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JANUARY 2003

www.bchm.org Your Monthly Museum Newsletter

Waterways Museum opens new exhibit

By MICHAEL BAILEY

The Brazoria County Historical Museum opened a new exhibit entitled **Waterways** on Friday, Jan. 10.

The first exhibit of this new year explores the important role that waterways have played in the overall development of Brazoria County. The rivers and coastal byways of the county have been one of the defining characteristics of this area.

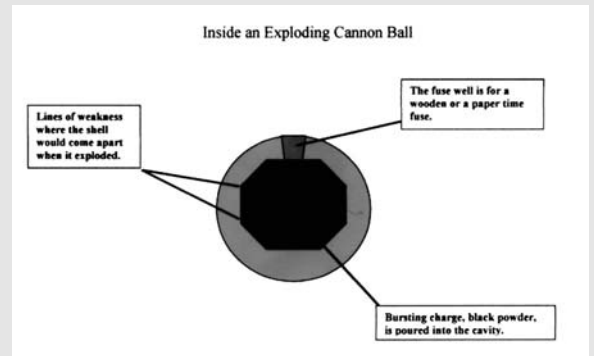
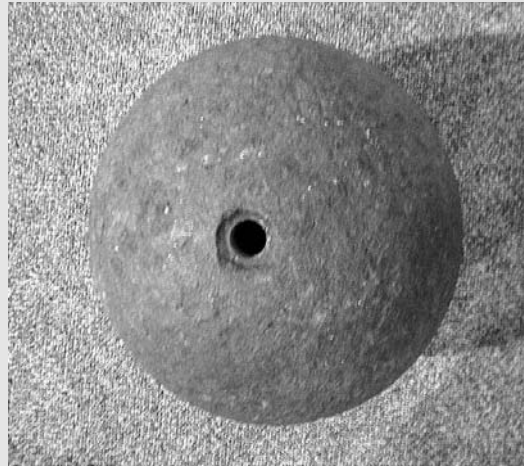
From prehistoric times through early European exploration, waterways have provided transportation, sustenance and recreation as well as have aided in the defense of the area. Later, waterways had significant impact on determining where colonists settled and on the economic development of the area.

Items on display in **Waterways** include objects from the early days of the Texas Republic when the Texas Navy provided protection and engaged the forces of Mexico and the United States, as the young Republic fought to establish itself as a nation. There also will be artifacts from the Civil War and World War II periods.

Of particular interest is the large cannon ball on exhibit that is slightly less than 10 inches in diameter and weighs approximately 103 pounds. The gun that would have shot this shell was a smoothbore (without rifling) cannon. A wooden fuse plug or paper fuse would have been the detonating device. When the gun was fired, hopefully the flame from the firing would catch the fuse on fire, then it would burn to the powder charge, and finally explode the bomb. It was not uncommon for the fuse not to light and the bomb not to explode.

Recently, there have been occasions when individuals locate these shells unexploded. Extreme caution is advised whenever one suspects that a found object might be a cannon ball. Call the local law enforcement agency and do not handle the cannon ball until help arrives and assists with its disposal.

Waterways will be on display for six months.



TEXAS TRIVIA

Researched by ACE FILIPP

Do you know what the state bird of Texas is? How about the official state vegetable? If you read on, you will learn about all the state symbols that make Texas so special as well as some interesting facts.

Six different national flags have flown over Texas during its history. Spain, France, Mexico, the Confederacy, the Republic of Texas, and the United States of America all have claimed Texas over the years.



Texas remained an independent nation from 1836 until it joined the United States in 1845. The red, white and blue of the Texas flag are the same colors

that are on the American flag. The red stands for bravery. The white stands for strength. The blue stands for loyalty. The lone star on the flag, a Masonic symbol, gives Texas its nickname, the Lone Star State.

Composer William J. Marsh of Fort Worth along with lyricist Gladys Yoakum Wright composed "Texas, Our Texas". This patriotic song was adopted in 1929 as the state **song** of Texas

after being selected in a state-wide competition. Can you remember the words?

TEXAS, OUR TEXAS!

*Texas, our Texas! All hail the mighty state;
Texas, our Texas! So wonderful so great,
Boldest and grandest, withstanding every test;
O empire wide and glorious, you stand supremely blest.*

CHORUS

*God bless you, Texas! And keep you brave and strong.
That you may grow in power and worth, throughout the ages long.*

*Texas, O Texas! Your freedom single star!
Sends out its radiance to nations near and far.
Emblem of freedom! It sets our hearts aglow.
With thoughts of San Jacinto and glorious Alamo.*

*Texas, dear Texas! From tyrant grip now free,
Shines forth in splendor your star of desinty;
Mother of heroes! We come your children true.
Proclaiming our allegiance, our faith, our love for you!*

The state **flower** is the bluebonnet. It can be found growing wild in the countryside of South Central Texas. Named for its color and resemblance of a woman's sunbonnet, the flower blooms in early spring, making Texas hillsides appear as an endless sea of blue.

