



FRANKLIN COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Volume 24, Number 4, July/August 2019

Website: <http://www.fcha-online.org>

Date: Monday, July 1, 2019 - Pot Luck

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Program: Mr. Preston Ware: Music Program

Place: Hagansport Community Center

(11 miles north of Mt. Vernon on east side of US Hwy 37, just before intersection with Highway 71)

Hosts:

Norm and Carol Horn, Bob and Donna McFarland, Lisa Lowry, and Paul and Victoria Fletcher

Join us at the Hagansport Community Center on July 1 at 6 p.m. for a special program to be provided by Preston Ware of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Mr. Ware will share the history and importance of music and musical instruments in the early, mid, and late 1800's. The demonstration will include a bit of historical background and performing examples from instruments such as rhythm bones, jaw harp, jaw bone, French harp, 1820's fiddle, cigar box fiddle, fretless banjos, bowl back mandolin and early guitar.

This will be a fun and interesting program!



A Story – We Met at A Swimming Hole

One time back in 1950 or so, my Mom and Dad finally agreed to take my little brother and me fishing. So, one sunshiny spring day we all loaded up in the family pickup, and headed out. We asked my Dad where we were going but he would not say. So, eventually we ended up on a Creek about mid-morning in a community that my Dad said his family had lived in back around 1920-25 in the northwest part of the adjacent County.

The Creek was running in a lot of places and the water was clear, something that we did not have much of in our area of the state; when they ran at all, the water was usually muddy. After noting a small farm-tractor parked near the road-bridge that crossed the creek, we began fishing in the large pond that was located at the bridge-crossing, we then fished at several other ponds of the Creek as we worked our way up from the road crossing, but we never caught anything. Eventually, noontime came and my mother spread a tablecloth on the ground underneath a towering hickory tree and served us with a really grand dinner of fried chicken and biscuits.

Then, as my Dad leaned back in the spacious grass and dozed off, my brother and I heard some shouts and splashing in the creek upstream. My brother and I then made our way upstream and discovered two young boys swimming in a large pond of the creek.

Of course, my brother and I immediately prevailed on our mom and dad to be permitted to join the two boys in swimming. After finally receiving permission from our mom and dad, little brother and I joined the two boys for swimming in one of the deep, wide ponds of the Creek. As I said before the water was almost clear, which was a rare treat to us as most of the waters in that area was always muddy looking.

EPILOGUE: *My mom and dad were Leta Lois (Mattingly) and Roger Joe Banks, with my little brother being Zack. The little community where the creek was located was the West New Hope Community, northeast of the small town of Winfield, and in the northwest part of Titus County, Texas. The creek, with its many ponds (“swimming holes”) was Dorsey Creek.*

In more recent years when I was an engineer with the main office of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), I chanced one day to be visiting with the Director (at the time) of The State Department of Public Safety (DPS). Colonel Dudley Thomas. And it came up in our conversation that the Colonel, himself, was originally from the West New Hope Community of Titus County, and actually and surely had been one of those young boys that my brother and I joined in “skinny-dipping” in Dorsey Creek that day.

I subsequently learned from Colonel Thomas that he had attended and graduated from East Texas State College (now Texas A&M University at Commerce), followed by enlisting with the DPS Highway Patrol and eventually working his way up “through the ranks” to Director.

Later, we boys finished our swimming and put our clothes back on, and Mom and Dad gathered the rest of our belongings, and made our way back to the creek crossing bridge. And, as our farm pickup made its way back onto the county road for the return home, we saw the small tractor with our two new friends hanging on, chugging its way in the opposite direction.

Ralph K. Banks
Austin, Texas



Colonel Dudley M. Thomas

My Granny's Sugar Cookies

By Frankie Cooper

1 cup shortening
2 cups sugar
½ cup milk
1 tsp soda
2 eggs
Flour to thicken (about 3-3-1/2 cups)
Mix and roll out on floured board.
Cut and bake at 375 degrees until brown just on the edges.



