

## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Members,

This year has been a busy and productive year for promoting our county's history. We have been a partner in celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Sabine Pass, worked diligently on a website re-design to increase visibility of our history and archives, and monitored plans for an interior restoration of the historic courthouse.

May each of you be blessed with a happy and healthy holiday season!

Theresa Goodness, JCHC Chair



Jefferson County Courthouse  
Christmas Tree 2013

### VOLUME 2013, ISSUE 6

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### DECEMBER, 2013

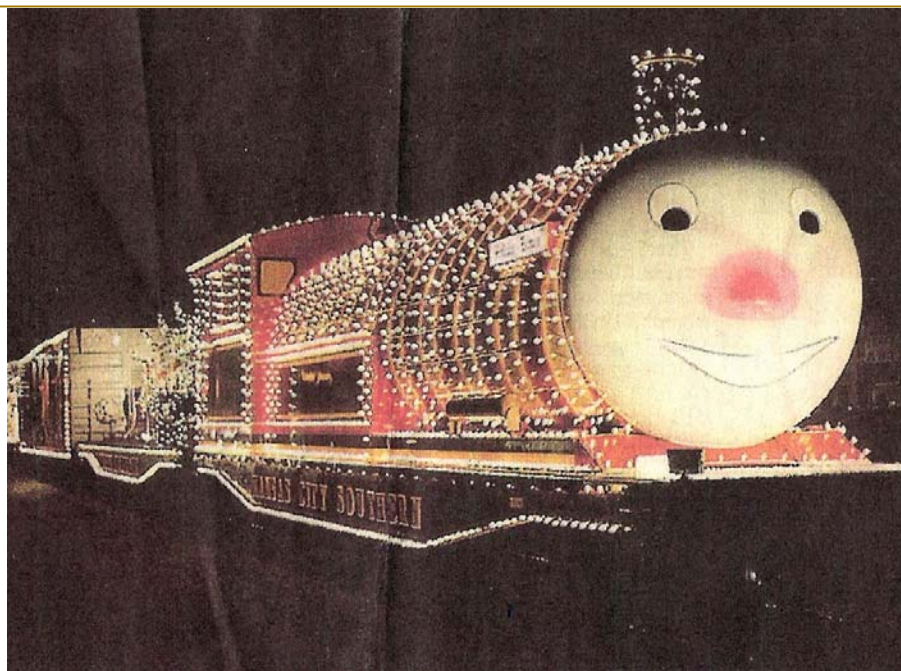
#### Special points of interest:

- \* Next Meeting.
- \* Volunteer Hours.
- \* Mini-museum
- \* CLG News

## RED BRICK AWARD

On December 13, 2013, JCHC, in recognition of our five year membership anniversary. Chair, Theresa Goodness, and Coordinator, Linda McMahan, accepted the award on behalf of JCHC. We appreciate our partnership and applaud Beaumont Main Street for their many accomplishments in preserving our history in downtown Beaumont.

## KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN HOLIDAY EXPRESS TRAIN



KCS Holiday Express  
Photo Credits: DeQuincy News

An estimated two thousand people enjoyed the KSC Holiday Express Train at the site of the Kansas City Southern Railway Depot in Port Arthur where an historical marker was dedicated in 2010.

Children and adults alike were thrilled to see the special train decorated with lights and filled with Christmas wonders such as a gingerbread house, Santa's workshop and his sleigh. Santa and his elves were also on hand to greet the crowds.

## JCHC MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS IN 2014

January 23, 2014	Noon	JCHC Conference Room Third Floor
March 27, 2014	Noon	JCHC Conference Room Third Floor
May 15, 2014	Noon	JCHC Conference Room Third Floor
July 24, 2014	Noon	JCHC Conference Room Third Floor
September 25, 2014	Noon	JCHC Conference Room Third Floor
December 11, 2014	Noon	JCHC Conference Room Third Floor

### VOLUNTEER HOURS

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. (Emeritus members do not have to meet this requirement.)