The mockingbird is the state **bird** of Texas. The mockingbird is famous for its ability to mimic sounds. A mockingbird may have as many as thirty-six imitations in its repertoire. These birds are known to sing throughout the year. The song of the bird is a medley of the calls of many other birds, thus it is nicknamed the "mocker". But do not be fooled! A mockingbird is known to be a fierce protector of its nest and environment, and often is seen swooping down on a dog, cat or predator that may be venturing too close to the bird's protected territory. Both male and female birds are ash-gray in color, with a grayish-white breast. The wings and tails are both dark gray with white.



Among the many kinds of trees that grow in the forests of our state is the pecan. The pecan is the state **tree** of Texas. Some native pecan trees are estimated to be 150 years old, and they can grow an average of 70-100 feet in height! The pecan tree produces an edible fruit, the pecan nut. The tree must be five or six

(See TRIVIA, Museum Page 2)

TEXAS TRIVIA

(Continued from Museum P. 1)

years old before it can bear nuts. The nuts that the trees produce can be found in brownies, cookies and other foods. How about a recipe for some pecan pie?

TEXAS PECAN PIE

From George Bush,
President of the United States
and Former Governor the State of
Texas

- 1 1/2 c. Texas pecan halves
- 1 unbaked 9 in. pie shell
- 3 eggs
- 1 T. softened butter
- 1 c. dark corn syrup
- 1 T. vanilla
- 1 c. sugar
- 1 T. all-purpose flour

Arrange pecans in a pie shell; set aside. Beat eggs until light. Add butter, corn syrup and vanilla; stir until blended. Combine sugar and flour; blend into egg mixture. Pour into pie shell. Let stand until pecans rise to the surface. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

As printed in the *Plantation Heritage Cookbook*.

Texas blue topaz was chosen as the state **gemstone**. Its crystal-like appearance occurs in many natural colors including blue, orange, brown, green, pink, beige and red. The state **gemstone cut** is the Lone Star Cut. The state **insect** is the monarch butterfly. This type of butterfly is special because it is the only species of butterfly that does not hibernate, but instead migrates in changing seasons. It takes three to four generations of these black and orange butterflies to make the

migration each year. A seashell called as a lightning whelk is the state **shell**, named for its colored stripes. Only found along the Gulf Coast, it is unique because it is one of few shells that open on the left side.

Here are some other interesting state symbols you may not already know:

The state **dinosaur** is the PLEUROCOELUS.

The state **fabric** is COTTON.

The state **fish** is the GUADALUPE BASS.

The state **folk dance** is the SQUARE DANCE.

The state **food dish** is CHILI.

The state **fruit** is the TEXAS RED GRAPEFRUIT.

The state **grass** is the SIDE-OTS GRAMA.

The state **flying mammal** is the MEXICAN FREE-TAILED BAT.

The state **large mammal** is the LONGHORN.

The state **small mammal** is the ARMOR-PLATED ARMADILLO.

The state **motto** is "friendship".

The state **musical instrument** is the GUITAR.

The state **pepper** is the JALAPENO.

The state **reptile** is the HORNED LIZARD.

The state **ship** is the U.S.S. TEXAS.

The state **shrub** is the CRAPE MYRTLE.

The state **soil** is HOUSTON BLACK.

The state **sport** is the RODEO.

The state **stone** is PETRIFIED PALMWOOD.

The state **vegetable** is the 1015 SWEET ONION.

News from the Cemetery Committee

By JAMIE MURRAY

Eleven members met on Dec. 14, to discuss projects and make plans for the Cemetery Committee. Data entry volunteer David Roberts began the meeting with an announcement that the number of entries on the database stands at 13,430 recorded Brazoria County burials in 135 cemeteries. He reported that 1,871 people visited the cemetery database web site in November.

Alice Royalty told the group about her Nov. 22 meeting with Preservation Architect Graham Luhn at Sandy Point Cemetery. He came to view the mausoleum and offer advice on the feasibility of pursuing a grant to restore it. Mr. Luhn stated that the mausoleum is in better shape than some others that he has seen restored successfully. He suggested that one of his brick masons could look at it and give an estimate of the cost of restoring the masonry. He did not think that the brick would be difficult to match. He recommended that excavations be made on all four sides of the structure so that the condition of the footings can be evaluated and said that money for adequate scaffolding also must be requested in the grant.

