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FRANKLIN COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Volume 26, Number 1, March/April 2021

Mission: To Preserve our Natural and Cultural Heritage

Manager's Report – Pandemic Edition

What a difference a year makes. We'd all love to go back to 2019 when everyone was blissfully unaware of Covid-19 and where such things as social distancing, zoom meetings and murder hornets were foreign to us.

Most importantly, we yearn to have our loved ones back who lost their lives to the horrific virus. Sadly, we report the passing of several who have contributed greatly to our organization. J. D. and Iris Baumgardner, Libby Milton and Robert Long. They were all vibrant volunteers in our community for many years and will truly be missed. We express our sincere condolences to their families.

There are, however; some positives worth noting about the year 2020. Members Sheryl Divin and Kelly Briley have worked diligently at installing new technology that will allow museum visitors to learn about nature and our history in a new and exciting way. As we "forge into the future" interactive touch screen TVs and kiosks in the Fire Station Museum and Cotton Belt Depot will provide additional information about Don Meredith, Native American artifacts, birds/butterflies, as well as trains and local history in a way that will entertain adults and children alike.

Staying physically fit while social distancing has become a challenge this year and I've noticed more and more families have taken to the outdoors by walking around town. There have been many nice comments about the trails at Dupree Park.

Board members Mary Lou and Jerald Mowery took on the project of having the paths cleared. They're now wide enough so that there are no worries about being snagged by a bush as you make your way through all 67 post markers. Take the children out this spring and try to identify the plants and trees along this beautiful walking trail. Call me for a free trail guide. As you stroll about town, be sure to take notice of the newly painted farm implements in front of the Cotton Belt Depot. Thank you, Ken McDonald, for sprucing up these agricultural tools from our past!

In the last few months, FCHA has published two children's books—Marland Mansion, written by Jean Pamplin and illustrated by Beverly Brewer, and Bluebonnet Visits Mount Vernon, Texas, written by Mary Brooke Casad, and illustrated by Benjamin Vincent. Both would make a lovely addition to your library and are available for purchase at \$12.50/each, which includes shipping and handling.

The books were distributed by Robert Long, Charles Henry Horton and Mary Lou and Jerald Mowery to Mount Vernon's third and fifth grade students just in time for Christmas. Special thanks to the Mowerys and Jimmy St. Clair for making these publications possible.

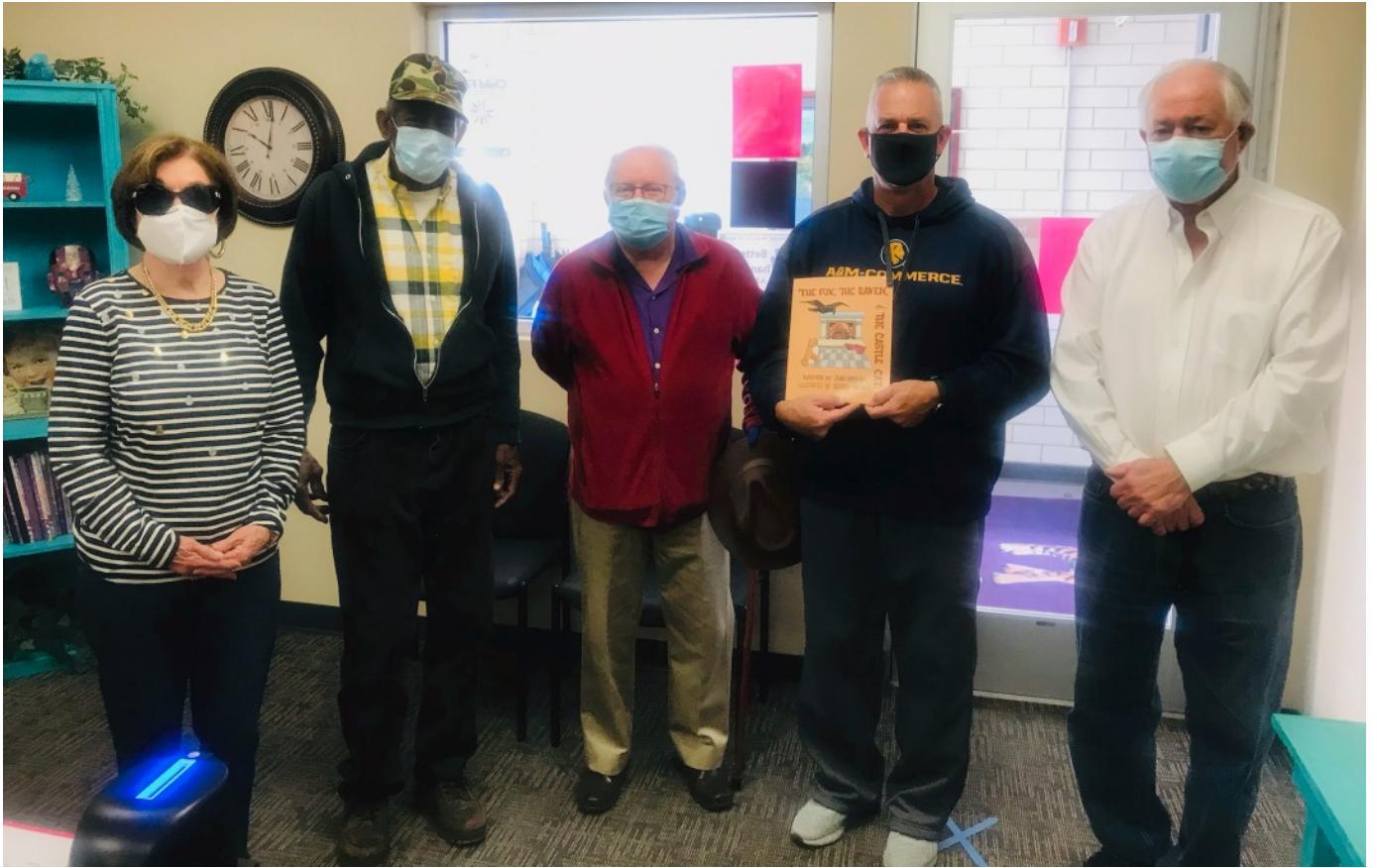
Best wishes to FCHA board member, Jason Burton, who moved with his family to Puerto Rico last summer. Steve Hammons resigned from our board as well. Thank you for your years of service to FCHA.

For now, our museums remain closed until our docents feel safe in returning and giving tours. Our second-floor gallery stands ready for a reception featuring the lovely works of Beverly Brewer's illustrations for Marland Mansion. We are hoping to open our doors again late this summer to welcome everyone back. I truly hope that soon in 2021, we can all gather together and get back to socializing and enjoying those marvelous potluck meals at our bi-monthly meetings. Until that day, stay safe everyone!

