



The Window Pane

Brazoria County Historical Museum

100 East Cedar Street
Angleton TX 77515

Father of Texas Awards Banquet

The Brazoria County Historical Museum will hold *Texas Trails: The Tenth Annual Father of Texas Awards Banquet* on Saturday, September 17, 2005, at Columbia Lakes. Beginning at 6:00 p.m., the evening's festivities will include a welcome reception and dinner, a silent auction, and the awards program. Recognized for their contributions on the areas of leadership, pioneer spirit, and literature respectively, this year's award recipients are Garvin H. Germany, Jr., Eleanor Nabors Rea, and Gregg J. Dimmick. Tickets are available for \$50.00 each or a table of eight for \$500.00. The *Awards Banquet* is the Museum's primary annual fundraising event. Its proceeds support the Museum's operations, the care of its historic collections, and educational programming. Telephone the Museum at 979/864-1208 to make your reservation or for further information about sponsorship opportunities. The Stephen F. Austin Leadership Award is presented annually to an individual who has demonstrated, in modern times, the leadership qualities --- whether in business, industry, civic or political activities---exhibited by the "Father of Texas", Stephen F. Austin. Retired judge Garvin H. Germany, Jr. has been selected by the Museum

Awards Committee to receive this prestigious award. Born in Dallas, Garvin had done more before he received a B.A. in Political Science (1950) from Southern Methodist University than most people do in a lifetime. He worked on a hay baling crew, learned to play the violin, drove a cattle truck, served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, received a private pilot's license, joined a Masonic Lodge, and qualified as a flight engineer in the U.S. Air

Force Reserve. After graduation from college, Garvin went to law school but his education was interrupted once again when he was called up to active duty during the Korean Conflict. In 1955 he finally was able to finish law school, and then embarked upon a career in law that brought him to Brazo-



ria County in 1962. Garvin's vocation has spanned six decades to date and concluded formally with his retirement as a County Court & Probate Judge, although he still serves as a Visiting Judge when asked to do so.

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Father of Texas Awards Banquet

Saturday

September 17, 2005

6:00 p.m.

Columbia Lakes

Black Tie Optional

Finishing the Fair Project

With the help of volunteers, interns and Museum staff, the Brazoria County Fair Association donation is close to being processed. Earlier this year the Fair Association donated boxes of unsorted, mixed media items to the Brazoria County Historical Museum. The Museum has ordered the collection by sorting, rehousing and reformatting them into a usable collection, which researchers can now utilize when exploring the history of the county fair.

The main component of the collection is photographs, almost 5,000, dating to the 1960s. These include images of the Fair Parade, Fair trophy winners and Fair board members. There are even images of the big name personalities who have visited the County Fair over

the years. The primary concern for the Museum staff was stabilizing and rehousing the collection, which was done with funds provided by the Texas Historical Commission. As time permits, staff and volunteers will identify and then scan the images into the Museum's database as well as store the other items for future use.

While processing the collection, some notable gaps became apparent. There is very little information for the years between 1912 and 1938. The Museum now has a fairly complete collection of Fair Catalogs. These are the Fair's annual publication, which serves as both a promotional and an informational tool. They list all Fair events and recap the previous year's activities. The years missing from the collection are 1912 through 1938, 1940, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1965, 1966, 1969, 1981, and 1982. Patrons who have these editions and wish to donate them may contact the curator, Michael Bailey, at the Museum. If you would wish to participate in this project or one of many other similar projects, please contact the Collections Division of the Brazoria County Historical Museum at 979/864 -1208.

Michael Bailey



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Catherine Munson Foster to be Considered for Recognition by UT

Officials with the University of Texas are considering including Catherine Munson Foster in an exhibit that will honor great Texas women. The exhibit will be created on a public area wall of Kinsolving Women's Residence at the University of Texas in Austin, as part of its "Histowalls" Program.

"As a storyteller, I am very excited about her being among some 40 that we will feature and another 50 or 60 whom we would like to show with brief quotes or short descriptions, ... At this point she will probably be

among those for whom we would give a short description and perhaps a quote," according to Mary Grace Ketter of UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures.

Mrs. Foster is well known in Brazoria County because of her unique contributions in the areas of storytelling and writing. If chosen, Mrs. Foster's voice and perhaps two images will be displayed in the exhibit that is tentatively set to be installed as early as 2007.



Thanks to Killum Pest Control for their donated services to the Museum.

Adriance Library & Research Center

The Adriance Library files are "chock full" of interesting material on early Texas, particularly Brazoria County. People from all over contact us for information. Visitors come here to discover family genealogy, gather information for writing books and history papers, and to get ideas for articles to publish in magazines and newspapers. The Museum has been a part of this county for over 20 years, and word has spread about the treasure trove of old maps, photographs, and records available here for researchers.

