

DALLAS COUNTY
HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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ANSHE SPHARD SYNAGOGUE and PRIMERA IGLESIA BAUSTISTA

The Interconnectedness of Dallas

By Juanita H. Nãnez

We have all heard how we are all interconnected and that Dallas is no different. However, while we may have “heard” this, we probably do not always understand how this may be so. The story of how a Mexican-American Baptist church came to have the Star of David in its windows is yet another fascinating example of the rich and often surprising history that has been created in Dallas.

This story began in the late 1800s and early 1900s when Eastern European Jews from Austria and Romania started arriving in Dallas, settling in a neighborhood north of downtown that quickly became known as Little Jerusalem. Many arrived as part of the Galveston Plan, an immigration assistance program operated by several Jewish organizations that worked to divert Jewish immigrants fleeing Russia and eastern Europe away from East Coast cities that were already crowded with poverty-stricken immigrants. The Little Jerusalem neighborhood covered about ten city blocks and was bordered by the Missouri, Kansas and Texas railroad, Akard Street, McKinney Avenue, and Griffin Street. Most of the streets were unpaved, municipal services were few, and housing was cheap.

In 1906, this small Jewish community founded *Anshe Sphard*. Initially, they met in private homes, and the congregation followed the Sephardic rite. In 1913,

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Primera Iglesia Bautista about 1919. Note the Star of David in each of the two upstairs windows.

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Rick Loessberg
Director of Planning and Development
411 Elm Street, 3rd Floor
Dallas, TX 75202-3301
214.653.7601

Dallas County to Continue Under-Told Marker Funding



With the State's annual historical marker application period scheduled to begin on September 1, the Dallas County Commissioners Court has reauthorized the County's under-told marker funding program for another year. This action was taken based on a recommendation made by the County's Historical Commission.



This will mark the second year that the County has offered to provide such funding. The County began providing such information because of a concern that there were many aspects of the County's history that still had not been adequately acknowledged or commemorated. In fact, although Dallas County is 39% Hispanic and 22% African American, less than 10% of the State historical markers in the County address the history of these two populations.



"We truly look forward to working with everyone in closing this gap," said Commission Vice Chairman Jesse Tafalla whose committee developed the recommendation to create the program a year ago and to now have it reauthorized. "There are so many incredible stories that make up our history, and it is so important that we celebrate all of them."

A total of \$1100 will be available for the upcoming Fall 2017 application period. Under this program, the County will provide 50% of the cost (up to \$550) of a small version of a State subject marker, a cemetery marker, or a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark marker. Applications for County assistance must be submitted to the Historical Commission by November 1, 2017. Additional information about the program is available on the Historical Commission's website (www.dallascounty.org/dchc) under "Projects" and can also be obtained by calling Rick Loessberg, the County's Director of Planning & Development, at (214) 653-7601.

State Historical Marker Application Period to Begin September 1



While it always seems to be a long way off—like Christmas when you were a kid—it is suddenly almost that time once again—the start of the State's annual historical marker application period. Beginning on September 1, it will be possible to submit applications for markers to the Dallas County Historical Commission.

Markers can be sought to commemorate events, people, cemeteries, subjects, and structures. If you are trying to determine whether a particular topic or building is

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Interconnectedness (continued from page 1)



they acquired a house located at 2211 Alamo Street and converted it into a synagogue. Several years later, as the Jewish community prospered and began moving elsewhere, the congregation moved with it and began occupying a different home, this one in south Dallas.

What was once a synagogue then became an opportunity for another religious group. At about the same time that Dallas' Jewish population began to move to south Dallas, immigrants fleeing the turmoil and ravages of the Mexican Revolution began arriving *en masse* in Dallas. Many settled into Little Jerusalem, and some Jewish community members rented their homes to the new residents. The number of Mexican immigrants living in this neighborhood grew rapidly, reaching 10,000 by 1920 with "Little Jerusalem" becoming "Little Mexico." A popular saying during this period was, "You can walk all the way from Jerusalem to Mexico down Akard Street."

The majority of the new residents were Roman Catholic; however, some were also Protestant, and evangelical churches and missions were established to serve this community. One of these missions was *Primera Iglesia Bautista* (First Mexican Baptist Church). Like the early Eastern European Jews, the loyal members of this mission church first held services in members' homes, and at other times, they used an empty warehouse space in what is now the West End District. In 1919, they acquired 2211 Alamo—the same building that had once been *Anshe Sphard*—and the congregation now had a church that featured the Star of David in its windows and a home that lasted until 1926.

Today, ninety years later, *Primera Iglesia Bautista* is located near Walnut Hill and Marsh Lane in the northwestern portion of Dallas. *Anshe Sphard* merged with *Shearith Israel* in 1956. 2211 Alamo no longer exists; the site was located in-between what is now the Perot Museum of Nature and Science and El Fenix Restaurant. However, its history is symbolic of the early beginnings of multiculturalism in Dallas and is a tribute to those who were willing to respect the faiths of others.

