August 2015 Newsletter Kathie Nenninger Editor knenninger@verizon.net

August 27th 2015 Meeting

The Lost Art of Letter Writing: Look what email has done to us.

Elizabeth Quigley will be speaking about the historical importance of hand writing letters and notes in her presentation entitled, The Lost Art of Letter Writing: Look what email has done to us. In this age of email and texting we have lost the personal touch and are slowly losing an important part of history. In order for future generations to have something to go back and look at we must keep “writing” alive. If you send hand written notes to family and friends you are leaving a paper trail for future generations to know what life was all about during your lifetime.

Calendar of Events

August 27  Meeting  Elizabeth Quigley  The Lost Art of Letter Writing: Look what email has done to us

The Bus Barn next to the
West Bay Common School Children’s Museum
210 Kansas Street, League City
6:45pm Social ~ 7:00pm Meeting

September 12  Living History Dinner with Colonel Theodore Roosevelt at Walding Station

September 24  Meeting  Charlie Gordy  From Toxic to Terrific: The move of Campbell’s Bayou Cemetery from Texas City to Forest Park East

October 31  Ghosts of the Past: Genealogy in a Cemetery at Fairview Cemetery

December 12  Historic Homes Tour
June 26, 2015 Meeting

President Doug McKee welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for old or new business and announcements.

Catharin Lewis discussed the trip she and Richard made recently to the Country School Association of America meeting held in Saratoga, New York. (The West Bay Common School Museum is the Association’s headquarters.) They then traveled to Williamsburg, Virginia, where they participated in a living history conference. Catharin announced an upcoming educational exhibit at the Bus Barn museum concerning patriotism in schools.

Deborah Gammon asked for volunteers for the Ghosts of the Past tour of Fairview Cemetery taking place this year in October. This year’s tour will focus on the genealogy of the families represented at Fairview.

Catharin reminded everyone of the Teddy Bear Parade taking place on July 4th and asked for volunteers.

Kathy Weisskopf spoke of the continuing project to re-measure the registered live oaks in League City. If your tree is registered, expect to be contacted regarding your tree(s).

Doug introduced our speakers, Joan Peeples, Youth Department librarian at Helen Hall Library and CCISD school librarian, and Selenia Paz, Children’s Librarian in the Youth Department at the Library. Their topic was pioneer cooking. During the late-1700’s into the 1800’s, as pioneers crossed the central part of America, they brought with them everything they would need for the trip and once they arrived. Because space was an issue in wagons, cooking utensils had to be kept to a minimum, and pioneer women relied on the Dutch oven, cast iron skillet, and wooden butter churn to prepare food for their families. Sugar, flour, and salt would have to be purchased as they traveled. White sugar was the most costly, brown sugar less so, and molasses was very inexpensive. Drippings and lard were used as fat in cooking. Using “pioneer” recipes, Ms. Peeples had baked in cast iron skillets some corn muffins, biscuits, and baked apples for us to try and then passed out copies of those recipes. Meeting adjourned.

The summer has flown by and school is about to begin again. We have had one of our busiest summers with almost 700 visitors from all over the Houston area. We held seventeen schoolhouse programs since June with most happening in the first part of August. Program fees brought in more than $1200, gift shop sales totaled $76.95 and walk-in donations came to $182.

Our annual Teddy Bear Parade was very successful with 50 participants, more than 75 parents and ten volunteers. We especially want to thank D & D Pest Control for their generous donation to fund the event and be our parade sponsor. We also want to thank the local twins (mothers of multiples) group who helped with advertising and brought seventeen sets of twins to enjoy the event.

Progress is being made on property improvements. Richard and his twin brother from North Carolina helped rebuild the schoolhouse porch in one day. So nice to have help he said. The porch was originally built of salvage lumber from the interior walls that were added in 1936 when the schoolhouse was made into a three-room house.

Save the Date

LEAGUE CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
“2015 HOME TOUR”
Chairman Mike Peterson

The League City Historical Society will be holding a Historic Homes Tour in the downtown historical area of League City, TX on Saturday December 12, 2015.
The previous wood was regular yellow pine and lasted 20 years, this wood is specifically for porches of historic homes, came from Galveston and is treated. It was so pretty we decided to stain it with a wood preservative stain instead of painting it.

