

Heritage Brazos

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OFFICERS

Stephanie Hilliard
President
stephanie.hilliard@gmail.com

Dana Foster
Vice President
danarenae89@gmail.com

Sheila Fields
Secretary
atredrobin@msn.com

Beverly Myers
Treasurer
mycobra@suddenlink.net

Dan Beto
Past President
dan.beto@gmail.com

Tom McDonald
Of Counsel
tcmac1965@gmail.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Shirley DuPriest
Membership
dupriestsf@gmail.com

Sheila Fields
Research
atredrobin@msn.com

Randy Hilliard
Events
trhilliard@verizon.net

Stephanie Snyder
Newsletter
snyder78@gmail.com

President's Message

The Stars and Stripes boldly flared, driven by a strong July breeze, while *The Star-Spangled Banner* rang out acapella from the bandstand. Softly singing along, tears came to my eyes as they usually do when I see the flag raised and sing our national anthem.

My love for this musical tribute to our American flag was deepened back in September 2014 when I learned the story of how the anthem came to be written. In 1814 (during the War of 1812), Francis Scott Key was tasked to make a POW exchange with the British. Shipboard during the negotiations, he was informed that the British planned to end the war with a massive bombardment of Ft McHenry, which was full of non-combatants as well as soldiers. The British demanded that the Americans strike the colors or face the wrath of the entire British Navy. They declined. After a hellish night of heavy shelling, including multiple direct hits on the flag, when dawn finally came Key saw that the flag miraculously remained. Shredded, canted at a weird angle, it yet stood - because men physically held it in place. Throughout the night, as defenders died others took their place. Our flag still flew, a symbol of our determination, because it was held in place by the bodies of dead American patriots.

The flag raising and anthem that so touched me this particular July morning officially opened the Brazos Heritage Society's 29th annual Independence Day in Heritage Park. The day turned out quite beautiful, warm but with that strong breeze, and no rain. After the incredibly wet spring we just endured, that was a blessing. We couldn't have asked for better weather, if you didn't mind chasing a few papers. Reverend Ross Hooks, husband of long-time member Fran (Lamb) Hooks, started us off with a wonderful invocation, followed by the flag raising, anthem, and a tribute to the flag by The National Sojourners.

President's Message

As President, I added a few of my own thoughts about the significance of the day, sharing some of the history of what their bid for Liberty cost our Founding Fathers, followed by a reminder that our freedom is dearly bought by the service and blood of our soldiers, past and present.

After the opening ceremony, I lined up a large group of children of all ages near the bandstand where Sheila Fields, our parade mistress, quickly passed out colorful red, white and blue leis. We actually started a couple minutes early because if I didn't let the kids run, they were going to mutiny! While the band played, they made multiple laps around on the park on their gaily decorated bikes, scooters, skates, wagons, and strollers. This colorful, joyful parade of youngsters is always the highlight of the event!



For the remainder of the time our visitors enjoyed wonderful popular music by Proud Country, a group that has played the event for a number of years. They munched on hotdogs, popcorn, and watermelon while strolling among the different exhibitor booths under the shade of the park's tall trees. This year's exhibitors included the A & M Garden Club, Brazos Spinners and Weavers Guild, Brazos Valley African American Museum, Brazos Valley Farmer's Market, Central Texas Historical Association, NS Daughters of the American Revolution, The Brazos Bluebonnet Quilt Guild, The Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History, and The James C. Taylor Association (a local veteran support group).

Along the street, the Bluebonnet Streetrodders displayed a variety of gorgeous vintage cars. The antique cars were joined by a 2.5 ton LMTV (Light Medium Tactical Vehicle) and the well-known High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV), or Humvee, provided by our local U.S. Army Reserve 420th Engineer Brigade. Being able to climb around on the military vehicles was a big hit with our visitors! In turn, we were delighted to share the day with a few of our soldiers.

For a second year, we were also joined by local radio station KORA, who broadcast live from 9 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. I personally want to thank Fran (Lamb) Hooks for her wonderful help again this year in coordinating our pre-event advertising with KORA and the broadcast. KORA's presence was made possible by donations from Mervin and Annette Peters, Bookman and Florence Peters, and Tom and Caroline McDonald.

All of this Independence Day fun was made possible thanks to the support of BSA Troop #383 (St. Joseph Catholic Church), Dent Magic, Dixie Chicken Inc., HEB, Kroger, Saint-Gobain Norpro, The Downtown Bryan Association, and The Farm Patch. We are very grateful for their continuing support of this free community event.