Marker Schedule (continued from page 2)

historic, just remember two basic principles:

- The structure, event, subject, etc. usually must be at least fifty years old or must have occurred at least fifty years ago; and
- Just because something (or someone) is old does not mean that it is historic.



Marker applications and instructions will soon be available at the Texas Historical Commission's website: www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projectsandprograms/statehistoricalmarkers. It is expected that these instructions and materials will be very similar to what has been used over the last several years.

While preparing a marker application may seem like a daunting task since it requires the use of footnotes and references, it often helps to think of this as just another short paper or essay you may have written in high school or college. Quality, not quantity, is what is important. Simply explain what it is that you are seeking to acknowledge, why you think it is important, and provide the justification for your position. Try not to get bogged down with trying to sound "scholarly"—try to write like you talk. Most people verbally explain things quite well. It is only when they sit down with a pen (or a keyboard) that sometimes the words become difficult.

Rick Loessberg, the County's Director of Planning & Development, and members of the County's Historical Commission are available to help answer questions about preparing an application. Please contact Mr. Loessberg at (214) 653-7601 or at rloessberg@dallascounty.org if you need any assistance.

Once an application has been completed, it must electronically be submitted to Mr. Loessberg no later than November 1 for it to be considered during this cycle.

Irving Heritage Society

Preserving and Creating History

By Mary Higbie



Founded in 1978 as an outgrowth of America's Bicentennial celebration, the Irving Heritage Society is now almost forty years old. Two couples—Neill and Dorothy English and O.D. and Estelle Bates—that had worked on local Bicentennial events, realized that a permanent organization was going to be needed if the local interest in history that had arisen was to be sustained. On February 14 of that year, the Heritage Society and its first event—a Vintage Valentine Tea, which continues to be held every year—were launched.

Reflecting Irving's beginning as a railroad town, a logo that depicted a train depot was selected for the new organization. This railroad theme was then subsequently reinforced with the establishment of Heritage Park—one of the Society's first projects—that not only contained a relocated train depot and caboose, but also the city's first water tower, a windmill, and the Henry Caster cabin which was first constructed in 1887.



Sights at Irving's Heritage Park: from left to right, the Caster Cabin, a Rock Island train depot, a caboose, and the city's first water tower.

In addition to Heritage Park, the Society is best known for its role in the preservation and operation of Heritage House. Originally built in 1912 as the home of C.P. Schulze, it has been fully restored to the era in which it was initially occupied. Featuring items from the Schulze family that were actually in the home during its early days and period antiques donated from local residents and supporters, the home allows visitors to truly "step back in time."



Scenes from another of the Society's prizes: the Heritage House.

History does not stop nor does the Society. It assisted in the founding and development of Bear Creek Heritage Park which commemorates one of the oldest African American communities in Dallas County, and it helped sponsor the writing of the book, *Irving, A Texas Odyssey*. It provides tours of the Caster Cabin and train depot during festivals and events held in Heritage Park, it offers monthly tours of Heritage House, and it conducts a variety of other annual events, including "Celebrating Irving," the previously mentioned Valentine's tea, and a fish fry.

A long-term goal of the Heritage Society is the establishment of an Irving Museum in the Heritage District. Given what the Society has already accomplished, there is no doubt that this will be achieved as well.

Honoring the Dallas County Medical Society Alliance



First in Nation

By Elizabeth Gunby

On May 4, 1917, not quite a month after the United States formally entered what was then known as “the Great War,” a meeting took place at 4105 Live Oak in east Dallas. It was there that Katherine McReynolds proposed the formation of a Women’s Auxiliary to the Dallas County Medical Society (DCMS), the first group of this type in the country.

For the previous forty-eight years, the men of the DCMS had relied on their spouses to host the out-of-town wives who were attending state medical conventions held in Dallas with their doctor-husbands. But Mrs. McReynolds’ plan encompassed far more, a year-round program of service to the medical profession and to the entire community. She saw the opportunities for volunteers to help promote better health by teaching hygiene, nutrition, and safety measures. At that time, she especially saw the health-related needs brought on by the nation’s entry into the war. On the very day of its organization, with Mrs. McReynolds as its first president, the group decided that its primary project would be to equip one of the four instruction classrooms of the Dallas Chapter of the American Red Cross.

By the end of their first year, the number of Auxiliary members had grown from seventeen to seventy-one. Their work included the packaging of 1400 Christmas boxes for soldiers in France, invitations for 555 aviators from Camp Love and Benbrook to Dallas homes for Christmas dinner, knitting 400 sweaters for Camp



Love, and gifts of window shades, gas stoves, jelly, books and magazines for the hospital at Camp Dick as well as fresh eggs, bath slippers and twelve pints of preserves. Their work at the Red Cross Sewing Room yielded 518 operating gowns, 313 caps, and fifty Belgium baby dresses.

