



HERITAGE BRAZOS

The Newsletter of the Brazos Heritage Society



Volume 2, Issue 4

January 2013

OFFICERS

Nat Hilliard
President
nathilliard@verizon.net

Dan Beto
Vice President
dan.beto@gmail.com

Kyle Kovel
Secretary
kylekovel@gmail.com

Beverly Myers
Treasurer
mycobra@suddenlink.net

Jonathan Smith
Past President
jmsmith@neo.tamu.edu

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Sheila Fields
Research
atredrobin@msn.com

Randy & Stephanie Hilliard
Heritage Park & Events
stephanie.hilliard@gmail.com

Tom McDonald
Of Counsel
tmackd1998@aol.com

Brazos Heritage Society
P. O. Box 1776
Bryan, Texas 77806
brazos.heritage@gmail.com

President's Message

These past two years I have served as your President have been challenging, rewarding, and full of activity. During this period members of the Brazos Heritage Society accomplished a great deal:

Continuing the tradition, we held two well attended and enjoyable Independence Day celebrations in Bryan's Heritage Park;

We produced two successful Christmas strolls in the Eastside Historical District and Heritage Park;

We provided stewardship of Heritage Park by finalizing a master plan, providing necessary maintenance, and entering into a relationship with Blaine Brezina to landscape and plant trees in partial fulfillment of his Eagle Scout project;

Working in harmony with the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History, we participated in two Boonville Day Living History Fairs and created a special exhibit of Astin Family clothing;

We held a Victorian tea at the Clary House and at Fannin School we had an "Antique Sideshow," Brazos County's answer to the successful PBS program *Antiques Roadshow*;

We helped host the 2012 Arbor Day ceremony in Heritage Park;

With the help of the Duncum Family, we placed a community marker designating the site of the old Boonville jail;

We created *Heritage Brazos*, our electronic newsletter;

In addition to the regular annual meetings in February, we held two fall meetings at the Matthew Winsper Knobel Memorial Gazebo in the Park;

And we supported several organizations whose mission was to preserve the history of Brazos County.

All this could not have been accomplished without the hard work of those persons who served on the Executive Committee over the past two years, to whom I am extremely grateful. I have thoroughly enjoyed serving as your President but it is now time for someone else to assume this responsibility.

Please attend the Society's Annual Membership Meeting on Sunday, February 24, 2013, at 2:00 PM at the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History, at which time we will elect new officers. If you are interested in serving in any capacity, please come to the meeting. If you have any questions about serving as an officer, please feel free to call me at 229-2468 or email me at nathilliard@verizon.net.

I look forward to seeing you on February 24. Please come and get acquainted with other members of the Society.

Nat Hilliard, President

Treasurer's Report

The following is an overview of the finance condition of the Brazos Heritage Society as of January 28, 2013.

At Prosperity Bank we have a certificate of deposit valued at \$8,379.26 and our checking account at the bank has a balance of \$5,764.73, for a total of \$14,143.99.

For more detailed information about the Society's financial condition, please do not hesitate to contact me at 979-229-9414 or by email at mycobra@suddenlink.net.

Beverly Myers, Treasurer

Electronic Newsletter and Social Networking Update

If you have not done so, please visit the Society's electronic newsletter – *Heritage Brazos* – at <http://heritagebrazos.blogspot.com>. This electronic newsletter is the official publication of the Brazos Heritage Society and it provides the same information found in the paper editions of the newsletter and much, much more.

At year end 2012, the Society's newsletter has had 7,114 online visits from 50 different countries.

While the vast majority of those visits were from within the United States, the newsletter's website was also viewed by people in the following countries (listed in alphabetical order): Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Malaysia, Mexico, Namibia, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, Togo, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Venezuela, and Vietnam.

In decreasing order, the ten countries with the most visits are: United States – 6,015; Russia – 407; China – 87; United Kingdom – 71; Germany – 58; France – 56; United Arab Emirates – 50; Canada – 36; Israel – 22; and Thailand – 22.

In addition, the Society has a Facebook page, which may be viewed by going to the following link: www.facebook.com/brazosheritagesociety. Please visit it and "Like" it.

And finally, the Society has its own email address – brazos.heritage@gmail.com – which is regularly checked. Feel free to contact us.

Dan Beto, Vice President

Christmas Stroll Well Attended

The Brazos Heritage Society's Christmas Stroll in the East Side Historic District and related activities in Heritage Park on December 15, 2012, proved to be an overwhelming success.