The Fire Hose Reel Building has now been stained with wood preservative also.

Many of the trees and bushes have been trimmed. There is still more work to be done before the fall classes begin. These projects will be tackled one at a time.

I continue to work on the collection with photos and paperwork. We are making progress with this too. I am also working on adding science to our fall programming.

Announcements are coming soon.

I have two new volunteers helping with daily operations as we welcome Joyce Zongrone and Linda Michaels to our staff. We thank them both for the time they share. We are excited to announce that Sarah Eubanks will be returning two days a week this fall to help with our teaching staff.

Other progress includes newly purchased and assembled benches for the Garden Classroom.

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We want to thank you for helping us reach our goal of 94 birthday wishes for Richard’s mother’s 94th birthday in July. They were published in a book for her to keep. It was close. We could not have done it without your help. The cards and wishes came from her family, her friends, the church and you, the League City Historical Society. Thank you for helping to make it happen.

Richard and Catharin Lewis

Cabela’s Wants Old Hunting & Fishing Photos

By Ronnie Richards

Recently the League City Historical Society was contacted through its web site by Cabela’s with a request to help with their new League City store décor. Cabela’s is the World’s Foremost Outfitter of hunting, fishing and outdoor gear. Their new 72,000-square-foot store will anchor a retail development at the intersection of Interstate 45 and Big League Dreams Parkway near Big League Dreams Sports Park. According to Cabela’s they expect to hire approximately 170 full-time and part-time employees, most of whom will come from League City and the surrounding area. The building’s exterior will reflect Cabela’s popular log construction, stonework, wood siding and metal roofing. The interior will be built to include an outdoor-like experience with a large mountain replica, museum-quality wildlife displays and an aquarium and include an indoor archery range, Gun Library, deli and fudge shop. They are requesting pre 1970 vintage hunting and fishing photos along with the story that goes with the photo that to feature in their new store. If you have any photos that might meet these requirements please email them to ronnie@butlerscourtyard.com.

Did you know that League City has obtained seven Texas State Historical Association, TSHA, Markers in the past 33 years, between 1973 and 2006? The First Baptist Church, League Park, Magnolia Creek Cemetery, the T. J. Dick House, the site of the Galveston County Poor Farm, the Mainland Mission Churches and St. Mary Church all have been memorialized.

The State of Texas first commemorated a historical site in 1856 by marking graves at the San Jacinto Battleground. The first official state historical monument was placed in 1884 at the Fayette County Courthouse honoring the fallen men of the Texas Revolution’s Dawson Massacre.

In 1973, the First Baptist Church of League City, 2nd Ave and Colorado St., was granted the city’s first TSHA Marker. It was the first Baptist church on the Galveston County mainland. Initially organized in the Clear Creek Schoolhouse, Dec. 4, 1887, with B. A. Smalley serving as clerk; the first permanent pastor, Rev. D. T. McLeod, arrived Oct. 1895. The first building erected on this site was dedicated June 14, 1896.

LEAGUE CITY BANDSTAND

Photograph of the first League City bandstand, an elevated gazebo with a double staircase, in League Park. A group of four young men are posed for a picture on the structure. Two of the young men are reclining on the railing of either staircase; the other two are seated on the railing where the two staircases meet. Date unknown.

In 1981, League Park received its TSHA Marker. Located at FM 518 at Park Rd., it lies where Galveston land developer John Charles League platted the town site of League City soon after he purchased property here in 1890. Faced with the competition of an adjacent development known as the city of Clear Creek, League personally directed the planning of his town. Through his efforts, land was set aside for a school, a church, and this park. Provided for in a land sale to the Galveston, Houston and Henderson Railroad, League Park was established in 1895. League’s improvements to the site included oak trees for the landscaping and construction of a two-story bandstand, which was later rebuilt after the 1900 Storm. For many years League Park served as the center of the community’s political, cultural, and recreational interests. Activities here included campaign speeches, medicine shows, revivals and traveling shows. In the summers the League City
Band held concerts while local ladies sold ice cream from the lower floor of the bandstand. During World War I, League Park was the scene of Red Cross rallies and activities. In 1975, during our Bicentennial Celebration, local residents funded a new bandstand. Other improvements included landscaping by the League City Garden Club.

