

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

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

- May 17, 2023 10:00 a.m.
- July 19, 2023 10:00 a.m.
- September 20, 2023 10:00 a.m.
- November 15, 2023 10:00 a.m.

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PRESERVATION AND JEFFERSON COUNTY

The mission of the Jefferson County Historical Commission is to “Preserve, Protect and Promote the rich history of Jefferson County”. With May being both Preservation Month and Disaster Preparedness Month, it’s important to think about promoting Disaster Preparedness as it relates to Preservation.

April 30th through May 6th is Preservation Week and many great resources are available at www.preservationweek.org including two webinars about different facets of Disaster and Tragedy Response with regard to preservation.

JCHC appointees regularly engage in preservation activities of all types, including research on local history, volunteering at museums, volunteering with libraries to catalog and digitize their collections and so much more.

One important component of preservation and preparedness is surveying and inventorying. For municipal governments, conducting historic resources surveys is a vital part of preservation and preparedness. Without knowing exactly what historic resources (typically defined as properties and structures of historic significance) are located within the boundaries of a local government, an effective preservation plan cannot exist.

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In 2019 the JCHC was awarded a grant from the National Park Service's Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria Disaster Recovery Grant Program. This emergency supplemental funding is intended to provide relief for historic preservation projects in areas impacted by these storms. The JCHC applied for this grant to be used to perform a historic resources survey of Jefferson County, excluding the incorporated areas of Beaumont and Port Arthur. This survey includes areas such as Groves, Port Neches, Nederland, Fannett, Hamshire, LaBelle, Cheek, Nome, China and Bevil Oaks. Once this survey is complete, a preservation plan will be developed. This survey is the first of its kind for Jefferson County and the preservation plan will enable the JCHC to help increase awareness of the preservation and preparedness needs for the county.

You can view the Historic Resources Survey at: https://dmoore.egnyte.com/fl/zs5wAiRrs1/Task-09_Draft-Survey-Report_

A survey is being conducted to pinpoint the preservation priorities of the citizens of Jefferson County. The most effective preservation plan will be the one that reflects the needs and interests of the county. You can participate in this survey by using the QR code below, or the link below to complete the survey. If you'd prefer a raw .pdf copy that you can return to the JCHC office, please email Jennifer.Trenbeath@jeffcotx.us

Jefferson County Historic Preservation Plan Questionnaire

Open through Wednesday, May 10, 2023



<https://forms.gle/QQy6xTFaBHi74rKUA>



PRESERVATION AT HOME

- Organize your family photos and make copies for all your family members! Distributing copies lessens the risk of completely losing the content in case of disaster
 - Make an inventory of your documents/photos/collection
- Scan your documents/photos/paper ephemera and store the digital files on portable flash drives or the cloud
- Get VHS, Cassette Tapes converted into a digital format. There are professional services that can convert these media types before they degrade from age.
- Stop storing papers and collections in cardboard boxes! Cardboard will act as a sponge if it comes in contact with water. Instead use acid-free, non PVC plastic storage totes.
- Store papers separately from photographs and digital media. Just separating these items can lengthen their lives by protecting them from chemical off-gassing.

RESOURCES

<https://tsl.texas.gov/outofthestacks/category/preservation/>

And

[Www.archives.gov/preservation/conservation/flood-damage.html](http://www.archives.gov/preservation/conservation/flood-damage.html)

CLIFTON— WARTIME SERVICE, PART II

Soon after her first experience of combat below New Orleans, *Clifton* was assigned to escort USS *Sachem* - a ship with which she would soon be captured on the Texas coast - on a reconnaissance against Confederate Fort Gaines at Mobile, Alabama. As at Forts Jackson and St. Philip, *Sachem* was employed in conducting surveys to calculate precision targeting of the fort by naval artillery, as United States commanders were considering a similar attack on Mobile. On May 8, 1862, while approaching Fort Gaines, *Clifton* ran aground within artillery range of the fort. The larger steamers accompanying the expedition could not approach her to help, as they would have grounded as well, so the smaller *Sachem* was sent in to assist her. Though *Clifton* was refloated under her own power as the lines and anchors from *Sachem* were being affixed to her, Lieutenant Commander Baldwin nonetheless tendered his thanks to the crew of *Sachem* for bravely moving up to help her, all the while under a tremendous cannonade from the enemy fort. This action ended with no casualties on either side, and the 1862 plan to attack Mobile was abandoned.

President Lincoln wanted full control of the Mississippi River restored to the Union in order to split the Confederacy, and Admiral Farragut was therefore ordered to continue up the river. Baton Rouge, Louisiana was captured May 9, 1862, and Natchez, Mississippi on May 12, 1862. To the north, United States naval forces captured Island No.10 and Memphis, Tennessee, which isolated the last two major Confederate Mississippi River strongholds of Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Port Hudson, Louisiana.