Frankie Chester Cooper is the daughter of Billy Chester and Hilga Blount Chester of Sulphur Bluff. Billy and Hilga Chester had four daughters: Myrna, Corlette, Kay, and Frankie. Frankie had two sons from her marriage to Steve Cooper: Joey and Jeffrey Cooper, and has two grandchildren, Jacob and Caitlin Cooper.

This recipe originated with Frankie's grandmother, Vida Stretcher Blount (1886-1968). Vida Stretcher married Joseph Ceright Blount (1897-1969), a cattle rancher from Sulphur Bluff. Billy Chester was the son of Lloyd Franklin Chester and Bertie Mae Bassham Chester. Lloyd Chester was a cattle rancher and owner of a Phillips 66 service station in Sulphur Bluff. Billy Chester was also a cattle rancher and then took over operations of the family service station. Hilga Chester was a beautician. Frankie says her mother stayed busy working and trying to keep up the house for four girls, and her grandmother's sugar cookies were a special treat growing up.

Memorials & Honorariums

Donated By:

Kelly Stretcher
Kelly Stretcher
Kelly Stretcher
Robert Cowser

Donated By:

Kelly Stretcher
Michael & Joan Breard
Nancy Bolduc
Jaimie Bennett

In Memory Of:

Max Wardrup
Ned Dennis
Monty Monzingo
Monty Monzingo

In Honor Of:

B.F. Hicks
B.F. Hicks
B.F. Hicks
B.F. Hicks

Living History - 2019 Magic

The First and Second Grade Tours

By B .F. Hicks

Before the session was over, I clearly heard Miss Polly Thruston telling several first graders that the rocking chair in the bedroom was the exact chair occupied by The Colonel when he died. No, she did not use the word “passed”—she used “died.” And the rifle on the wall was Colonel Thruston’s during the War. She went on to explain that the house had no indoor plumbing and the Colonel used the chamber pot at the foot of the bed. And then she showed the students her iron and let each of them lift it with an admonition that it could be both hot and heavy.

Students lined up into the yard and groups of eight (8) were admitted to create a full house with the program underway. Eight students fell under Beverly Kelley’s spell (Miss Polly – daughter-in-law of the Colonel); those eight passed on to the next room under Jean Ann Marshall and eight more came in from the yard and into Miss Polly’s room.

Jean Ann passed her eight back to the kitchen where Ruth Averitt was churning butter. Ruth pointed out all aspects of life in the pioneer home with the wood cook stove and the cistern on the back porch catching water off the roof.

By now we had three groups continuously circulating; it was raucous; it was great fun; it was one more magical moment for two days straight with the first grade and then second grade classes coming through our Thruston Home.

I have no idea what sort of living history was recounted by Jean Ann Marshall in the parlor across the hall (Jean Ann played the role of Mary Belle Thruston, widow of the Colonel). I do know that students were fascinated. And an hour into the tour, Jean Ann was offering to lead a quilting class for the students.

I was counting out groups of eight at the front entry; permitting eight to enter as the group ahead had moved on past Miss Polly’s bedroom spiel. We had the life-size cutout of the Colonel and tiny students lined up under the giant’s welcome at the front door into the once-open dogtrot. I did look up once to catch Ruth Averitt taking a group to study the cistern on the back porch. I saw rapt attention. I understand why historians call this “living history.” Our organization did the children proud.

We had great support and a wealth of volunteer helpers. Mary Lou and Jerald Mowery had already taken students through the depot, let them feel cotton bolls, and had trains running in 1958 Mt. Vernon.

Chock Yates took in a dozen or so at a time and turned down the lights in the egg room in the fire station and had children playing multiple bird calls to mimic the woodland morning birdsong.

Cynthia Loftis demonstrated egg beaters and such before we had electric utensils. And Ruby Neely explained how she studied by the light of a kerosene lamp.

Next year, you don’t have to work; just come and walk with one of the groups of students in the morning session of tours; stay for pizza and cookies.

You’ll be enthralled with the magic;

You’ll be proud.

Elementary School Students Tour Museums

On May 13th and 14th over 250 first and second grade students, teachers and parents visited FCHA's museums where they discovered how Mount Vernon's rich past is woven into the fabric of our American history.

