August 28th Meeting

The Rosenwald Schools of the South
Herman Wright

Next Thursday night, we are honored to have Herman Wright from Kirbyville, Texas as our speaker at our Barn Museum. He is going to present the history of the Rosenwald School movement and the restoration of his specific Rosenwald School in Jasper, Texas. From 1920 to 1935, African American families, many with little to no formal education, built over 5,000 schools throughout the southern United States with the help of Julius Rosenwald (President of Sears and Roebuck, Co). Over 5 million children went through the doors of these schools and out into the world to become teachers, doctors, lawyers, scientist, business people and military leaders. The Rosenwald Schools assisted an entire class of rural African-Americans to up their socio-economic status. He gave them the materials and instilled a drive in them to create a better future for their community. It was a crusade that rivaled any crusade in human history.

Come hear this very fascinating story. Rosenwald Schools are still standing all over southeast Texas. Most are being used for other purposes now. Our own one room school was a farm storage building before we brought it to League City.

from the Desk of the President...

Ronnie Richards

What a relatively mild summer we are enjoying this year and plentiful rain showers to keep everything green without a big water bill. First, a big “thank you” to Doug McKee for the great Teddy Bear Parade the Society hosted July 4th. We had a great turnout and a new record was set for the number of twins in our parade. In case you weren’t aware, my daughter and son-in-law Amber and Mike Murphy had twins that are now 8 months old. They live here in League City and she belongs to an online social media group called Bay Area Mothers of Multiples. She put the word out to this group and we were blessed with five (that’s 5, cinco) sets of twins in our parade! I thought it was a random until Amber informed me of how the word got out publicizing the parade. You can see lots of photos here and on our Facebook page.

With that being said I would like to ask everyone reading this to ask your friends on Facebook to “Like” our page. I promoted the page by paying a small fee and we now have 450 “Likes”. Please go to our page and “Like” it and request all your Facebook friends do the same.

Please join me in congratulating two members of our Society who have been recognized by Galveston Historic Foundation’s Sally B. Wallace Awards for historic preservation in Galveston County in 2014. Aleyca Gallaway nominated Melodey Hauch and Floyd “Lanny” Martin for community service with regard to the Magnolia Cemetery project. Melodey and Lanny were chosen to receive a 2014 Preservation Award. Joyce Zongrone, representing League City Historical Society, nominated the 1929 Joseph Peter Giacchino house for its restoration/rehabilitation. Richard Lewis (GCHC) is the current owner of the Giacchino house and performed the restoration/rehabilitation.

Now, for our upcoming events... Please mark your calendar to hold the date for our Living History Dinner...
set for Thursday, October 9th at Butler’s Courtyard. In the coming days I will post on the League City Historical Society Facebook page more details but I can assure you this will be another sell out, so as soon as tickets are available, you will need to buy yours. We have a Team working on this project to make it the best ever. I may call you to be on the Living History Dinner Team!

In December we are all looking forward to the Historic Homes Tour set for Saturday, December 13th from 10am – 5pm. Phyllis White is heading this up and is seeking volunteers to spend a few hours that day on a very rewarding project.

I look forward to seeing you at our next meeting and don’t forget to visit our Facebook page and web sites for updates.

Meeting Minutes
Susan Pierce, Secretary

June 27, 2014 Meeting

Evelyn Garland started the meeting by welcoming everyone and reminding members to mail in their annual membership dues. Evelyn announced that there will be no meeting in July, as is the usual custom, and that snacks will no longer be served at our meetings due to insects gobbling the leftover crumbs. Richard Lewis announced that next month’s topic will be the Rosenwald Schools, started by Julius Rosenwald, the President of Sears & Roebuck. Five thousand Rosenwald Schools were opened in the 1910’s to educate blacks in the South.

Richard then introduced our speaker, his better half Catharin Lewis, who discussed her hard work organizing and digitizing the many assorted records she’s been given and found for League City’s historic Fairview Cemetery. Some of those 100-year-old records came to Catharin in dilapidated cardboard boxes. Catherine read from the application she and Barbara Holt successfully submitted to obtain the THC’s historic marker recently awarded to Fairview. She gave us a quick history lesson of League City and the land now used as the Fairview Cemetery. It is uncertain where the name “Fairview” came from. On some death certificates, the cemetery named is “League City Cemetery.” The first burial in Fairview was of 5-year-old Victor Nordhem in 1900.

