

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

THE GILBERT BUILDING

1902-2024

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

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

As most people have heard by now, the Gilbert Building in downtown Beaumont, a contributing building to the downtown National Register District, caught fire on June 6, 2024. The building has a long history in Beaumont, so we thought it would be worthy of a trip down memory lane.

January 21, 2013

© Photograph by
Steven P. Lewis

June 7, 2024

© Photograph by
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Built in 1902, the current Gilbert Building was actually the second Gilbert Building to grace downtown Beaumont. The first Gilbert Building burned in a fire on October 15, 1901. John N. Gilbert immediately set about the task of rebuilding, hiring Galveston architect, George B. Stowe to design the new building. In addition to the Gilbert Building in Beaumont, George B. Stowe's work can still be seen

NEW BANK OPENS TUESDAY.

**Gulf National Will Begin Business
Immediately After Labor Day.**

The Gulf National Bank, which will occupy the Pearl and Bowie street corner of the new Gilbert building, has received its fixtures and furniture, and expects to open for business Tuesday morning.

The fixtures are unusually handsome, and the arrangement is one that promises to give the greatest convenience to the officers, employees and customers of the bank.

Cashier Williams has been busy for several days superintending the preparations for the opening, and today there is a large force of men employed in putting the finishing touches to the interior of the building.

The Gulf National is officered by some of the strongest men, financially, in Beaumont, and the executive department will be in charge of gentlemen well known in banking circles as careful and conservative business men who, however, are anxious to extend to their customers every accommodation consistent with sound banking.

in Galveston, notably in the former Galveston Orphan's Home, which is now the home of the Bryan Museum, and which is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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The new Gilbert Building's first tenant, the Gulf National Bank, opened on September 3, 1902. An examination of the 1902 Beaumont City Directory delivers the following list of Gilbert Building tenants in 1902:

Attorneys

John Hacket Adams, W.E. Miller and the law firm of Watts, Chester & Ellison.

Oil companies

Beatty Oil Co. and M.K. & T. Oil Co.

Real Estate

C.T. Heisig and Will P. Oldham

Doctors

Dr. O.S. Hodges (oculist) and Dr. Miles O. Perkins

Dentists

B.H. Spurlock

Fraternal Orders

Elks Lodge

Order of the Eagles

Barber

H. Holt Barber Shop

Tailor

James K. Grist, Merchant Tailor

Shoes

Beaumont Shoe Co.

Undefined

Herman Fresch

L.W. King

David S. Speer

F.M. Yost

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The Gilbert building went on to house over 400 businesses, with notable names such as Marrs McLean, Hightower, Orgain & Butler Attorneys at Law, William D. Gordon, Walter J. Crawford, the Beaumont Baseball Company, Majestic Photo Finisher, Sun Pipeline Co., Stanolind Oil & Gas and many others.

C. T. Heisig. T. V. Smelker.
Theo. Heisig.

HEISIG & SMELKER

Realty, Insurance,
Bonds, Etc.

SEVERAL SNAPS
IN
OIL AND RICE Lands
AND
City Property.

FOR RENT.

OFFICES
Rooms for Light-Housekeeping.
One cottage and one house.

10 and 11 Gilbert Building.
Phones 51.

Heisig & Smelker ad from
September 28, 1903

A July 3, 1928 ad offering support to Colonel R.C. Duff in his vision for Jefferson County, and advertising the sale of Harvey W. Gilbert's planned industrial and home sites.

BEAUMONT ENTERPRISE PROGRESS & DEVELOPMENT NUMBER—1025

FIRST—LAST—AND ALWAYS—ARE WE FOR SABINE DISTRICT PROGRESS
THAT'S WHY WE SUPPORT THIS PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT NUMBER AND EXTEND

Congratulations and Courage
TO
COL. R. C. DUFF
"BUILDER AND FRIEND OF OUR ENTIRE SECTION"

One of the greatest friends and most intensely interested men who is today striving to develop the Sabine District is Col. R. C. Duff of Houston. The story of the long drawn out attempt by Colonel Duff to link the Sabine District with the great producing section of Central Texas is well known here. His Waco, Beaumont, Trinity and Sabine Railroad now seems a certainty, and from the time the first car is moved, it will inaugurate a new era of prosperity and possibilities for our section.

Now comes the gigantic industrial development of Colonel Duff. By his plan a string of industries would skirt the Neches River from a short distance below Beaumont on around Port Arthur and up Hildebrandt bayou. It is an enormous undertaking by an outstanding character. All help, aid and all influence should be extended Colonel Duff. It is true that ultimately, after this section has been developed, all will be remunerated, but in the meantime, much time, much effort and enormous sums of money must be expended without immediate returns.