In the Cotton Belt Depot students saw the 1898 Studebaker covered wagon that the Hicks family loaded with furniture and supplies in 1902 and walked for 28 days from Alabama to their destination in Franklin County.

They heard stories of how early Mt. Vernon residents picked cotton and raised watermelons and peaches that were shipped on trains from the Depot. Their eyes grew wide with excitement at the sight of the model train exhibit.

Outside, students watched as Joel Dihle, FCHA's resident blacksmith, demonstrated how tools and farm implements were made long ago by heating iron in an authentic coal forge.

Across the street at the Fire Station Museum, the children learned about legendary Dallas Cowboys quarterback and Mt. Vernon hometown boy, Don Meredith.

Upstairs, they were treated to an exhibit of butterflies from all over the United States and over 200 rare bird eggs, including the now-extinct Carolina Parakeet, Passenger Pigeon, and Heath Hen eggs.

Then, just around the corner, imagine their excitement at hearing stories about various Native American tribes that once inhabited the area and seeing a collection of tools, arrowheads and other artifacts!

Now, it was time to load the buses and travel across town to the Civil War-era Henry Clay Thruston home where Beverly Kelley, Ruth Averitt and Jean Ann Marshall greeted the students in authentic pioneer dresses. They demonstrated how women in the 1800's made quilts, churned butter and heated irons in the fireplace to iron clothing.

Lunchtime! Pizzas were provided by Santa's Sweeties and delivered right on time. Students enjoyed pepperoni and cheese pizzas at the Lowry Pavilion and were given crayons and copies of the Dupree Park Nature Trail Guide and Coloring Book.

Seeing the enthusiasm on the faces of students from Mt. Vernon Elementary School never gets old. We are proud to offer stories of our heritage to these young people in hopes that one day they, too, will be passing on the tales of Mt. Vernon's colorful history!

FCHA would like to express our appreciation to the wonderful volunteers who were on hand help with the tours. We couldn't have managed so many students without you!

Special thanks to John Hicks, Jason Weakley, Don Easterling, Cynthia Loftis, Joel Dihle, Robert Long, Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery, Santa's Sweeties, Pat Hudson, Scott Harvey, Jenny Dennis, Ruth Averitt, Beverly Kelley, Jean Ann Marshall, Ruby Neely, Chock and Marcy Yates, Cindy Stutts, Lauren Herman, Tommie Smith, Scott Stinson, Donna McFarland, Ken Greer, Kathy Shelton, Karen Smith and Johanna Deal.



Left: Shaving was on the mind of this MV first grader when FCHA volunteer Ruby Neeley demonstrated a straight edge razor during the tour of the Thruston House.



Above: Mount Vernon elementary students learn about the freight room at the FCHA Depot Museum on May 13. The freight room has a large collection of historic photos of life in Mount Vernon and Franklin County during the years. Volunteers (Lauren Herman and Mary Lou Mowery) explained some of the historical items on display.



Left: Quilting frame at the Thruston House is explained by FCHA volunteer Jean Ann Marshall. One of the MV elementary students already has a question for Marshall during the May 13 tour.



Left: FCHA volunteer Beverly Kelly explains how pioneer women had to iron clothes before electricity. MV ISD first graders learned a little at the Thruston House about how our ancestors lived.



Above: First graders from Mount Vernon Elementary get a real feeling for Colonel Henry Clay Thruston's height of 7'7-1/2". The cutout is his actual height, so about three first graders stacked up to make one Colonel Thruston.



Above: One slice or two? Cheese or pepperoni or one of each? The tremendous decisions facing First graders on May 13 during the FCHA museums tour.



Left: Franklin County Historical Association officers, directors, docents, volunteers and members have just finished feeding the MV ISD first graders pizza and cookies.

The classes were lead through the Fire Station Museum, Cotton Belt Depot Museum and blacksmith shop, followed by a tour of the Colonel Thruston Dogtrot House and Dupree Nature Trail.



Left: Quilting was just one of several pioneer crafts shown to the 1st and 2nd grade students from Mount Vernon ISD during the annual museums tour.

Quilting, churning, ironing with heavy metal tools, shaving with a straight edge razor, all necessary parts of daily life but a lost memory now.

