May 2010 Newsletter

Kathie Nenninger Editor knenninger@verizon.net

May 27th Meeting

Our special speaker will be Charlie Gordy with the Houston Archeological Society. Mr. Gordy will discuss the Bernardo Plantation Project.

The Bernardo Plantation Archaeology Project was founded by Gregg Dimmick, James Woodrick, and Greg Brown, and is managed collaboratively by the Community Archaeology Research Institute, Inc.; Jim Bruseth with the Texas Historical Commission; Greg Brown, with Cowboys and Indians Magazine; James Woodrick as Project Historian; Gregg Dimmick with The Friends of San Jacinto, Inc.; and Charlie Gordy with the Houston Archaeological Society.

Bernardo Plantation, established in 1822 by Jared E. Groce II, one of the "Old Three Hundred" settlers, is at once a historical as well as an archaeological treasure. Bernardo is the earliest cotton plantation to be established in Texas and was visited by the Texas Army under the command of General Sam Houston during the famous "runaway scrape."

Descendants of the Groce family live in League City including our member, Debbie Groce.

from the president...

Ronnie Richards

Elections are over, the weather is great and summer is almost here. I want to thank everyone that has helped out with the museum clean up unfortunately I was out of town for my grandson’s Confirmation.

I want to thank Diane Kerkhove for her presentation of holiday post cards at our last meeting. I was out of town and missed the presentation but Kevin Burk, Vice President tells me it went well.

Looking ahead, our next meeting will feature Charlie Gordy, President of the Houston Archeology Society and volunteer coordinator for the Bernardo Archaeological Project.

Charlie will tell us about this very interesting project that is unearthing a lot of history on the Jared Groce plantation known as Bernardo. This will be one you don’t want to miss and we urge you to bring a friend.

We still need a speaker for June so if you have any ideas, I would love to hear from you at Ronnie@hstr.com or 281-797-1970.

We thank Diana Dornak and Catharin Lewis for this month’s refreshments

Calendar

May 27, 2010 - Charlie Gordy
The Bernardo Plantation Project
West Bay Common School Children’s Museum
210 Kansas Street, League City
Social 6:45pm Meeting 7:00pm

July 3, 2010 Teddy Bear Parade
October 7, 2010 Living History Dinner
October 30, 2010 Ghosts of the Past
December 11, 2010 Historic Homes Tour
April 29th Meeting Minutes

Sherry Frankovich

Kevin Burke, the Vice President, welcomed members and guests. Kevin introduced Diane Kerkhove, who was our speaker. She talked about her holiday postcard collection. She showed us many postcards about Valentine’s Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. She has 10,000 post cards, which are from every state and most every country. She began her collection in 1986 after she moved to League City. She began a stamp collection, also. Her neighbor encouraged her in both collections.

Kevin conducted the business meeting. Secretarial and Museum reports were printed in the newsletter.

Catharin Lewis told us that they will be traveling to the One Room Schoolhouse Conference this month. Richard will be in charge of the program and Catharin will be in charge of the registration.

Kathy Weisskopf will take 4 LCHS actors to Bauerschlag Elementary. They will be telling League City history to third graders, as they portray four ancestors.

Kevin adjourned the meeting at 7:50 P.M.

MusNews

Catharin Lewis, Director / Curator

April continued to be busy with classes, work day event and daily operations. We held 22 schoolhouse sessions and enjoyed the groups from Seabrook, Houston, Sugarland, Galveston, Pearland, Spring, Lake Jackson and League City. There were 379 students, 24 teachers and 39 adults in attendance. We also had 13 walk-in-visitors for docent talks during the month of April. We brought in $1,828.00 in program fees and $1,130.80 in gift shop sales during the last month.

We held a Museum Work Day on April 17th and there were six wonderful volunteers to tackle some outside work on the museum. I want to thank Gene and Doris Teets, Diana Dornak, Kathy Weisskopf and Richard and myself for trimming bushes and trees, pulling weeds, and repairing part of the Barn Museum roof. We all worked three hours and felt we made a difference in the appearance of the museum grounds. We are planning another work week, June 1st – 4th to paint the outside of the schoolhouse (weather permitting) and weed and trim trees. Anyone wishing to volunteer should contact me at the Museum.