Every Beaumontian, as well as all citizens in the intermediate territory, should appreciate this great work of a master builder and friend of our section, Colonel Duff.

Gilbert Industrial and Home Sites

The map above gives an idea of the extent of opportunities offered by Harvey W. Gilbert & Company. Our industrial lands are ideally located near the Gulf on the Port Arthur-Beaumont ship channel, affording tide water, railroads. Railroad facilities are also included among these properties.

In addition to the industrial sites, are the home sites just outside the limits of the thriving city of Port Arthur. For building, for investment, these properties afford unusual opportunity.

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Visualizing a 40-Ft Beaumont-Pt. Arthur Ship Channel

The thirty foot ship channel that Beaumont and Port Arthur now enjoy to the Gulf accommodates boats from every clime, but thirty feet is not enough. It was sufficient temporarily a few years ago, but today with the great industrial and agricultural expansion and growth of our section a thirty foot depth is rapidly becoming inadequate.

To be free and unfettered, with growth and expansion unlimited, the Sabine District needs a ship channel that will accommodate the largest ships in the world—let none fail to come here because of inadequate facilities—provide these facilities and when one comes, others will follow. The deeper ship channel will better accommodate the boats that are now plying our waters regularly and it will entice others to us.

Today the outstanding needs of our section may be classed as, first, the deeper water to the Gulf, second, the opening of vast territory by railroad and hard surface roads, and thirdly, by encouraging the program of Colonel Duff that this would in time become the foremost industrial section of the entire United States.

HARVEY W. GILBERT & COMPANY
GILBERT BUILDING BEAUMONT, TEXAS

The Beaumont-Port Arthur District Is Now the South's Chief Industrial Center.
—1928 Chicago Daily News Year Book.

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In 1914, the Gilbert Building was a "victim of flames" yet again. On Christmas night, a suspected firecracker thrown in the elevator shaft caused the building to go up in flames. Damages at that time were expected to total \$65,000, though future reports conclude that Mr. Gilbert was able to rebuild for about \$35,000. An article from the Beaumont Enterprise on January 28, 1915 describes the rebuilding of the Gulf National Bank and the "repairs and changes made, which will make the place one of the handsomest in this section of the state." The same article states that the bank expected to be "completed and ready for reopening about February 15." An ad, seen below, from the Beaumont Enterprise, March 10, 1915 announced that the Gulf National Bank would reopen on March 15th.

OUR OLD HOME

In the Gilbert Building will be ready for occupancy next Monday, the 15th. Believing in the future of Beaumont, we are equipping one of the handsomest banking rooms in the South. The past year has been a prosperous one for us and present indications point to a steady and continuing increase in our business. We are installing every modern convenience for the benefit of our customers in the handling of their business. We extend a cordial invitation to call and inspect our new banking room and equipment and will appreciate a share of your banking business.

The Gulf National Bank
BEAUMONT, TEXAS

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John Nathan Gilbert and the Gilbert family were involved in the business and civic circles of Jefferson County for decades. A short list of companies or organizations that the Gilberts participated in includes the Nona Mills Lumber, Gilbert Oil, Magnolia Cemetery, Gilbert Ranch and the Gilbert Ranch Rodea, Yount-Lee Oil, Beaumont Lumber Company, The Masonic Lodge and Beaumont-Port Arthur Ship Channel.

As the county commission for historic preservation, the JCHC remains hopeful that the building's owner will be able to safely stabilize the structure and save the façade, while restoring or renovating the interior to be a functional space in downtown Beaumont once again. Though the building is 122 years old, the connections to our community remain. With over 400 tenants through the life of the building, the people who's livelihoods were contained within its walls touch all corners of our city and we hope not to lose that link to our shared past.

The Acmeograph Co [Gilbert Building, Gulf National Bank], postcard, December 9, 1915; University of North Texas, crediting Tyrrell Historical Library AC137-026 -001.



