



HERITAGE BRAZOS

The Newsletter of the Brazos Heritage Society



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Independence Day Celebration a Huge Success

More than 250 people attended the 25th Anniversary 4th of July celebration at Heritage Park in Bryan, Texas.

The official program began at 9:45 AM, when Nat Hilliard, President of the Brazos Historical Society, asked Gerald Garcia to offer an invocation. The invocation was followed by members of the Sojourners, who raised the American Flag, led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance, and then provided their now famous toast to the American Flag, our great symbol of liberty. The National Anthem was also sung.

During the program, two special presentations were made by President Hilliard. Jonathan Smith, who served as President of the Brazos Heritage Society from 2008 to 2011, was presented a plaque in recognition of his dedicated service. Also receiving a plaque was Tom McDonald, who organized the first 4th of July celebration in the Bryan Historic District 25 years ago, and who has been steadfast in promoting the history of Brazos County. He was cited for his "vision, service, leadership, and patriotism in the development of Heritage Park."

Following the brief program, The Westernaires, a local band, provided a variety of musical selections – from patriotic to country and western to popular standards – throughout the morning.

While the music played, there was the annual children's parade around the park; many of the children wore patriotic costumes and their bicycles and wagons were decorated in red, white, and blue. Other activities included a silent auction, games, booths, and exhibits, including a collection of vintage Studebakers and the crown from the Queen Theatre, provided by the Downtown Bryan Association.

Members of the Brazos Heritage Society served free lemonade, hot dogs, and watermelon to those in attendance.

In commenting on the success of this year's festivities, President Hilliard noted that this would not have been possible without the help of the Society's Executive Committee and an army of volunteers. She also recognized a number of corporate sponsors for their generous support, including Dent Magic, Wienerschnitzel #255, Saint Gobain/Norpro, the Farm Patch, Taco Bell #2310, and the Dixie Chicken, Inc.

President's Message

WOW! I hope you were able to join us for our 25th Anniversary Old Fashioned 4th of July Celebration – it was Great!

We have several things in the works right now and I will take a minute to tell you about them.

First: We are trying to obtain a Historic Marker for Boonville before the Town site disappears under a sea of concrete during the construction of new housing. Sheila Fields has been working very hard to get the necessary permission from the owners for us to apply for the marker. Anyone who can help us with this project please contact Sheila Fields or myself.

Second: Glynis Gore has been working with the City of Bryan to get a Master Plan in place for Heritage Park. She is waiting, at the moment, for a detailed drawing from the designer so we can present the Master Plan to the Parks and Recreation Department for approval.

Third: We are having a collection of vintage clothes, donated to us several years ago by the Astin family, restored so they can be displayed at the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History. Beverly Myers has been coordinating this project. The clothes are to be prominently displayed in the Astin wing of the Museum, a first run is scheduled from January through April of 2012, contingent of course upon our getting the clothes restored to a usable condition in time. The Heard-Craig Historic Center in McKinney, Texas has offered to loan the museum some of Nina Heard Astin's china and other items to enhance the clothing display. We are currently applying to the Arts Council for funding to help with the restoration. We will be looking other places for grants to help with this as well.

Fourth: A full Membership Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September, 29, 2011, at 7:00 PM, at Heritage Park. I will email those with email addresses, and Dan Beto will put the information up on our new blog – *Heritage Brazos* – at <http://heritagebrazos.blogspot.com>. We will also be mailing notices about the meeting to those members who do not have computers. Plan to attend; refreshments will be served.

Fifth: Plans are in the works for our Annual BHS tea, which will take place at The Clary House on November 12th and 13th. Anyone interested in helping with the tea please contact me!

Sixth: We have tentatively set the date for our Christmas fundraiser for December 10th; there will be more information to follow on this as plans firm up.

I have been blessed with a wonderful, enthusiastic, hard working Executive Committee, for which I continually give thanks.

Anyone wishing to step up to the plate and help us accomplish our goals please contact me at 979-229-2468 or nathilliard@verison.net.

Nat Hilliard, President

Victorian Tea Scheduled for November

On the afternoons of Saturday and Sunday, November 12-13, 2011, the Brazos Heritage Society will host Victorian afternoon teas in the beautiful Clary House, located at 601 East 30th Street in the Bryan Historic District. There will be two seatings each day, the first at 2:00 PM and the second at 4:00 PM.

The price of admission is \$35.00 per person. For reservations, please call Beverly Myers at (979) 229-9414. Tickets must be purchased in advance. Seating is limited so make reservations early.

The Clary House is a transitional style home built by Charlie Jenkins for John H. Moore in 1902. Since that time the house has undergone considerable renovation. The current and fourth owner – Linda Roberts – totally renovated this historic house's interior and now operates it as a bed and breakfast.