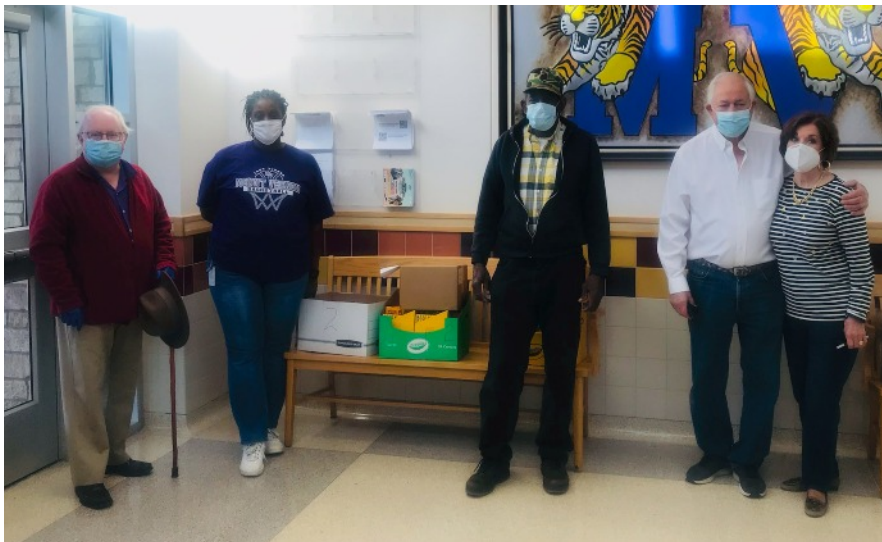
Gail Reed

FCHA Office Manager

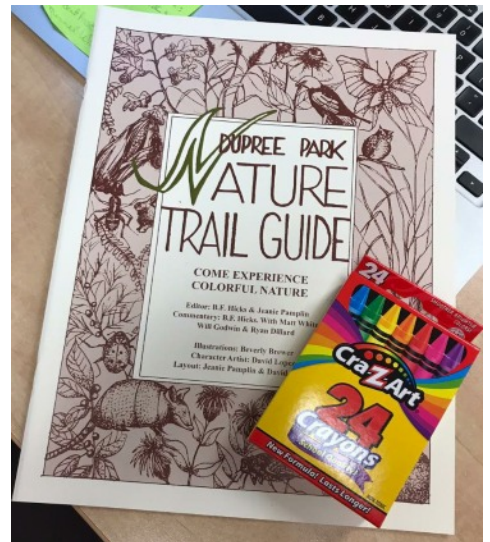
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FCHA members Mary Lou Mowery, Robert Long, Assistant Principal Derek Tyson, and Jerald Mowery deliver Marland Mansion books to MVISD Middle School.



Yolanda Linwood accepts Bluebonnet books, Dupree Park Trail Guides and packs of Crayons for MVISD elementary students from FCHA members Robert Long, Charles Horton, Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery.



Trail Guides and Crayons distributed to MVISD first grade students

February 23, 2021 ~ ~ ~ Dear Members:

Our organization is set up as a public nonprofit corporation. All members have equal voting rights under our organization's bylaws. We are to convene each year in January and elect officers and directors. We have a nine (9) member board with three (3) directors elected each year. There is no term limit and officers and directors can be re-elected indefinitely. Doris Meek served for 30 years as our president. I followed John Stephenson, Ron Milton and J.D. Baumgardner and now approach a decade in office.

We did not meet in January and we may not have a public membership meeting for some months yet.

Given the reality of the global pandemic which has not abated, on behalf of your directors, and based on the recommendation of our nominating committee, we ask that you call or e-mail Gail Reed with a vote (yes or no) to approve officers listed below until regular elections can be held in January 2022. Gail Reed: fchadirector@gmail.com or 903-537-4760.

B.F. Hicks, Jerald Mowery, Joel Dihle, and Lillie Bush-Reves as president and vice-presidents designated in order listed. Sheryl Divin (secretary) and Mary Lou Mowery (treasurer). Directors: B.F. Hicks, Randy Cates, Lauren Herman, Beverly McPherson, Pat Hudson, Johanna Deal, Lisa Lowry, Karen Smith, and Mary Lou Mowery.

Please respond with a vote (yes or no) by telephone to Gail Reed, our office manager. If this proposal does not receive a majority response in favor of the proposal, we will work to set a meeting in April with social distancing out at Dupree Park.

As you see from the reports for activities set forth in this newsletter, your organization is functioning and serving our community. Our mission statement is simple: To preserve our natural and cultural resources. Your support is essential to those continued preservation goals. You will let us know how we can better serve the public.

With gratitude for your support as members of the Franklin County Historical Association.

B.F. Hicks, President

Presidential Ponderings – Trees as Boundary Markers

I've practiced primarily real estate law for the last 20 years. I read a lot of deeds. I confirm the status of title and try to resolve boundary issues, heirship questions, and generally work to see that a purchaser of an interest in property is getting marketable title so that some future title examiner won't find some title discrepancy and lay blame on me for failing to find or resolve the problem. The neat aspect of title examination for me is that there aren't that many problems and I can stop and ponder all of the people involved in the chain of title extending back for well over 100 years. So, I'm reading the deeds in the chain of title. And there will be pleasant surprises. The references to grist mills, churches or schools in abandoned communities. And then trees; yes, read on.

Recently, land in north Franklin County traded hands. The tract which sold was out of a larger tract acquired by J.L. Markham in a deed dated November 15, 1910. The Markham deed is recorded at volume 50, page 353, of the Deed Records of Franklin County. The land has long since been sold by Markham heirs but the 1910 deed is a masterful document. The deed describes the tracts of land which J.L. Markham acquires as being on "two sides of White Oak Creek" and has measurements calling for distances between trees. You had best know your trees. Distances between the trees are set out in varas, the old Spanish measurement; 33-1/3 inches (essentially an English yard, but not quite).

Back to trees: let me explain (and I'll take the references sequentially in case anyone wants to actually pull up the original deed to confirm the arboreal references). So, an original survey was granted to A.E. Carson and from Carson's Northwest corner, the deed reports that you will have a red oak; and then proceed north (or to another compass point) for so many varas to a white oak. The deed continues with these directions, leading you to a hickory; and then to an ash; next to a white oak; then to a large willow oak; and to a post oak "marked M" and eventually to another hickory; to a red oak; to a persimmon; then to a sweet gum; and then to a white oak, to a hickory, to a willow oak; AND finally you end up at a stake "in prairie." Guess they got out of the woods. In a further description for a small tract included with the deed, you have to be able to spot a black oak, pin oak, post oak, an elm and an ash. Maybe some of the trees survive; surely not the persimmon.