We could not possibly host this event without the help of all our fabulous volunteers. My deep personal thanks to Cathy and Alice Cox (Children's Games), Shirley DuPriest (Setup/Rover/Cleanup), Sheila Fields (Parade Mistress/Silent Auction booth), Tim Gray (Setup/Cleanup), Samantha and Natasha Gray (Setup/Face Painting booth/Cleanup), Zachary Gray, BSA Troop #1114 (Children's

Games/Cleanup), Daniel Hilliard (Setup/Cleanup), Nat Hilliard (Setup/Silent Auction Booth), Fran (Lamb) Hooks (Public Relations and Advertising), Reverend Ross Hooks (Invocation), Dena Kahan (Exhibitor Setup/Ticket Booth/Cleanup), Homer and Beverly Myers (Setup/Watermelon Booth/Cleanup), Ulrike Smith (Ticket Booth), and Helen Wise (Setup). Last but not least, I want to thank my husband, Randy Hilliard, who always does such an amazing job as our Events Chair. Without his logistical skill, this event would never get off the ground.

The 4th of July celebration is not a fundraiser, but our annual silent auction helps offset the costs of putting on the event. This year we raised over \$700 thanks to a variety of great items donated by sports teams from around the state including Dallas Stars Hockey, FC Dallas Soccer, the Gene and Jerry Jones Family Foundation (Dallas Cowboys), the Houston Rockets, the Texas Rangers, and Texas Stars Hockey. Local donors include the Benjamin Knox Gallery, Blue Baker, Patty Clark, Brazos Glassworks, the Brazos Valley Bombers, Jim.n.i, Kwik-Kar, Lady Camo, Beverly Myers, Steve Miller, Old Bryan Marketplace, Southern Grace, Texas Rose Boutique, The Chocolate Gallery, Harvey and Helen Wise, and Studio Yoga. We also received a monetary donation from Fran (Lamb) Hooks. Due to July 4th being on a Saturday, and part of a long weekend, it seemed like our turnout was not quite as high as last year, but the feedback has been uniformly enthusiastic, which is all we ask. While we are busy wrapping up the after-event paperwork, rest assured we are also already making plans for our 30th annual Independence Day in the Park for July 4, 2016. Our 30th year coincides with the 175th anniversary of the founding of Brazos County and the 150th year of the founding of Bryan, so it will be a time for celebrating some auspicious anniversaries.

Moving on from the 4th of July event, I wanted to discuss a few other items of business.

First, our next event will be Boonville Days on October 10. We've had a booth at the event multiple years and we always enjoy getting to share local history with visitors. We also offer a butter-churning demonstration, complete with snacks. We showcase vintage school books, a Brazos County timeline, and antique pioneer items loaned to us by Dr. Lou Hodges. I hope you'll think about attending the event, which is always a wonderful look at our pioneer period. If you do, be sure and stop by our booth and say "hi!"

As you can see, we've been working on the look and content of the newsletter. As well as the new features, we also plan to start publishing quarterly in order to make our newsletter a more useful tool for sharing what is going on with BHS. The changes in our newsletter would not be possible without the help of Stephanie Snyder, a BHS member in San Antonio who stepped up and offered to do much of the production. Don't forget, however, that if you are a social media user, we also post regularly on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/brazosheritagesociety>. Not only do we share BHS events and information, we also share both local and national items of historical interest. It is a great way to stay in touch in between newsletter issues.

In separate articles, I provide updates on the Turner-Peters Dogtrot Cabin project and the revitalized effort to restore Temple Freda, Bryan's first synagogue, located on Parker Street just off downtown behind Old Bryan Marketplace. If you would like more historical information, you can visit our website at brazosheritage.org under Projects.

Finally, if you are a newsletter subscriber but not a member, I would like to encourage you to formally join the Brazos Heritage Society. Memberships are as low as \$10/individual or \$15/family. We are only as strong as our membership, and we truly value your support and your ideas.

A Structure Rises: the Turner-Peters Dogtrot Cabin Nears Completion

Cedar wood walls stand strong and firm once more, cracks in the process of being chinked, while near the wrought iron entrance gates paving stones have been set in place for the amphitheater where six flags will stand tall, representing those symbols of national sovereignty flown at various times over Texas since her birth. This same half-circle will provide seating for 60 and a place for Texas history teachers and docents to lead historical presentations for classes and visitors. The amphitheater is connected to the cabin by a walkway composed of crushed granite composite and paving stones at either end.