There are over 1,000 burial sites in Fairview, including 19 soldiers from the Civil War (both sides), 25 from WWI, 30 from WWII, 4 Korean, and 2 Vietnam vets. The cemetery has 48 persons of Japanese descent who immigrated to League City in the early 1900's.

Catharin discussed the confusion involved with digitizing the cemetery’s records due to conflicting or absent records, and ended her program by showing us how all her records are currently stored.

Catharin then gave her report on how the Museum is doing, including money recently donated by IBM. She’s holding a summer camp on June 24. Volunteers are needed for the Teddy Bear Parade this July 4th. The meeting was adjourned.

MusNews
Catharin Lewis, Director / Curator

In July, we once again held our annual Teddy Bear Parade. We want to give a special thanks to Doug McKee of D& D Pest who sponsored our event providing the funding for prizes and funds needed to support the police safety for the children. We also want to thank Butler’s Courtyard once again for providing their wonderful outdoor patio to stage the end of the parade for prizes. We had a wonderful group of participants this year which included five pairs of twins thanks to Ronnie Richards’s daughter.

Looking back over the summer months, it has been a rather quiet summer. We held six schoolhouse sessions for 83 children and adult groups, gave docent talks for the 124 walk-in-visitors and still had time to make repairs and clean artifacts, clean the buildings and continue to photograph objects to be added to the computer system. We held a one day summer camp with seven campers who really had a good time. The campers learned a lot about rope making, sewing, butter making, birds, snakes and bugs. We have been in the process of doing research to change exhibits to look at Aprons and the Wars. We are making plans for special fall programs. More information to come in next month’s newsletter.

Plans are still in the works to paint the schoolhouse roof and replace the front porch. The summer seems to have slipped away and we hope to have this project done now before the middle of September. We are still planning to work on the gardens in our free time.

Thanks again to my staff, Sarah Eubanks, Catherine Gill, Melissa Aguilar and Sherry Frankovich for their continued help with the schoolhouse program. Special thanks also to Barbara Vermillion, Doris Teets and Kathie Nenninger for the volunteer support that they give to the museum.
LCHS member Melodey Hauch is a winner of Galveston Historical Foundation’s 2014 Sally B. Wallace Awards for historic preservation. The Magnolia Cemetery Research Project started in 2006 when Melodey Hauch and her research partner Lanny Martin first visited the cemetery.

Using Lanny’s photos of the tombstones, Melodey created a spreadsheet with around 100 burials. Over several years, the two researchers worked to add the names of persons buried in the cemetery using Texas death certificates online and newspaper obituaries. Their latest count is 582 burials with 444 unmarked graves. During the last two years, Melodey expanded the spreadsheet into a book entitled Here They Rest: Discovering Unmarked Burials at Magnolia Cemetery of League City. The book includes a history of the land and the African-American community in the Dickinson-League City area where most of the deceased lived as well as sections on the extended family members Melodey was able to connect through her research. Another section provides information on the cemetery’s 42 known military burials. The names of the parents and spouses of the deceased and their places of birth, death and residence were also included when available on death certificates. The book includes a full name index with over 1500 names, many photos of the people and their tombstones, and a map of the inscribed tombstones. Magnolia Cemetery is located near the intersection of FM 646 and State Highway 3, not the Magnolia Creek Cemetery in the Rustic Oaks Subdivision of League City near Friendswood.

by Joyce Zongrone

Catharin and Richard Lewis’s guesthouse for their grandchildren just won a 2014 Sally B. Wallace Preservation Award from the Galveston Historical Foundation. This is the second Sally B. Wallace Award for the Lewises. In 2013, Catharin Lewis won the same award for her One Room Schoolhouse Museum. Last year was the first year that the League City Historical Society won this award and the first time that GHF presented its prestigious award to recipients on the mainland.