Ken Greer's ancestor Allen Urquhart surveyed lands now lying in this county in the 1830's. Traylor Russell (lawyer and historian) wrote that the early surveyors worked from their saddle, riding their horses through the forests and guided by a compass. Land was plentiful. Land is now expensive and in much demand. A title lawsuit in our district court a couple of years back resolved title in favor of one set of claimants against another based on conflicting surveys from the 1860s (the earlier survey work prevailed and the defendants lost 40 acres of land).

Our deed records go back to original land titles established when Texas gained independence through victory at San Jacinto on April 21, 1836. We have never had a fire. Scribes were sent to Clarksville to transcribe the records for land lying in what is now Franklin County when the county was created in 1875. And the same scribes were dispatched to Titus County to transcribe the records relating to lands carved out of Titus County for the period of its creation in 1846 up until Franklin was created in 1875. We have maps showing ownership, and the genealogy society has published records relating to heirship to the land. Few counties can match our heritage established through archival documentation.

Certainly, the frame of reference for time has been altered during the pandemic. I think I've had the documents in my hands probably three or four times over 40 years of practicing law but age does enhance reflection and appreciation for our heritage and then the free time allowed by the pandemic freeing up a lot of time otherwise taken up in social encounters, makes for the guarantee that I'll ponder documents from a perspective other than mere examination to insure there is no lien. Thus, I know I've seen the Henry family documents relating to their land ownership in the Hagansport area before. But it just never dawned on me that in one deed, for several generations, the family has been passing title to two tracts of land which are measured in the old systems which have little relation to the present. The first tract is measured in poles. I've only seen poles used three or four times in my professional career. An old English measurement, generally regarded as 16 feet. And then, in the same document, the family passes title to a second tract and it is measured in varas, in the old Spanish system. The current heir holds title under public record to a deed incorporating the measurements passed down through her family for well over a century.

I understand that the solar farm developers are cutting trees in order to install their solar panels. One young man told me of a huge oak that had been cleared in the process of clearing for the solar installation. I now have had two sets of clients report that 18,000 acres will be covered by solar panels in Red River County and our newspaper reports of 13,000 acres being cleared in Franklin County. I hope that at least a few of the old boundary trees escape the saws. Let the solar panels be installed on the roofs of the houses sprawling out from Dallas and leave our countryside in grass and forest.

Ah, that the hope be not in vain. ~ ~ ~ B.F. Hicks

Devastating Cyclone at Mt. Vernon, Texas

By Bob Cowser

The April 28, 1904, issue of Southern Mercury, published in Dallas, reported that on April 27, 1904, a destructive cyclone struck Mt. Vernon at 3:30 P.M. Eleven houses were blown down. The homes of R.T. Wilkerson and H.A. Smith were severely damaged. J.P. Castlebury, a lodger in one of the homes, was seriously injured. When the cyclone struck the W.W. Arnold home, the occupants were blown outside the structure into the yard. Mrs. Arnold was blown into a well on the premises. A child's arm was broken in the home of Evan Wright when the storm struck. Sheriff Hose Holley posted guards the evening of the storm.

Injuries caused by high winds were also reported in the Old Saltillo community in Hopkins County and in Winnsboro.

This is the storm that destroyed the home of my great-grandparents, Jim and Rebecca Wardrup. Their house was in Hopkins County one quarter mile from the Franklin County line in the Old Saltillo community. According to the family story, the walls of the house fell outward, leaving the couple unharmed sitting in rocking chairs. They spent the last years of their lives in the home of my grandparents, Oliver (Od) and Julia Wardrup.

Bob is a professor emeritus of University of Tennessee at Martin, Tennessee. He began teaching high school in Big Sandy; taught there for three years. He also taught at Victoria (Texas) Community College for four years. He lived in Texas for 30 years. He taught at Southeastern State University in Durant, Oklahoma, before moving to Tennessee. Bob is currently writing but "mostly relaxing." Bob taught for 60 years, retiring six years ago. Bob has published over 125 poems in various journals. He did volunteer work in Tennessee prisons, working with inmates on their English skills. He was also paid to teach in Tennessee prison college programs. Bob has volunteered several times to teach Mexican immigrants and migrant laborers English while living in Tennessee. After Bob's wife died, he moved to Ashland, Missouri, where he now resides.

A Different Kind of Bird

By: Matt White

“Stop the boat,” I asked Morlan Roach as we cruised past Overlook Park on Lake Cypress Springs. “I see some birds I’d like you to see...”

Morlan is an officer for the Franklin County Water District, who graciously agreed to allow me to join them recently for a routine patrol of the lake in an effort to learn what birds were using the lake. The weather was perfect for being on the lake and for birdwatching as well. A slight breeze was blowing in from the south and the skies were partly cloudy with some breaks of sunshine. We were even teased with a scattering of raindrops that mostly danced across the water but never sent us to the boathouse.

Like most people who are on the water regularly, Morlan is aware of the birds he sees. We were watching some Ring-billed Gulls feeding over a shad school and a Belted Kingfisher resting on a boathouse. A number of Great Blue Herons stalked along the shore and an Osprey flew straight overhead in search of a small fish with which to make a meal.

As the boat came to a stop, I pointed toward the shore where two unusual black and white birds were resting in the shallow water. “Look at those birds by the shore,” I said placing my binoculars around his neck. “Have you ever seen anything like that?” It only took him about five seconds to find them through the binoculars, bring them into focus, and then announce that he had never seen anything like that.

I figured he hadn’t, because the exotic-looking American Avocets are western birds, and breed in the northern plains from the Panhandle of west Texas to California and north to Canada. They are most common on the Great Salt Lake in Utah although several thousand spend the winter on the Gulf Coast of Texas. A few migrate through northeastern Texas every year, but they are never very common, and despite their distinctiveness, they are not particularly conspicuous.

Avocets are known as shorebirds by birdwatchers because they stalk the shoreline and make their living probing for small bugs and insects within the mud in shallow water. They are mostly white in winter with black wings with a single white stripe down the center. They are slightly smaller than a crow and they have long, thin blue legs which make them appear to be on stilts.

“Look at those blue legs...” Morlan mused, no doubt impressed by the unusual color.

I explained how the long black bill is also unusual because it bends upward toward the tip, a trait shared by only a few birds.

“This must allow them to get insects from the mud,” he suggested.

We maneuvered to within 20 yards of the birds and they just loitered on the beach, occasionally taking a step and showing off for us, though it was clear they were more interested in tucking their heads back and catching a nap.

“I have never seen anything like that, he kept saying as he carefully studied them through my binoculars. When we finally started the boat again, I could tell he didn’t want to leave them. It is a sentiment I have noted time and time again in others and even myself. Birds possess a quality that stirs something within us. Once we have felt it, it keeps luring us back to see what other birds await.

Back at the boathouse he announced to the guys, “I saw something today I have never seen before...”



