



The Window Pane

Brazoria County Historical Museum

100 East Cedar Street
Angleton TX 77515

Step Rideau & the Zydeco Outlaws

Join the Brazoria County Historical Museum on June 24th at 5:00 p.m. when it will host the renowned Step Rideau & the Zydeco Outlaws at the Museum's Annual Concert on the Courthouse Lawn Event. The concert is free, and concertgoers are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or blankets.

A dinner of red beans and rice with boudin balls and sides will be available for \$7.00 per plate with prior reservation by calling the Museum at 979/864-1208.

Step Rideau & the Zydeco Outlaws have been featured at the Houston

Livestock Show and Rodeo as well as the Houston International Festival. The group has drawn capacity crowds at popular dance emporiums in the Houston area for nearly fifteen years. With six Zydeco albums to his name, Step Rideau and his band will energize downtown Angleton with tunes like "Gotta Get Up", "Step's Stomp Down", "Dry Bayou Drive", "My Zydeco Shoes", and "Are You Gone." The evening's activities will commemorate the 141st anniversary of Juneteenth, when slavery officially ended in Texas.

For more information, telephone the Museum at 979/864-1208 or 979/388-1208 or go to the Museum's website at www.bchm.org.

June 2006

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**Free Concert on
the Lawn**

**Step Rideau &
the Zydeco
Outlaws**

June 24, 5-8 PM

**Reserve a plate of
Red Beans & Rice
with Boudin Balls
for \$7 per plate**

by calling

979/864-1208.



New and Renewing Members

NEW

Mr. Eddie Venne, Windswept Seafood Restaurant, Freeport – El General

RENEWALS

Ms. Helen S. Horton, Pearland – Senior

Mr. & Mrs. J. Michael Lowrey, Lake Jackson – El Presidente

Mr. Jay A. Mallard, Angleton – Senior

Ms. Gale D. Kauffman, Washington, DC – Senior

Mr. & Mrs. Marcus Stephenson, Lake Jackson – El General

Ms. Nedra Kelley, Angleton – Senior

Mr. Newton G. Brand Jr., Houston – El General

Mr. Sands Weems, West Columbia – Senior

Ms. Sue Gupton, Angleton – El Tejano

Ms. Suzanne J. Cain, Sherman – Senior

Mrs. W. M. Choate, Lake Jackson – Senior

Ms. Nancy Bertoneclj, Angleton – Senior

Ms. Beth Griggs, West Columbia – El General

Mr. & Mrs. Johnney Pollan, Lake Jackson – La Familia

Mr. John O' Leary, Lake Jackson – El Tejano

Mr. Jack Reid, Lake Jackson - Senior

Mr. George Easterling, Angleton – El Tejano

Ms. Emma Jean Tanner, Lake Jackson - La Familia

Mr. & Mrs. Elmer Cannon, Rosharon – El General

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Adriance Library & Research Center

In January, Neal McLain of Brazoria took on an ambitious volunteer project for the Museum. Neal is conducting an inventory of all the maps in the Museum's collection, repairing some, and improving the description of each one on the Collections Database. With the help of volunteer J.D. Allen, the maps are being scanned and photographed so that an image of each one can be viewed on a computer by researchers. This will save wear and tear on the maps and also will save the time of both staff members and researchers who want to utilize maps that are relevant to their research.

Neal earned his M.A. in RadioTelevision from



from the University of Michigan. He began his career in broadcast engineering, but switched to cable television in 1976. During his career, Neal worked extensively with maps. After retiring, Neal and his wife, Ann, moved to Brazoria in 2003 to be closer to their daughter. The McLains are active in the Brazoria County Master Gardeners, Texas Master Naturalists Program, and Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges. Neal attended the General Land Office program about maps at the Museum last October, which is what prompted him to volunteer. We are thankful Neal has shared with us his expertise with and interest in maps here in the Museum Library. Neal is thorough, enthusiastic, dedicated, and professional in his approach to the map inventory project. This project is a time-consuming endeavor, but its value to future researchers and Museum Staff cannot be measured.

Jamie Murray

The Museum Staff also can be reached at the following:

100 East Cedar Street
Angleton, TX 77515
979/864-1208 (office)
979/864-1217 (fax)



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

Guest Columnist: Neil McLain, Museum Volunteer



My interest in mapping grew out of my work as an engineer in the cable television industry. Like telephone companies and electric power companies, cable TV companies have "outside plant" -- wires and cables spread all over their service areas. Maps play a critical role in the construction and maintenance of this plant. Plant maps, however, show more than just wires and cables. They also show cultural features: streets, railroads, civil boundaries, landmark buildings. They show history.