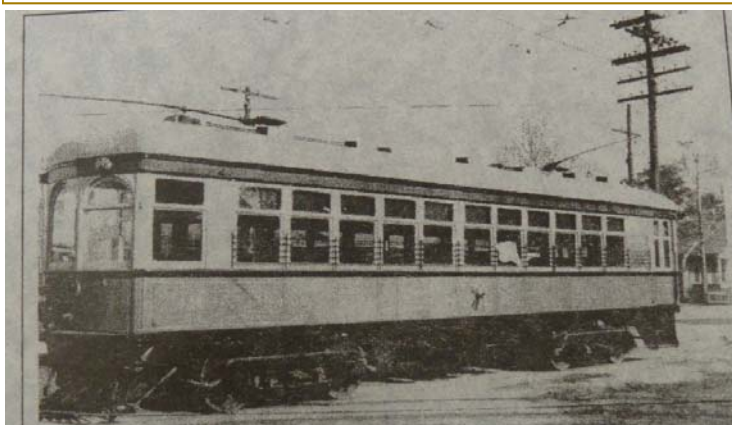
Also with the number of hours, JCHC needs a general description of work performed, for example: 3 Hours – Marker Survey.

If you have any questions, please call the office at 409-835-8701 or contact Linda via email at [histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us](mailto:histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us)

### PRESERVATION PARTNERS

Beaumont Heritage Society  
Landmark Commission  
Texas Historical Foundation  
Friends of Sabine Pass Park  
Beaumont Main Street  
Museum of the Gulf Coast

## 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERURBAN BY PAUL PROSPERIE



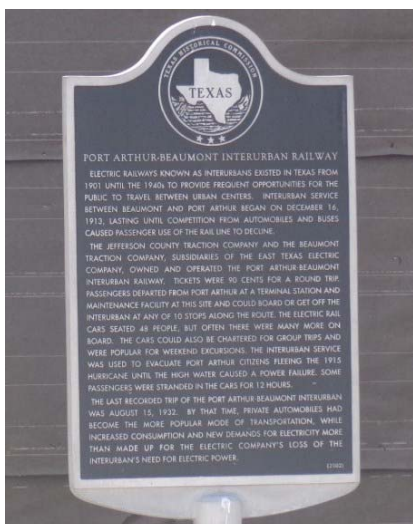
Railcars from the Port Arthur-Beaumont Interurban Railway

Photo Credits: JCHC Archives



Historical Marker for the Port Arthur-Beaumont Interurban Railway

Photo Credits:  
JCHC Archives



December will mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inaugural run of one of Jefferson County's faded treasures. The Interurban, a full-sized electric train, ran daily between Port Arthur and Beaumont from December 15, 1913, to August 15, 1932.

In the early 1900s, both Port Arthur and Beaumont were thriving. Oil had surpassed cattle and lumber as the major export of SETX, and many people had come here at the turn of the century to earn a better living. A burgeoning industry as well as a growing population had given rise to the need for transportation between the two cities, and in 1913, Jefferson County residents received a gem.

In July of that year, the Stone and Webster Corporation purchased the Beaumont Traction Company, thus acquiring 12 miles of track with overhead electric lines, 20 passenger cars, and a car barn. This, along with the formation of the Jefferson County Traction Company, laid the groundwork for a rail system between Beaumont and Port Arthur. Acquiring the right of way through the county was a simple task since most of the landowners and farmers welcomed the idea of easy transportation to and from the cities. Most gave the required land away or sold it for a token dollar.

The train would make 19 trips per day with an early start of 5:45 am and a midnight finish. Tickets cost 90 cents for a round-trip or 50 cents one way and were prorated for the 10 stops between the two cities. Stops along the way included South Park, Spindletop, Nederland, Rice Farm, and Griffing/Pear Ridge.

Certainly the railway was a great asset to Jefferson County during its run, and in 1915, it aided the fleeing residents of Port Arthur during a hurricane until a power outage stranded the train. Some passengers rode out the storm, spending a total of 12 hours in the railcars.

In August 1932, the Interurban railway made its final departure, ending 19 years of service. Although it had survived hurricanes and other element-related hardships, it could not survive progress. By the 1930s, private ownership of cars and a bus system ultimately made the need for a passenger railway between Beaumont and Port Arthur redundant.

Nothing is left of the original line except a right of way where the tracks once lay. Sadly, the tracks have been replaced with power lines, which stretch from 19<sup>th</sup> Street in Port Arthur to near Lamar University in Beaumont. A historical marker, dedicated in 2002, is located on Austin Avenue in front of what was then the office.