MARKER SPOTLIGHT

Beauxart Gardens
8900 Block of Central Drive
Nederland



Named for its location between Beaumont and Port Arthur, Beauxart Gardens was developed during the Great Depression by the U.S. Government as a federal subsistence homestead colony under the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933. The act encouraged urban and rural workers to supplement their incomes through agriculture. Residents worked part-time at area refineries and kept gardens and livestock. One of five such colonies in Texas, Beauxart Gardens was located on fertile rice land and provided a total of 50 families with a house and acreage. In 1934, the U.S. Government bought 205 acres of land from Frank D. and Lillian Mabry and Ed and Mary Mittie for the creation of Beauxart Gardens. Plans included homesteads of approximately 2.5 to 4.5 acres, two dedicated parks, two shelled public roads and a community center, all protected by fence and cattle guards. Residents purchased homesteads for an average of \$3000, payable over a period of forty years. In addition to a modest frame home, each homestead included a combination garage and cow barn and a chicken house. The federal government transferred title to the Beauxart Homestead Association in 1936 but continued to provide agricultural and related instruction during the Depression. The Beauxart Homestead Association maintained its oversight of the community's development, and the community center was the location of frequent civic and social activities. In 1942 it became the polling place for a new voting precinct at Beauxart Gardens. Today, Beauxart Gardens retains its identity as a successful New Deal program.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◇ **July 12, 2024** 8:00 p.m. Boomtown Cinema Under the Stars presents “How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days”. \$5 entry fee. Visit www.lamar.edu/spindletop-boomtown-museum/events for more information.
- ◇ **July 18, 2024** 5:30 -7:30 p.m. Beaumont Heritage Society’s Heritage Happy Hour at the First City Bank Building, 505 Orleans Street, Beaumont. For more information, please visit www.beaumontheritage.org/events
- ◇ **July 25, 2024** 5:30-7:30 p.m. Opening reception for the Chambers House exhibit “Pressed Pleats and Altered Hems: Findings from the Chambers Family Closets”. An address by Beaumont Heritage Society’s summer intern, Emma Woods, will be given at 6:00 p.m. For more information, visit www.chambershouse.org
- ◇ **July 26, 2024** 7:30 p.m. Boomtown Summer Serenade presents musical guest Jamie Talbert. \$5 entry fee. Visit www.lamar.edu/spindletop-boomtown-museum/events for more information.



Classic Movie Nights at the Jefferson Theatre

- July 11, 2024– The Sandlot
- July 12, 2024– Jurassic Park
- July 18, 2024– 101 Dalmatians
- July 19, 2024– Back to the Future
- July 25, 2024– Scooby Doo
- July 26, 2024– Gone with the Wind



The Ice House Museum & Cultural Center's Railroad Exhibit featuring Silsbee's 1901 Santa Fe Depot opens July 5, 2024. The museum has recreated part of the depot inside its space. Panels will be displayed which will provide the history of railroading in the area, including its early connection to lumberman/businessman John H. Kirby.

The Ice House Museum is located at 818 Earnest Avenue, Silsbee, Texas 77656.

Hours of operation are: 10:00 a.m.— 4:00 p.m. Thursday and Fridays and 11:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. Saturdays.

Do You Know

That for one week ending Sunday, July 5th, we are having a sale on 50 ft. lots in Hillcrest at Nederland priced from \$100.00 to \$275.00. These prices will be advanced Monday, July 6. Buy now.

"He is wise who owns his own home"

Tyrrell-Combust Realty
200-4 Kyle Bldg.

INSURANCE
FIRE and AUTOMOBILE.
REAL ESTATE LOANS.
HUNTER & COLLINS
(O. S.) (H. S.)
216-17 Wise Bldg.

CROSBY HOTEL
Beaumont, Texas
Under new ownership and management. Rates \$1 Per Day and up. Call GALEY-HOFFPATER HOTEL CO. for reservations. G. W. HOFFPATER, Manager.

Don't Let a Leak Worry You
Phone 4210
Our Plumbing and REPAIR SERVICE Saves You
\$ \$ \$ \$ \$
Coburn Company
Phone 4210

Eye Examinations By Modern Methods
Correct modern equipment combined with knowledge and experience enable us to fit you with correct precision.
Glasses
Beaumont Optical Co.
OPTOMETRIST
330 Pearl St.
H. A. PHILIPSON, Manager.

Andrus-Park Stores
Specials listed in all our stores—Both Beaumont and Port Arthur.
Sugar, Lard, Milk, Canned Fruits, Argo Salmon and Canned Peas.
Fresh Meats at the Markets
See our Black Boards as prices are the LOWEST in Town.

PIGGLY WIGGLY Bulletin

Extra Value Tuesday
Gold Dust Per Pkg. . . 3

Evaporated Milk . . . Tall Can
Carnation Pet Dairy . . . Baby Can
Borden's Armour's

Tidal Wave Flour, 24-lb. Sk.