The cedar shake roof shelters the two living areas and the dog “trot” from the elements, These rooms will once again hold period treasures, showing how the owners likely lived back when the cabin was new and stood on the open prairie land of what was once Brazos, and later Grimes, County.



The Turner-Peters Dogtrot Cabin now nears completion of Phase I, with the structure reassembled, roofed and awaiting finishing touches. To the right stands a model of the cistern that would have once been the source of family water. Across from the entry gates, a walkway leads to a shaded area where a replica cannon will sit, patterned on the famous Twin Sisters. This artillery piece has been donated by Samuel W. Smith, a WWII B-17 Flying Fortress pilot awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross medal, former Texas A&M Chemical Engineering professor, and history enthusiast. Mr. George Nelson will serve as cannoner, heading up a six-man crew for those rare times when the piece is actually fired.

In later phases, bronze statues of Texas Ranger Eli Seale, Hiram Hanover (first Boonville postmaster and later State Representative), and Texas President Sam Houston will be grouped. A fourth bronze of Harvey Mitchell, Father of Brazos County, will be placed near the entrance across from the amphitheater.

A labor of love by the Sons of the Texas Republic, this historic structure is ultimately envisioned as the core of a Boonville Historic Site, with additional representations of pioneer life in the town of Boonville, once the seat of Navasota, later Brazos, County.

The site is scheduled to open after Labor Day with a small public event; the first general opening for public visitation is scheduled to coincide with Boonville Days on October 10. A formal dedication will take place in Spring 2016 in conjunction with the Brazos County Historical Commission's celebration for the 175th anniversary of



Brazos County's creation, and with all planned features in place.

The site will need docents who can be available whenever a school tour or other event is held. If you are interested, please contact us at brazos.heritage@gmail.com. We are functioning as a liaison on the project for the Sons of the Republic of Texas and can help you connect with the appropriate people.

In the meantime, I urge you to stop by the site, located east of the Kroger center on Boonville Rd. and view the progress that is being made. It is really a beautiful development and I am excited to see it come together at last. If you would like to donate to the costs of restoring the cabin, or its operation as an historical site, please visit our website at <http://brazosheritage.org/projects/turner-peters-dogtrot-cabin-project/> where you can securely donate via PayPal. You may also send a check, made out to Brazos Heritage Society, to P.O. Box 1776, Bryan, TX 77806. Any and all assistance is appreciated.

Temple Freda Restoration: One Step Closer to Reality

As first reported in last November's newsletter, there is an ongoing push to restore Temple Freda, Bryan's first Jewish synagogue and one of only three in the world named for a woman. Unfortunately, the process ground to a halt for some months; the last work done on the structure consisted of removing the endangered stained glass windows and boarding up the openings to protect the interior. Those windows currently reside at Foster Stained Glass waiting to be restored.

Twice over the past couple months Randy Hilliard, our Events Chair, and I met with The Friends of Temple Freda, the citizen group heading up the push to restore the synagogue. Brazos Heritage Society has been asked to partner with them, as we are a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit. As such, we can receive and hold donations for the project, as well as assist in applying for grants and other funding. Not only do we bring 30 years of historic preservation experience to the project, but also we offer an established organization that can serve as an anchor point for the process.

We typically meet at Arkitex Studio in downtown Bryan, the architectural firm involved in the project. The Friends group consists of Dr. William Bassichis (Temple Freda's caretaker for over 30 years), Stephanie Sale (local artist), College Station Mayor Nancy Berry, Eva Read-Warden (Arkitex Studio) and her husband Robert Warden (Professor of Architecture at Texas A&M), Judge Tom McDonald, Randy Haynes and Lindsey Guindi with the City of Bryan, Nan Ross (Head Librarian for the Carnegie Library), Sylvia Grider (Retired Professor of Anthropology, Texas A&M University), and Lewis Ford (a physics professor at Texas A&M University).



We've spent significant time exploring what needs to happen overall, as well as determining what specifically needs to occur *first* in order to make this restoration a reality. The final consensus was to start with a comprehensive structural engineering report, provided by Sparks Engineering. This report will detail the issues with the structure and provide a solid sense of the problems that need to be addressed.