Four houses, beautifully decorated for the Christmas season, were opened for the Stroll. Those opened included the home of Linda Roberts, better known as the Clary House, at 601 East 30th Street; Susan and Mitchell Roy's home at 616 East 31st Street; the home of Isabel and Todd McPartlin at 501 East 31st Street; and Harriet and Phil Smith's home at 705 East 31st Street.

In addition, two homes on opposite sides of Heritage Park, while not opened to the public, provided refreshments to Stroll participants. Nat and Dan Hilliard at 615 East 30th Street and Donna and John Van Duyn at 615 East 31st Street served wassail and cookies.

Throughout the evening the "Sweet Strings on the Brazos," a mountain dulcimer band, provided beautiful Christmas music from the Matthew Winsper Knobel Memorial Gazebo in the Park. The Park was decorated for the Christmas season, with hundreds of twinkling lights on the Gazebo and light poles.

A big hit of the evening was the opportunity to ride in the horse drawn carriage around the neighborhood, which was provided as part of the price of admission to the Stroll.

On the day following the Christmas Stroll, Isabel McPartlin, whose home was on the tour, sent a message to Society President Nat Hilliard; the relevant parts read as follows:

Hope ya'll are having a wonderful Sunday!

First, I would like to thank all of those who organized the Christmas Stroll event yesterday. As first time participants we (Todd and I) don't have anything to compare it to but the music, the carriage ride, and the wassail were great touches. This combined with the gift of perfect weather from God made for an incredible evening!

Todd and I were thrilled to be asked to participate and to be considered among the three other beautifully decorated homes on the tour.

Nat – The signs you made were adorable and the feedback I heard from those who came through was nothing but good stuff. Well done!

Thank you again all!

Merry Christmas!

Perfectly said, Isabel. The 2012 Christmas Stroll was thoroughly enjoyable and brought back remembrances of Christmases past.

The Society's Executive Committee is grateful for all the effort by so many people that made this such a successful event.

New BVMNH Exhibit: Legacy – The Astin Family

The Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History, in cooperation with the Brazos Heritage Society and the Heard-Craig House Museum in McKinney, Texas, is pleased to present its new exhibition: *Legacy – The Astin Family – Culture and Couture in Early 20th Century Bryan*.

The exhibit tells the Astin family story, charting the rise of the family and its business enterprises in the Brazos Valley region. James Hugh Astin, pioneer planter, first came to Texas in 1854, and after a brief stint as a gold miner in California, but he returned in 1861, serving in the Confederate Army's famed Hood's Brigade. Ultimately, Astin married, settling in Bryan in 1865. Gradually, through hard work and native business sense, he accumulated extensive holdings in the Brazos Bottom, becoming one of the most successful cotton farmers in the region. His descendants constructed Rivermist, an extensive cotton plantation near Bryan, and went on to become one of the most prominent families in Brazos County.

Nina Heard Astin and her daughter, Nina Bess, well known for generosity and community involvement, bequeathed much of their inherited wealth to the Bryan/College Station community through the Nina Heard Astin and Nina Bess Astin Charitable Trusts. The two trusts continue to support community projects, scholarships, and charitable organizations including the Museum. Legacy will be held in the Museum's main gallery – named for the Astin family.

Materials on loan from the Heard-Craig House Museum in McKinney, Texas, including photographs and family china, will augment an extensive collection of historical clothing once belonging to members of the Astin family, on loan from the Brazos Heritage Society. Supplementing couture on display are stunning examples of period jewelry, purses, and hats. A selection of decorative items, including Steuben glass and Tiffany reproductions, art from the period on loan from the J. Wayne Stark University Center Galleries, and other Art Nouveau and Art Deco pieces will give the visitor a sense of the prevailing art and design movements of the period. Collaborators include historian John P. Blair and genealogical researcher Bill Page, Beverly Myers and members of the Brazos Heritage Society, and coordinating curator, Elisabeth Manning of the BVMNH.

This exhibit, which opened on January 29, will remain until June 1, 2013.

The Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History is open to visitors Tuesday-Saturday, 10:00 AM-5:00 PM. The admission fees: adults \$5.00; seniors/students/children \$4.00; and children 3 and under are free.

Membership Dues and Membership Meeting

Please plan to attend the Annual Membership Meeting at the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History on Sunday, February 24, 2013, at 2:00 PM. Participating in the activities of the Society is a rewarding experience.

As a reminder, the 2013 membership dues are now being accepted. Please complete the accompanying membership application mail it, along with your dues, to the address indicated.