For the attack on Vicksburg, Farragut would repeat his tactics at New Orleans, beginning with a 4AM attack from below the city with his gunboats and mortar schooners on June 28, 1862. *Clifton*, as part of Commander Porter's division, engaged the rebel water batteries as Farragut attempted to pass the city with his division. USS *JP Jackson*, another ferry gunboat, took several shots from a Confederate 7-inch Brooke rifle which disabled her steering mechanisms. *Clifton* moved up to assist her, and in doing so, she received a shot from a 50-pounder Dahlgren gun through her steam machinery. In a foreshadowing of future events at Sabine Pass, the escaping steam blasted its way throughout the boat's forward compartments, blowing out hatch covers

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and filling the magazine with steam. Six crewmen were scalded to death and many had to jump overboard, one of whom drowned in the river. Despite the damage, Commander Baldwin kept his 32-pounders and 9-inch pivot guns firing at the enemy batteries. *Jackson's* crew managed to restore her steering, and she in turn assisted *Clifton*, which was completely disabled by the loss of steam pressure to her propulsion mechanisms. USS *Octorora* was able to secure towing lines to *Clifton* and removed her to safety. One week later, *Clifton* had been temporarily repaired, operating under only one of her boilers. Lieutenant Commander Baldwin reported that she would still be able to fight, although her speed would be much reduced until the boiler could be repaired in a shop by dedicated craftsmen. The next month, she would receive a new commander and orders for further combat in Louisiana and Texas.

Despite the fierce exchange of fire, neither side inflicted much damage on the other, with apparently poor Confederate marksmanship and the inability of the United States vessels to elevate their guns high enough to target the rebel batteries on the river bluffs. Though Vicksburg had been successfully passed by Farragut's fleet, it would require a prolonged siege by the army under General Ulysses S. Grant to conquer the fabled "Gibraltar of the Confederacy."

Both Mobile and Vicksburg revealed *Clifton's* major weaknesses – the big boat's tendency to frequently run aground – a trait shared by all ferry gunboats in US service - and the vulnerability of her machinery to heavy Confederate ordnance. Both of these weaknesses would later be glaringly obvious at Sabine Pass.

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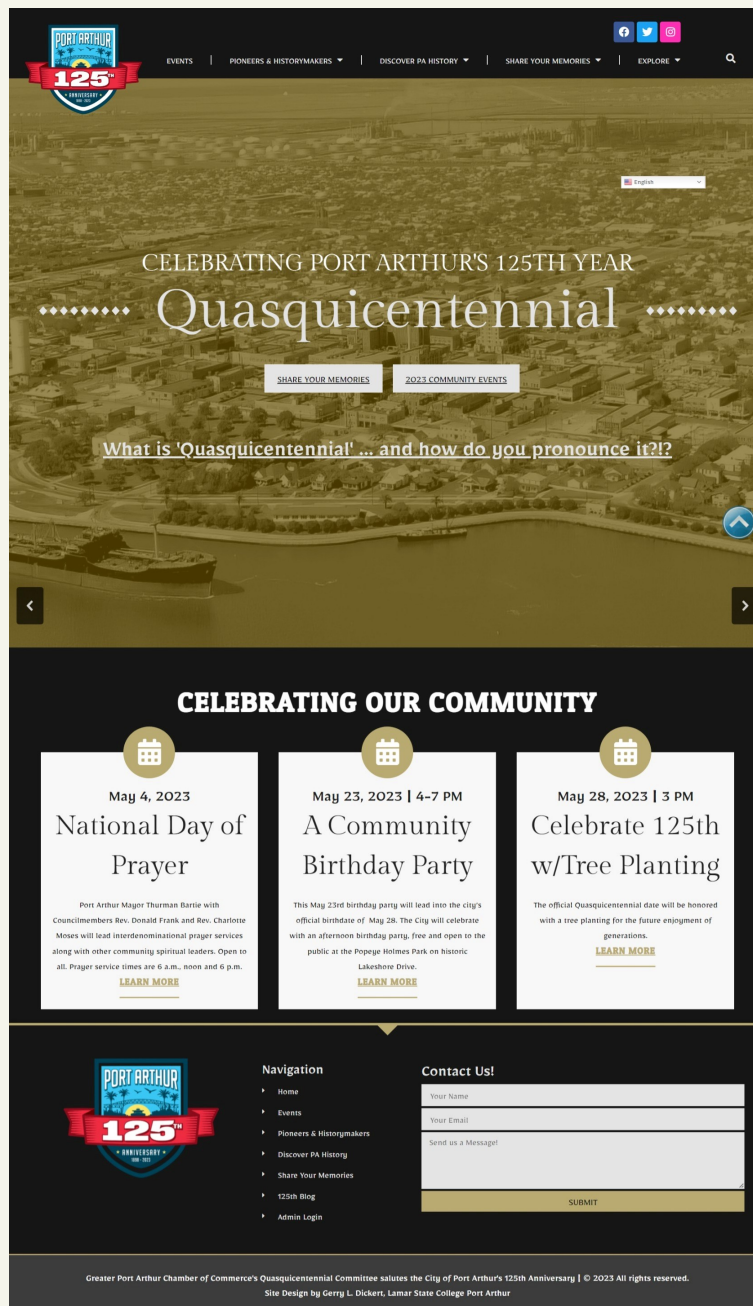
*Though this image is of Farragut's fleet passing Port Hudson, it reflects the scene at Vicksburg on June 28, 1862, minus the burning USS *Mississippi*.

