

DALLAS COUNTY
HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Opening Soon! *The New Irving Archives and Museum*

By Jennifer Landry



The new, soon-to-be opened, Irving Archives and Museum.

The opening of the new Irving Archives and Museum (IAM) in October will culminate the ending of a more than forty-year-old journey to bring a history museum to the second-largest city in Dallas County. This quest began in 1975-1976 when Irving had a temporary museum as part of the nation's Bicentennial Celebration and has since been kept alive by the Irving Heritage Society, the Irving Museum Advisory Board, the Friends of the Irving Museums, and countless other businesses, organizations, and individuals.

The vision for the IAM is to not just be a museum about the past, but to be a community gathering place where history is explored and culture is shared. The IAM is also envisioned to be the "hub" museum in Irving's museum system which already includes the Jackie Townsell Bear Creek Heritage Center (Ms. Townsell was the first African-American Irving City Council member), the Ruth Paine House (which is where Lee Harvey Oswald's wife and children were staying at the time of President Kennedy's assassination), the Mustangs of Las Colinas Sculpture and Museum, and the Irving Archives.

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Cedar Crest House

A Landmark Restored

By Fred Durham

Located immediately across the street from historic Sunset High School in Oak Cliff stands “Cedar Crest,” one of the last Victorian country estate houses remaining in Dallas. Built in 1905 by prominent Dallas milliner Lark Owen Daniel on twenty-seven acres, the beautiful three-story, 5000-square-foot structure features Greek revival detailing, a central portico, and wrap-around porches.



Originally surrounded by orchards and farmland, “Cedar Crest” remained in the Daniel family for many years although the land surrounding it was gradually sold and developed (today, the house sits on less than one acre). The home itself was finally sold and turned into an office, first for a law firm and then for a title company. During this time, the City of Dallas, recognizing its richness and historical significance, designated “Cedar Crest” as a City Landmark in 1984.

Unfortunately, however, the title company moved in 2010, and the grand house stood vacant and began decaying. In 2011, only one year after the title company had moved, Heritage Oak Cliff listed the structure as the fourth-most at-risk historic building in Oak Cliff, noting that “this structure has been vacant and neglected” since the leaving of the title company. “Paint is peeling and railing on the third floor is falling off. This City of Dallas Landmark needs someone to love it.”

That someone turned out to be the law firm of Durham, Pittard, and Spalding which needed larger office space for its expanding appellate and legal support practice. After studying the matter closely, the firm found that the cost to rent traditional office space would be about the same as buying, renovating, and utilizing an older building. As a result, the firm was absolutely delighted when “Cedar Crest” became available on the market; the idea of restoring a Dallas Landmark while providing a beautiful and functional office for their firm was both incredibly exciting and rewarding.



Purchasing “Cedar Crest” in 2016, the firm immediately began two years of attentive restoration. As part of this effort, the first floor hall, reception, library, dining room, butler’s pantry, and kitchen were skillfully preserved. The upper floors were also modified to provide for twelve private offices, but in so doing, no original walls were removed, and all of the original wood trim and windows on these floors were kept intact.

The book cases and fireplace in the library, cabinetry, columns in the butler’s pantry, and a staircase from the second to the third floor are all new, but they were carefully crafted to match the home’s original woodwork. Similarly, the new hardware that was needed for the doors on the upper floors was matched with the original hardware on the first floor.

All of the structure’s wood floors are original. Many of its light fixtures are also original, having been rescued by a neighbor when they had once been set out for trash during an earlier renovation and having now been restored, rewired, and reinstalled for this effort.

Because of this commitment, Durham, Pittard, and Spalding have enabled “Cedar Crest” to recapture the brilliance of its early-twentieth-century past, they have demonstrated how the preservation of an historic building can make economic sense, and they have fittingly received Heritage Oak Cliff’s 2018 Ruth Chenowith Conservation Achievement Award.

Irving's Upcoming Museum (continued from page 1)

The \$2.8 million IAM will be located on the first floor of what was previously the Irving Central Library at 801 W. Irving Boulevard. Prominently situated at the gateway of Irving's Heritage District, the museum will have a total of 22,000 square feet. The Ruth Paine Visitor Center will occupy the west side of the museum's lobby and will be joined by an Irving All-Sports Hall of Fame exhibit. An auditorium that will be available for community events and a museum store featuring local and Texas-themed merchandise complete the lobby space.



Architect's rendering of museum's first floor interior space.

Upon entering the main museum floor, visitors will be able to explore several different areas. The temporary exhibition gallery will host a regular rotation of nationally travelling and locally curated exhibits. The first exhibition scheduled for the temporary gallery is *Work, Fight, Give: American Relief Posters of WWII*, a nationally travelling exhibition which examines relief efforts during World War II.

