

HAYS COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes--May 28, 2020

The May 28, 2020, meeting of the Hays County Historical Commission (HCHC) was called to order by Chairman Kate Johnson at 6:19 p.m. Because of the guidelines set out for protection from Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the meeting was held virtually on ZOOM. A quorum was met as the following members participated by computer or phone (roll call for attendance): Delbert Bassett, Marie Bassett, Eric Beckers, Eric Casillas, Luanne Cullen, Cindy Daugherty, Irma Gaitán, Eddie Gumbert, Dorothy Gumbert, Faye Haskins, Kate Johnson, Richard Kidd, Quincy Kennedy, Jo Landon, Jo Ann Lowe, Cindy Meyer, Ralph Meyer, Jerry T. Moore, July Moreno, Henry Oles, Marian Oles, Trisha Randow, Gina Rogers, Daphne Tenorio, Vanessa Westbrook, and ex-officio member, Lila Knight. One community member, Anita Collins, also attended.

Introduction to the Meeting—Kate Johnson thanked Vanessa Westbrook for putting the ZOOM meeting together and for providing information to everyone on using the program.

Announcements: Kate said that the meeting would be held on ZOOM again on June 25, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. Because the reading of the minutes had been overlooked on the agenda, the February 28, 2020, minutes would be voted on at the June meeting along with the May minutes.

Citizens Comments—No citizens were participating to offer comments. Guest Anita Collins said that she was joining as a representative from County Judge Ruben Becerra's office.

Committee Reports

1. **Technology**—Vanessa Westbrook reported that she had been pleased to organize the May 28 ZOOM meeting and planned to do the same for the June 25 meeting. She offered to assist committee chairmen in having ZOOM committee meetings because of our extended account. The January through April report included 6,372 visitors on the website and 110,935 hits. The next report would cover April through June. Vanessa was pleased to report that virtual tours of the Kyle Railroad Depot and Heritage Center and the Historic Courthouse were in the planning stages. Virtual tours will be docent focused narratives videotaped and set up on the website. She also encouraged members to submit articles that highlight the diverse groups and cultures in Hays County. Guest Anita Collins asked if information about the 2020 Census could be included on the website, and Vanessa said that she would include that information.

- 2. Historic Kyle RR Depot & Heritage Center Committee**—Trisha Randow said that Marie Bassett had received the text for the Depot's historical marker and had sent it to the Depot Committee and Marker Committee for review and comments. Because of the precautions set forth in the COVID-19 guidelines, the Model Train event scheduled for March 14 and the Easter event scheduled for April 11 had to be cancelled. Disinfecting protocols were being set up by county staff for Depot volunteers, etc. Plans had begun to create a virtual tour of the Depot. Trisha thanked Faye Haskins for writing a narrative on the Depot for the website and thanked the committee for proofing and editing the piece. She also reported that the City of Kyle had asked to use the land behind the caboose for an IT expansion department but, because the Depot had planned for the addition of more train cars to be housed on that space, the City decided to place the IT building at another location. She did not have a date for the purchase or arrival of the picnic table and bench. She thanked Lila Knight for going to the Depot daily to check on it.
- 3. Cemetery Committee**—Jo Landon said that the field trip scheduled for March 17 had been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Skyview Cemetery was in disrepair, and Sylvia Tarkington had requested assistance with the upkeep; Jo gave her the cemetery's contact person, Maddie Welch, for assistance. The Byrd Owen-Payne Cemetery was being cleaned each month by Richard Gomez. The property owner, Frances Herry, said that she is okay with HCHC applying for an HTC (Historic Texas Cemetery) designation. The Cheatham-Hohenberg Cemetery needs the brush cleared and, when groups are able to meet, Jo will plan for a visit to clean it. The descendants of the Pitts Cemetery had again expressed interest in relinquishing upkeep of the cemetery. Jo received an unusual request from a wedding planner who had a bride looking for a cemetery in which to get married. Jo suggested Kyle Cemetery and Skyview Cemetery and provided contact information, but she did not hear of any further plans.
- 4. Historical Marker Committee**--Discuss and take action on the Don Felipe Roque de la Portilla marker. Before Marie Bassett began her report, Kate provided a review of the status of the marker from its placement in 1976, to its damage from a car accident in 2018. A replacement marker would include new research provided by Gina Rogers. Discussion had included relocating the marker to the courthouse from its original position on Old Bastrop Road near San Marcos de Neve, just south of El Camino Real de los Tejas' crossing of the San Marcos River. However the Historical Marker Committee had voted 8-0 to keep the marker located at the site on the Camino Real de los Tejas. Kate wanted to confirm that decision by a vote from the full Hays County Historical Commission. Delbert Bassett moved that the

marker remain at the location, and Jo Landon seconded the motion. Discussion followed which included comments from Gina Rogers describing her research on Don Felipe Roque de la Portilla for updating the marker text and reasons to relocate it to the courthouse; Daphne Tenorio relating her discussion with Judge Becerra about the possibility of having two markers, one at the original site and one at the courthouse; Faye Haskins asking about protection of the new marker at the original site; Jo Ann Lowe suggesting that the Welder family of Refugio County be contacted as to their family relationship to Don Felipe Roque de la Portilla. After discussion, Kate called for a roll call vote by secretary, Luanne Cullen. The vote was 21 for replacing the new marker at the original site, and 4 against. [Richard Kidd's vote for the motion was not heard because of being muted so the final vote was 22 to 4.] After the vote, Kate said that some of the questions that had been brought up in discussion would be presented at the next meeting. She also reminded members that all markers are the property of the THC regardless of who pays for them. They are also the final authority on the approval, relocation or removal of markers and that Marie Bassett is the primary contact for historical markers in Hays County. Any questions regarding historical markers should be directed to Marie.

