



THE WINDOW PANE

Brazoria County Historical Museum

DISCOVER WHERE TEXAS BEGAN

Thank you, Shelia!

No, the name is not a misprint or typo. Shelia Smith, the Museum's intern from the University of Houston at Clear Lake, does not spell her given name in the average way. In fact, the word average just does not apply to Shelia. Since she began her internship here in February, Shelia has demonstrated to the Museum staff how very capable and above average she is.

Shelia's internship project, which she chose from a list of possibilities, required her to tackle a large

collection of material donated to the Museum by the Brazoria County Fair Association. The collection includes photographs, articles, fair catalogs, and miscellaneous records generated by the Fair Association over many years. It was Shelia's job to survey the contents and then to organize and file the materials in

a way that will make the information more accessible to researchers. In doing this, she has learned something about the process of cataloging a collection into a museum. At the same time, she also has accomplished a project that might have taken the Museum staff a long time to do in such a thorough manner.

Shelia came to the Museum as a University of Houston-Clear Lake Graduate Scholar of Humanities seeking an internship as a culminating project for her Master's degree program. She will soon be awarded that Master's degree after many years of balancing home, family and the family's general contracting business in Manvel, and all while completing her university education!



The word average certainly does not apply to Shelia's accomplishments as a student either. She earned her B.A. degree in 2001 and managed to attain spots on the Dean's List and in several national honor societies during the course of her college career. Somehow in the midst of all this, Shelia found time to pursue her interests as an artist. She paints with oils and watercolors and has enjoyed art classes both as a student and as a teacher. Shelia also is interested in quilting and

textile arts.

In completing her degree plan with an internship here, Shelia has provided an important service for the Museum. Uncatalogued collections in boxes are of little use to a researcher. There is a need in our museum for volunteers who can concentrate on organizing one collection until the job

is done. Shelia's project, funded by a grant from the Texas Historical Commission, has allowed her to do this with the Brazoria County Fair Association materials. The time that she has invested in this project is time that she has saved both the Museum staff and future researchers of this collection. We appreciate Sheila for the excellent job she has done and for the many skills and talents she has demonstrated during the course of her internship at Brazoria County Historical Museum. She has shown an impressive ability in her life for accomplishing in many areas at once. Perhaps as Shelia continues with her busy schedule, she occasionally will find time to include some more Brazoria County Historical Museum projects. We certainly hope so!

Jamie Murray

May 2005

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Family Night at the Beach

May 5th

6:30 PM

Quintana Beach Park

Sacrificed at the Alamo

Book Review

May 19th

6:30 PM

From the *Texas Gazette*, March 6, 1830

Published at San Felipe de Austin

THE TEXAS HUNTER

The man was up, the wind blew mild,
All nature seem'd to wear a smile,
When William, with his gun, repair'd,
Toward the Rio San Bernard,
In quest of game of speed or flight,
For his and Mary's meat that night.

Long William toil'd ere he could find,
An object fit—it was the hind,
When back with eagerness he drew
The cock, and then pull'd trigger too,
When ere the smoke had clear'd his eyes,
His wish'd for dead deer did arise.

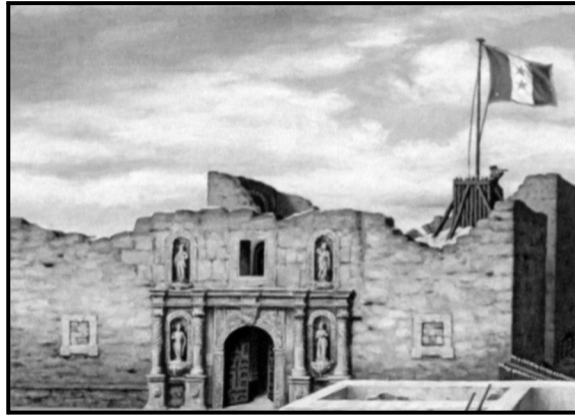
To loading of his gun again,
The anxious huntsman then began,
But first his ball and patching drew,
And this before he's charg'd her too,
"When lest" said he, "I lose some time,
I think of it, and now I'll prime."

The last manoeuvre was shut pan,
Meanwhile the deer before him stands,
"Oh now you're mine," said William, low,
If my old gun don't snap nor blow;"
But when the flint and steel had clash'd,
What think you? William's gun it flash'd.

In haste, our hunter had forgot,
To put in powder or the shot,
He sighted on an empty gun,
Which flash'd and then the deer did run;
And Will return'd to Mary's seat,
Without a single piece of meat.

The story told amounts to this,
As all my readers will insist,
That William's powder, patch and ball,
Were not put in the gun at all,
As if they suffer'd much from drought,
He'd plac'd the whole load in this mouth

Remember the Alamo!