A Pair of Unusual Twins

By: Matt White

By mid-afternoon the late February sky still seemed unsettled as our double-decker fishing barge – the Wharf Cat – pulled out of its slip in Port Aransas and headed north into the bay toward Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. On board were nearly 80 birders participating in Port Aransas' Whooping Crane Festival, a celebration held annually. All were anxious to get up-close-and-personal with the most famous bird on the entire Texas coast – the Whooping Crane.

Leading the trip was veteran guide Ray Little, whose dry off-beat humor and eagle-eyes are legend in these parts. But, also along to help navigate on this ride was George Archibald – the founder of the International Crane Foundation, dedicated to preserving the world's crane species. Archibald is a quiet fellow whose international reputation will endure for years because of the goodwill he has established among nations whose politicians usually don't want to work with one another, but whose scientists do.

As the Wharf Cat's engines pushed against the water, we settled in for the ride and watched as the birds around us went about their business as usual. For some reason the birds here seem to realize that a boatload of people are not a threat. There were loafing pelicans, Crested Caracaras gliding over the barrier islands searching for prey, and hundreds of birds of several dozen species. A rare Peregrine Falcon posed at eye level atop a piling marking the presence of some obstacle underwater and ubiquitous Laughing Gulls – named for their incessant laughing cries – followed behind the boat awaiting handouts.

During the winter on the Texas coast, birds are about as numerous as raindrops in a thunderstorm. Except for Whooping Cranes. This year an all time high of 194 birds – the world's entire wild population – returned to the coastal marshes around Aransas National Wildlife Refuge where they spend the winter months after breeding 2,500 miles northwest in Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada. In 1940, there were only 21 of these birds left and no one knew where they nested, which frustrated conservation efforts and it was feared they would soon become extinct.

Shy and wary, these beautiful white birds stand over five feet tall and are the largest North American bird. Even in winter a mated pair defends their territory from other whoopers as they search for their favorite meal – the blue crab. Although they eat a variety of foods, Archibald explained that the abundance of these crabs in Texas during the winter determines how successfully the birds will breed and raise young the following summer in Canada. If the crabs are plentiful in Texas, the birds are more successful at raising young than if they are not.

Each summer a female Whooping Crane will lay two eggs in the nest. However, for just one chick to fledge requires the parents be in top physical shape, and on average a pair will bring a youngster with them to Texas for the winter about every other year. Before this year, only twice since records have been kept, has a pair been able to raise successfully two chicks and bring them to Texas for the winter. When this happens, the chicks are called twins, and it is cause for great excitement.

Even from a great distance we could see the tall stately shapes of the whoopers as they bent over in the water searching for crabs. Suddenly dozens of binoculars were raised. As we got closer to the family group of four birds – including mom and dad and the twins – Archibald explained to us what a rare feat this was. The captain cut the engines and we drifted to within 70 feet of these birds and enjoyed only the third recorded instance of twin Whooping Cranes. It was a beautiful day.



Pandemic Ponderings – Scrapbooks

The pandemic opened opportunities for research, reflection and review.

I come from a family that kept scrapbooks; old yellowing pages of a paper not designed to last; some of the books were literally falling apart. I purchased jumbo sized zip locks to hold the crumbling paper; some fairly disgusting as the pages literally self-shredded as you tried to turn them; often the clippings glued to the page remaining intact while the original scrapbook pages were disintegrating. I think that I have actually been a better preservationist by taking pages and copying them; even copy paper will disintegrate but the documents will remain legible and useful for some years yet.

That said: I am going through scrapbooks maintained by Mae Hughes Milam, sister to my grandfather, Virgil Hughes, and by my aunt Virgie Beth Hughes, Virgil's daughter.

I find a clipping regarding Ozro Covington a Mt. Vernon High School graduate, distinguished service at the White Sands Missile Range; we have typeset the article and it is included in this newsletter. Later I chance on the program for Virgie's senior class play. Sure enough, her classmate Ozro Covington is listed in the cast. We check the web and find Ozro Covington listed in the White Sands hall of honor.

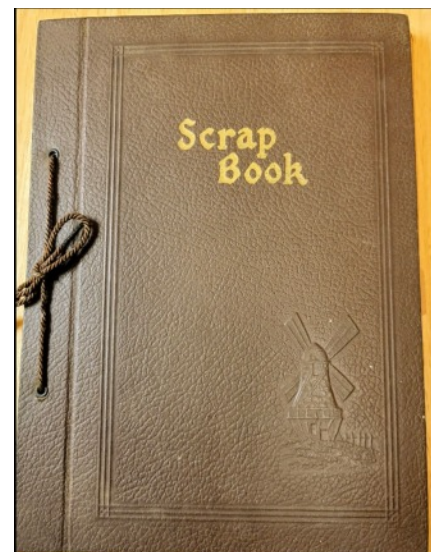
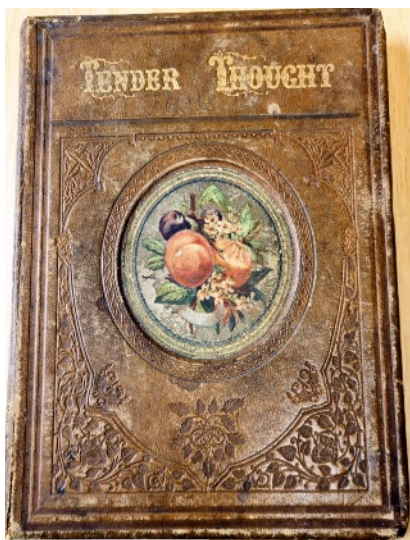
And then a clipping regarding Paul Bryant, Mt. Vernon High School Graduate. He's involved in the development of the atomic submarine. And the newspaper clipping reports that he is with President Harry Truman at the 1953 launch of the first atomic powered submarine. We have typeset the clipping and a search of ancestry.com yields a photograph of Mr. Bryant.

And I chance on a family memorial regarding my grandmother Hicks going with her friend Lillian Rouse Rutherford to prepare the shroud for Crozier Rutherford's wife – oh say, 1924, and then Miss Lillian's great-granddaughter stops by my office and tells me that she has chanced on a long article on the web relating to her grandfather's work at the UT Physics Department in the 1940's. He was in the Defense Research Laboratory Missile Guidance Group (Radar Division). And later he will be in the research team that develops sonar. But of significance for us, he (Charles R. Rutherford) is a Mt. Vernon High School Graduate.

And Dr. Byron Bennett is of the same decade and goes on to serve as the first assistant to Dr. Jonas Salk in the development of the polio vaccine. Mt. Vernon High School; Mt. Vernon City Cemetery.

We aren't even getting to an inclusion of Dan Dodson, the Brooks brothers, Maureen Holbert Hogaboom, the Galt brothers.