Sources

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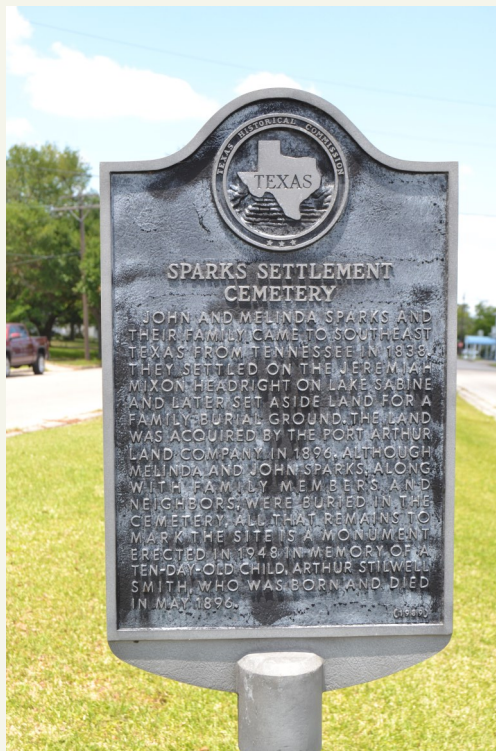
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On May 2nd, 1899 , the first City of Port Arthur officials were elected. The City of Port Arthur's incorporation was made official on March 30 of the previous year. The City of Port Arthur and the Port Arthur Chamber of Commerce will be holding events through the 2023 calendar year to celebrate Port Arthur's quasquicentennial. Events and historical information can be found at <https://portarthur125.com>

MARKER SPOTLIGHT: **SPARKS SETTLEMENT CEMETERY** **DEQUEEN BLVD AT 2500 BLK OF LAKESHORE DRIVE, PORT ARTHUR**



John and Melinda Sparks and their family came to southeast Texas from Tennessee in 1838. They settled on the Jeremiah Mixon headright on Lake Sabine and later set aside land for a family burial ground. The land was acquired by the Port Arthur Land Company in 1896. Although Melinda and John Sparks, along with family members and neighbors, were buried in the cemetery, all that remains to mark the site is a monument erected in 1948 in memory of a ten-day-old child, Arthur Stilwell Smith, who was born and died in May 1896.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◇ **May 4, 2023 “Imagine the Possibilities”** tour hosted by Beaumont Main Street. Start at the Jefferson Theatre at 4:00 p.m. for free tours of historic Downtown Beaumont. Visit www.beaumontmainstreet.org or call 409-838-2202 for more information.
- ◇ **May 6, 2023 “Lightning in a Camera” @ Museum of the Gulf Coast** The photographs of Jerry Connally. Opening reception May 6, 2023, 6:30 p.m.–8:00 p.m. Exhibit runs through July 29, 2023. Visit www.museumofthegulfcoast.org/events for more information.
- ◇ **May 7-13 “Texas Living History Week”** Texas Historical Commission sites across Texas will allow travelers to step back into history with tours and hands-on activities. Visit www.texasimetravel.com/livinghistoryweek for more information
- ◇ **May 13, 2023 “Family Fun Day: For the Birds” @ Museum of the Gulf Coast** Featuring Sonny the Birdman and his parrots. 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. Visit www.museumofthegulfcoast.org/events for more information
- ◇ **May 18, 2023 Lecture– “Jewelry for America: History and Evolution of Jewelry in America from the 19th Century” @McFaddin Ward House Visitor Center**, 6:30 p.m.—8:30 p.m. Guest lecturer Beth Carver Wees will present a brief look at the earliest jewelry worn in America. Visit www.mcfaddinward.org/event for more information
- ◇ **May 27, 2023 Memorial Day Service–** Visit Magnolia Cemetery at 10:00 a.m. for a service honoring the men and women who gave their lives in service of our nation. Call 409-832-5741 for more information.

GET IN TOUCH

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