An exciting turn of events that we could not have predicted when the Museum opened its doors twenty-plus years ago is the impact that computers and the Internet have had in bringing researchers and materials together. A welcome aspect of reaching out to other areas via the Internet is the wealth of material that has been sent to us by people in far away places with family roots in Brazoria County.

In March, I received an email from Rexford M. Ennis of Watertown, NY. He offered to send a copy of a journal kept by his g-g-g-uncle



Thomas Rexford, who had taken a group of settlers to Velasco in 1837. I lost no time letting him know that we would love to receive it. Thomas Rexford's tale is not a long one: the typed transcript is only 24 pages,

plus a couple of letters that tell us the end of the story. It chronicles a journey that took him and a group of settlers from New York City to Velasco aboard the brig *Belvedere*.

Thomas set sail from New York on May 13, 1837, bound "for the far famed Republic of Texas; being entrusted in the transporting and settling a number of families in that country." Passage on the vessel, including wood, water, and freight was only seventeen dollars, a rate that was five to eight dollars cheaper than normal because another vessel was also setting sail to Texas at the same time.

At first, Thomas writes about the hardships of the voyage. He describes the rolling and pitching of the vessel during squalls and gale winds, alternating with days of no progress when the winds died completely, the heat was oppressive, and drinking water had to be rationed. Finally, after six weeks of sailing, the *Belvedere* reached Velasco in the Republic of Texas on July 2, 1837.

Velasco, located at the mouth of the Brazos in the area now known as Surfside, must not have been a very imposing sight in 1837, with its twenty or so houses and a "goodly number" of taverns and grogshops that were its only public buildings. Even so, it no doubt was a welcome sight to the passengers on the *Belvedere* after their long and difficult voyage. Thomas writes that Velasco was "thronged with people from the interior, who have come here for the benefit of the Sea Breeze and on account of the healthiness of the place." The asking price on a 1/4 acre lot was \$200 - \$500.

Thomas mentions large quantities of drift wood and a stockade fort "made of timber from the beach." This is a very important sentence for today's historians who are interested in Fort Velasco. There has been some talk in recent years of building a replica of the fort at Surfside, and so researchers have been looking for descriptions of it. There has been some question whether the fort was constructed of driftwood, as Guy Bryan had described it,

or of logs brought in from Anahuac, as suggested in another early account.

Thomas' description of the inhabitants is also of interest. He writes that the majority of the people in Velasco then were not permanent residents. Most were "disbanded officers and soldiers of the Army ...Venturers, Land speculators, and blacklegs from the United States," and he adds that "necessarily morality is at rather a low ebb." He notes that although dueling is against the law, it is "winked at throughout the country; and the despicable murderer is allowed to run at large and associate with his fellow men." He then tells how a Lt. Redfield, Commandant of the Fort, and Doctor Linch, Surgeon of the hospital, entered into a duel "over some trifling dispute" about the duties of the doctor at the hospital.

Thomas tells of the dangers of landing at the mouth of the Brazos and of an accident that occurred while the passengers were disembarking from the *Belvedere*. A Mrs. Ward, her infant, a Mrs. Rowley [or Rawley] and her four-year-old daughter, and Mr. Curtis, the father of Mrs. Ward all were drowned when the small boat taking them to shore capsized in the surf. The Captain of the *Belvedere* was blamed for this accident because he had refused to land his passengers or their goods on shore at Velasco, according to the terms of their agreement. The passengers bound the captain and forced him to have the mate unload their possessions on the shore.

After spending sixteen days in Velasco, Thomas bought a horse and gear and set out for Brazoria. From there he journeyed to Columbia, San Felipe, Washington, Mill Creek, and Cole's Settlement before returning to Velasco. Along the way, he allows us to see 1837 Texas through his eyes as he describes it in his journal and gives his impressions of each settlement.

This journal is an important source for historians, and we have many to thank for it: Thomas Rexford himself for recording his impressions; a traveling companion who recognized the importance of the journal and had a part in preserving it; Thomas' family for treasuring it all of these years; and, his descendant, Rex Ennis, who went to the trouble to send a copy of it to the Museum. He found this Museum on the Internet and knew that Thomas Rexford's journal will be appreciated here in Brazoria County, now and in the years to come.

As I read Thomas Rexford's journal, there was a ring of familiarity about some of the circumstances he described. I felt I had read it before, but knew that I had never seen this memoir. I have discovered the reason for this feeling of *déjà vu* and will share it with you in the next issue of the Window Pane.

Jamie Murray



Velasco, 1835 by Mary Austin Holly

Father of Texas Banquet

In addition to his legal career, Garvin has been involved with a number of organizations and community projects across Brazoria County including: member of the Brazosport Chamber of Commerce, member/officer of the Lake Jackson Kiwanis, Director at the Brazosport State Bank, co-founder of the Brazosport Title Company, member/officer of several Masonic lodges, member of the Sweeny Rotary Club, founding member of the Brazoria Community Historical Museum, member of the First United Methodist of Brazoria, member/officer of several American Legion and VFW posts, worked to establish both the County Airport and the Juvenile Detention Center, member of the County Airport Advisory Committee, and Board member of the Brazoria County Historical Museum, Inc.

