



THE DALLAS COUNTY CHRONICLE

The Newsletter of the Dallas County Historical Commission

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Mesquite named a *Preserve America* Community

The City of Mesquite is one of the newest 15 Texas communities to be named a *Preserve America* Community by the White House, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Commerce and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. City Council members were recognized at a Texas Historical Commission's Annual Conference luncheon held in Fort Worth, May 7, 2004.

First Lady Laura Bush announced the *Preserve America* initiative in March 2003, in order to encourage local preservation and congratulate community efforts. The extensive application process included a special resolution by the Mesquite City Council supporting historic preservation and documentation of efforts in three categories: Discovering Heritage Through Historic Places; Protecting Historic Resources; and Promoting Historic Assets. The City received letters of support from U.S. Senator John Cornyn, Texas Representative Elvira Reyna, Dallas County Commissioner Mike Cantrell and others.

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Shirley Roberts and Char-



Left to right are Texas First Lady Anita Perry, Mesquite City Council-member Shirley Roberts, Historic Mesquite Executive Director Charlene Orr, and Assistant Commerce Secretary David Sampson. At the top is THC Chairman John Nau. (Photo by Andy Rhodes, Texas Historical Commission.)

lene Orr, City Historical Preservation Officer, accepted the designation certificate, signed by Mrs. Bush, from Texas' First Lady Anita Perry and Dr. David A. Sampson, Assistant Secretary for Economic Development in the Department of Commerce. Chairman of the Advisory Coun-

cil on Historic Preservation, John L. Nau III, announced the designations. He also serves as chairman of the Texas Historical Commission.

For more information on the *Preserve America* program, see www.PreserveAmerica.gov.

Material for this article provided by Historic Mesquite, Inc.

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Cottonwood Cemetery Marker Dedicated

Ceremonies were held June 5 to dedicate the Cottonwood Cemetery as an Official Texas Historical Cemetery. Speakers at the event were local cemetery historian Frances James, Dallas County Historical Commission Chairman Buddy Frazer, and Cottonwood Cemetery Foundation President Jim Foster.

The Cottonwood Cemetery is located on Whitely Road in the northeastern corner of unincorporated Dallas County. The cemetery borders Cottonwood Creek on its east end.

The cemetery is part of the J. C. Johnson Survey and the land was originally located in Mercers Colony. The first known burial at Cottonwood was in December 1875 for John L. Sims, the twenty-four year old son of Elisha and Elizabeth Turner Sims. The parents, one brother and one sister were also buried here.

There is no known documentation indicating the name of the person that donated the original land for this cemetery, but it is thought that Elisha Sims set aside this land since it was later conveyed by Emma Adalade Sims Spence, Elisha's daughter. The first known documentation recording conveyance of the surrounding property was dated August, 19, 1948, and specifically states, "Save and Except that

portion of said property used as cemetery."

The original land contained approximately three-fourths of an acre and consisted of all property directly in front of and west of the entrance gate. The newer section consists of all property east of the entrance gate. This section is slightly less than one-half acre and was donated by William E. and Jessie Rhea Hunter in 1973. The total acreage is now recorded at 1.19 acres.

There are approximately thirty unmarked graves in the old section. Many of the older unnamed graves were marked with bois d'arc stobs (small posts) and almost all of those posts have disappeared over the years. There are 201 marked graves in the combined sections. Many of the graves in the older section contain the remains of the first pioneers and early settlers of the Cottonwood Community.

All of the early graves were dug by members of the nearby communities. Fred Spainhouer, Clyde Raney, Hubert Raney, and Oscar Merritt were some of the frequent volunteers. George Nelson even made a special tool in his Liberty Grove blacksmith shop for evening up the sides.

Veterans from the Indian Wars, Mexi-



Frances James and Superintendent of Grounds Butch Harper unveil the Cottonwood Cemetery marker. (Photo by Buddy Frazer)

can War, Civil War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War are buried in the cemetery.

There was no established program for the care and upkeep of the cemetery until 1958 when the Cottonwood Cemetery Foundation was formed. Carl Foster served as first president with Judge Dee Brown Walker as vice-president and Agnes Eaves as secretary/treasurer. The current officers are Jim Foster, president, Judge Dee Brown Walker, vice-president, Larry Murry, second vice president, and Mary Beth Tyler as secretary/treasurer.

