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APRIL 2003

www.bchm.org Your Monthly Museum Newsletter

20th anniversary program offers walk down memory lane



Kandy Taylor-Hille (left) and Ginger Tumlinson

Brazoria County Historical Museum supporters from the past 20 years gathered on April 3 to listen to local Historical Commission Chairman Marie Beth Jones review the history of the Museum.

Ms. Jones presentation was an entertaining walk down memory lane as she traced the events and anecdotes that led to the saving and restoration of the historic 1897 Brazoria County Courthouse and the establishment of the Museum therein. Those attending the program also enjoyed viewing slides from the Museum's early years and taking a look at the latest exhibit, *20 Years and We've Only Just Begun*, a display of artifacts, photographs and other ephemera that chronicle the development of the Museum. Curator Michael Bailey prepared the exhibit in celebration of the Museum's 20th Anniversary. The first 20 years have been so wonderful that we cannot wait to see what exciting things are in store for the next 20 years!



Marie Beth Jones



Mary Ann Thomas (left) and Beth Griggs

2003 Youth Summer Archaeology program

Get your hands dirty as a participant in the Brazoria County Historical Museum's *Youth Summer Archaeology* program.

Beginning on Monday, June 9 and lasting until Friday, June 13, the five-day hands-on archaeology program will last each day from 8 a.m. until 12 noon and will cost participants \$50 to attend. Open to children between 11 and 14 years of age, this program will teach participants how professionals survey a historical site, record where and what artifacts are found, and what those artifacts say about the people

that once used them.

Class participants will spend the first three days at the Brazoria County Historical Museum learning about basic excavation techniques. The fourth day will be spent at the Lake Jackson Plantation Archaeological Site and the final day will be spent participating in an actual archaeological dig. Students will take part in a full-scale excavation and assist a professional with identifying and interpreting artifacts uncovered during the excavation. Participants will receive printed course materials and daily snacks.

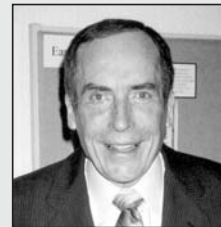
Parents/Guardians are responsible for the transportation of the participants to the Museum, the Lake Jackson Plantation and the excavation site.

For more information or to register please contact Ace Filipp at the Brazoria County Historical Museum at 979/864-1208 or via e-mail at programs@bchm.org. The minimum enrollment for the class is 10 students.

Classes with fewer students may be canceled. A full refund will be made if the class is canceled. Maximum enrollment is 25 students.

Holder presents entertaining program on school history research in county

Those who attended Fred Holder's program at the Museum on Feb. 20 enjoyed a lively presentation entitled *Researching School History: A Tale of Tribulations*.



Fred Holder

Fred related with humor and enthusiasm his experiences while researching the history of education in Brazoria County. He currently is writing a book on the history of schools in the Brazosport area at the request of the Retired Teachers' Association of Brazosport. While gathering information for the book, he also collected a great deal of material on the history of schools

throughout the County.

Although Fred has no plans at this time to write a second book that would trace the history of education for the entire county, he has done a thorough job of compiling the information. The research will be there for whomever does decide in the future to write a book on the history of education in Brazoria County.

After completing his book on Brazosport school history, Fred will be placing his research in the Adriance Library to be used by genealogists and other researchers. Perhaps someday another author will make use of it in writing a book on the school history of the entire County.

We appreciate Fred for his program, his meticulous research, and his dedication to the project. The gift of research is a gift of time -- a priceless commodity -- and a very generous gift it is!

SIGN-UP TODAY!

2003 Youth Summer Archaeology Program Registration Form

Name of Student: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Home Telephone #: () _____ Work Telephone #: () _____

Please make checks payable to BCHM and mail or deliver to: 100 East Cedar, Angleton, Texas 77515.

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Just for kids & kids at heart

Directions: See if you can find the words that relate to the life of Stephen F. Austin in the puzzle above. The words can be found vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards in the puzzle. As you find them, circle the word.

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 PENNSYLVANIA

News from the Cemetery Committee

By JAMIE MURRAY

As requested in the latest issue of the Save Texas Cemeteries organization newsletter, *The Gravestone Speaks*, the March meeting began with an announcement about the Official Cemetery Visitation Day on April 6.

While it is state law that individuals cannot be denied reasonable access to cemeteries, the reality is that some property owners deny access on the basis that activities there are dangerous to visitors. They contend that oil drilling, mining or blasting operations, hunting, or raising livestock render the property unsafe for visitors. However, the Save Texas Cemeteries organization maintains that even in these situations it is not unreasonable to expect the landowner to allow visitation twice a year on an official visitation day.