The IAM will also feature a Smithsonian Spark!Lab. Developed by the Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation, the Spark!Lab will engage young visitors and their families in interactive exploration of the invention process. The IAM will be the first museum in Texas to be a Spark!Lab host, joining a network of museums across the country to encourage the learning of essential twenty-first century skills.

The east end of the building features a curved glass curtain wall that overlooks Irving's beautiful Veterans Memorial Park. This area will become the *Between the Forks Community Space*, an open programming space that will feature interpretive panels about the park and sculpture. A flooring design that speaks to the importance of Irving's geographic location between the forks of the Trinity River will signal this as a gathering space.

At the center of the IAM is the permanent exhibition devoted to the history and cultural heritage of Irving. The exhibition will feature three "chapters" of the Irving story and will emphasize the themes of community, transportation, migration/immigration, and communication. The first section, "The Frontier and Founding of Irving," will explore the early history of the region when trails and crossroads made this an important region for Indigenous Peoples and European settlers. The story then moves to the decision by Otis Brown and J.O. Schulze to found a town along the Rock Island Railroad and the auction of the first lots on December 19, 1903. Other exhibits in this section include a log cabin, general store, and the transition of a blacksmith shop into an automobile repair garage.



Conceptual drawing of the exhibit that discusses the early days of Irving.

Moving into the post-World War II era, the exhibit reveals how the automobile allowed Irving to grow into a central suburb in North Texas. Irving was in many ways a microcosm of what was happening across the nation during the post-war baby boom, and the exhibit will place Irving's story into a national context.

The third section of the exhibit looks at how Irving has evolved since 1970 into a stand-alone city. The arrival of the Dallas Cowboys, DFW Airport and the development of Las Colinas provided Irving with a national presence and an increasingly diverse population. There will also be an "Explore Your History" section that will feature touchscreens that will allow the visitor to explore archival materials and specific stories and to record your own story and memories of Irving.

Irving's Upcoming Museum (continued from page 3)

Further complimenting these exhibits, meeting spaces, and learning centers will be a climate-controlled storage area for the city's collection archives.

Funding for the IAM has generously been provided by the City of Irving through its hotel occupancy tax and by contributions from the Irving Heritage Society, the Friends of the Irving Museums, and many individuals. When completed, the IAM will represent a truly unique multi-faceted cultural asset that will exist nowhere else in Dallas County.

Southwestern Medical College ***From Prefab Buildings to Nobel Prizes***

By Fred Durham



All too often we take for granted the great institutions that surround us and contribute enormously to the life of our community. Even more, we actually forget or never knew the history behind those institutions—the years of hard work, sacrifice, and dedication that were invested to give them birth. Locally, two institutions that have influenced our region greatly, but whose stories are somehow overlooked by their success are the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and its parent, the Southwestern Medical Foundation.

Today, UT Southwestern stands as one of the premier health care training facilities, research centers, and health care providers in the nation. Its researchers have been awarded six Nobel prizes since 1985—five in physiology/medicine and one in chemistry. Just as important, from its inception, it has trained thousands of quality doctors and medical professionals who have ensured that people throughout North Texas and around the world have superb medical care. However, UT Southwestern did not just suddenly appear one day with its world-class reputation already intact.



Dr. Edward H. Cary, one of the people most responsible for what became UT Southwestern.

In fact, the college was the result of forty years of ceaseless work by Dr. Edward H. Cary to bring quality medical education to Dallas. In 1903, Dr. Cary convinced Baylor University to have the then-University of Dallas Medical Department, which had been financially struggling, become the foundation of Baylor's school of medicine in Dallas. He then served as dean and a professor of ophthalmology at the school from 1903-1920 and as Dean emeritus until 1943.

In 1939, he, along with Karl Hoblitzelle, Dr. Karl Shannon, and other prominent Dallasites, created the Southwestern Medical Foundation to further promote and fund medical education and research in Dallas. This was especially fortuitous as, four years later, Baylor suddenly decided to move its medical school to Houston. When this occurred, the Foundation quickly stepped in and founded Southwestern Medical College so that Dallas would continue to have a medical school.



The early days of the medical school and its proximity to the original Parkland Hospital.

Classes for the new school's first 200 students somehow began on July 1, 1943, and within an impressively short span of six months, the school was accredited with a top rating by the American Medical Association. Classes were held in prefabricated military buildings near Old Parkland Hospital, its main hospital teaching partner.

Southwestern Medical College (continued from page 4)

During World War II, the school became the Army specialized training unit for the Eighth Service Command of the U.S. Army. In 1949, Southwestern became affiliated with the University of Texas, introducing the school to additional resources. In 1968, Dean Charles Sprague began guiding the school through a period of phenomenal growth that was fueled by funding from the UT system, the State of Texas, and Southwestern Medical Foundation donors and that has led to the UT Southwestern that we now know today.