Work on the getting the new addition organized continued through April and our goal is to complete this project by the end of June. We photograph the collection during the slow daily operations of the Museum and enter the data when we can. We continue to research families buried at Fairview Cemetery and to gather photos and information concerning them. If you have family photos, family history or school memorabilia that you wish to donate to our collection, please stop by the museum during hours.

We want to thank Ann Fisher of Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania for her recent donation to the Museum collection. Ann settled the estate of her relative, Marilyn Nussbaum of Nassau Bay and donated a wooden bowl, large scissors, two small Bibles, a ceramic butter dish, a wedding dress, a christening dress, handkerchief, ladies shoes, comb, three Rosaries, slip, and bloomers. All these items are quite old and very interesting to add to our collection. We look forward to putting them on exhibit.

We also have another new contract teacher, Kate Jordan. She received her Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Science from Pennsylvania State University and her Master of Science in Agricultural and Extension Education from Pennsylvania State University. She comes with work experience in Day Camps and the Houston Zoo. She is a quick learner and comes each day with a smile. The children are responding well to both Kate and Geoffrey during the schoolhouse tours. We still have Sarah Eubanks and Catherine Gill contract teaching when they can also. I am really blessed to have such a great team of workers to help with the Museum program. And as always I am thankful to my office volunteers who also make things happen. I am planning a Special Volunteer Luncheon and Outing for all my volunteers and teachers on Thursday, June 3 at noon. Plan to meet at the Museum.

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Plans for the 2010 Historic Homes Tour Will Begin Soon!
The first meeting of the Historic Homes Tour Committee will be held Monday, June 7 - 10am at the home of Diana Dornak - 1013 Texas Avenue in League City.
The first order of business will be to choose the homes that will be invited to participate in this year's home tour.
"This event is very special because it takes place at the beginning of the holiday season," said Diana Dornak, Chairman of the Historic Homes Tour. "Because of the many details in planning the tour, we begin several months in advance so everything will run smoothly. It’s fun and we have a great committee," she continued.
Diana says that they welcome anyone who wants to be on the committee and get involved in planning the tour. Give her a call (281-316-2122) or email her if you are interested. diana.dornak1@verizon.net

Past LCHS President Wins League City Council Seat

To my friends, supporters, and all of the citizens of League City,
I would like to thank everyone who helped make my candidacy a success. Your hard work and dedication, your encouragement, your trust, and your votes, have made my dream of serving on City Council a reality. I promise I will not let you down.
These are challenging times for our City. An uncertain economy, coupled with the growing pains we all feel daily, demand that this City Council focus on policy over politics and commonality over personal agendas. I look forward to working with my fellow council members to make League City the best place ever to live, work, and raise a family.
I believe with uncommon effort we can restore the people’s faith in our ability to serve as their stewards in making government, once again, an instrument of the people.
I will never forget the honor you have bestowed on me.
Sincerely,
Joanna Sharp
Position 7, League City City Council

T.R. Fehrenbach Book Award

Congratulations to former LCHS member, Dr. Heather Green Wooten who was given the T. R. Fehrenbach Book Award for her first book, The Polio Years in Texas: Battling a Terrifying Unknown.
The T.R. Fehrenbach Book Award began as an annual publications contest established by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) in the 1960s. The contest was designed to recognize outstanding original research, study and publication in the field of Texas history.
In 1986, the THC named the contest in honor of internationally recognized author-historian T.R. Fehrenbach of San Antonio. Honored by the Texas Legislature, Fehrenbach is the author of 18 nonfiction books, including Lone Star, the most widely read history of Texas and the basis for the PBS miniseries.
Fehrenbach served as a THC commissioner from 1983 to 2001 and is currently THC commissioner emeritus
The award was presented at the Annual Historic Preservation Conference in April 2010.
Fairview Cemetery Research Continues...

Deborah Gammon

About a year ago, I decided to put my family tree online on Public Member Trees for ancestry.com. I followed the directions given on the site to upload my family tree, going to the oldest ancestor and following their instructions.

Shortly after I put the tree online, I began getting messages from people looking at Fairview Cemetery people. To my amazement, ancestry.com took everyone in my file, including the people that I am not related to but researching who are interred in Fairview Cemetery, League City, Texas.