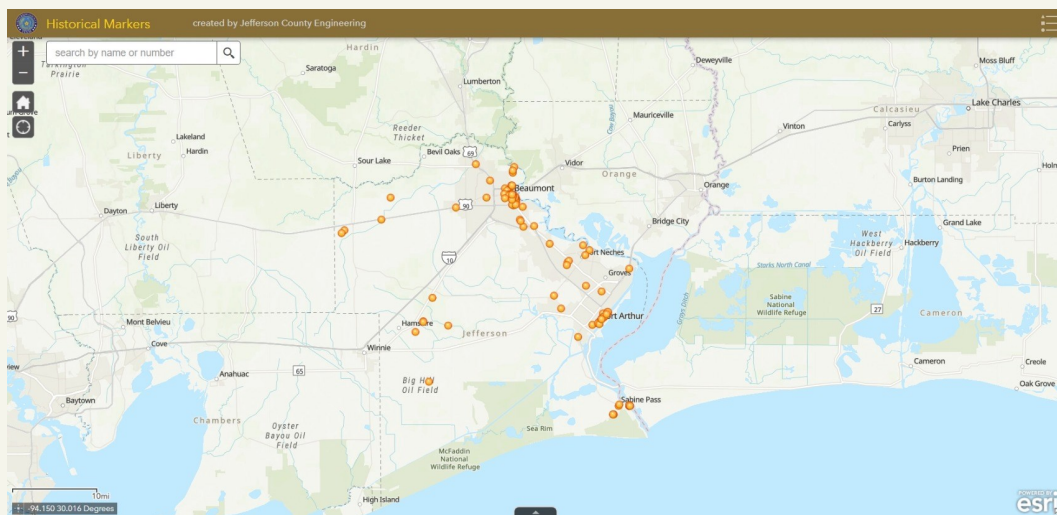
Tomatoes, No. 1 Cans . . .

AT FRUIT STANDS
Just received: Shipment fresh Colorado Turnips, Beets, Green Onions, Radishes, Sweet Peas, Egg Plant, Cauliflower and Spinach.
The above prices effective at our store in Orange, and our 2 stores in Port Arthur today.

A step back in time— 100 years to be exact! Ads from the July 1, 1924 issue of the Beaumont Enterprise

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.



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!



QUICK FACTS FROM THE JCHC LOCAL HISTORY CALENDAR

Did you know that each year, JCHC appointees research local history for inclusion in a local history calendar? The 2024 calendar can be viewed on our website at https://co.jefferson.tx.us/Historical_Commission/pdfs/web/viewer.html?file+files/History/JCHS_2024_CALENDAR.pdf

July 1, 1882– The first traffic law was passed for Jefferson County.

July 1, 1897– The summer of 1897, Port Arthur Land Co. began construction of the Orange Hotel in Nederland for the purpose of housing immigrants brought to the area.

July 1, 1903– The Beaumont Light Guard became known as Co. M, Third Infantry, Texas National Guard, following passage of Texas Senate Bill 165

July 4, 1976– Dedication of 20 acres of land for the William Doornbos Park, located in the 2300 block of Avenue H in Nederland.

July 5, 1932– Billywalker soft drink introduced by Beaumont soda manufacturer of the same name, Billy Walker.

July 6, 1931– Beaumont Exporters set a Texas League record with 6 triples.

July 9, 1980– John Paul Davis took an oath of office, becoming Beaumont's first African-American Judge.

July 11, 1881– The city of Beaumont was incorporated under a general statute.

July 11, 1879– The Post Office opened in Nome.

July 15, 1902– Rosenthal Dry Goods opened.

July 17, 1897– The first land in Nederland purchased by George Reinstra. He purchased 80 acres for \$800.00 cash from KCS Railroad, which became Lots 1,2 and 3 on Boston Avenue.

July 22, 1904– G.W. Carroll accepted National Prohibition Party's nomination as U.S. Vice President.

July 23, 1919– Cleveland Nisby, local civil rights activist and community leader, was born.

July 24, 1963– Canvass of election was held to incorporate the Town of Bevil Oaks. The measure passed.

July 25, 1948– The Melody Maids, on tour in New York to sing at Lions International convention, make their television debut on the Dumont Ward Show.

July 31, 1925– "Free Beer Day" sponsored by XXX Root Beer was celebrated at ballparks in Beaumont, Nederland & Port Arthur.

GET IN TOUCH

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409-835-8701 • www.facebook.com/FRIENDSofJCHC