Material for this article provided by the Cottonwood Cemetery Foundation.

DCHC Awards Resource Survey Contract

Dallas County has awarded a contract for phase three of the update to the historic resource surveys of municipalities in the county. The contract is effective July 1 and ends on January 3, 2005. Budgeted at \$17,500, it covers Duncanville, Grand Prairie and DeSoto. The cities provide a portion of the total funding.

A request for proposal was issued in order to obtain a qualified consultant.

Resulting proposals were evaluated using a 100-point scoring system by a five-member committee made up of a representative from the Historical Commission, each city, and the County's Planning Director. The winning proposal was submitted by the Coker Company of Dallas.

This survey represents the third phase of a three-phase effort that the DCHC has undertaken to help replace the last

county-wide survey which was done in 1982. The first two phases were done in 1998 and 2000. When this phase is completed, the County will have assisted in the surveying of 22 of the 25 cities within its jurisdiction. With the other three cities either having recently had some type of other survey done or are in the process of having a survey done by another entity, the Commission's desire to update and replace the 1982 survey will largely have been realized.

"Friends of Old Red" Completes Work

By Lindalyn Adams

The Dallas County Historical Commission has long been an advocate of the restoration of Dallas County's 1892 Courthouse, fondly known as "Old Red". In the late 1970's, the Commission worked to acquire a Texas Historical Marker for Old Red through a grant by the Junior League of Dallas, who provided assistance not only in the purchase of the marker, but also with a volunteer who wrote the narrative for the marker. The Commission planned the 1979 dedication ceremony for the marker with numerous civic dignitaries taking part.

The Commission embarked on other projects in connection with restora-

tion efforts being made by Dallas County. When the County brought in James Pratt as architect for the courthouse, the Commission assisted Mr. Pratt in bringing attention to the many needs of this irreplaceable and most significant 19th structure through its Historic Buildings Advisory Committee. The Commission also received a grant from the Texas Historical Commission for the building.

In the mid-1980's, the Commission started The Friends of the Old Red Courthouse, an advocacy group consisting of Commission members who wrote hundreds of notes inviting Dallas' leading citizens to join the Friends by sending a donation of \$100. Hundreds



Lindalyn Adams addresses the final meeting of the Friends of Old Red. (Photo by Ross Crabtree, Old Red Museum)

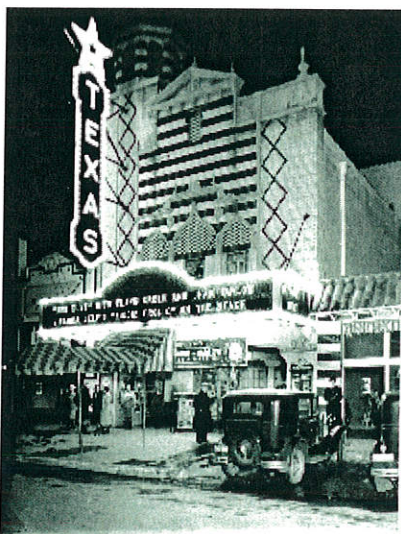
joined this effort displaying an outpouring of affection for the Old Red Courthouse. Later, Commission members established a Restoration Fund at the Com-

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Legacies Dallas History Conference Set for September 18 at Central Library

By Mike Hazel, *Legacies* editor

Theater, music, film, crafts, and sports will all be featured topics at this fall's Sixth Annual *Legacies* Dallas History Conference. With the theme "Arts and Entertainment in Dallas," the confer-



Opening night at the Texas Theatre. (Photo courtesy Old Red Museum of Dallas County History and Culture.)

ence will held Saturday, September 18, from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the ground-floor auditorium at the J. Erik Jonsson Central Library in downtown Dallas.