In 1992, Magnolia Creek Cemetery, 701 Apple Lane, got its marker. It was named for the creek forming one of its boundaries. This cemetery traces its establishment in 1855 to the early settlers: Willis and Hepsibah Perkins Butler and her mother, Martha Morgan Perkins; Samuel J. and Rebecca and Coward Perkins; Allen and Margaret Perkins Coward; and Needham and Elizabeth Perkins Coward. Descendants of these four families are buried here, along with: 20 Civil War veterans, ten Union and ten Confederate soldiers; and World War I and II, and Korean War and Vietnam veterans. The first recorded burial was that of Samuel J. Perkins in 1859. The first legal record of the cemetery appears in a deed executed in 1884 by Rebecca Ann Coward Perkins to M. R. Hays. Provisions within this deed reserved four acres for graveyard purposes. During the 1870s and 1880s George Washington Butler arranged to have several family members interred in the cemetery grounds. His prominence in the community and burial here in 1921, may have led to some of the citizens to referring to this graveyard as the Butler Cemetery.

In 1993, the T. J. and Mary Lelia Dick House, 720 Second St. at N. Kansas St., received its marker. Thomas Jefferson and Mary Lelia Sherman Dick lived on their north Galveston County Buckhorn Ranch for many years before hiring J. R. Beerwort and O. V. King to build this house in 1904. T. J., acclaimed for his role in building the Galveston seawall, was divorced from Mary Lelia in 1920. The house remained in her family until 1989.

In 1997, the Site of Galveston County Poor Farm, 807 SH 3 N, received its marker. The Galveston County Commissioners Court began planning in 1886 to purchase a farm to house and care for the county’s indigent citizens. A site was chosen and in June 1887, 213 acres of land on the banks of Clear Creek were purchased from Stephen F. Austin. The first building constructed was designed by Galveston architect Nicholas J. Clayton and contained a dining hall. Joe Meyers was hired as the first superintendent. Those housed at the farm included county citizens who were poor, elderly, mentally ill, and convicts. Elderly residents lived in cottages surrounded by gardens tended by convicts. All physically able residents were required to help with farming chores. Funding for maintaining the farm was inadequate and complaints about living conditions were investigated by the county. Portions of the poor farm land were sold to help finance operation of the facility. By 1913, the Commissioners Court closed the site and the ten remaining elderly people were sent to St. Mary’s Infirmary in Galveston. Eventually, most of the land was sold, but about 70 acres were dedicated as a park in 1928. A pavilion was constructed in 1929, and the park became the site for recreational activities and social gatherings. The pavilion was refurbished in 1975 and reconstructed in 1994 after a fire. In 1985, the site was named the Walter G. Hall Park.

In 2006, two markers were dedicated: the first for the Mainland Mission Churches; the second for St. Mary Mission Church, both at 620 E. Main St. In 1869, the Diocese of Galveston needed a church on the mainland to serve Roman Catholics. The following year St. Mary began in Hitchcock and the mission church, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, established in 1870, began serving Alta Loma. These two churches were later renamed Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Elizabeth's respectively. In 1948, the two churches were moved together to one location to serve both towns. As the area population grew, the Diocese continued to construct mission churches. Father Jerome A. Rapp, the first priest assigned to Hitchcock and Alta Loma, was also instrumental in building mission churches St. Joseph’s in Dickinson and St. Mary in League City. The Diocese also built a mission church named St. Mary in Texas City. The churches became vital institutions in their communities. Many events that began as fundraising endeavors eventually became community traditions, including bazaars, pageants and picnics. The churches also provided education to the area, opening parochial schools in 1946 and 1963. As population in the coastal area grew throughout the 20th century, the churches built new larger buildings and moved out of the original mission churches. Today, St. Mary of League City is the only mission church building left standing, remaining a testimony to the impact the mainland mission churches had on the lives of Catholic residents in Galveston County.
Sally B. Wallace Awards for Historic Preservation

The 1927 Salmon Icehouse/1936 Barbershop Museum and the Outstanding Stewardship of Jerry Dornak and Ed Linck for the continued restoration of Old St. Mary Catholic Church are winners of the 2015 Galveston Historical Foundation Sally B. Wallace Award for preservation. These awards are League City’s fourth and fifth awards over the past three years.