Who was teaching physics; who was teaching science; who was instilling the appreciation of education; the desire to excel and also to inquire. I'll resolve that concern eventually. At this stage in the pandemic, I can only report that I've been pulling the boxes of old records; reviewing the documents and puzzling over the quality of those teachers in our school. More on them will follow; I'm not through with the research; I only wish I had Charles R. Rutherford, or Jabez Galt, or Morton Brooks, or my own family members; now all gone; someone to expand and explain as to what was going on which allowed these men and women to go on to serve their nation and to excel in the sciences.



Former Mt. Vernon Man One of Top Scientists at White Sands

The following is an article taken from a New Mexico paper, "Wind and Sand" dated July 12, 1957, written in recognition of Ozro M. Covington, a former Mt. Vernon boy, for the part he played in the field of science. Covington is married to the former Miss Pauline McMurrian, a Mt. Vernon girl. They have three children, Sally, Morris, and Douglas.

Ozro M. Covington, top civilian in the U.S Army White Sands Signal Agency, has been promoted to a position above the regular GS job structure.

Approved by the Secretary of the Army and the Civil Service Commission, the promotion was announced last week under the provision of Public Law 313, a bill that establishes positions above the range of general schedule jobs for outstanding scientific and professional personnel.

Just one other man on the Proving Ground has been awarded a Public Law 313 position. He is Dr. W.H. Clohessy, now chief scientist for WSPG. Mr. Covington will retain his title of technical director, White Sands Signal Agency, under the command of Col. Gerald Carlisle.

The promotion action gives "official" national recognition to Mr. Covington for the part he has played in the dramatic history of this desert missile testing center.

In the language of the bill, the promotion is given to "scientific and professional personnel who have attained a level of competence and national eminence which makes them outstandingly qualified to occupy such positions." The system developed under Mr. Covington's direction also provides acquisition data for positioning the instruments on the range that evaluate missile performance. Provision of ballistic data and control of drone planes in surface-to-air tests were developed in this period.

Mr. Covington in 1946 started on a job of communications that had nightmarish aspects because of terrain, distances, and weather. Today, the Signal Agency operates over 19,000 miles of wire and cable, 197 radio channels and 23 microwave channels.

The WSSA technical director is one of an active elite group of those early pioneers still with the Agency. The group includes William Morton, now in the Pentagon liaison office of WSSA; Richard Shoulders, assigned to work on the new RCA FPS-16 instrumentation radars designed specifically for supersonic missile tracking; Ron Bart, in Integrated Range Support, and Bernard (Doc) Yarter, Plans and Management Office.

Talking of the early days here, one of this group said last week: "Wherever there was work going on, and that was everywhere, Ozzie was in the thick of it. He was the boss, but if a radar had to be fixed, he was the man who could do it when the rest of us were stumped. If he needed a partition, for instance, Ozzie grabbed a saw and hammer and built it himself.

"We've come a long way since those days," this pioneer said, "and Ozro Covington is the man who has pushed us all the way."



After leaving WSMR in 1961, Mr. Covington worked at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center.

He retired from NASA in June 1973.

Mr. Covington died on 18 May 2006.

Local Man Helps Build Atomic Sub

The following article is transcribed from an Optic-Herald reporting on Paul Bryant appearing with President Harry Truman for the launch of the first atomic submarine at Groton, Connecticut.

On Saturday, June 14, 1952, in the south yard of the Electric Boat Division, General Dynamics Corporation, Groton, Connecticut, the President of the United States, Harry S Truman, laid the keel for the first nuclear powered submarine, the Nautilus (SSN 571) – an historic first, of consequence not only to the Corporation but to the entire world.

Among the men who have worked on this project since its beginning is a former Mt. Vernon man Marcus (Paul) Bryant. Bryant was born in Mt. Vernon in 1902 and was the son of D.J. Bryant now deceased, and Mrs. Louie Oliver Bryant who now lives at Marshall. He entered the navy in 1919 along with Jack Galt, deceased, another Mt. Vernon boy. Bryant has many relatives who still live here.

Bryant remained in the naval service until 1939 at which time he retired but immediately re-enlisted following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. It was no easy matter for him to get back in the service as he had been injured while playing football during his stay in the navy.

After he was turned down the first time, he didn't give up but kept going on up the list until he found a way to reenlist.

Almost all of his time in the navy was spent in the submarine service and after his reenlistment during World War II he was supervisor of Task Force 58 which operated in the South Pacific and was composed of 10 submarines.

At the close of World War II Bryant retired again and was employed at Abernathy, Texas, when plans were completed for the construction of the World's first atomic submarine. Bryant's experience with submarines was well known to Navy men and when the Electric Boat Division, General Dynamics Corporation got ready to start construction of the World's first atomic submarine, they sought the help of Bryant and asked him to leave his position at Abernathy.

He then went to Groton, Connecticut where this work was being carried on and at the keel laying the Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics had this to say about the Nautilus, Bryant and other employees of the firm: "Nautilus (SSN-571), now the hearts and minds and hands of a host of men and women in all walks of life, far too many to mention individually, but each playing an essential part. Mention has been made of the leaders in Government, the Armed Services and Industry who conceived of and who direct this work.

"It is appropriate in closing to recognize also the many others at all levels of authority and responsibility whose loyalty, intelligence, industry and manifold skills are applied to the accomplishment of the historic task herein described."

Harry Truman upon laying the keel said, "The Nautilus will be able to move under the water at a speed of more than twenty knots. A few pounds of uranium will give her ample fuel to travel thousands of miles at top speed. She will be able to stay under water indefinitely. Her Atomic engine will permit her to be completely free of the earth's atmosphere. She will not even require a breathing tube to the surface..."

"We are building strength for security. And this ship Nautilus is part of that great effort. She is designed to patrol the seas and thus protect our land. She is an answer to the threat of aggression in the world."



Launching of
the USS
Nautilus

Paul Bryant

Photo Credit:
Ancestry.com

-A braggart, by his own loud boasting, gave Milton Shurtleff of the City Café in Mt. Vernon a reason to remember him—
and gave a Texas peace officer his first real clue to solve a murder
on the Bankhead Highway.

Body in the Underbrush

By Sheriff Henry Brooks of Bowie County, Texas, as told to Virgil Beck – October, 1939 -
Real Detective Magazine

March 13, 1932 – A biting wind of almost blizzard proportions surrounded the young farmer following the Bankhead Highway hoping to get medical help in Naples for his sick wife. Instead he stumbled across a dead body.

Close examination gave little clue to the corpse's identity. He was wearing two suits, one on top of the other. All pockets were turned inside out except one—a coat pocket holding a five-dollar bill, fourteen one-dollar bills, a quarter, dime, nickel and two cents. All other clues that might lead to the identification of the victim came to a dead end.