This initial structural engineering report costs \$2,500. Fundraising is underway, primarily via donations from members The Friends of Temple Freda.

However, we are always open to assistance from interested members and supporters of the Brazos Heritage Society. As soon as the \$2,500 is raised, Sparks Engineering will be authorized to start the report process. To date, we've raised \$1,750.

While we do not yet have hard numbers on overall project cost, we're honestly estimating approximately \$1 million to restore Temple Freda to her former glory. Obviously, this is not a cheap undertaking. However, this beautiful structure is not only worthy of saving in its own right for its historical value, it also adds to the continuing beautification of downtown Bryan, further enhancing the area and increasing public usage. When the restoration is complete, the City of Bryan plans to utilize the venue for community events and appropriate private gatherings.

Brazos County: A History from The Handbook of Texas

Brazos County has been the site of human habitation for more than 12,000 years. Evidence of Paleo-Indian inhabitants in the area has turned up in the form of spearpoints, and the remains of a butchered mammoth have been found at the DUEWALL-NEWBERRY SITE on the Brazos River. Archaic hunters and gatherers in the future county lived on deer, bison, roots, and nuts. Within the historic period, Spanish explorers reported Bidai and Tonkawa Indians in the area, and there is evidence that groups related to the Apaches and Comanches occasionally hunted buffalo as far east as Brazos County. Spanish travelers on the Old San Antonio Road passed along the northwest boundary of the future county, but there was no Spanish settlement in the area.



The territory that is now Brazos County was included in Stephen F. Austin's second colony and became part of Washington Municipality under the Mexican government. Colonists who sought plantation sites on the Brazos between 1821 and 1831 included Elliot McNeil Millican, Richard Carter, James H. Evetts, Melvan Lanham, Lee C. Smith, and Mordecai Boon. In 1837 most of the area of present-day Brazos County was included in Washington County. The Brazos River, which bisected the latter, proved a serious obstacle to county government, and a new county, Navasota, was formed in

January 1841. The first court, with Judge R. E. B. Baylor presiding, was held later that year in the home of Joseph Ferguson, fourteen miles west of the site of present Bryan. The county seat, named Boonville for Mordecai Boon, was located on John Austin's league and was surveyed by Hiram Hanover in 1841. In January of the following year Navasota County was renamed Brazos County. The 1850 census showed 466 whites and 148 black slaves in the county. Of the approximately 176,000 acres in farms at that time, less than 2,000 acres was cleared for crops. Farmers concentrated on growing corn and a bit of cotton. The county remained overwhelmingly rural in the 1850s; only two families lived in the county seat in 1852, and only two post offices, Boonville and Millican, operated in the county in 1856.

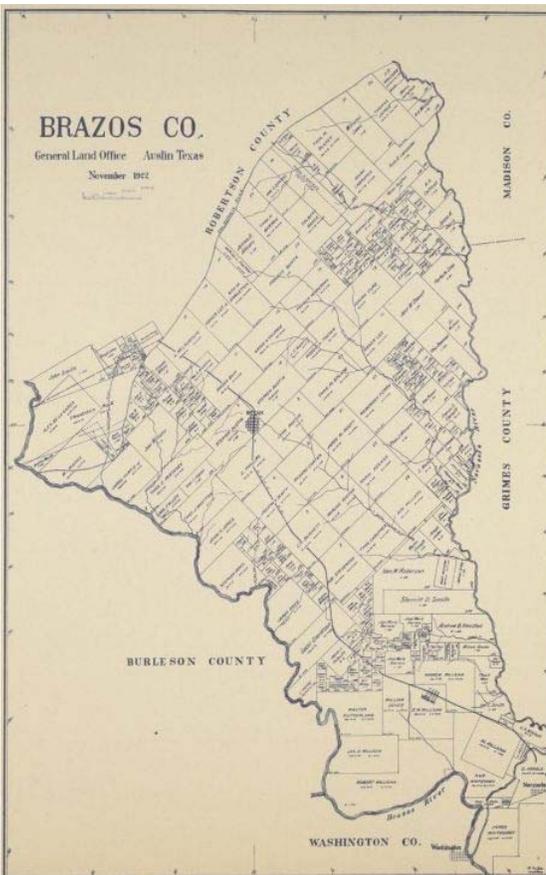
In 1860 growth in the county was speeded by the arrival of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad, with Millican as its terminus. By that year the county had some 14,509 acres under cultivation, and cotton production had increased from 142 bales in 1850 to 2,269 bales. On the eve of the Civil War, Brazos County had a mixed economy of small farms and a few larger plantations. The county voted 215 to 44 for secession in 1861 and mobilized its inhabitants for the war. The railhead at Millican became an important transportation center for the Confederate war effort, and a training camp was established nearby in 1861. Local men formed companies or parts of companies in the Twenty-first and Twenty-fifth Texas Cavalry regiments, the Tenth Texas Infantry regiment, and other army units, and participated in various home and state guard units. During the war the Brazos County Commissioners Court acted to gather supplies for the Confederacy and assist the indigent families of men serving in the armed forces.