The first Sundays in April and in October have been designated by a declaration of the State Legislature as Official Cemetery Visitation Days in the State of Texas. Save Texas Cemeteries recommends that those who wish to visit a restricted access cemetery should contact the landowner in advance to tell him of the planned visit to the cemetery and to explain the Official Cemetery Visitation Day program to him if he is not aware of it. Sometimes establishing communication and mutual respect is the first step in saving an endangered cemetery.

The recent Save Texas Cemeteries newsletter also gives information on bills relating to cemeteries that are currently in the Texas Legislature. These bills are listed by number in the latest STC newsletter along with a brief description of each bill and the name of the bill's author. The proposed bills can be reviewed in detail on the Texas Legislature Online website.

David Roberts reported to the 10 members present that Max and Alice Royalty have added 546 more names to the database, bringing the total to 20,726 entries. In February, 1,500 visitors found their way to the web site where the database resides. David also told the group that Fort Bend County's web site is a good one for viewing land and probate records for that county. Another committee member directed the group's attention to an article on cemeteries appearing in the March issue of the *THC Medalion*.

The Texas Historical Commission has officially approved Sandy Point Cemetery as a Designated Historic Cemetery. Repair work on the mausoleum is proceeding as the weather permits. Work sessions at Sandy Point will resume on Thursday evenings, with the first after-work session scheduled for April 17. An inventory will be made of gravestones that need cleaning and repair. Probing for stones buried beneath the grass is another job that can be done that evening, along with basic mowing and clean-up activities.

Mr. Viola announced that March 31 is the start date for archaeologists employed by TXDOT to begin relocating four graves at Pioneer Cemetery. These graves, which are located in the right-of-way, are being moved to another area of Pioneer Cemetery. Mr. Viola and other members of the Cemetery Committee will be on hand when the graves are relocated. Mr. Viola requested help to get Pioneer Cemetery mowed before March 31 and to keep it maintained in the future. He has been taking care of it himself as much as possible, but could use some assistance.

Elois Gibbs will contact Mr. Gardner regarding the Gardner Funeral Home records. She will make an appointment to view the records and assess the best way to duplicate them. Then they will be entered into the Cemetery

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A big thank you to all the businesses that make it possible for the Brazoria County Historical Museum newsletter to be published monthly.

If you wish to support this newsletter, please call (979) 849-5407.

Your ad will be mailed to all museum members in addition to being printed in **The Bulletin**.

The Adriance Library and Research Center

By JAMIE MURRAY

In trying to find an answer to a simple question, once again, we have uncovered an interesting story. There are so many folks coming in and out of the Adriance Library, that once a question has been raised, it usually does not take very long to find someone who knows something about the subject. Our visitors and research contacts do not always have the whole answer, but often can supply a clue to finding it. It is like putting together the pieces of a puzzle, and that is what makes this job so interesting.

This time, the simple question was: *What is the origin of the name Darrington Plantation?* Volunteer researchers here in the Museum Library checked sources on plantations and prisons. They found no answer to the question, but learned that Sterling McNeel had purchased Darrington Plantation. That led the researchers to the McNeel family file, where nothing was

found about the origin of the name.

The question now became: *Did Sterling McNeel purchase a working plantation already named Darrington by its previous owner, or did Sterling purchase the land, develop the plantation himself, and name it Darrington after the man from whom he had purchased it?*

Research volunteer David Pettus ran across the name John Darrington in some of the old Brazoria County District Clerk's records that he is indexing. Cemetery committee members David Roberts, Roy Karl, and Max and Alice Royalty also became interested in the quest. David was able to pull up some information about John Darrington on the Internet and through corresponding with other researchers on a genealogy web site. Roy Karl headed for the Courthouse deed records, as did Max and Alice Royalty. They brought back copies of land records on which the Darrington name appears.

The result of all this research

activity was for us to learn that John Darrington lived in Alabama. He bought and sold land in Texas through an agent. Darrington's name appears on the tax rolls of Brazoria County, but he probably never even lived in Texas. John Darrington was a land speculator who bought property primarily for resale.

Strom Duke of Iowa Colony saw the Darrington story in the Museum newsletter. He provided us with a copy of an 1847 land sale record in which John Darrington sold the "plantation in full operation & known as the Darrington Plantation" to a man named Ira A. Lewis, along with a group of slaves "and their future increase." The slaves are listed by name and by age. So the question was answered. John Darrington, an absentee landlord, had a working plantation in Texas called *Darrington*, which he sold in 1849. Now the question changes again to become: *When and from whom did Sterling McNeel buy the Darrington Plantation property?*

A quote from the *Handbook of Texas* tells us that James F. Perry visited Sterling McNeel's sugar plantation "five miles north of China Grove" in January of 1849. We have yet to discover the land sale record showing that Sterling McNeel purchased Darrington Plantation from Ira A. Lewis between August of 1847 and January of 1849.