Car tracks indicated the body had been drug from a car headed east toward Texarkana. The sheriff searched in reverse. Joe Hazelwood called from Mt. Vernon located on the Bankhead Highway in Franklin County. The officer believed the slain man and his companion had been in the City Café at eight o'clock Saturday night.

The description of the dead man corresponded exactly to a small, quiet man called "Shorty." The larger other man appeared to be about thirty and his loud bragging attracted the attention of everyone in the café.

They were traveling from California to Illinois driving Shorty's gray Model T Ford coupe with a cardboard cigarette advertisement covering a broken window. The boisterous companion was along to help pay expenses.

The older man paid the sixty-cent tab with a twenty-dollar bill. Shurtleff gave back a five-dollar bill, fourteen one-dollar bills, and a quarter, dime and nickel in change.

The car was finally found abandoned in Texarkana. Law officials caught up to John Harris, feigning innocence until the testimony of Shurtleff, the City Café owner, E.J. Armstrong, the cook, Arland Banister, a waiter; and Johnny Banks, Jack Middleton and Dale Mills, customers in the café, promptly identified him.

The following year the Shurtleff Café moved across the street to a building newly adorned with plate glass windows on the north and west sides "so that tourists could not fail to be attracted."

In the Spring of 1937, the *Mt. Vernon Optic-Herald* masthead claimed to be: Capital of Talco and Sulphur Bluff Oil Fields, County Seat paper for the Garden Spot of the World and On the Broadway of America.

An article titled "Goodwill Caravan Welcomed by Band," in the May 21, 1937 issue reported that a group of boosting townsmen met the caravan consisting of 35-40 automobiles crossing the country from San Diego, California to New York City. They arrived via the Bankhead Highway, Broadway of America, Sunday afternoon at 2:49 and remained 15 minutes.

LOCAL NEWS RELEASE – *Optic Herald*, April this year, 2016. Approximately 40 vintage cars took time to circle the Mt. Vernon plaza, stopping 30 minutes before continuing on their trip commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Bankhead Highway, fifteen minutes longer than reported SEVENTY-NINE years ago. The 2016 group was on its way to Odessa, Texas but the 1937 group was going across the country from San Diego, California to New York City.

The Bankhead Highway, Broadway of America and Mt. Vernon's Main Street was one of the first transcontinental east-west routes. Now marked U.S. Highway 67, old land records list the road as U.S. #1. A portion of the early road runs in front of the historical Colonel Thruston house west of the Mt. Vernon Welcome sign and now the Bankhead Highway Visitor Center.

Originally the road turned south on Holbrook Street just past the square to parallel I-30. Drivers and passengers in the mobile contraptions of the early days traveled at 10 miles an hour and watched in amazement as the fence posts flew by. The 2016 caravan could relate.

Editor's Note: Article submitted by Jean Pamplin, based on review of printed news reports from the period. The cafe involved in the 1932 crime remains a restaurant and is now the location for 5-B Burgers on the square in Mt. Vernon.

Let Me Leave You My Calling Card

By Jenny Ashcraft

Want to take a peek into a fascinating social custom from the Victorian era? Calling cards (also called visiting cards or visiting tickets) were all the rage in the 19th century and represented an indispensable way to communicate. The cards did much more than just announce a visit, they relayed important social messages. For example, a calling card with a folded corner, or a card in a sealed envelope sent clear messages that accompanied strict etiquette protocols. By the early 1900s, calling cards fell out of fashion. Today's business cards are a leftover relic from the calling card era.

Calling cards first became popular in Europe in the 18th century and were favored by royalty and nobility. Their popularity spread across Europe and to the United States and soon calling cards became essential for the fashionable and wealthy. Society homes often had a silver tray in the entrance hall where guests left their cards. A tray full of cards (with the most prominent cards on top) was a way to display social connections.

Both men and women used calling cards and they were distinguishable by size. Men's cards were long and narrow so that could fit in a breast pocket. Women's cards were larger and during the Victorian era, became more ornate and embellished. According to this article from 1890, a typical society woman handed out nearly three thousand cards each year.

When wishing to arrange a visit, a caller generally waited in a carriage while a servant delivered the calling card to a household. If delivering the card in person, it was customary to fold the upper right-hand corner. This indicated that the caller made the effort to deliver the card personally. The visitor then returned home and within a few days would likely receive a calling card in return, sometimes with a short note written on the back. This usually extended an invitation to visit. Visits were generally short, formal, and at designated visiting hours. If a calling card wasn't acknowledged, or worse, returned in a sealed envelope, it meant the offer to visit was rejected.

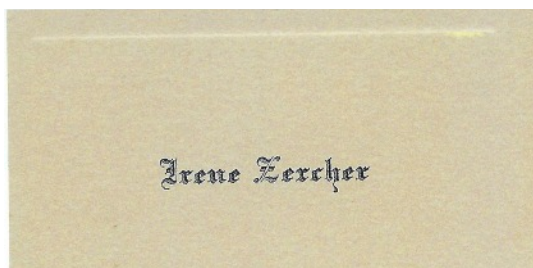
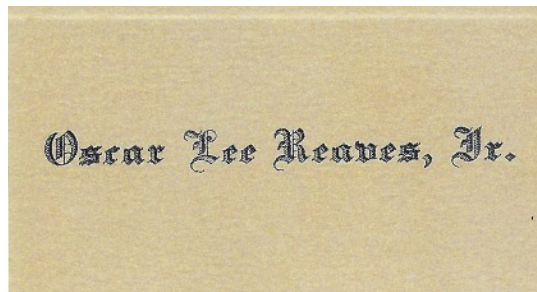
When leaving a calling card, different messages could be communicated by folding different corners of the card.

- The lower left-hand corner to express condolences
- The upper left-hand corner to express congratulations
- The lower right-hand corner indicated the caller was planning a long trip and did not expect an acknowledgement

If the household contained more than one woman, a gentleman caller folded a corner to indicate he intended to visit the entire household. A woman also followed strict protocol when leaving calling cards. She never left her card at a home where a bachelor resided without also including her husband's card. When leaving after a visit, a woman generally left two of her husband's cards – one for the master of the house and one for the mistress.

The social rules were enough to make your head spin, but the upper-crust society was schooled in the practice, and newspapers published calling card etiquette rules for others to navigate.

By the early 1900s, calling cards began to decline in popularity just as the use of business cards was on the rise. A change in formal society customs and new-fangled telephones led to a steady decrease in arranged visits. Businesses, which adopted the calling card system, continue to use them today. If you would like to learn more about calling cards and their impact on the social customs from earlier days, search Newspapers.com.