While county residents worked out the social and political problems left by the Civil War, the county prospered and grew. In 1866 the Houston and Texas Central Railroad resumed construction past Millican, and county citizens voted to make a site on the railroad line, the new community of Bryan, their county seat. Both Millican and the former county seat, Boonville, declined rapidly as their inhabitants moved themselves, their goods, and in some cases, the lumber from their homes and stores to Bryan. By 1870 Brazos County had 9,205 inhabitants, more than a three-fold increase since 1860. Cotton production had also tripled since 1860, and for the first time county ranchers raised cattle and hogs in substantial numbers. Sheep ranching reached an all-time county record in 1870, when 8,565 sheep were counted, in contrast to only 219 in 1860.

Population growth continued at a more modest rate in the next few decades, reaching 13,576 in 1880 and 16,650 in 1890. The black population of the county increased more rapidly than the white, growing from 3,759 in 1870 to 6,250 in 1880. In 1890 the number of African Americans reached 8,845, and for the only time in its history the county had a black majority. Beginning in the 1870s substantial numbers of Germans, Austrians, and Czechs (Bohemians) migrated to the county, and Italians began arriving in the 1880s. In 1900 the county population reached 18,859. Of the 10,005 white residents that year, 1,403, or 14 percent, were foreign born, including 553 from Italy, 239 from Germany, and 223 from Bohemia. Settlement and economic growth were hastened in the county by

transportation developments in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In the 1880s the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway built through the southern part of the county and the Hearne and Brazos Valley Railway built through the northwest. In 1900 the International-Great Northern built through to Bryan, and in 1910 the Bryan and College Station Interurban Railway was started between Bryan and Texas A&M College.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century cotton in-



creasingly dominated county agriculture. Acres planted with cotton grew from 28,044 in 1880 to almost 44,000 in 1890 and to an all-time high of 72,275, about a third of all improved acres in the county, in 1910. About half the cotton acreage was usually allotted to corn, the second major crop in the county. The county also followed the general Southern pattern of large numbers of small farms, many of them worked by tenants and sharecroppers. The number of farms increased from 666 in 1870 to 1,630 in 1880 and 2,088 in 1890. In 1900, of the 2,613 farms in the county, 1,576, or 60 percent, were worked by tenants and sharecroppers. Black farmers were much less likely to own land than their white counterparts. In 1900 more than half of the white farmers owned their own farms, while only 20 percent of black farmers were owners. In 1920 the number of farms reached a peak of 3,023, and the number of tenant farmers reached its zenith at 1,939, or 64 percent. As a percentage of the total cropland harvested, cotton land probably reached its peak in 1930, when more than 64,000 of the 88,224 acres harvested was used to grow cotton. Thereafter, county farming began to change in response to changing technologies and opportuni-

ties. During the Great Depression much of the rural workforce left the county to seek work in the cities of Texas or left the state entirely. By 1940 the number of farms had fallen to 1,773, comparable to the number of farms back in 1880. Mechanized farming began in the bottomlands of the county along the rivers in the late 1920s and slowly spread to other parts of the county. With the loss of even more of the rural labor supply after World War II, farmers consolidated their holdings and turned to tractors, mechanical cotton harvesters, and other machines to work their fields.

During the twentieth century, Bryan and College Station played an increasingly important role in the life of the county. After its founding as a railroad town in 1866, Bryan slowly grew to a community of 3,589 in 1900, when approximately one-fifth of county residents lived there. The nearby community of College Station, which grew around Texas A&M after its founding in the 1870s, numbered only 391 inhabitants in 1900. Both communities grew steadily, and by 1940 they had a combined population

of 14,026; at that time more than half of the county population lived in the two communities. As the county population continued to grow—to 38,390 in 1950, 57,978 in 1970 and 93,588 in 1980—the urban population continued to grow both absolutely and with relation to the rural population. In 1980 the 81,506 inhabitants of Bryan-College Station were 87 percent of the residents of Brazos County. Significant industries that developed in the two-city area in the later twentieth century included defense electronics and varied manufacturing.