FCHA volunteers, from left, Ruth Averitt, Ruby Neeley, Jean Ann Marshall, and Beverly Kelly donned docent garb and brought a bit of living history to the Thruston House.



FRANKLIN COUNTY HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION PRESENTS

PAINTINGS BY DON & SUSAN MEREDITH

An opening reception with Michael Meredith

JULY 18TH - 5-7 P.M.
OLD FIRE STATION MUSEUM
107 SCOTT STREET
MOUNT VERNON, TEXAS

CIVIL WAR BANQUET

The Franklin County Historical Association's annual Civil War Banquet for Mount Vernon students drew over 100 people, coming to recognize the excellent research, creativity, and knowledge for this activity.

Mount Vernon students participate in the annual Journal writing project as a part of the social studies/writing class. This year, there were 140 entries in the contest.

All students prepare a journal, writing as if they were alive during the American Civil War, taking on the character of their choice and describing what they were experiencing during this important period in American history. They are allowed to stretch their imaginations, research how their characters lived, what their surroundings were, and how they were affected by this event.

Through the years, the FCHA sponsored-contest has seen students writing from the viewpoints of soldiers on both the Union and Confederate sides, wives and husbands of the participants, spies, nurses, slaves, former slaves working on the Underground Railroad, and many other characters.

This year was again a wonderful assortment, including a woman who dressed as a man to be able to serve in the army. This was actual historical happening and required much research. Also, the students all carry out classroom and out-of-class study on the Civil War, its causes, and the results.

Once the teachers receive the journals, they read through them, making the difficult choice to narrow down the responses. The next step is to choose the top ten entries, and then a group of judges chosen by the Franklin County Historical Association read through these ten again. This year, the judges were Randy Cates, Jim Ballard, and Christine Ballard.

Each of the judges reads and evaluates the ten and make their decision regarding placement. Once all the judges individual choices have been made, the three lists are then put together and the winners decided.

The top ten journalists were:

Lee Gaddis, Jet Bass, Alexis Noel Dunavent, Alexis Myers, Jesse Ross, Meaka Johnson, Kaylin Haygood, Daliana LaTortue, Peyton Bowers, and Boone Morris.

The first place award went to Jet Bass, with a check for \$250.00. Second Place went to Alexis Noel Dunavent, with a prize of \$150.00; and third place was awarded to Alexis Myers, who received \$100.00.

All top ten were recognized by the members of the Franklin County Historical Association, their families and friends in attendance.

Robert Sterling Long served as master of ceremonies and questioned each of the students about how they arrived at their characters, who they decided to write about, and what extra research they did.

Outlaw Barbeque provided the meal, and the event was held at the Cultural Arts Center.

"Each year, the students' creativity seems to grow," Long said, "and the visual aspects of the journals show the increase in that creativity. Some of the journals had pages which looked liked they had been burned, covers were in all types of materials, and you could see how much trouble these excellent students put into their project."

Each of the teachers who had classes participating in the project received cash awards to be used by their classes.

The program and banquet were underwritten by FCHA members Scott Harvey and Bryan White of Roper/White Attorneys.



Civil War Journals created by students



**Contestants with winners seated on front row:
2nd place, Alexis Noel Dunavent; 1st place, Jett Bass; 3rd place, Alexis Myers.**

FCHA Honored With Distinguished Service Award

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) recognized the Franklin County Historical Commission (FCHC) with a Distinguished Service Award (DSA) for the 2018 year of service.

This annual award affirms CHCs commitment to ongoing, well-rounded programs of history and preservation-related projects that enrich local communities.

FCHA was one of only 80 Texas counties to have been honored. The award was presented during a meeting of the Franklin County Commissioners' Court on June 25th at 9 a.m., to acknowledge the CHC's accomplishments.

"The Distinguished Service Award honors County Historical Commissions that go above and beyond to protect and promote local historic and cultural resources. They are essential to our agency's efforts to save the real places that tell the real stories of Texas," said THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe.

"The Texas Historical Commission presents this Distinguished Service Award to the Franklin County Historical Commission to honor its efforts to preserve the Lone Star State's unique heritage."