Garvin and his wife, Joyce, currently live in Angle-



ton, and between the two of them have six children, sixteen grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.



Eleanor Nabors Rea has been chosen to receive the Jane Long Pioneer Spirit Award. The Museum presents this award each year to the individual who, in modern times, possesses a pioneering vision and the tenacity, courage and conviction to pursue it, as epitomized by Jane Wilkinson Long, an early Texas settler. Born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, Eleanor met and married her late husband, Jim Nabors, while they were students at the University of Alabama. They moved to the Brazosport area in 1956, when Jim became publisher of *The Facts*. Eleanor and Jim were blessed with four daughters, Susan, Martha, Amy and Elizabeth, all of whom were happily married before Jim passed away in 1993.

Father of Texas Banquet

While Eleanor's first priority was her family, she nevertheless devoted considerable time and effort to her community. Eleanor has worked with and supported the Salvation Army, the Symphony League, the First United Methodist Church of Lake Jackson and the Brazoria County Historical Museum. She and Jim made a gift of a magnificent collection of sea shells and miscellaneous seashore findings to the Brazosport Museum of Natural Science as well as donated their beach house to His Love Counseling Services. Eleanor was honored as the Brazosport Area Chamber of Commerce Woman of the Year in 2003; that same year she and husband Ernie Rea, whom she married in 1999, were honored as Philanthropists of the Year. Eleanor and Ernie worked with the Boys and Girls Club, the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center Outreach program and the Lake Jackson Historical Association. Although Ernie passed away last year, he and Eleanor continue to support the community together through a scholarship that he established at Brazosport College in her name and funded by means of a bequest from his estate. Eleanor continues to serve the organization as a Director on its Foundation Board.

The Catherine Munson Foster Memorial Award for Literature is presented in memory of the late Brazoria County



librarian, storyteller and writer, Catherine Munson Foster. This year's award will be presented to Gregg J. Dimmick. Born in Douglas, Wyoming, Gregg graduated from Texas A&M University and then attended the University of Nebraska, where he received his medical degree. He is a pediatrician with the South Texas Medical Clinics in Wharton. Gregg and his wife, Debbie, have been married for over thirty years and have two children.

Although Gregg is a practicing physician, a job that by its very nature is demanding, he nevertheless finds the time to pursue his interests in history and archaeology. A member of the Houston Archeological Society, the Texas Historical Association and the Friends of the San Jacinto Battleground, Gregg has participated in archaeological excavations at Mar de Lodo, the Fannin Battle Site and the San Jacinto Battlefield as well as numerous Native American sites. Additionally, he has given numerous lectures and has made several television appearances related to his avocational pursuits. In 2003, Gregg received the San Jacinto Award from the descendants of San Jacinto for his efforts to preserve Texas history. The following year the Texas State Historical Association published his book, *Sea of Mud: The Retreat of the Mexican Army after San Jacinto, An Archeological Investigation*. This monograph recalls two forgotten weeks in 1836 and one of the most consequential events of the Texas Revolution – the tale of the Mexican Army's misfortunes in the aptly named "Sea of Mud," where more than 2,500 Mexican soldiers and 1,500 female camp followers floundered in muddy fields in what is now Wharton County. Not one to rest on his laurels, Gregg currently is editing a translation of *Analysis of the Military Diary of General José Urrea* and is writing a new book, *Santa Anna's Army in Texas: 1835 - 1836*.

Please join the Brazoria County Historical Museum in honoring these three outstanding individuals at *Traveling Through Texas: The Ninth Annual Father of Texas Awards Banquet*.



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Historical Museum

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Angleton, Texas
77515

Happy Bad Poetry Day !

August 18, 2005

Last Chance to Place Names on Veterans Quilt

The Brazoria County Historical Museum and the Plantation Quilting Guild of Lake Jackson have been working together to ensure that the names of those Brazoria County residents who have served or currently are serving either in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan or in Operation Iraqi Freedom are remembered. Since April 1, 2005, the Museum staff has been collecting names that will be embroidered on quilt blocks, which then will be sewn into a quilt by Guild members and put on display at the Museum. The project should be completed in time for the quilt to be premiered on Veterans Day, 2005. Because of privacy concerns, those family members that want their relatives who are service members to be represented on the quilt are asked to contact Michael Bailey, the Museum's Curator of Collections. This project is open only to service members who are residents of Brazoria County. Memorial quilts are a traditional way of preserving names of those individuals who have served in various military conflicts. The quilt project is both straightforward and commanding, yet will lead to a quiet remembrance of modern-day military conflicts and those who served in them.