Marie Bassett presented her report for the Historical Marker Committee. She said that the new marker foundry had to close its doors because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but they were slowly producing markers with a skeleton crew. Updates on Hays County's outstanding markers included the following:

Jacob's Well (18HY05 - 2018 Undertold marker) & Riverhead Farm (19HY01) Texts were sent to the foundry on 3/31/2020. Jacob's Well marker is expected to be ready in 4 to 6 weeks, with Riverhead Farm in September.

Kyle Depot (19HY02) Proposed text for the marker was received from THC on 05/26/2020 and has been circulated for editing to both the Historical Marker Committee and Historic Kyle RR Depot & Heritage Center Committee.

La Sociedad Mutualista de Cuauhtémoc (19HY03) & Alba Ranch (2019 Undertold marker). The committee was awaiting the writing of their texts by THC.

A narrative was being prepared by the Historical Marker Committee to accompany a Request for Review application for Don Felipe Roque de la Portilla. So far, two persuasive arguments for a replacement marker from THC have surfaced: 1. the record of Don Felipe's birth and baptismal dates had been located; and 2. he was not an empresario. Marie thanked Gina Rogers for her in-depth research.

Marie said that the Regular Marker window was still open until June 15. Only one application had been submitted and accepted for consideration by THC, William B. Travis League. The result would be announced at the end of July. The Undertold Marker window would run

from November 1 to December 15 with applications available for download from THC's website (thc.texas.gov) on September 1, 2020. The committee had also continued discussion about a new historical marker book with digital input.

5. Natural Heritage Committee—Delbert Bassett said that the COVID-19 pandemic and hot weather had prevented the committee from exploring various locations, but he hoped that field trips could resume in the fall. He also was very interested in the information he and others learned about “cultural landscapes” at the Waco Preservation Texas Symposium and was looking forward to applying some of those concepts to Hays County.

6. Tejano History Committee—Gina Rogers reviewed the various activities of the committee in March, April, and May 2020. These activities included preparations for an oral history with Dr. Garza and María Rocha (some meetings were cancelled due to COVID-19); participation in the repatriation of six Coahuiltecan Indian remains to the San Marcos Sacred Springs site; gathering research for the Indigenous Cultures Institute (ICI) historical narrative; researching information about Don Felipe Roque de la Portilla for marker text; holding committee meetings by conference calls to discuss the committee's plans and activities; proposing an Undertold marker for Indigenous People, San Marcos de Neve, Juan Martin de Veramendi, and recent Tejano settlement at the courthouse. Also, information had been shared about Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos's alternative plans for the Cinco de Mayo fundraiser luncheon and the article in the San Marcos Daily Record about Ofelia Vásquez-Philo's book, Sueños y Recuerdos del Pasado: A Community History of Mexican Americans in San Marcos, Texas.

Amended: Kate proposed a historical marker for Juan Martin de Veramendi at the courthouse in her email to the commissioners' court in March. In email exchanges she supported the Tejano committee applying for an undertold marker. Marie was included in this communication. The proposed marker is for the Indigenous People, San Marcos de Neve, Juan Martin de Veramendi and will conclude with the more recent Tejano settlement. This application falls squarely within the definition of an undertold marker outlined by THC. This marker is supported by a Texas Spanish American historian, along with Judge Becerra, and the Tejano Committee. During the Portilla marker research Gina located nine documents at the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas dated from 1807-1818 that have not been imaged. These documents will become available when the museum reopens in mid-August and will conclude the research for the marker.

7. Courthouse Committee—Luanne Cullen read the report submitted by Courthouse Committee Chairman, Linda Coker. In the Museum, the Abandoned Communities display had been repaired. The San Marcos Academy had borrowed the Buck Winn Display which would be rehung in June. The Academy gave us a framed gift from the USPS displaying a stamp that Buck Winn had designed.

Linda was reworking the bulletin board located by the elevator and planned to finish it in June. Future updates to Museum include a display on the Chautauqua, Dudley Dobie, and additions to the Schools display. A Courthouse Committee meeting would be held sometime in the future when groups could get together. Gina Rogers asked if an Indigenous Cultures/Native American/Tejano display could be included in the Museum. Kate suggested that she speak with Linda Coker about that idea because she is the Courthouse Committee Chairman.

8. Certified Local Government (CLG)—No report was presented.

Adjourn Meeting—Jo Ann Lowe moved that the meeting adjourn; Jo Landon seconded the motion. Motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Luanne P. Cullen, HCHC Secretary