Cemetery Committee member Elois Gibbs, who grew up in Brazoria County and is descended from Darrington Plantation slaves, has been researching her family genealogy. When Elois contributed the results of her research, the story became even more interesting. She had found that John Darrington was an attorney as well as a land speculator. In 1836, he had purchased a large tract of land

in Texas from Old 300 colonist, David Talley.

In his role as an attorney, Darrington was administrator of the estate of William Matherson of Clark County, Alabama, who died in 1836. According to Matherson's will, his slaves were to have been distributed among his four children. Elois found that in 1847, John Darrington was sued in Clark County, Alabama, by one of the heirs of the Matherson Estate. She accused him of having stolen her inheritance,

which included a group of slaves. She alleged that he had transported these slaves to his property in Texas.

Elois has not been able to find proof that Darrington sent Matherson's slaves to Texas, but neither has she been able to find any record of Darrington purchasing slaves in Texas. We know that he had slaves on Darrington Plantation, because Darrington himself listed them

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April Mystery Photo



This photograph of two attractive young ladies from the 1920s or 1930s was found in the West Columbia folder of the Adriance Library Information Files. The women are unidentified, and there is nothing on the photo to connect them to West Columbia. Perhaps this little image may have been cut from a yearbook. The fact that it was in the West Columbia file may provide a clue, but it may have been placed there erroneously. These individuals may not be from West Columbia at all. If you can identify either one of the young ladies in the photograph, please contact Jamie Murray at the Museum.

Mystery Photo update

Only one call was received about last month's Mystery Photo which showed the first group of women employed in the Dow Chemical Plant at Freeport, Texas. The call came from Nancy Smith of Lake Jackson.

She identified the photo as having been taken in the Central Lab at Plant A in 1944 or 1945. Nancy did not know the names of anyone on the back row of the photograph, but she identified the front row (from left to right) as Reba Robinson, Hazel Sledge, Margaret Krenzke, and Cornelia Wetzel Robertson.

Please call Jamie Murray at the Museum if you can tell us the names of any of the other ladies pictured in the March newsletter's Mystery Photo.

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By ROSEMARY DUKE

Spring has finally arrived! Just look outside, and see the beautiful flowers that have bloomed, the green grass, the bright new green leaves on the trees, and most of all the fields of Texas bluebonnets. This year even Angleton has a small field of bluebonnets in town!

The Texas Bluebonnet is not only the State Flower, but it also is a trademark of Texas, as well known as cowboy boots and the Stetson hat. Like the shamrock to Ireland, the cherry blossoms to Japan, and the rose to England, so is the bluebonnet to Texas.

The Native Americans wove fascinating folklore around the bluebonnets. The early Spanish priests gathered seeds and grew bluebonnets around their missions. Legend was that they brought these seeds from Spain. This is probably not true since the two most predominant species of bluebonnets are found only in Texas. The early Anglo settlers who observed these beautiful flowers thought them to be little blue bonnets to keep the hot sun off the flower's faces.

Bluebonnets come in various

shades of blue depending on the type of bluebonnet planted. *Lupinus subcarinosus* is a dainty little plant that sheets the hills of coastal and southern Texas. *Lupinus texensis*, the favorite of tourists and painters, provides the blue spring carpet of Central Texas. *Lupinus Harvardii* known as the Big Bend bluebonnet, is the most majestic of the Texas bluebonnets. These grow spikes up to three feet! *Lupinus concinnus* is an inconspicuous flower that combines white, rosy purple and lavender and is found in the Trans-Pecos region. *Lupinus plattensis* found in the Texas Panhandle is the only perennial species, and it grows up to two feet tall.

Most bluebonnets are varying shades of blue. There are a few that are white, and lore has it that is what inspired the makers of the

Texas flag to put a Lone Star in a field of blue. There also are the very rare pink bluebonnets. These are said to grow only along the river in San Antonio. They were discovered the spring after the battle of the Alamo. It is said that so much blood had been shed for the independence of Texas that the flower took on a pink tint. According to Dr. Jerry Parsons, the only place in the State where the original wild pink bluebonnets were found was along the side of the road, just south of downtown San Antonio.

The Aggies from Texas A&M have developed a maroon bonnet. Bettye Snell has planted some here at the Museum. They are pretty, but not as beautiful as the blue ones Ace Filipp planted last year. It will be interesting to see what will be planted next year! It is said that

no amount of manipulation can spoil the pleasure of experiencing again each spring the time when the sky seems to fall on Texas as the bluebonnets return for a few weeks to refresh our spirits. Take a drive, and picnic along the fields of nature's gift to us.

Stop by the Museum and pick up Elizabeth Silverthorne's book on the *Legends & Lore of Texas Wildflowers*. She not only has included the natural history of the flowers, but also has included political and social history in which various wild-

flowers have been involved. Silverthorne has included the uses of the wildflowers and has mentioned their use in literature throughout the year as well.

