin-WardHouseMuseum.org)



McFaddin-Ward House Museum

Photo Credit: [McFaddin-Ward House Museum website](http://McFaddin-WardHouseMuseum.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/)

Jefferson County Historical Commission

Executive Board 2018 - 2019

Chairman, Theresa Goodness

1st Vice-Chairman, Bruce A. Hamilton

2nd Vice-Chairman, Les McMahan

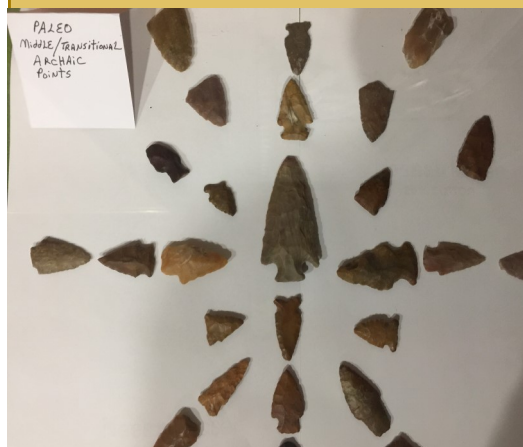
Treasurer, Linda McMahan

Secretary, Jen Trenbeath

**JCHC MINI-MUSEUM
"TEXAS ARCHEOLOGY MONTH"**



Above: Exhibit includes bottles from the Beaumont Port Arthur Bottle Company
Photo Credit: Linda McMahan



Each October, Texas Archeology Month (TAM) celebrates the spirit of discovery. It is an opportunity for Texans to learn more about the richness of our heritage, from the former dwelling sites of prehistoric hunters and gatherers to historic shipwrecks and military sites. This year we are proud to have an exhibit by Port Arthur archeologist, Mike Estrada. Mike has traveled Texas, Mexico, Central and South America. His exhibit shares with us some of his discoveries:

- East Texas – Newton County - Archaic Late / Transitional points, tools
- McFaddin Beach – artifacts found near the cattle pens and water tank
- Paleo Middle / transitional archaic points
- Beaumont and Port Arthur Bottling Company - circa 1900 –1950 - Found in Old Sabine Pass - Sabine Hotel.

This exhibit will run through November 14, 2019, and will be followed by an exhibit featuring French High School memorabilia.

Left: Paleo Middle transitional archaic points on display in exhibit.
Photo Credit: Linda McMahan