No-knead Cranberry Walnut Bread

Betty Ferguson Meek

3 cups of bread flour
1/2 teaspoon of active dry yeast
1 teaspoon of salt
1 teaspoon of sugar
2 teaspoons of oil
1 1/2 cups cold water
1 cup of chopped walnuts
1 cup of dry cranberries

Combine all dry ingredients. Add walnuts and cranberries. Mix well. Add oil to water and add to dry ingredients. Use handle of long wooden spoon to mix all ingredients. Do not knead dough. Cover mixing bowl and let proof for 18 hours. I cover with white cotton dish towel and set in my cold oven so as not to be disturbed. After the bread has been proofing for 18 hours, take the bread out on a floured surface. Shape into a round loaf and put into a clay or stone pot. Put your bread into a cold oven, set the temperature to 475 degrees Fahrenheit and set the cooking time for 45 minutes. Keep your pot covered. I use a stone cooking pot with a stone cover. In 45 minutes, remove lid of your pot and let bake for another 5 minutes for bread to form crust on top. Take it out and let cool for a couple of minutes. You can use a cast iron or enameled cast iron pot for baking bread. For cast iron the baking time is 30 minutes in a preheated oven covered and 15 minutes uncovered. ENJOY!

I found this recipe by accident, but it is so simple and very good that I am glad to recommend it.

I had bought cranberry walnut bread at a bakery and Jim and I loved it. I wanted to bake it myself and so I searched the internet for a recipe and hit the jackpot with this one. I am not sure of its origin. I have changed it up by using different nuts and dried fruit. My combination of rosemary and dried figs was especially good. —Betty Meek, July 2020



Betty and Jim at daughter Amber's wedding and cooking together at home.



The Confederate Pension Application(s) of Zachery Taylor Seay **By Joshua Coe**

The 39th Regiment of Alabama Infantry was formed in May, 1862, as part of the armies of the Confederate States of America. One of its eventual members would be Zachery Taylor Seay, named for the well-known former general elected President of the United States in the year of Zach's birth (1848). Whether his full name was spelled "Zachary" or "Zachery" is unclear, and I have simply chosen the one I consider most likely even though it doesn't match that of the President. Zach was too young to enlist at the outbreak of war, and was only fifteen during his service dates of Feb. 1 – Sept., 1864.

The 39th did most of its fighting as part of the Army of Tennessee, participating in the important early battles of Stones River and Chickamauga. The Army was created under the leadership of the deeply unpopular Braxton Bragg, who was eventually replaced by Joe Johnston in late 1863. Zach was in the brigade of General Zachariah Deas (consistently misspelled as "Days" by contemporaries, presumably because that is how it was pronounced), part of the division commanded by Major General Thomas Hindman. A chronological – but possibly incomplete – listing of the battles in which Zach fought includes Dalton (2/22-2/27), Resaca (5/13-5/15), Cassville (5/17), Kennesaw Mountain (6/27), and Jonesborough (8/31-9/1). The opposition in every case was the Military Division of the Mississippi, led by William Tecumseh Sherman. The first three of those engagements were relatively minor skirmishes, as Johnston was at an overwhelming numerical disadvantage and Sherman would not risk full frontal assault against entrenched defensive positions. He therefore engaged in a series of flanking maneuvers leading to minimal loss of life on either side, but that steadily pushed the Confederates south toward Atlanta nonetheless. This pattern was broken at Kennesaw, when Sherman miscalculated the strength of Johnston's center and attacked it in force. Although the battle is considered a Confederate victory, it still was followed by further retreat over the Chattahoochee River. It was at about this point that Confederate President Jefferson Davis lost patience with Johnston's caution and replaced him with General John Bell Hood. Hood is the namesake of Hood County, TX, and the fort located in Killeen. Sherman lured Hood out of Atlanta to fight at Jonesborough, intent on destroying the Army of Tennessee. Zach was seriously wounded in the neck on the first day of battle. While not destroyed, Hood was decisively defeated and forced to evacuate Atlanta the following evening. A later generation would remember the fires of that night from their dramatization in *Gone with the Wind*, but less commonly remembered is that those fires were ordered by Hood.

All of the battles listed above are also described in one of the most popular memoirs of the Civil War: *Company Atych*, by Sam Watkins. If you've ever seen Ken Burns' documentary on the subject, you know that Watkins gets quoted a lot. His recollections of combat are vivid and devastating, but his anecdotes regarding the life of the common soldier are often entertaining.

Zach returned home to Barbour County, Alabama, almost immediately after being wounded. He arrived by steamboat in Jefferson, TX, in 1871, then married Elizabeth Druscilla Johnson (Lizzie) the following year. Together they established a homestead on what was then Mt. Vernon Route 1, at what is now the northwest corner of the intersection of FM 3122 and FM 2723, just north of Lake Cypress Springs. The Seays went on to have five sons and four daughters, including one son that lived until 1982. This was my great-grandfather – Alter Velo Seay – whom I met a few times as a child.

The United States established pensions for Union combatants and their families as early as 1861. Understandably viewed by Northerners as vanquished insurrectionists, Confederate soldiers couldn't hope for any such compensation from the federal government. In response to this, every previously Confederate state, one of the border states (Kentucky), and one territory (which eventually became the state of Oklahoma) established Confederate pension programs at the state level.

Texas did so through the Confederate Pension Law, an act of the 26th Legislature passed May 12, 1899. The Law established requirements for residency, age, military service, marital status in the case of widows, and indigence. As Zach later learned, the last of these translated to limitations on an applicant's income and net worth. The initial benefit was \$6.81 a quarter, or \$27.24 a year. To put that number in context, the average annual salary according to 1900 census data was about \$450, or \$9,000 in today's money. One of the main reasons for the low early payments was the sheer number of applicants, as the war had ended only 35 years prior and many of its survivors were still living. As is often the case with public welfare programs, however, the restrictions steadily eased and the benefits grew with time.

Zach's first application was submitted on June 1, 1922. The Law's service requirement included two sworn affidavits from witnesses, wherein H. C. Seay and D. H. Holder confirmed not only their having fought alongside Zach, but the severity and persistence of the wound he received at Jonesborough. Nevertheless, the application was rejected by the State Comptroller's office only five days later. The Law's indigence clause imposed a maximum of \$1,000 on the claimant's property value, but the Seay homestead had been assessed at \$1,690 (\$26,000 in today's dollars).

The limit on property value was made exclusive of the homestead the following year, although the home's appraisal still could not exceed \$2,000. This information must have made its way back to Zach, because in 1925 his homestead appraised at \$1,540 on June 29 and he reapplied for a pension on July 1. Based on the information available from the Texas State Library and Archives, it appears the application was processed using the same paperwork submitted previously. This time Zach ran into problems of a different sort, in that the War Department could find no record of his service! "On account of this unsatisfactory report," Zach was called upon to "furnish further proof." Somehow he managed to contact one T. H. Jones of Thomas County, GA, who at the behest of Franklin County Judge B. O. Shurtleff provided additional testimony on Zach's behalf. The interview record is undated, but presumably it took place in late 1925 and eventually was received by Shurtleff.