The 1927 Salmon Icehouse/1936 Barbershop Museum was originally built in the 600 block of Second St. In 1927 and the barber shop was opened in the left side of the building in 1936. Sixty years later, in 1996, it was relocated to its present location in front of the West Bay Common School Children’s Museum, 210 N. Kansas St. Restoration has been ongoing for 18 years. To bring the building back to life, four plaster “ghosts” of prominent League City residents were created to depict business life in League City by local art teacher, Alicia Moore. A sound system was installed with recordings of voices and sounds of people who actually walked League City’s streets. The man sitting in the barber’s chair is G. I. Butler, the grandson of George Washington Butler, who built the very first two-story brick building in League City. The barber standing and giving G. I. a shave is Allison Stewart, the son of LaVace Stewart, Stewart Elementary School’s namesake. The Ice House/Barbershop has seen more than 75,000 visitors over the past 18 years.

Jerry Dornak and Ed Linck were selected to receive a 2015 Sally Wallace Preservation Award in the category of Outstanding Stewardship for their care of the historic of the 1910 St. Mary's Church.

For the next seven years, St. Mary Church underwent a face lift. She received a new foundation as it was moved back 25 feet from the street and over 30 feet sideways on a new foundation while maintaining the original heater stack in place. The original bell was returned to the church steeple. Restoration included a new roof, cross, electrical wiring, heating, air conditioning, landscaping, wall coverings, floor refinishing and restoration of the walls. The painted windows and ceiling surfaces were sugar sand blasted to remove the paint. The original wall paper was found and replaced to bring the interior back to its original beauty.

Ed, Jerry, their wives Berniece and Diana, and other volunteers gave hundreds of hours to keep the restoration going. This took place concurrently while the parish was in the midst of building a third St. Mary’s Catholic Church on Walker Street which was dedicated on November 20, 1999. Even with the construction of the new church, parishioners continued to give small donations to be used for the restoration. Many outright gift donations of time, labor, in-kind goods or services have totally funded the project. Thanks to the hard work of several dedicated people, the church and property remains debt free.

Ed and Jerry have continued directing the recent renovation of the stained glass windows to include the lighted window in the front loft, windows in the sacristy and the sanctuary. Today, old St. Mary Church proudly takes her place on Main Street as one of the focal points of the Historic District of League City and has become known to the community as “Old St. Mary's.”

On December 19, 2010, the Texas Historical Commission honored St. Mary Church with two historical markers. The first was for St. Mary Mission Church as the gothic revival structure is the only extant example of the original Mainland Missions. The other, a subject marker, is for Mainland Mission Churches. Today, St. Mary of League City is the only mission church left standing and remains a testimony to the impact the mainland mission churches had on the lives of the Catholic residents in Galveston County.
Resetting of GAR marker
And a short genealogy of the Smithson family
By Deborah Gammon

A Union veteran of the War Between the States, William M. Smithson’s Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) marker was reset on August 14, 2015 after it had been damaged at Fairview Cemetery. The resetting of the marker was done by Barry Gammon and paid for by Lt. Cmdr. Edward Lea USN, Camp 2 Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

Son of Edward T. Smithson and Betsey Walter, William M. Smithson was born in Ohio on Nov. 21, 1833. When young William was but 3 years old, his father died. Betsey’s father was appointed guardian of William and his brother, John Walter Smithson. The family relocated to Knox County, Illinois before 1840.