The work that was being accomplished by the auxiliary in Dallas soon spread across the state. The need for such an organization was so immediately apparent that McLennan and Bexar counties quickly formed similar auxiliaries to their medical societies within the same year. On, May 15, 1918, the three county organizations met in San Antonio to form an Auxiliary to the Texas Medical Association with the three-fold purpose of patriotism, philanthropy and fellowship. Georgie Cary of Dallas was elected the state association’s first president.

Four years later, the success of these local organizations had reached the national stage. In 1922, the American Medical Association created its own Woman’s Auxiliary, and in 1927, the same Katherine McReynolds that had created the first local auxiliary at that meeting on Live Oak was elected president of the national auxiliary. With this, the circle which first began in Dallas and which forever would link medical alliances at the county, state and national levels was completed.

For the next eighty years, the work that first began with Mrs. McReynolds and her sixteen colleagues has been dutifully carried on. The name of the organization may have changed to reflect the times, but its goals and accomplishments have been the same. A cottage was built at Savage Lake and donated to the Salvation Army for housing underprivileged children during the summer. The Physicians Benevolent Fund which benefits doctors’ indigent widows and orphans was established. Consultation rooms were furnished for doctors at New Hope Cottage and Methodist Hospital, and an intern’s recreation room was added at Parkland. Scholarships were created for nursing students. Volunteers and funding were provided for health-related nonprofits like the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, The Family Place, Visiting Nurses Association, the Agape Clinic, and the North Texas Shared Ministries. Programs for health monitoring, disease screenings, and improved health education were promoted and conducted.

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Medical Society Alliance *(continued from page 5)*

Not surprisingly, in 2017, the Texas Historical Commission recognized the founding and the contributions of the Medical Society Alliance (as the Auxiliary is now known) with the awarding of a State Historical Marker, appropriately citing its role in creating similar organizations throughout the country and its emphasis on children, the nursing profession, and the improvement of local medical facilities.



The recent dedication of the State Historical Marker for the Dallas County Medical Society Alliance.

Juanita H. Nãñez Appointed to DCHC

Juanita H. Nãñez is another of the Dallas County Historical Commission's newest members, having been appointed by Dallas County Commissioner Elba Garcia earlier this spring. A native of Dallas and a human resources and diversity consultant with The Hopkins Group, she has a very strong background in community, cultural, and historic affairs.

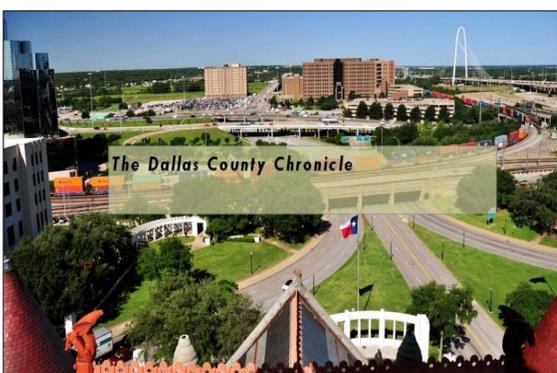


She is currently president of the Dallas Mexican American Historical League, chairman of the Dallas County Sheriff's Department Civil Service Commission, and member of the advisory boards of the Friends of the Aldredge House and Operation Blue Shield.

Ms. Nãñez is also a current member and a past chair and state representative for the Hispanic Women's Network of Texas, Dallas Chapter; a member of the Hispanic 100; and past membership chairman, member-at-large, and co-chairman of the Latina Living Legend Award Committee. She is also founding president of the Texas Diversity Council (Dallas) and has previously served on the Hispanic Advisory Board of Big Brothers, Big Sisters and board member and treasurer of the Anita N. Martinez Ballet Folklorico.

Even though she has only been on the County's Historical Commission a short time, Ms. Nãñez has quickly become very active in the Commission's work, having conducted research on the La Bajada neighborhood which is just west of downtown and assisted in the efforts to improve communication and coordination with other local historical organizations.

Ms. Nãñez holds an advanced level accreditation, Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR), from the national Society of Human Resources Management; she has attended Dallas Baptist University; and she is a graduate of the Executive Development Program at the University of Minnesota, Carlson School of Business.



The *Dallas County Chronicle* is the official newsletter of the Dallas County Historical Commission.

The Historical Commission serves as the primary advisory body on historic preservation matters for the County.

Its meetings are open to the public and are typically held on the second Thursday of every month at noon. For more information about the Commission and its meetings, please call 214.653.7601.