

DALLAS COUNTY
HISTORICAL COMMISSION

THE DALLAS COUNTY CHRONICLE

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***Seadrift* Wins “Best Historical Film” Award**

People from another country begin moving into a community. Different language. Different customs. Competition for the same jobs. A belief among local residents that the government has provided these new arrivers with assistance that was never available to them. Violence occurs. A white supremacist group gets involved.

This sounds like something you would see in the news today. However, it isn't—it's from forty years ago, and the new arrivers aren't from Latin America—they are from Viet Nam.



Such is the story told by *Seadrift*, a film by Tim Tsai that won the Dallas County Historical Commission's "Best Historical Film" Award at the 2019 Dallas International Film Festival.

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Seadrift is a fishing town of 1300 located on the gulf coast about 80 miles northeast of Corpus Christi. In 1979, following building resentment in the town, economic fears, and a lack of common understanding, a fight occurred between a white fisherman and a Vietnamese fisherman that left the Anglo dead. A campaign of violence that included the fire-bombing of Vietnamese boats and a vacant home followed in an effort to drive the "new residents" out of town. The Vietnamese fisherman was charged with murder, but was acquitted on the grounds that he acted in self-defense.

See **Seadrift** on page 3

State Approves New Historical Markers for Dallas County!

By John Roppolo



Once again, the Dallas area historical community has proven how exceptional it is with the Texas Historical Commission's recent decision to approve the applications for four new Texas Historical Markers in Dallas County. Although a total of 87 counties were awarded new markers, only four counties (Harris, Lavaca, Tarrant, and Collin) had more applications approved than Dallas County.

The four markers that Dallas County will soon be receiving are for Christ Church Episcopal, Greater Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church, and Antioch Life Park Cemetery.

Built in 1921 out of brick and native woods, Christ Church Episcopal is located in Oak Cliff. Much of its stained glass is reflective of the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement (i.e., the "Munich Style"). In keeping with this style, a contemporary wrote that "there are . . . sanctuaries built on a more elaborate scale than ours but we have not seen any that express the spiritual beauty of the architectural line and woodwork any more completely than ours. The chaste simplicity of the work insures that we will never grow tired of it." The State similarly agreed with the church now being regarded as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark.



Christ Church Episcopal

El Bethel has been located in the historic 10th Street neighborhood, which was one of the earliest freedman's towns in Dallas, for more than 125 years. El Bethel has consistently provided the community with a powerful social influence, and it is the only church remaining in the 10th Street Historic District. Recognizing this longstanding and important role, the State approved the church's application for a subject marker.



The Mt. Pisgah congregation in 1948.

Mt. Pisgah has existed for more than 154 years and is the oldest African American Baptist Church in Dallas County and the third-oldest African American Baptist Church in Texas. Originally located on Preston Road, the church originally saw its members coming as far as five miles away, traveling via horse, wagon or foot on unpaved roads. Eventually, the horses and wagons were replaced by cars, and the church, which was once surrounded only by fields, became encircled by large subdivisions and residential communities. In 1981, the congregation moved to a new home on Webb Chapel, but it remains as strong as ever.

Antioch Cemetery, located just west of Mountain Creek Lake, had its origins on farmland where slaves were buried, often in unmarked graves. Following the Civil War, this property, along with other acreage, was given to freed slave Mose Jordan Sr. who is believed to have been the first free black man in what became Grand Prairie. The cemetery was formally established in 1881 and besides containing those initial graves of people who were slaves when they died, it also contains the graves of former slaves and members of later African American families.

The process that the State uses to determine whether to approve a marker application is quite rigorous. That the applications for these four markers were approved is indicative of the skill and commitment of the people and organizations behind them. With the approval of these four markers, Dallas County is now nearing a total of 400 Texas Historical Markers (it presently has 391 markers). Only Travis County (with 470) and Harris County (with 464) have more.

John Roppolo is the chairman of the Dallas County Historical Commission marker committee. This committee serves as the first level of review for proposed Texas historical markers within Dallas County.

Seadrift *(continued from page 1)*

At the height of this tension, the townspeople began to pull back and asked themselves, “Is this who we really are?”

This is Tsai’s first film. He began working on it in 2012 because he was stunned that the incident had never been taught in any history class he had taken. Beth Aplin-Martin, whose father was killed in the incident, is featured extensively. She says that she now realizes that more should have been done to help integrate the Vietnamese into America and the community. “They weren’t given the help they deserved, and I think that caused a lot of miscommunication and grief that everyone found hard to overcome.”

Diane Wilson, who was a commercial fisherman in Seadrift in 1979 and still lives there, has similar thoughts. She says the whole incident could have been avoided if there had been some type of communication between the two populations. Instead, there were just “misconceptions, rumors, and fears” among both groups.