Mr. Luhn said that before we can apply for a grant, we need to receive approval for the Historic Cemetery Designation application previously submitted to the Texas Historical Commission. He also said that the 501(c) status needs to be established before we can expect to be awarded a grant. Nancy Howard has been working toward securing this not-for-profit status. She plans to meet with a CPA to try to complete the required paperwork.

Mr. Luhn suggested that we contact the National Trust regional offices in Fort Worth and the National Preservation Trust Fund in Natchitoches, Louisiana, for information on grants to fund the mausoleum restoration project. He also recommended that someone from the committee should attend a grant writing workshop scheduled for July in Austin. Alice Royalty will be out of state at that time and will not be able to attend, but Jamie Murray and Lisa Mims expressed an interest in attending.

Lisa and Jim Mims have been working at the Joseph Mims Cemetery near Brazoria. They have learned that U.S. Senator Shelby of Alabama is a descendant of the Mims family. They plan to contact him to see if he might have ideas for funding restoration work at the Mims Cemetery.

Roy Karl and his crew are nearly finished with the inventory of South Park Cemetery in Pearland. There was no new information presented on Island Cemetery or Pioneer Cemetery at the December meeting, but thanks to volunteer David LeBlanc and committee members Alice and Max Royalty, the Restwood project is moving forward.

The Royalties have taken the cemetery record cards sorted by David LeBlanc and put them all into alphabetical order to expedite the recording of information from each stone. Several committee members checked out cards for specific sections of the cemetery and will proceed to com

(See CEMETERY, Museum Page 4)

BCHM and Varner-Hogg to co-sponsor annual Texas Independence Day Essay Contest

The Brazoria County Historical Museum and Varner-Hogg State Historical Site will co-sponsor the Fourth Annual Texas Independence Day Essay Contest for seventh grade students who reside in Brazoria County.


The purpose of the contest is to provide students with an opportunity to learn more about important historical Texas figures as well as to practice writing skills necessary for successful completion of the TAKS test. Awards will be presented to first, second and third place essayists at an evening banquet to be held in conjunction with Texas Independence Day in March 2003. The banquet will be held in West Columbia, Texas, the first capital of the Republic of Texas. Area educators are encouraged to make this contest a class project or to offer extra credit points to students who choose to enter the contest.

Any student interested in participating in the contest must write a five-paragraph essay about a man or woman who played an important role in the battle for Texas Independence. In the essay, the student writer should discuss the part that the historical figure had in the movement for independence and how Texans today benefit from that individual's efforts.

All essays must be typed and double-spaced and include a cover page with the student's name, teacher's name, school name, and home telephone number. Although not a requirement, students who participate in the contest are encouraged to make use of the abundant historical research materials available at the Brazoria County Historical Museum's Adriance Library and Research Center.

All essays must be turned in at the Brazoria County Historical Museum by 5 p.m. on Tues., March 4. Winners will be notified the following week. For details, contact Ace Filipp, Program Coordinator, at (979) 864-1208 or via email at programs@bchm.org.

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

Photo Update

Since the story about the donkeys appeared in the November newsletter, two more photographs of children riding on donkeys have surfaced.

The people in these photos are not identified. There is just a notation on the back of one photo that says "home, Angleton, Texas". If you can identify any of the people shown in these two photographs, please contact the Museum.

We have received no calls about the people in the San Bernard picnic photographs published in last month's newsletter. Is there no one who remembers Miss Pearl Locke?

Of the two letters mailed to the addresses we had for Van Wells ("Hubba-Hubba" the Clown), one has come back marked "returned to sender." The second letter has not yet come back. Hopefully, it will reach someone in his family, and perhaps we will then receive more information on Van Wells and his career as Hubba-Hubba the Clown.

Percy Beacroft called to say that his father was engineer for the ship Freeport Sulphur, No. 5 when Freeport Sulphur Company owned it. He has a bench and a clock which were once on that vessel.



Tuxpan was county's 'Garden of Eden'

BY JAMIE MURRAY

I have come to view the month of January as a respite from the frenzy of the holiday season.

The pace slows down a bit. It is a time for reflection and new beginnings—a time for starting over with a clean slate and a new energy to get things accomplished that did not get done in the preceding year.

The New Year brings with it an aura of hope for better things and a hint of adventures yet to come. This concept of starting over and beginning again makes January a good month to reflect upon Tuxpan, Mexico, and the Brazoria County families who once upon a time migrated there to start a new life.