Giacchino Home - 1939 - (lr) Anthony, Caroline, Andrew - Anthony’s high school graduation

The 1929 Joseph Peter Giacchino home of Dickinson’s only Italian blacksmith was relocated in early 2004 from its original location in the Nicholstone subdivision at 4312 St. Goar Street, in the Italian section of the city, to 1518 E. Walker St., behind the Lewis’s home in the League City Historical District, for restoration and preservation by Richard Lewis. Lewis, a Board Member of the League City Historical Society, found the home on the lot of League City’s Marsh Structural Movers. Giacchino arrived at Ellis Island in 1906, at age 24 from northern Italy. He travelled to New York; New Orleans, where he was quarantined for six months due a Yellow Fever epidemic; to Houston, where he did a short stint as a bartender; then on to northern California working as a farmer, in the clay mines and on the railroad, all over the western United States. He came to Hitchcock in 1914.

Three years later, in 1917, he married Lillian “Lilly” Benigno who died in 1929, at age 40. Following her death, Giacchino became both mother and father to his three young children -- Caroline, age 10; Anthony, age 8; and Andrew, age 5. They moved from Hitchcock to League City for a year and then to Dickinson in 1930 where Giacchino lived and worked as a blacksmith and sold seeds until his death, at age 90, in 1962. After his
death, his daughter Caroline worked at the seed store until 1997.
The home sat next to the old Dues Gas Station which Giacchino transformed into his blacksmith shop. Also on the property was the Dickinson Seed Store, operational until 1997, which now resides on a private collector’s lot in Dickinson.
All three of Joseph Giacchino’s children have since passed away. His four surviving grandchildren live in Texas, Georgia and California. Granddaughter Bernardine Mallory Farmer attended the awards ceremony.

When the home arrived in League City, the back section which housed the kitchen, bath and front porch, was no longer attached.
The only surviving rooms were the living room and the bedroom. As the restoration began, Lewis was guided by the original teal exterior color paint lines which aided him in his reconstruction of a kitchenette, a bathroom and screened porch. The new, smaller kitchen, with added screened porch, was chosen for the express purpose of its being used in what was to become Lewis’ guest house for visiting grandchildren.
The three windows in the living room and bedroom retained their original glass and were re-glazed. The solid wood walls are original to the living room and small bedroom. Also, the inside colors are original. The home’s interior and exterior are the original cypress wood.
The home was found to have three asphalt-shingled original roofs, dating back to the original, that were replaced with a new metal one. The original plasterboard walls were gutted to expose the solid wood walls behind. During the gutting of the walls, a brick chimney was discovered. Since water filtration had rotted around the brick chimney, Lewis removed the chimney and molded the area into an archway leading into the kitchenette. The original door to the kitchen now entered the screened porch.
The existing electrical wiring was removed and replaced with decorative exterior wiring in 1920s art deco porcelain knob and tube fashion. Lewis performed all the manual labor himself over a period of eight years.
The Giacchino Home, which is the only fully restored 20th century Italian house in Texas, made its public debut on December 14, 2013, during the League City Historic Homes Tour, hosting 150 visitors.

Bernardine Farmer December 2013 in her childhood bedroom

“I am so impressed and grateful,” she said.

Bernardine also thrilled tourists when she visited her childhood home, where she lived from birth until she married in 1972, during the Historic Homes Tour.

A Special Welcome to Our New Member

Ivan Ewers

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Catharin Lewis  Museum Director
League City Historic District
Commission Report
LCHS Rep. to the LCHDC
...Fay Dudney

June 19, 2014
A request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to extend an existing fence or replace it with a vinyl or wooden fence, and install floodlights on property at 621 4th Street was approved. The Historic District Design Guidelines state that all site lighting within the District should comply with the Dark Sky Guidelines designed to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through quality lighting. Architect Michaell Hendershot suggested that the applicant use wood for the fencing. He also suggested that the applicant comply with the Historic District Guidelines and the International Dark-Sky Association Guidelines to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through quality outdoor lighting.

A Certificate of Appropriateness to install a chicken coop on property at 403 Kansas Avenue was approved.

A Certificate of Appropriateness request to replace original wood windows on a c. 1900’s home at 914 4th Street was conditionally approved, providing the owner would remove the tops of the new windows, and replace them with windows in keeping with the traditional style of the home.

WANTED
Silent Auction Items
Now that you have the Living History Dinner marked on your calendar for October 9th, consider donating a treasure for the silent auction. Please drop off your items at the museum or call Catharin Lewis at 281-554-2994. Donations must be made by September 26th. Remember, this is League City Historical Society’s largest fundraiser of the year. Your contributions are very important to its success.