

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Members,

As our country grapples with a devastating COVID-19 pandemic that has taken a heavy toll in lives lost, cemeteries are important places for families to visit their loved ones. Protecting and cleaning up cemeteries, researching those interred within, and bringing recognition to the history of our cemeteries through appropriate historic cemetery designations are all ways we can ensure families have access to these vital stories.

Thank you to our members for your time and service.

Theresa Goodness, JCHC Chair



Evergreen Cemetery, Historic Texas Cemetery Marker

Photo Credit: Paul Prosperie

VOLUME 2021, ISSUE 1

In this issue:

Friends of THC Celebrates 25 years	2
Artesian Wells in Jefferson County	3

JANUARY, 2021

Special points of interest:

- * Jefferson County Fast Facts
- * Courthouse Mini-Museum Exhibit
- * Area Museum Online Resources

JEFFERSON COUNTY FAST FACTS

\$5,000

Amount appropriated by Commissioner's Court for a Rural District Territory Survey on 9/22/1919, to educate the rural population in modern sanitation methods to eliminate preventable diseases. This sum was in addition to a state allocation.

\$125.00

Amount of monthly salary approved by Commissioner's Court, to pay J. A. Hamshire, ferryman of the Hickory Street Ferry beginning on 1/1/1919. The previous ferryman was M. M. Carroll.

\$5.00

Amount of warrant approved by Commissioner's Court on 7/30/1919, to pay J.S. Brock for the killing of one grey wolf.

THE FRIENDS OF THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

The founding of the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission goes back to 1995 when Jim Bruseth, then Director of the Department of Antiquities Protection at THC, founded the non-profit with the sole purpose of supporting THC. The shipwreck, *La Belle*, a French vessel that sank in 1686 off the Texas Coast in Matagorda Bay, had just been discovered and a major excavation meant serious funds were needed as soon as possible. The first gift was \$250,000 in

AT&T stock from the late Dennis O'Connor of Victoria, Texas, and other gifts soon followed. Additionally the state appropriated \$1.75 million to assist with the excavation.



Although THC had twice previously created non-profits to support the agency, their boards had voted to take on broader preservation missions and moved away from supporting THC. The discovery of the *La Belle* necessitated a third try resulting in a 25 year successful partnership between the Friends and THC.

Excavation of the *La Belle* in Matagorda Bay, 1996-1997

Photo Credit: [THC](#) website- La Salle Archeology Projects

UPCOMING JCHC MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS IN 2021

Meetings to be held at Noon at the Agriculture Auditorium, 1225 Pearl Street, Suite 200, Beaumont, TX 77701. (All meetings subject to cancellation under state and federal COVID-19 guidelines.)

- 1/20/2021
- 3/10/2021
- 5/19/2021
- 7/21/2021
- 9/15/2021
- 11/17/2021

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

ARTESIAN WELLS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY, TEXAS

BY LES MCMAHEN

Many years ago, I came across some information that Port Arthur, in its early years, had its fresh water supplied by the Port Arthur Water Company from an artesian well in part of what is now Port Neches Park. A 210-acre tract on which the well was located was owned by the Port Arthur Water Company, then by the City of Port Arthur. At least two pictures, one of which is in the JCHC 2021 calendar, have circulated for years. (See photo to the right)



Artesian Well- Port Neches Park

Out of curiosity, I recently contacted the City of Port Neches to see if they had information on the former well, and was given information that there had been two (2) wells on the property. That revelation led me to seek more information, and I found an article written by W.T. Block that confirmed the former existence of two wells and that the location of one of them was clearly marked to this day. It is located in the southeast corner of Port Neches Park across Grigsby Avenue from the old jail structure, and is defined by an old concrete ring with a cedar tree growing in it. (See photo below) Theresa Goodness was able to locate two maps in the County records that I can use to define the 210-acre tract using descriptions in the documents noted above.

Artesian well in what is now Port Neches Park. Well supplied water to early Port Arthur. Port Arthur's Gates Day Celebration shown being held at the well site.
Photo Credit: Port Arthur Public Library Collection



Current site of location of former well in Port Neches Park.