On May 19th, the Brazoria County Historical Museum will host a program by Dr. Bruce Winders. Historian and curator of the Alamo, Dr. Winders will review his current book *Sacrificed at the Alamo: Tragedy and Triumph in the Texas Revolution* at 6:30 p.m. in the Museum's auditorium, after which there will be a book signing. The book is for sale in the Windows Book & Gift Shoppe.

Dr. Winders will shed light on the military and political aspects of battle, including the idea that the Texas Army was largely responsible for the tragedy not only at the Alamo, but also at Goliad.

Sacrificed at the Alamo takes a different approach to the Alamo battle than is typically presented. Mr. Winders wants the reader to appreciate the event itself and why it occurred instead of focusing on the usual historical factoids such as did Davy Crockett really wear a coons skin hat or how many pleas for help were sent? Join us for an entertaining and enlightening evening!

Rosemary Duke

Mystery Photo

This month's mystery photo is of *Baptist church primary class, 1930*. If anyone has any information about this photo, please let Jamie Murray know at research@bchm.org or 979/864-1208.



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

Adriance Library & Research Center

Just when we think we have seen them all, another outstanding old photo from Brazoria County's past comes to light. Max Royalty recently brought in a wonderful image that we had not seen before of the 1839 courthouse building in Brazoria. It was in his collection of old family photographs, but Max was not aware that he had a treasure that local historians had yet to discover. How many other wonderful old images are out there that have not made their way from family albums to the Museum's collection? Now that is an exciting prospect!

Somehow this particular courthouse image is not among those familiar historic photos that have been passed around the County, appearing in various publications and exhibits over the years. It definitely is an old image. Apparently, it was taken when the 1839 two-story wood-frame courthouse building was sold to be moved so that the new, grand J.Reilly Gordon courthouse could be constructed in its place in the mid 1890s. The photo shows workmen standing around the building, which has been placed on jacks as if in preparation for the move.

The one-story brick building that appears to the left of the frame building was occupied by the County Clerk's and District Clerk's offices. Max pointed out that some of the folks in the photo seem to be dressed for a special occasion. He supposed that this photo may have been in his family's collection because of his grandmother's wedding. On September 5, 1896, Ella Hudgins married Braxton Bragg Meredith, and the couple had to visit the courthouse after the wedding to sign official marriage documents. By September of 1896, however, the new brick and granite courthouse was already built and in operation. The people standing in the doorway are most likely the employees of the County Clerks' office. Enlarging the photo either might enable Max to identify his grandparents or to decide that the photo actually has nothing to do with their wedding day.

For some years, I assumed that the 1839 frame building had been demolished to make way for the new courthouse construction in 1895. After all, it was almost 60 years old by then, and at least in my lifetime, Brazoria County has not been known to show a lot of respect for old buildings. I was intrigued by a brief letter sent to the Museum in August 2000, from Oma Bell Perry, who was residing in Leakey, Texas. In it, Miss Perry stated, "The first Brazoria Court still stands in Brazoria, Texas. It is a two story old frame building on the East side of the Highway in Brazoria. My mother said that was where they held the Perry-Bryan family reunion in the early part of 1905-etc." She then added a p.s. "Our grandmother Perry gave the land for the Court House." Did she mean the land for the original courthouse site or the land to which the courthouse was moved? I responded to her letter, sent her a clipping about the 1839 courthouse, and asked her some questions, but she never wrote to me again. Miss Oma Bell Perry has since passed away.

By checking Marie Beth Jones' book, Peach Point Plantation, I found that Oma Bell's Grandmother Perry was born in 1830 and died in 1888. She could not have given the land for the original courthouse site in 1839, and she had already died before the need arose to move the frame building to another location. Oma's great-grandmother was Stephen F. Austin's sister, Emily Austin Bryan Perry (1795 -1851). Is it possible that Emily gave the land for the original courthouse? More

research is required to explain Oma Bell's statement that her "grandmother Perry gave the land for the courthouse." Research on the location of the Perry family reunions also may prove helpful in shedding some light on the location of the frame courthouse building in later years.