Texas in the days following the Civil War was economically depressed. Goods were in short supply, and money was scarce. While the entrepreneurial spirit that survived in Brazoria County brought this area back to prosperity sooner than other Confederate States in the Deep South, Texas was a difficult place to earn a living immediately after the war.

Just as Texas in the 1820s and 1830s had offered hope for economic improvement to settlers from the eastern United States, Mexico began to look very attractive to some Southerners struggling with conditions after the Civil War. Farrell Vincent, a Confederate veteran, went to Mexico and found a fertile valley along the Tuxpan River in Vera Cruz. He communicated his enthusiasm for the area to Dr. R. M. Collins of Brazoria County,

describing Tuxpan as a Garden of Eden, "the land first class, the timber mahogany and rosewood, with valuable dye woods and cedars six to eight feet in diameter." One of the Willy-Collins descendants who researched her family in the Adriance Library tells us that Tuxpan is an Indian word that means "land of rabbits."

Mr. Vincent, along with Dr. Collins, Colonel Mordello S. Munson, Dr. John Drayton, Andrew Alexander, and Captain Mosley formed the Tuxpan Land Company and bought half a million acres. The Collins Family migrated immediately along with a few others, notably George Jackson, son of Abner Jackson of the Lake Jackson Plantation, and Lewis Stroebel. Colonel Munson made several visits to Tuxpan and began making preparations to establish a sugar plantation and fruit orchard there. According to Colonel Munson's granddaughter, Mary Kennedy Giesecke, her family was all packed up to make the move to Tuxpan when an epidemic caused the closing of the border. Emigration into Mexico was halted for a time, and Colonel Munson and his extended family never moved to the colony in Tuxpan.

In 1868, naturalist Gideon Lincecum moved to Tuxpan and lived there until his death in 1874. Robert Willy, a Brazoria County deputy sheriff, left Brazoria County for Mexico in 1873 with Dr. John Drayton. In 1874, Robert Willy married Mary Elizabeth Collins. Robert and Mary had nine children. Mary died in Tuxpan in 1924. Robert lived there

until moving back to Texas shortly before his death at age 89. Some of their descendants continued to live in Mexico.

Eventually, the Mexican government confiscated most of the land owned by the American colonists, and the Tuxpan Colony experience was over. Names, dates, and places provide the framework for the story of The American Colony in Tuxpan, but some of the details are found in letters and memoirs in the Adriance Library.

Family File #111 contains two letters from Rebecca Collins of Tuxpan to M.S. Munson in Brazoria County. In the letters she tells of the hardships and disease suffered during floods in September of 1888. On December 29, 1888, she wrote, "[w]e have made up our minds to leave Mexico if we can sell what little we have here. The children have all been sick. Mr. Willy was sure sick after the high water from exposure in the water. [three words unreadable, perhaps 'We still have'] the Oyster Creek lands-god forbid that we should be here in another overflow. It is a thing to be remembered as long as I live."

Family File #111A contains a memoir of Edward Alexander Goff, who in 1896, at age 18, left his Texas home in search of adventure. He and his brother Charles tried to join the Rough Riders, but the roster already had been filled, so they stayed on the train and ended up in Tampico, Mexico. Then they went to Tuxpan and met the Willy family. Edward tells in his memoir of his experiences while working in Mexico, and of the death of his brother Charles. Edward lived in Mexico until 1916, when the revolution made it unsafe for Americans to stay. Returning to Tuxpan in 1924, Edward farmed there until 1932. Then he sold his property and came back to Texas.

As I look at the map of The American Colony in Tuxpan, Mexico, I see other names besides the one mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. W.H.Young, W.S. Smith, R.N. Woollett, C.A. Evans, Nicacio Reyes, and the surnames Mimms and Brown are written in on parcels of land. Were all of these settlers from Brazoria County? Do more families here possess letters or journals written by relatives who once settled in Tuxpan?

If anyone has more information or copies of primary source documents relating to the Tuxpan colonial experience, please contact Jamie Murray at the Museum. We would like to add more material to the Tuxpan file.

Brazoria County history trivia

Can anyone tell us the origin of the name of Darrington Plantation?

It was owned by Sterling McNeel and was on property that is now the Darrington Prison Unit of TDC. After consulting books and files on prisons and plantations, we have not yet been able to come up with the answer, and would welcome input from anyone who can provide us with a source that tells us how Darrington Plantation got its name.