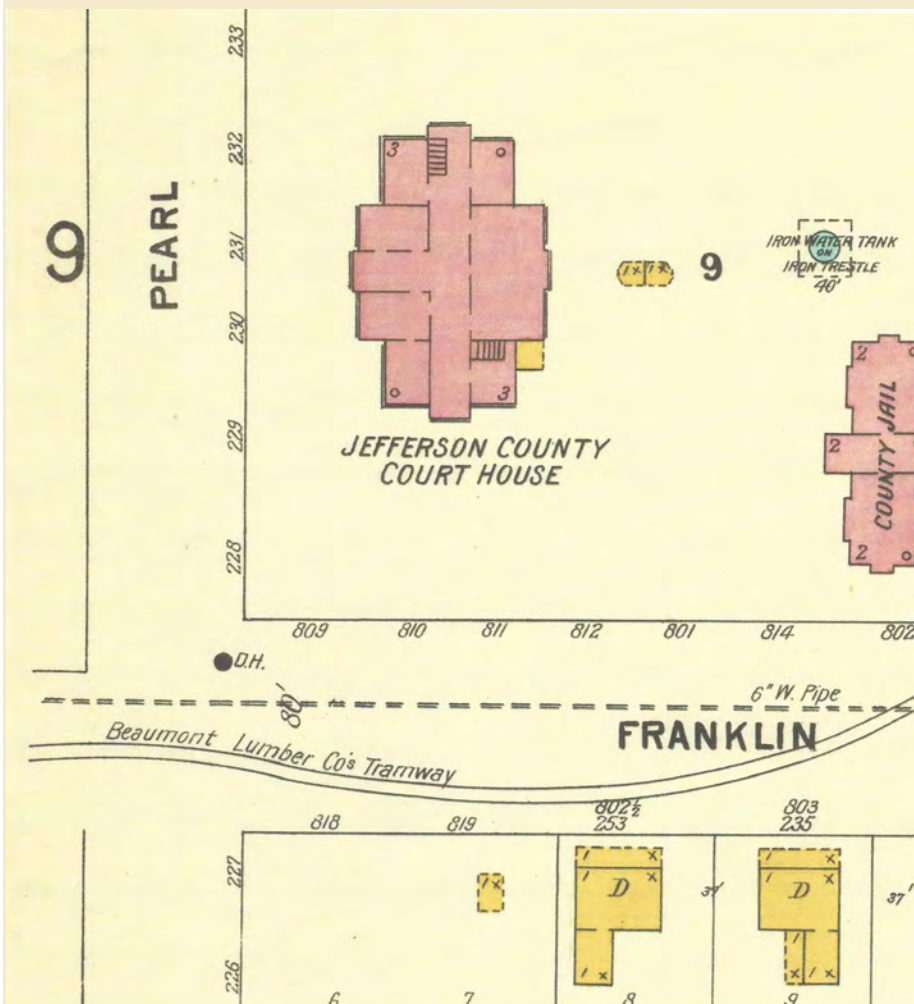
Photo Credit:
Les McMahan

ARTESIAN WELLS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY, TEXAS

CONTINUED BY LES MCMAHEN

While doing general searches for more information on the Port Neches wells, I came across a USGS publication entitled "Coastal Plains of Texas – Underground Waters 1910" that listed artesian wells in Jefferson County. A partial listing follows:

- Port Arthur 450 feet, 40gpm
(location not specified but this could have been one of the wells that was in Port Neches in the T.F. McKinney League)
- McKinney 620 feet, "slight flow"
(location not specified but this could have been one of the wells that was in Port Neches since the land is in the T.F. McKinney League)
- Courthouse 745 feet, 30gpm
(at Beaumont next to the 1893 Courthouse, drilled between November 1895 and November 1896; Theresa Goodness was able to locate an 1899 Sanborn map that shows the location of a water tower behind the courthouse and next to the old jail – presumably the well was nearby) (See map above right)
- Natatorium, 796 feet, 150gpm (downtown Port Arthur)
- Hotel, 1,065 feet, 100gpm (Windsor Hotel, Sabine Pass)



1899 Sanborn map showing Jefferson County Courthouse square and the location of a water tank where the well would most likely have been located nearby.

AREA MUSEUM UPCOMING EVENTS

Museum of the Gulf Coast

The Museum of the Gulf Coast is proud to announce its 6th Annual Community Art Show, OPEN TO ARTISTS OF ALL AGES.

Memories - Old, New, Real, Imagined

There will be children's and Adult Professional and Non-Professional Divisions with prizes and a cash prize for BEST IN SHOW. We will be accepting entries through February 17, 2021.

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



Museum of the Gulf Coast

Photo Credit: museumofthegulfcoast.org



Photo Credit: Spindletop Gladys City Boomtown Museum website

Spindletop Gladys City Boomtown

Lucas Gusher Re-enactment Schedule

The Lucas Gusher gave up its riches for nine days before Anthony Lucas and the Hamill brothers could get the well under control. We re-create the gusher using water and only run it for about 2 minutes. But it is always fun to watch how high the water will blow and what direction the spray will take. It is always free to enjoy the gusher re-enactment. Regular admission fees apply to museum entrance.

120th Anniversary Event,
January 9th-10:30am and 2:00pm

January 14th - 12:00pm

January 20th - 1:00pm

January 29th - 12:00pm

Credit: [Spindletop Gladys City Boomtown Museum website](https://spindletopgladyscityboomtownmuseum.org)

McFaddin-Ward House Museum

The McFaddin-Ward House welcomed guests back on Wednesday, September 23, 2020, with free self-guided audio tours. These tours will be available for the 1st floor of the McFaddin-Ward House, Carriage House, and Gardens from Wednesdays – Saturdays, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Credit: [McFaddin-Ward House Museum](https://mcfaddinwardhousemuseum.org)



McFaddin-Ward House Museum

Photo Credit: [McFaddin-Ward House Museum website](https://mcfaddinwardhousemuseum.org)

**JEFFERSON
COUNTY
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION**

1149 Pearl Street
Third Floor
Beaumont, TX 77701

Tel: 409-835-8701

E-mail:

histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us
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 2021 - 2022

Chairman, Theresa Goodness

1st Vice-Chairman, Bruce A. Hamilton

2nd Vice-Chairman, Don Smart

Treasurer, Linda McMahan

Secretary, Jen Trenbeath

JCHC MINI-MUSEUM

The Jefferson County Historical Commission is seeking a new exhibit for the mini-museum. Past exhibits have included school memorabilia, historic postcards, courthouse artifacts, artwork depicting historic buildings by local artist, Larry Baggett, and other items celebrating the history of Jefferson County.

Please contact Linda McMahan, JCHC Coordinator, if you have an idea for a local history exhibit.