That UT Southwestern's success was not pre-ordained does not diminish its accomplishments or its story. In fact, it only enhances them. On the evening of December 12, 2018, the Southwestern Medical Foundation and the Texas Historical Commission took a significant step toward ensuring that this important history would not be overlooked with the dedication of an official Texas Historical Marker that commemorated the 1943 founding of Southwestern Medical College.



The unveiling of the new Texas Historical Marker that commemorates the founding of Southwestern Medical College.

And the location of this marker? It is at the very spot where the medical school's prefabricated classroom buildings once stood on the grounds of Old Parkland Hospital, literally just a few feet from the school's front door, and just outside the present-day office of the Foundation that made it all possible.

Ryan Garcia Appointed to Historical Commission

Ryan Garcia has become one of the newest members of the Dallas County Historical Commission. Appointed by County Commissioner Theresa Daniel, Ryan will serve a two-year term that will end on January 31, 2021.

Ryan lives in Dallas and holds a degree in history from the University of Florida. He is particularly interested in post-World War II history, and his interest arose, like many of us, because of a class in high school.



Ryan grew up in South Florida, moved to Texas in 2015, and presently works for a real estate development company that specializes in creating workforce housing. He is also a member of Preservation Dallas.

Combining the Old with the New

2017-2019 and the Dallas County Historical Commission

One does not always associate something “new” with something “old,” but that is exactly what the Dallas County Historical Commission did during the two-year term that just ended on January 31, 2019. The Commission, of course, exists to preserve and promote local history, and during the period of February 1, 2017-January 31, 2019, the Commission once again expertly served as the first level of review for Texas Historical Markers, successfully recommending nine marker applications that were subsequently approved by the State, and it published the *Chronicle*, its newsletter, every quarter. That is the “old.”

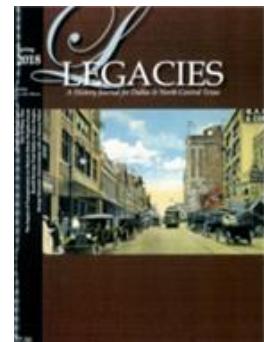


The Commission's new video is available at:
www.dallascounty.org/dchc.

How else the Commission went about preserving and promoting the “old” over the past two years is the “new,” and not only was it new, but it was also very unique utilizing a variety of media and approaches.

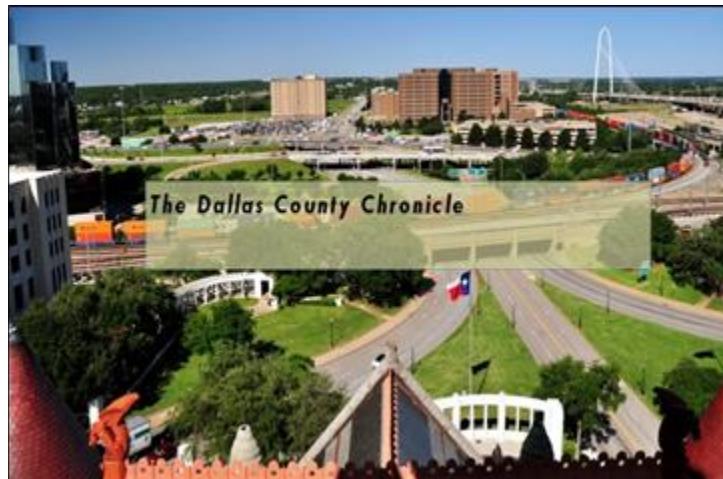
Recognizing that the internet has made it possible to reach millions of people around the world, the Commission produced an on-line video that explained the Commission’s role, its duties, and its goals.

Understanding that there are many aspects of Dallas County’s history, especially those involving people of color, that are still not widely known, the Commission did not just wait and hope that others would begin to identify and acknowledge this past. Instead, the Commission began providing funding to help cover the cost of markers associated with such subjects, and it conducted research and wrote an article that was published in *Legacies* about how transportation had affected two historic neighborhoods: the La Bajada Hispanic neighborhood and the Old North Dallas African-American neighborhood.



Film has long had the power and the ability to reach people both literally and emotionally. Realizing the opportunity and the benefits that film thus provides, the Commission began helping sponsor the Dallas International Film Festival, one of the largest film festivals in Texas, so that a “Best History Film” category and award could be created.

For an organization that has been so influential in the past—it was instrumental in the preservation of the Old Red Courthouse and the establishment of the Sixth Floor Museum—it is only appropriate that the Commission’s last two years have been so productive and innovative.



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.