At the same time that the county was becoming more urban, the building of a network of rural roads in the 1930s and 1940s transformed the Brazos County countryside. As late as 1930 the great majority of the county's farms, 2,100 of 2,439, were located on dirt roads. Twenty years later only 538 were still on dirt roads. Similarly, though only forty-eight farms had electricity in 1930, rural electrification brought power to most of the county's farms by the early 1960s. Starting in the 1960s, as Texas A&M University embarked on a major expansion program, much of the rural land in the vicinity of Bryan-College Station was brought into the suburban orbit of the two cities. By the mid-twentieth century, county farmers had increasingly turned away from the old agricultural staples of corn and cotton and had moved on to cattle ranching. In the 1980s cotton was generally grown on approximately 12,000 acres, only 15 percent of the acreage used for cotton in 1925. The number of cattle in the county increased from 25,354 in 1940 to 42,545 in 1950 and fluctuated between 45,000 and 57,000 through the 1980s. As part of the shift to cattle, feed crops of hay, oats, and wheat became more important in the county in the decades following 1950. Oil, first discovered in the county in 1942, became an important part of the county economy in the 1970s, and by 1990 a total of 73,427,789 barrels had been produced. Almost 2,215,000 barrels of oil and 6,807,187 cubic feet of gas-well gas were produced in the county in 2004; by the end of that year 137,027,692 barrels of oil had been taken from county lands since 1942.

In 1982, 67 percent of the land was in farms and ranches, with 18 percent of the farmland under cultivation and 20 percent irrigated. Primary crops were hay, cotton, sorghum, oats, and wheat, and primary livestock and products were cattle, hogs, and milk. The industries with the most employment were agribusiness, oil and gas extraction, and construction. In 1980 Brazos County was one of



the most densely populated counties in the state. Of its 94,492 inhabitants, the largest ancestry groups were English and German. The black population of the county, which had remained relatively static at about 9,000 for most of the century, began to increase in the 1970s and was 10,350 in 1980. Significant Hispanic migration to the county began in the second half of the twentieth century; by 1980 Hispanic residents numbered 9,455. In 1990 the county had 121,862 residents.

In 2000 the census counted 152,415 people living in Brazos County. About 67 percent were Anglo, 18 percent were Hispanic, and 11 percent were African American. More than 81 percent of residents age twenty-five and older had four years of high school, and 37 percent had college degrees. In the early twenty-first century Texas A&M University played a key role in the area's economy, and other local companies produced high-tech equipment and services, wine, and other goods; agribusiness was also important. In 2002 the county had 1,350 farms and ranches covering 308,814 acres, 51 percent of which were devoted to pasture, 38 percent to crops, and 9 percent to woodlands. In that year Brazos County farmers and ranchers earned \$47,060,000, with livestock sales accounting for \$38,215,000 of that total. Cattle, eggs, cotton, hay, sorghum, and horses were the chief agricultural products. The incorporated towns were Bryan (2000 population, 65,660), College Station (67,890), Wixon Valley (235), Millican (108), and Wellborn (100). The Texas Brazos Trail, which offers tourists scenic views of wildflowers and forests, passes through the county, and there are recreational parks for boating and fishing on several of the county's lakes and reservoirs.

Bibliography: Glenna Fourman Brundidge, *Brazos County History: Rich Past–Bright Future* (Bryan, Texas: Family History Foundation, 1986). Elmer Grady Marshall, *History of Brazos County* (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1937).

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Treasurer's Report

After the July 4th celebration in the park:

Including the unpaid previously mentioned, our total bills for the 4th of July are; \$300.00 City of Bryan, street closing ; \$600.00 Band; \$67.17 Table clothes, popcorn salt; \$72.36 Popcorn; \$100.47 Prizes; Total to date \$1,140.00.

Monies brought in were as follows; \$359.50 Ticket Sales; \$100.00 Membership; \$30.00 Books; \$75.00 KORA; \$652.00 Silent Auction; Total to date \$1,216.50.

We have not yet received Texas Commercial Waste invoice, if the same as last year the amount would be \$140.00.

Checking acct \$ 7,834.33