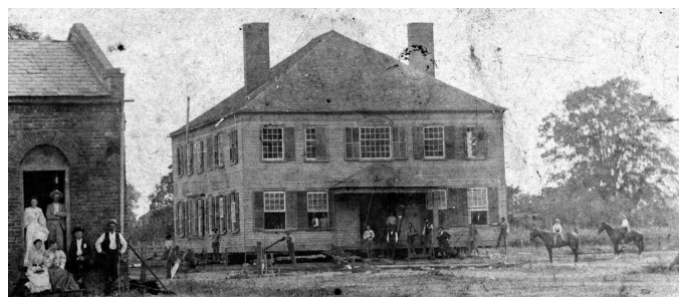
After receiving Miss Perry's letter in 2000, I mentioned it to some Brazoria history buffs. I believed that if the old 1839 courthouse building was still standing in Brazoria, local historians and old-timers would certainly know about it. Yet no one that I asked knew of another location for the old building after it was moved from its original site. Oma Bell Perry was born in 1913. When she wrote to the Museum in 2000, she was 87 years old. No doubt she remembered seeing the old courthouse building in Brazoria after it was moved, but perhaps she had not been back to Brazoria for some time and did not realize that the building was no longer there. At any rate, her mention of that building is what sparked the quest to discover what had happened to it when it was no longer serving Brazoria County as a courthouse.

What became of the 1839 wood frame courthouse building? If only I could ask the late Catherine Foster. Not a day goes by that I do not come across something that I want to discuss with Catherine. Fortunately, we have most of Catherine's memories and research in print because she was a prolific writer on all topics of Brazoria County history for a very long time. So far, I have not found any information in Catherine's writings about the ultimate fate of the 1839 courthouse. This is not to say that it is not there, but just that I have not found it yet.

These days, I call on Brazoria County Historical Commission President Marie Beth Jones and local historians Doris Setzer and Ron Livingston (among others) for answers to interesting research questions. If they do not have the answers themselves, they can usually suggest a source or give me the name of someone who might. I also enjoy chasing the topic around the Adriance Library, checking here and there as the research leads me. There are so many places to look: the information files, the family files, the books, the collections of photos, maps, and documents, exhibit research material, old newspapers, and oral histories. One source leads to another. It is like a puzzle with lots of pieces--and sometimes some of the pieces do not seem to fit. Conflicting sources add to the confusion. It is an interesting challenge to try to sort it all out, but sometimes perseverance pays off.

The trail of the old courthouse building leads us from "Old Town" Brazoria to "New" Brazoria. In next month's newsletter, I will follow that trail and continue to pursue the question, "Whatever became of the old two-story frame building that once was the 1839 Brazoria County Courthouse?" There are still a few sources to check and a few threads to tie together before we can be satisfied that we have the answer, but we are closing in on it.

Jamie Murray





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Historical Museum

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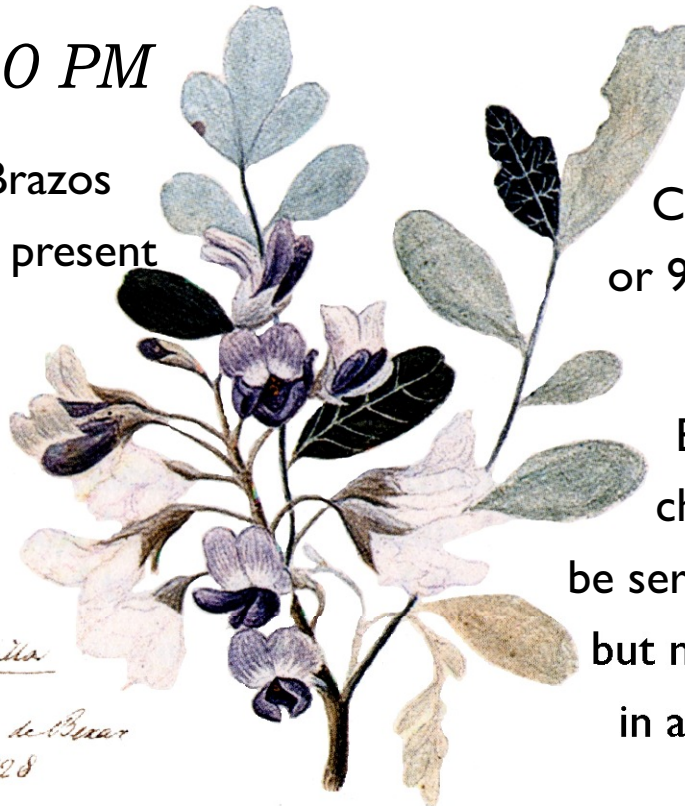
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Happy Mother's Day !

Family Night at the Beach

May 5th, 6:30 PM

Dennis Jones from Brazos Bend State Park will present "Prairies, Texas Lost Legacy" about the pre-settlement environment of the Texas Coastal Plain.



Thompson
In Antonio de Bexar
1828

Habitat in locus lapidosus submontibus Texas.

Quintana Beach Park

Call 979/864-1208
or 979/233-1461 for
directions.

BBQ sandwiches,
chips & drinks will
be served for \$5/plate,
but must be reserved
in advance by calling
979/864-1208.