Among the speakers is Kay Cattarulla, who will relate the fascinating story of how Margo Jones produced *Inherit the Wind* in Dallas when no other theatrical producer would touch the controversial play. Troy Sherrod will reminisce about the colorful theaters that once entertained Oak Cliff audiences. Larry Taylor will talk about Dallas as a crossroads for roots music, particularly the blues and jazz. Ellen Niewyk will review the career of artisan Velma Davis Dozier, whose jewelry and metalwork has found a place in museums. And two sports-related papers will be presented by Thomas H. Smith, recounting the forgotten story of Dallas's first professional football team (the Texans) and Michael C. Miller, discussing the career of Lamar Hunt.

The registration fee of \$25 will cover



Dallas theater legend Margo Jones and friends. (Photo courtesy Old Red Museum of Dallas County History and Culture.)

parking at the library and morning refreshments as well as attendance at the conference itself. Registration forms will be available by August at the public library or by calling 214-421-5141, ext. 3801.

The Dallas County Historical Commission is again a sponsor for the Dallas History Conference, along with ten other local historical agencies.

Friends of Old Red con't

(Continued from page 3)

munities Foundation of Texas which also enabled the Friends to raise additional private funds for the restoration of the beautiful tile roof which once had adorned the Courthouse.

Several Annual Meetings of the Dallas County Historical Commission had the Old Red Courthouse as beneficiary of the funds raised from these events. These funds helped form the basis for the monies held in the Communities Foundation Old Red Fund.

In 1990, Dallas County asked the Commission to make recommendations for the use of one quadrant in Old Red, as the building was to be vacated. The Commission asked that the Friends be activated to plan for the use of the northwest quadrant on the first floor. At that time, a steering committee was formed with four advisors to the Old Red Restoration Fund, appointed by the Commission. The Steering Committee was composed of current and former Commission members, presidents and executive directors of county-wide historical organizations, the architect of the building, county department heads, and persons in public relations and other professions.

The Steering Committee approached the County to advance funds, much as when the Sixth Floor Museum began, to bring in consultants to plan a major exhibit on Dallas history. The funds were advanced from a fund held by the Sixth Floor, and the plans for the exhibit in a quadrant and half of the first floor were completed in a

year.

Sensing that revenues from such an exhibit would not support the management of such an endeavor, a consultant from Canada studied the pro-formas and concluded that the County needed to further study how the building should be used. As the process of appointing a task force to make recommendations for the buildings use took over a year, and the task force's recommendations receiving approval by the Court took additional time, the Friends of the Old Red Courthouse continued to meet to engage the historical organizations in the county on the need to restore and use the Courthouse. The Friends made several donations to the newly formed Old Red Foundation and continued to act as an advocacy group for the highest and best use of this much loved structure.

As the plans for the Old Red Museum of Dallas County History and Culture, and Dallas County's dedication to the excellent preservation and restoration of the building materialized, it became more and more evident that Dallas County's Old Red Courthouse would have a bright new future, and that the role of the Friends could now be dissolved. Thus, on June 9, 2004, the Friends became new charter members of the Association being formed as a support to the Old Red Museum of Dallas County History and Culture.

Dallas County, within a year or so, will have a magnificently restored

Ross Avenue Baptist Church Demolition

The sanctuary of the Ross Avenue Baptist Church was demolished June 21. The sanctuary was destroyed by fire in 2002, and could not be restored with available funding.

The building was a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark. The Texas Historical Commission, in a letter to Pastor Eddie Sanchez waiving the normal sixty-day review, said, "...while we would have hoped for full restoration of the structure, we understand the special circumstances of the situation."

The marker will be removed from the building, but may be displayed inside as a part of an exhibit on church history. The church could apply for a subject marker documenting the history of the site.

Courthouse, thanks to Dallas County, a clock tower thanks to a grant from the Texas Historical Commission, and a superb Museum of Dallas County History and Culture, thanks to David Biegler, who led the effort to raise the \$12 million from our own Dallas County citizens.

Distinguished Service Award Received



Chairman Buddy Frazer (center) accepts the Texas Historical Commission's Distinguished Service Award for 2003 on behalf of the Dallas County Historical Commission. The award was presented by THC Executive Director Larry Oaks (right) and Deputy Director Terry Colley (left). THC Commissioner Lareatha Clay of Dallas (top) read the names of the recipients. (Photo by Andy Rhodes, Texas Historical Commission.)

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