I have been contacted by family members for the Cooper family, the Singletary family, Martin, Osterman, Berglund, Cravey and Dick families. My latest communication came from Mrs. Judy Matejowsky of Ledbetter, Texas. She was looking for descendants of the Stoddard and Symms families. Mrs. Matejowsky had purchased a box of pictures in an antique store in the Houston area. On the back of the pictures was written Mrs. G. E. Symms. Mrs. G. E. Symms was Mary Ellen Stoddard, daughter of William Stoddard and Mary Philomena Castillo Stoddard. Mr. William Stoddard is one of the Union veterans of the Civil War interred in Fairview.

Mary was married to Guy E. Symms about 1906 and the two divorced in October of 1929. Most of the pictures are dated 1927.

After several emails, Mrs. Matejowsky loaned the pictures to me to scan.

I quickly did that and have returned them to her so she can continue to pursue the descendants of the Stoddard family. Mrs. Matejowsky wishes to return the original pictures to someone in the family.

I am convinced that the very elderly lady in a couple of the pictures is Mary Philomena Stoddard who died May 1930, mother of Mary Ellen Stoddard Symms. As for the other individuals in the pictures, I imagine one of the ladies to be Mary Ellen Symms and the other people to be her brothers and sisters, friends and family. Mary Ellen Stoddard Hanna was born 16 February 1869 and passed away 18 May 1952.

I have included several of the pictures for our readership.

If anyone has any information about the whereabouts of the descendants of the Stoddard family, please contact me at 281-334-4950.
Bringing League City History to Life...  

Kathy Weisskopf

Members of our society will bring history to life for third graders at Bauerschlag Elementary School on Tuesday, May 25.

Sherry Frankovich, Catherine Gill and Deborah Gammon will portray early residents of League City, sharing their life stories with the students. Kathy Weisskopf will provide a brief history of the community as a framework for their presentations, with each impersonator stepping forward at the appropriate point to bring her era to life.

Bauerschlag’s librarian, Ladonna Littlejohn, requested the presentation by our historical impersonators after hearing about our program at Victory Lakes Intermediate School.

“Because our third graders study communities, especially the history of League City, your presentation would be a great tie-in for them,” she said.

Sherry Frankovich will portray Lucretia Kipp, sharing her spellbinding 40-year love story that started when her beau went to fight in the Civil War. Word came that he had been killed, so she moved on and married another. Forty years later their paths crossed by surprise, and they married within a month of laying eyes on each other again.

This picture from the files of Liz Fleming shows Lucretia Kipp and her husband, John Henry, with the flag she gave him for the Magnolia Rangers before they left to fight in the Civil War more than 40 years earlier. John Henry is seated under the flag, and the woman seated closest to him is believed to be Lucretia.

“I enjoy doing Lucretia Kipp because she proves that life doesn’t end at age 60,” says Sherry. “Hope is rekindled when a lost loved one is found.”

Catherine Gill will portray Sarah Girard Reifel, who married a survivor of the Battle of Manasses. They lived in Galveston during the Great Storm of 1900, and then moved inland to League City, where he represented the ice company.

Catherine Gill wears an 1860’s-era gown in a style popular at the time she and her husband were married.

She will wear a beautiful antebellum gown loaned by J’Nean Henderson, Texas Victorian Lady.com.

“We really appreciate J’Nean loaning us this lovely dress,” says Kathy Weisskopf. “Seeing a character in the attire of her era helps students visualize life in those days.”

Deborah Gammon will bring Lucy Bell Cravey to life, sharing the story of this daughter of a confederate soldier, Henry Cravey, who was captured at Vicksburg. She grew up in League City area, then married a German immigrant, Victor Henry Gorsen, of League City. Lucy went into labor with her 6th child several months after the 1915 hurricane. Her family tried to take her to the hospital in Galveston but couldn’t reach Galveston because of the destruction there. They tried to go to Houston, but the bridge was out. Unfortunately, she and her baby died on the way to the hospital. They are buried together in Fairview Cemetery.

Deborah Gammon will portray Lucy Bell Cravey Gorsen, pictured here with her husband, Victor.

“Today’s kids have experienced several hurricanes themselves, and this story gives them insight into how long it took for communities to recover from storms like this a century ago,” says Deborah.

At the end of the presentation, each student will receive a ‘wooden nickel’ from the West Bay Common School Children’s Museum.

“I enjoy dressing in the clothing of the era and talking to people about how hard it was to live during the early 1900’s, especially children who have no idea about how different their lives were growing up,” says Catherine.