Tsai calls his film “an historical story” that he hopes will help other communities with issues about race and other divisions come together. It is the second “Best Historical Film” award given by the Dallas International Film Festival. Sponsored by the Dallas County Historical Commission, the first award was given last year to *Footprint*, a film that follows the reactions of visitors to the World Trade Center Monument in New York City.



Seadrift director Tim Tsai (left) being presented with “Best Historical Film” award from DCHC member Chris Smith.

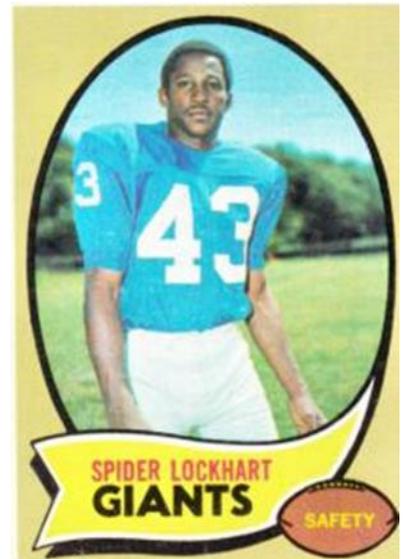
DCHC Assists with Upcoming Video on Spider Lockhart

Dallas County Historical Commission member Patricia Hicks recently assisted the NFL’s New York Giants with the production of an upcoming video on Carl “Spider” Lockhart who played for the Giants from 1965-1975.

Lockhart, a two-time Pro Bowl defensive back, graduated from Hamilton Park High School in 1961. In 2005, he was voted into the Hamilton Park Wall of Fame.

Hamilton Park is a neighborhood east of Central Expressway and north of Forest Lane that was developed during the 1950s for blacks when housing patterns were heavily segregated. At the time, it represented one of the few opportunities for African Americans to live north of downtown Dallas.

Hicks, a lifelong Hamilton Park resident, met with Michael Collins, who is the producer of the television program “Giants Chronicles,” on March 27, introduced him to the principal of the Hamilton Park Pacesetter Magnet (the high school closed in 1969; the magnet school presently occupies where the high school existed), and showed him the school’s trophy case that includes Lockhart photos and memorabilia.



Spider Lockhart's high school prom picture. Lockhart is on the end of the top row at the far right.

Collins anticipates completing the video on Lockhart in time for the upcoming 2019 NFL season.

Lockhart died in 1986 at the age of 43 because of cancer. He ranks third on the team in career interceptions, he still holds the team’s record for most interceptions in a game, and he led the NFL in defensive touchdowns in 1968.

He was nicknamed “Spider” by Giants coach, Emlen Tunnell, because of the way he covered receivers.

Interwoven: *Dallas History and New Hope*

Baptist Church

To know the history of a community, one often has to look no further than the history of a local church, and the relationship of New Hope Baptist Church to both Dallas and the city's black population is no different. New Hope was created in 1873 by seven black families, making it the first church in Dallas to be entirely organized by African Americans. Located first in the home of one of its founding families near present-day Fairmount Street and Munger Avenue, it soon moved a few blocks east of what eventually became Central Expressway.



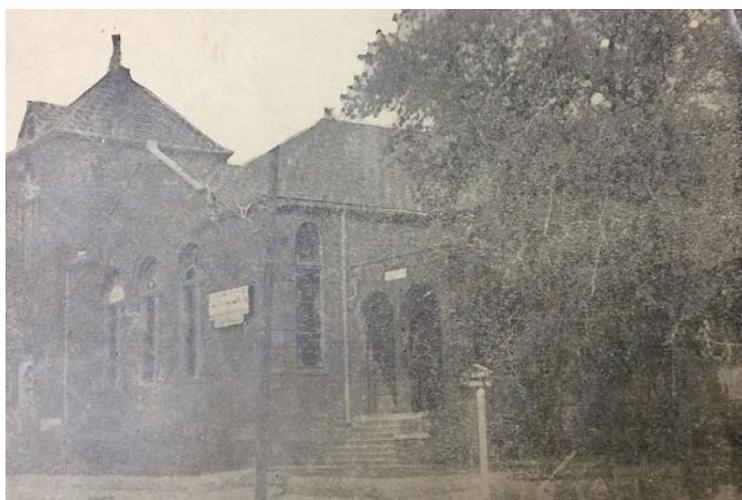
Reverend Allen R. Griggs was New Hope's first full-time pastor.

Rev. Allen R. Griggs became the church's pastor in 1874, and with his guidance, the church quickly began working to deliver the "new hope" that its name promised. In 1875, Griggs started a grammar school for ex-slaves, and by 1878, he had built the first high school for the city's freed children. In that same year, he started the state's first African American newspaper.

In 1892, the Negro Ladies Reading Circle was founded by eight teachers, two of whom were members of New Hope. In 1893, the Colored State Baptist Convention held a three-day conference at the church to discuss the progress that blacks had made since the Civil War.