A volunteer researcher recently came across the name John Darrington in a list of District Clerk court cases from the 1830s. Perhaps additional research will turn up more information on John Darrington and tell us whether Darrington Plantation may have been named for him or someone in his family.

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By ROSEMARY DUKE

The building where I work and where I write this column is affectionately called the "old courthouse".

It is not really a courthouse any more. As most of you already know, it is now the home of the Brazoria County Historical Museum. But no matter what its function is, this building is indeed old.

Bill Morgan writes about the "old courthouse" in his book *Old Friends: Great Texas Courthouses*. The original part of the building was constructed in 1897. It was built

Cemetery . . .

(Continued from Museum P 2)

plete the inventory. The completed cards then will be turned in to David Roberts for entry into the database. Since there are so many records to be entered, Alice Royalty volunteered to assist David with the data entry for Restwood Cemetery. South Park and Restwood are the last two large cemeteries that will be added to the database.

Of the 137 known cemeteries

following a hotly contested election the year before. The election was to finally settle the question of just where the county seat should be located: in Brazoria, where it had been since 1835, or in Angleton. When the returns were in, the citizens of Brazoria County had voted to move the county seat from Brazoria to Angleton by a 2-to-1 margin.

Feelings and tempers had run high during the election. According to Catherine McNeese, the night the returns were announced, her grandfather and several other men from Angleton, fearing that the county

records might be destroyed, made a secret dash across the prairie in a wagon and transported the records back to their new location in Angleton.

For a time the McRae Building on the north side of West Myrtle was the courthouse. However, no time was lost in the construction of a modest \$28,000 courthouse. This new courthouse was nothing compared to the one in Brazoria built by James R. Gordon, but it was fancy with its several chimneys and tall tower that housed a four-faced clock. This clock never worked. Everyone who knew about clocks in the county tried to work on the clock, but it never ran properly. The pigeons had won that battle. They would sit on the hands and slow the ride up the clock and make it go faster on the way down with their weight. I guess they never thought of putting glass on the front of the face!

The building was originally heated by wood burning stoves. Strangely, all of the stoves were located on the second floor. The first floor had no heat. I guess they did not realize that heat would rise!

Sometime in 1912 the building was converted to coal. The water was supplied by two cisterns on each side of the back door (main door of the Museum). If you wanted a drink, all you had to do was to take your glass outside and draw some water from one of the cisterns. It was not until 1927 that indoor plumbing was available.

Oil lamps provided light in those days. There were six of these lamps in a bracket, each backed by a large reflector. In 1913, the building was wired for electricity. The lamps only put out about 10 watts. In 1916, a west wing was added, and then the big change came in 1927 when an east wing was added. A good deal of the gingerbread was removed

and the clock tower was taken down. Some say this was due to hurricane damage, and others say it was just for modernization. At the same time, stucco was added to the exterior; the brick could not be matched so someone suggested stucco. This building remained the Brazoria County Courthouse until a new one was built in 1940. For 43 years the building was used as a city library and offices for civic groups. In 1983 the building became the home of the Brazoria County Historical Museum.

Please stop by and see the Museum or use the research library upstairs. Visit the Bookstore and guess the new mystery item in the main hallway. Become a member and be invited to several interesting programs and receive a 10 percent discount on most items in the store. The Museum and Bookstore are open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

in Brazoria County, almost all have been entered in the database. Individual burial records of the two remaining cemeteries in Pearland will not appear in the cemetery database.

Because these cemeteries are so large, contact information will be given for them instead.

In addition to the Sandy Point mausoleum restoration, possible projects suggested for 2003 include a bake sale, a rummage sale, and the development of a Brazoria County cemeteries brochure to be distributed through tourist and convention centers across the county. Another project that has been discussed in the past is that of organizing a tour of a historic cemetery to be led by living history characters.

Alice Royalty told about a genealogy article that defines a "taphophile" as one who has an intense interest in old cemeteries. Now that we know what the term means, we would like to invite other taphophiles to join us in 2003 in our efforts to record and restore the cemeteries of Brazoria County.

Please remember that it is not necessary to attend the monthly Saturday morning meetings to be a part of this committee. There are numerous ways for taphophiles to get involved with the work of this group and assist with research, clean-up, or inventorying of the county's cemeteries. The Restwood Cemetery recording project needs volunteers now who can work at their own pace and on their own schedule. For more information, contact Jamie Murray at the Museum.

The next meeting of the Cemetery Committee is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 25, at 10 a.m. in the Museum auditorium. In February, the meeting date is Saturday, February 26. All who are interested in Brazoria County's cemeteries are invited to attend.

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