Even something as seemingly insignificant as the orientation of roads and streets can tell us a lot about local history. Roads in states along the Atlantic Coast are aligned at all sorts of odd angles, reflecting the largely random settlement patterns of Colonial times. Roads in Midwestern states tend to be aligned in a regular north-south-east-west grid, following the pattern set forth by Second Continental Congress in the Land Ordinance of 1785. California's roads follow the same grid pattern as the Midwestern states, but with numerous interruptions at the boundaries of old Spanish and Mexican land grants.

Here in Texas, we have a unique situation. In the southeastern part of the state, roads tend to follow the property lines of old "Empresario Land Grants" dating from the early 1800s. Northwestern counties, established in later years, tend to be rectangular in shape, a pattern reflected in the orientation of their roads.

The first Empresario Land Grant was granted to Moses Austin by the Spanish government in 1821. After Moses Austin's death in June of that year (and after lengthy negotiations with the newly-independent Mexican government), his son Stephen F. Austin continued his father's work. Under the terms of the Empresario Grant, S. F. Austin was authorized to settle 300 families along the Texas coast. Each family could receive as much as one league (4428.4 acres) of grazing land and one labor (177.1 acres) of cropland.

Most of these grants were oriented along waterways so that each family would have access to water. Depending on the course of the waterway, most grants were aligned along an east-west axis, or at a 45-degree angle. We can see these orientations today in the alignment of roadways: streets in Angleton tend to run north-south and east-west, while streets in Sweeny run at 45 degrees from a north-south line.

After the turn of the century, a new form of transportation arose, the railroad. Railroad surveyors had little interest in the old grant boundaries; their goal was to lay out rights-of-way as short and as straight as possible. As new communities grew up around the railroads, their street patterns were often

oriented to the railroad. We can see these orientations today in Danbury, where streets run parallel or perpendicular to the railroad.

The Museum's map collection includes maps dating back to the early years of the twentieth century. Most of the maps are subdivision surveys of the original one-league grants, although numerous other subjects are present. There are historic maps in the collection covering such diverse subjects as storm sewers in Angleton, drainage ditches near Danbury, ranchlands near Alvin, and irrigation canals near West Columbia.

Many of the maps are clearly labeled by location and date. I note in particular the work of J. Lee Chambers, whose entire career can be gleaned from the beautifully-detailed maps that he drew. Chambers began as a staff surveyor in Houston, then set up his own surveying practice in Angleton, and eventually became the Brazoria County Surveyor. On the other hand, many of the maps are not labeled. In some cases, I have been able to identify the mapped locations and updated the accession records accordingly. Unfortunately, some maps have proved impossible to identify; such maps are identified in the accession records only by a general description such as "survey map."

The Museum's maps are drawn to a variety of scales, including *feet* and *varas*. The *vara*, an old Spanish unit of measure equal to about 33 inches, has remained in use throughout Texas history, although its value has been the source of some confusion. In 1919, the Texas Legislature fixed its value at 33 1/3 inches. Most maps drawn in *varas* are scaled in inches: for example, 1" = 300 *varas*. A curious juxtaposition of English and Spanish measurements.

Some maps tell of unfulfilled dreams. An example is a map labeled "Port Brazos," a proposed community on the bank of the Brazos River, complete with dozens of residential lots, an entire block designated for a city hall, a city wharf on the river bank, and a railroad. A larger map of the same area shows the railroad extending north, where it crosses Lake Jackson (the lake) on two bridges. Of course, Port Brazos and its railroad never existed except on paper. The land is now in the City of Lake Jackson, occupied by MacLean Park and the Dyson Campbell Water Reclamation Center.

I have been working on the Museum's mapping project for about three months and have barely scratched the surface. There are hundreds of maps waiting to be cataloged, yet new maps continue to arrive from donors. Like all museum cataloging work, the job will never be done.





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Historical Museum

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Fax: 979/864-1217
www.bchm.org

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Angleton, Texas
77515

Celebrate Juneteenth!

Brazoria County Goes to War: The Homefront

This new exhibit offers a look at World War II as experienced here in Brazoria County. Many of the products necessary for the war effort were produced here in Brazoria County: sulfur for munitions and medicine, magnesium for bombs and new lightweight alloys for aircraft construction, and agricultural and petroleum products. Rationing of many everyday goods as well as the promotion of Victory Gardens helped supplement those food items that were in short supply. The County itself held war bond drives, which were a primary means of financing the war. The funds raised in this manner bought military aircraft, such as the B-17 flying fortress *Miss Brazoria County Texas*. There were coastal artillery stationed on the beach at Quintana and camped in Freeport for Civil Defense observers to watch for enemy planes and ships. German prisoners-of-war were held at the Brazoria County Fairgrounds and also near Alvin. The exhibit will be open through December 2006.

Michael Bailey