Building upon the Reading Circle, the church, under Rev. A. S. Jackson (who became the church's longest-serving pastor), regularly brought nationally-known African Americans to Dallas like Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Dubois, soprano Matilda Sissieretta Joyner Jones (who sang for four U.S. presidents), and concert violinist Joseph Douglass (who played for two presidents). At the same time, it also worked to encourage and assist African Americans in registering to vote and paying their poll taxes.

Not surprisingly, New Hope members became leaders in both their profession and in the community. In all, six members have had schools named after them. Griggs Park, which is located near where the church was founded, is named after Rev. Griggs. Frederica Chase Dodd helped establish the Delta Sigma Theta sorority at Howard University and became one of the first black social workers in Texas. Maynard Jackson, Jr., who was both the grandson of Rev. Jackson and the son of Rev. Maynard Jackson, Sr., another of New Hope's head pastors, became the first African American mayor of Atlanta. A. Maceo Smith was appointed deputy director of the Hall of Negro Life at the Texas Centennial Exposition, served on the national board of the NAACP, and became assistant regional administrator for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development with a federal building later being named after him. L.A. Bedford became the first black municipal judge in Dallas. Dr. H. Rhett James, who became pastor in 1958, helped desegregate the first lunch counter in Dallas and became the first African American to receive a master's degree in theology from TCU.



On the left, the church's home from 1911 to 1968. On the right, the interior of the sanctuary that it has occupied since 1968.

In 1968, as the church neared its 100th birthday, it moved from its longstanding home on the northeastern edge of downtown to a newly-constructed sanctuary three miles south. However, while its location may have changed, its work and its spirit have not--as evidenced by its "Showers of Blessing" ministry for the indigent—as it continues to both serve the community and create new history with the city.

The information and photographs for this article were graciously provided by Ernest Goode.

Jim Gaspard Appointed to DCHC

Jim Gaspard became one of the Dallas County Historical Commission's newest members when he was appointed to the Commission on February 5 by County Commissioner J. J. Koch. An East Dallas resident for over forty years, Jim professes that he hasn't really done anything out of the ordinary, but his resume says something much different: a high school classmate of Janis Joplin, someone who has twice sailed around the world with the U.S. Navy, the creator of the Texas Tech mascot "Raider Red," and a member of the team at Texas Instruments that introduced the first handheld calculator to the world.

Having experienced and been a part of such history, is it any surprise that he's ended up on the County's Historical Commission?



Can you guess which one is new DCHC member Jim Gaspard and which is Raider Red?

Ambassador Hotel Listed on National Register

The Ambassador Hotel, which was built in 1905, has become the newest Dallas-area addition to the National Register of Historic Places, having been officially included on April 4.

Located just south of downtown Dallas, when the Ambassador first opened, it was considered the premier hotel in Dallas. Sarah Bernhardt stayed there, as did Presidents (Theodore) Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson.

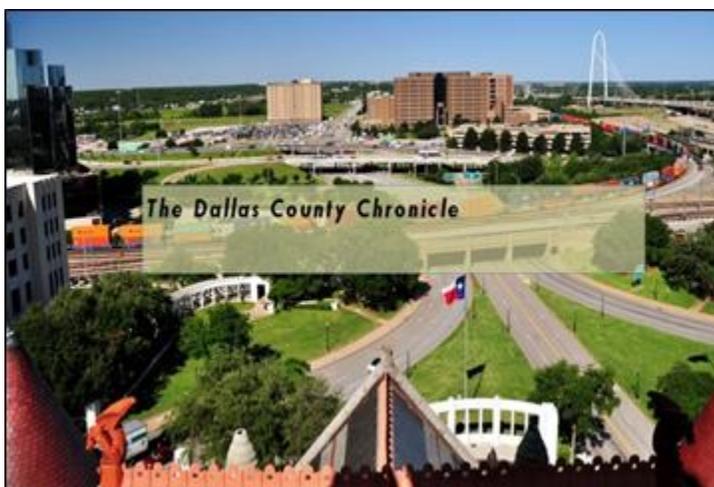
Originally, the six-story building featured a red brick exterior. However, in 1932, it underwent renovations which led to its present white stucco exterior and a more Mediterranean style.



The Ambassador Hotel is the latest addition to the National Register.

For the last forty years, the building has been opened and closed a number of times. In 2015, the property was acquired by an investment group that is now renovating and converting the building into about 100 units of residential housing.

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of historic places worthy of preservation. It is part of a national program to coordinate and support efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources. To be included on the National Register is one of the most prestigious and most difficult historic designations to obtain. There are presently only 139 subjects from Dallas County that are included on the National Register.



The Dallas County Chronicle is the quarterly newsletter of the Dallas County Historical Commission. People can subscribe to the Chronicle by sending an email to: rloessberg@dallascounty.org.

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 11:30 a.m. For more information about the Commission and its meetings, please call 214.653.7601.