Members of the Museum will receive a 10% discount on most items sold in the Bookstore. The Museum accepts MasterCard and Visa and will ship anywhere in the United States for you for an additional fee. Bookstore hours are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. till 5 p.m. and on Saturday from 9 a.m. till 3 p.m.

The Adriance Library and Research Center

(Continued from Museum Page 3)

he sold the land to Ira Lewis. Elois added that records show the older slaves on the Darrington Plantation were born in Alabama.

As always, finding the answers to a question just raises more questions, and the initial question evolves as the search progresses. We are piecing together a puzzle. We are following a trail that leads to more answers and more questions. Some information we seek in research projects may never have been recorded in the first place. Some was intentionally recorded only to be lost in fires, floods, or storms. Some information was recorded, but discarded along the way by someone who deemed it unimportant; however, some of it resides somewhere just waiting to be discovered in an archive, an antique shop, an attic, or in someone's family papers. We will never come up with all the answers when researching a history question, but we always will know more about the subject than we did when the search began.

Everyone who gets involved in the quest contributes a part of the picture. Research is time intensive. Lots of heads, with their various skills and backgrounds, are usually better than one when it comes to completing a project. This is certainly true with research questions in the Adriance Library.

Piecing a historical puzzle together is a game that can be played with a group, and it holds much more appeal for me than those games played with cards or on game boards and computers.

Report from the Cemetery Committee

(Continued from Museum Page 2)

Database, and a digital copy of the Gardner Funeral Home records will be provided to Mr. Gardner.

In response to a research request on Smeltzer Cemetery in Danciger, Bobby Koenning reported that there is nothing remaining to mark the site of that cemetery except the remnants of a fence. It will be listed as a cemetery on the database, along with a note that no headstones remain, but through research we may be able to determine the names of some people who are buried there. If anyone knows the name of an individual buried in Smeltzer Cemetery, please contact Jamie Murray at the museum or David Roberts at dgr@sbcglobal.net.

Another research request received recently in the Library concerned Chenango Cemetery. Bobby has visited it and found one remaining stone and also an ornamental fence around two unmarked graves. He saw evidence of other unmarked graves in the area, but was prevented by darkness to explore further. It is in an area that can only be reached in dry weather, so Bobby will plan to return when the ground is dry enough.

Remember that it is not necessary to attend the Saturday morning monthly meetings in order to be a member of the Cemetery Committee. There are numerous ways to help with the work of this committee. We need members who will participate in the clean up and inventorying of cemeteries or will assist with research or fund raising projects, even if they are unable to make it to the Saturday meetings. The next meeting of the Cemetery Committee is scheduled for Saturday, April 26, at 10 a.m. in the Museum auditorium. All who are interested in the Committee and its projects are invited to attend.

Mystery item revealed

By MICHAEL BAILEY

The Mystery Item remained unidentified this time. No one recognized the item as a "mincing knife". These were quite common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and were used for the production of "mincemeat". The 1897 Sears and Roebuck Catalogue carried similar knives for 10¢.

Mincemeat was a traditional food item that was prepared during the winter as a means of preserving meat. Most mincemeat prepared today lacks any animal products and is usually served as a desert item or a sweet, such as a cookie. The knife is shaped so as to make processing of meat, suet and fruits into a form suitable for pies. The shape also allows for the easy removal of meat from bones and the skull area of a food animal such as a cow. A mincemeat pie is quite different from a shepherd's pie, in that its flavor is sweet and tart at the same time. Mincemeat also can be kept in the refrigerator for quite a while before use. In fact some say that mincemeat aged for several days before use has a much better taste than fresh mincemeat.

As food preservation technology advanced in the twentieth century there was less of a need for the preparation of such food items as mincemeat, and few people prepare it in the traditional manner in this country. One can still find it prepared in the more traditional manner in such countries as England and Scotland.

A recipe for mincemeat from the late nineteenth century read as follows:

- Traditional Mincemeat for pies and tarts
- 3 cups seedless raisins
- 3 pounds currants
- 1 1/2 cups sultanas
- 12 ounces lean rump steak, chopped
- 3 cups beef suet
- 2 1/4 cups dark brown sugar, packed
- 1 ounce candied citron peel, chopped
- 1 ounce candied lemon peel, chopped
- 1 ounce candied orange peel, chopped
- freshly grated nutmeg to taste
- 2 pounds tart apples, peeled, cored, and finely chopped
- grated zest of 1 lemon
- juice of 1/2 lemon
- 1/2 cup brandy

Mix everything together in order. Press into sterilized jars. Cover tightly and leave for at least two weeks refrigerated. Will keep for 2 months in the refrigerator.



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