# **HARDIN COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION HOSTS AWARDS LUNCHEON**

**BY THERESA GOODNESS**

On November 21, 2013, our members were invited to an annual awards luncheon hosted by the Hardin County Historical Commission where they recognize individuals who have contributed to local preservation efforts. A short history program was part of the program. Les and Linda McMahan, Paul Prosperie and Bill Cummings attended.

This was the second function held recently in Hardin County which JCHC had the privilege to receive an invitation. Our warmest thanks go out to our friends in East Texas who have taken a leadership role in networking within the preservation community.

Hardin County Awards Luncheon

Photo Credits: Paul Prosperie



## LIBERTY COUNTY: WHISPERS FROM THE PAST

On October 26<sup>27</sup>, 2013, the Liberty County Historical Commission sponsored a tour of the Liberty City Cemetery called "Whispers from the Past." Reenactors depicting historic figures from Liberty County dressed in period appropriate attire and gave tour participants a guided tour of the cemetery. Paul Prosperie attended and took these photos to share with us.



Liberty Cemetery: Whispers from the Past

Photo Credits: Paul Prosperie





## AREA MUSEUM UPCOMING EVENTS

### Museum of the Gulf Coast

Join us for the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Celebration at the Museum of the Gulf Coast "Jingle All the Way"

Saturday, December 14, 2013

Activities include: Carriage rides to Pompeiian Villa for Hot Chocolate, Train Rides, Hands-on Activities and Arts and Crafts, Christmas games, Gingerbread Man decorating contest, Free screening of "The Polar Express" at 12:30 p.m.

Cost is \$4/per person 3 and over (under 3 is free). Museum members and Port Arthur Historical Society members get in for free.

Credit: <http://www.museumofthegulfcoast.org>



Museum of the Gulf Coast

Photo Credit: [museumofthegulfcoast.org](http://museumofthegulfcoast.org)



Chambers House

Photo Credit: [chambershouse.org](http://chambershouse.org)

### Chambers House

#### **Christmas Open House**

Come and see the Chambers House decorated for the holidays with ornaments, cards, and more that belonged to the family. Ruth and Florence Chambers' toys and the family silver will also be on display.

Credit: <http://www.chambershouse.org/>

### McFaddin Ward House

Join us at the McFaddin-Ward House Museum on Saturday, December 14, 2013 from 1 - 4 p.m., for a celebration of Christmas traditions at the annual Holiday Open House!

Take a break from the busy holiday pace and bring the whole family for a chance to enjoy a simpler, more peaceful Christmastime. Tour the brightly-decorated first floor of the museum, try your hand at Christmas activities, and sample traditional Christmas cookies and punch while you relax and listen to music of the season. The event is free and open to everyone!

Credit: <http://mcfaddin-ward.org/events/>



McFaddin Ward House

Photo Credit: [mcfaddin-ward.org](http://mcfaddin-ward.org)

**JEFFERSON  
COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
COMMISSION**

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Linda McMahan, Coordinator



*To preserve and  
promote history within  
the County.*

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We're on the web!  
<http://co.jefferson.tx.us/>

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Etching of 1893 Jefferson  
County Courthouse from County  
Clerk Letterhead

Jefferson County Historical Commission

Executive Board 2013 - 2014

Chairman, Theresa Goodness

Vice-Chairman, Les McMahan

Secretary/Treasurer, Paul Prosperie

Immediate Past Chairman, Ron Ellington



Clyde Marchbanks, County  
Purchasing Agent in 1930's  
Photo Credit: Sarilee Ferguson,  
daughter of Clyde Marchbanks

**JCHC MINI-MUSEUM  
DECEMBER 2013**

The Jefferson County Historical Commission is sponsoring an exhibit by Bruce Hamilton housed in the Mini Museum. The exhibit, entitled "Whispers of the Past," contains various pieces of Jefferson County History such as the wooden box which held the launching bottle for "M. V. Cape Faro" used by Mrs. John H. McGregor for the Pennsylvania Shipyards, Beaumont, January 17, 1944; souvenir cup and saucer from the Jefferson County Courthouse; and a small light tan zipper case with "Rita Ainsworth" stamped in gold.

Thank you, Bruce, for sharing these special pieces of Jefferson County history. If you have a collection you would like to place in the JCHC Mini Museum, please contact Linda (409 835 8701 or [histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us](mailto:histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us)) for more information.