William M. Smithson is found on the 1850 census living with his grandfather, John W. Walter. Living in the same household was Harriet Thurman age 14. William M. Smithson and Harriet Thurman were married in Knox Co., Illinois on Dec. 20, 1855. Daughters, VelmaViola and Alberta were born in Illinois. Son, Fred was born after the family moved to Nebraska.

War came to our Nation and William M. Smithson joined Co. F. Unit 86 Illinois on August 5, 1862. William enlisted as a musician. William was discharged February 2, 1863 in Tennessee because of his health. He returned to Illinois and learned carpentry. The family moved to David City, Nebraska in 1871. The Smithson family is credited with building of the town of David City. By the 1900 census, the Smithson family was living in League City.

William M. Smithson died on Friday, August 15, 1913 and was buried in block #58 in Fairview Cemetery. Harriet Thurman Smithson died 15 years later and is believed to be buried beside her husband in block #58. Her obituary in the League City News stated that she would be interred in Fairview Cemetery but her death certificate said she was interred in Forest Park East. A quick call to the office at Forest Park revealed that she was not there so most likely, Harriet is in the unmarked grave beside her husband.

Daughter, Velma Viola Smithson was born June 13, 1862 in Illinois. At the age of 17, she wed Alfred Louis Smith on January 22, 1879 in Nebraska. She and Louis Smith had two children, Daisy Smith and Otto Smith. Louis and Velma V. Smithson Smith are buried in block #58 in Fairview. Their son, Otto G. H. Smith, a WWI veteran is buried in block #111. Daughter Daisy Smith first wed Bert C. Perkins (Block#27) in Galveston Co. on July 17, 1897 and they had one son, Audrey Perkins. The 1900 census has 19 year-old, Daisy with her son, Audrey, age 2 living with her parents, Viola and Louis Smith in League City. Later Audrey Perkins took the name of Daisy’s second husband, Horsfall. Daisy Smith Perkins wed Nate S. Horsfall in Galveston Co. on September 18, 1901. She and Nate had two children, Cecil and Glenn Horsfall.

Following birth and deaths in obituaries and ancestry.com indexes, the Horsfall children of Daisy Smith do have descendants living in this area. But, they are not buried in Fairview Cemetery. The second daughter of W. M. Smithson and wife, Harriet, Alberta Smithson married George H. Giessler in Galveston Co. August 10, 1904. They did not have children. G. H. Giessler and wife, Bertie Smithson Giessler are buried in Fairview in Block #20.

Back to Bert Perkins. He was the son of Ella T. Perkins (Block#44), brother of Pearl Perkins Scott(Block #59) and brother of Ivy Perkins Gorsen(Block#44). Later, Bert Perkins married Mrs. Emmie Dorothy Labuzan, daughter of Charles Hancock. She is in Block #27 with Bert C. Perkins. She was the mother of William M. Labuzan, Sr., a WWI veteran buried in Block #27.

The League City Historical Society presents
“Ghosts of the Past”
Genealogy in a Cemetery
Saturday, October 31, 2015
At Fairview Cemetery
Look for more information to follow

Silent Auction

Don’t forget...Living History Dinner silent auction items are needed. Please drop them off at the one-room schoolhouse.
An Invitation to the League City Historical Society Living History Dinner

An Invitation to the League City Historical Society for an evening with Colonel Theodore Roosevelt.

Step back in time...in this unique setting for dinner and entertainment.

WANTED
Tough Texans to join Colonel Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders as they head to Cuba.
The US Cavalry is sending volunteers to fight for Cuban independence.
Colonel Roosevelt will be in League City this fall of 1898. Hear this inspiring leader talk about the future adventure.
Muster in with your horse and equipment for travel.

Fight for Independence!

The League City Historical Society cordially invites you to enjoy our Living History Dinner at Wedding Station
100 Perkins Avenue League City
Saturday, September 12, 2015
6:00 pm Social and Silent Auction
7:00 pm Dinner
Meet Colonel Theodore Roosevelt - portrayed by nationally known Larry Maples from Ohio

$50 per person

RSVP by September 1, 2015
Call 281-554-2994 or Mail 216 North Kansas City, TX 77573

A non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and sharing the history of our area.