Proceeds from this event will go to fulfilling the mission of the Brazos Heritage Society.

Treasurer's Report

I am pleased to report that the financial condition of the Society is healthy. As of May 31, 2011, the checking account had a balance of \$9,060.53. Since that date the Society received \$964.00 from book sales, memberships, the silent auction, and donations, and expended \$1,288.86, most of which was related to the 4th of July celebration. This has resulted in a checking account balance of \$8,735.67 on July 27, 2011. In addition, the Society has two certificates of deposit valued at \$14,016.23.

Should more detailed information be desired, please feel free to contact me at the following email address: mycobra@suddenlink.net.

Beverly Myers, Treasurer

Brazos Heritage Society on the World Wide Web

In addition to its website at www.brazosheritage.org, which is undergoing some modifications and updates, the Brazos Heritage Society has created a blog – *Heritage Brazos* – where newsletters and other items of interest to members will be posted.

While still in the developmental stage, *Heritage Brazos* may be accessed by going to the following link: <http://heritagebrazos.blogspot.com>. Please visit *Heritage Brazos*. Any suggestions for improvement or additions may be sent to dan.beto@gmail.com.

Dan Beto, Publications Chair

Remembering Boonville

The Brazos Heritage Society is pursuing the placement of an historical marker at the site of the original Boonville town site located on FM 158 across from the Boonville Cemetery. This is also the site of much new development and we hope to stake a claim for the very special place that was once the county seat of Brazos County.

The Daniel Boone connection to Brazos County began in 1751 with his marriage to Rebecca Bryan in North Carolina. A brother and sister of Boone also married Bryan family members. The Boones were friends and neighbors of the Moses Austin family and marriage between these families produced William Joel Bryan. After the death of Moses Austin, his son, Stephen Fuller, would continue to lead settlers to Texas.

During the year of 1821 the first of the original three hundred colonists, led by Stephen F. Austin, arrived and began building cabins and growing crops along the Brazos and Navasota Rivers. Texas was still a wild unsettled area open to Indian attacks and constantly in danger of being invaded by small Mexican armies. As more and more settlers began making their homes in Texas, they were finally able to muster together armies of their own aided by volunteers from Tennessee and led by General Sam Houston.

During that same year a young man named Harvey Mitchell was born in Cornersville, Tennessee. At the age of 18 he left Tennessee by wagon train for Texas and settled in this area known as Boonville, named after Mordecai Boone, Sr., a nephew of Daniel Boone. Mitchell set about working hard to aid fellow citizens in everyday life. He would eventually serve as Boonville's tax collector, surveyor, postmaster, chief justice, justice of the peace, teacher, operator of the gristmill, blacksmith shop, and dry good and grocery, and member of the Masons as well as the Minute Men. Mitchell would also go on to lead the way for Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College to be located in this area in 1872. He became known as the "Father of Brazos County."

Life in the settlement of Boonville began to thrive and Hiram Hanover, Richard Carter, and John H. Jones laid out plans for a town square of 150 acres with small lots facing a public square and 10-acre lots around these for growing crops or keeping animals, all laid out on a 45-degree angle to the compass. This custom of town planning was to prevent cold northerly winds from blowing through north-south streets, not a bad idea in Texas when a "blue norther" was coming through! Auctions were held to sell the small lots and raise money for the new functioning government and to pay off the \$150 per acre of land. This area is located in the pasture to the left of Tom Light Drive on FM 158. Lot 1 never sold and became the Boonville Cemetery.

By 1841 Boonville became the county seat and a log cabin courthouse was build on the public square. This was the first of three Brazos County courthouses. A cedar tree which grew at the site of the courthouse was transplanted to the downtown Bryan courthouse and still grows there today. A jail was also built in Boonville and became known as the worst jail in the Texas Republic because of its impossible escape design and its infestation with fleas! It was referred to as "The Dungeon" and was located at the entrance to Tom Light Drive on FM 158.

Although an outbreak of yellow fever swept through Boonville, taking many citizens who are now buried in the Boonville Cemetery, the town appeared destined for greatness when word of the railroad coming through emerged, but alas, when land was sold by William Joel Bryan for the railroad just two miles west of Boonville the little pioneer town began its decline. Citizens began moving to the new town that became "Bryan." Some families even disassembled their log cabins and moved them by wagon to rebuild in Bryan. Even Harvey Mitchell encouraged his fellow citizens to leave town and go to Bryan because "that's where the future is." By 1866 Boonville was deserted except for an orphanage near the cemetery which eventually was abandoned. Today a lone oak tree is all that stands at the site of the town square in the pasture on Tom Light Drive.

It is our hope that we might mark this very special place in our county's history so that, although there are no physical signs of its existence, we will not forget its importance to us.

Sheila Fields, Research Chair