On January 4, 1926, Zach submitted his third and final application for a Confederate pension. This time the paperwork was refreshed, including the affidavit from H. C. Seay. The complete package was filed formally on January 26, approved on February 2, and back-dated to December 1 of the previous year.

While Zach finally received his pension, he didn't get to enjoy it for long: he died just two years later, in 1928.

Lizzie applied for widow's benefits within two weeks of his death and was approved that very same day.

She continued to draw benefits for the next fourteen years, until dying at the ripe old age of 92.

Zach, Lizzie, and two of their children are buried at Glade Springs Cemetery, just south of Mt. Vernon and east of Highway 37.



Zach and Lizzie Seay

Editor's Note: The Confederate Pension article was prepared and submitted by Joshua Coe, great-great-grandson of Zach Seay. Josh is the son of Joe Dan Coe, long-time friend and supporter of our association. The Seay family were original owners of the log cabin now situated on the grounds of the historical association Majors-Parchman House. The land where the log cabin (called a corn crib because that was the primary use after initial occupancy) - is situated was acquired by Sarah Mayes who gave the building to the historical association in 2002. Volunteers headed up by Rex Norris and Rex Tillery dismantled the building and reconstructed it on our grounds.

The Talco Oilfields

In February, 1936, oil was discovered in what came to be known as the Talco oilfield, transforming the small East Texas community into a boomtown as people flocked to the area to look for oil or to work on the drilling rigs.

Shortly after the initial burst of drilling, geologists had predicted that the field contained reserves of some 160 million barrels of oil, or a fifteen-to-twenty-year supply at contemporary production levels. The intense excitement abated somewhat when it was discovered that the oil was of low gravity and thus less valuable. By the 1940s, the boom had ended, and the population had stabilized to around 700 residents.





Childhood Christmas Memories Are As Sweet as Ambrosia Mother Made

By J. Frank Dobie

This was a clipping from a family scrapbook dated to about 1943 in the War years. We have a much more commercial Christmas today; interesting to see the 1943 reflection of Christmas from about the year 1900.

It's too bad that people can't write their Christmas messages on Christmas day, after all the preparations for Christmas are over, after families are gathered and while being remembered by others brings a glow both bright and soft to the heart. I've always been a great hand to recollect things that give me pleasure, and now I'm recollecting Christmas times as remote from those of the present as the "Land of Reindeer."

We lived on a ranch 27 miles by horse from what is now called a shopping center. A few times a year a wagon went in and hauled out supplies, but the biggest haul was before Christmas. As I look back, those days seem days of great plenty, not because of affluence – quite the opposite – but because of the necessity of local stock-piling. Sugar came in the barrel, molasses in big kegs or jugs, flour by the barrel if not in a tier of 48-pound sacks, coffee in bushel sacks, lard in 50-pound cans, all canned goods by the case, and at Christmas time mixed candy came in large wooden buckets – enough for us six children, for our visiting cousins, and for the children of several Mexican families living on the ranch.

We had home-made candy occasionally at other times, but Christmas was the only time of year when it snowed candy. There were no chocolates, just a mixture of lemon drops, a gummy kind of sugar, and a striking variety of colors. Christmas was also distinguished by apples and oranges and raisins. Nobody dreamed of having to have fruit every morning for breakfast. Ambrosia, made of oranges and coconut, was as inevitable for Christmas dinner as turkey. Oranges and apples were put in stockings and they were hung on Christmas trees. They were a rare treat.

So far as gifts go, they have left a stronger impression on my mind than anything else out of childhood days except books – and my first new saddle. There were tin bugles, toy trains and dolls for the girls, but we had so much fun making our own toys that no bought toy has left any impression whatsoever on my memory. Christmas was the time for new pocket knives, and very useful they were. My father taught us to make water-wheels, which could be run only when an occasional rain made the creek run. We coined dollars by melting lead (bullets that had been shot for practice into live oak trees and that we gouged out), solder off tin cans and now and then a haul of windmill babbling. We melted metal in an iron spoon over a fire built on the ground and poured the liquid into a round wooden bluing box, wherein it quickly cooled and solidified. We used these dollars to pitch and to buy cattle, horses, sheep and goats from each other. Each of us had a large ranch enclosed by miniature fences of sticks, twine and strips of discarded, worn-out cotton clothing serving for barbed wire. Bailing wire was too scarce to use for fencing.

PLAYTHINGS HOME MADE

My mother did a great deal of sewing and spools for thread were our horses. Tips of cattle horn sawed off were our cattle. Oak balls were our sheep. Empty snail shells were our goats. With running irons made of bailing wire we branded the horses, cattle and sheep but the goats could not be branded. We made long trains of flat, rectangle-shaped sardine cans, coupled together, to haul the stock from one ranch to another. We hitched green lizards, which had been snared with the hair of horse tail, to a sardine can serving as a wagon.

Christmas was hog-killing time, and the hog bladders, also bladders from butchered cattle, were blown up for balloons and were great prizes. We may have had colored rubber balloons at some time, but I recollect only the ones made of bladders. We had a smoke house in which many sides of bacon and many hams hung from poles by heat-softened fiber of bear-grass and Spanish dagger leaves; but ham and bacon were nothing to us compared to the bladders of the slain hogs. Your own mouth was the only air pump for blowing up this homemade balloon. By holding it, air expanded, near a fire it would keep on expanding until the material was very thin and dry. Then came the climax – an explosion. Nobody wanted to part with his balloon, but that grand explosion could not be resisted.

REALITY OF MEMORIES

I never heard of Fourth of July fireworks until I was grown. Firecrackers and Roman candles were as much a part of Christmas as ambrosia. The firecrackers could be exploded by day, but the Roman candles were for darkness, when everybody gathered to see the pyrotechnics. They vanished all too quickly, like most other beautiful things, but not from the great reality called memory.

There were no commercial Santa Clauses. The only Santa Claus was my father. At an early age I learned his identity but that had no effect on the great illusion, any more than knowing that a grown woman could not live in a shoe had on the Mother Goose fact that there was an old woman who lived in a shoe. My father cut the Christmas tree himself – a comely little live oak – and brought it in secretly. It was lighted with little colored candles, one of which would usually start a blaze. The way he called out names in a disguised voice and presented the gifts was a joy. Then he would disappear and return in his accustomed clothes and claim his own presents, opening them with as much eagerness as we had opened ours.

A Child's Memories of World War II - - Tony's Story

By Kay Howell

Although Mother and I went to church regularly and the picture show occasionally, by far our main source of entertainment was the radio. We listened to 820 AM, a frequency shared by WFAA in Dallas and WBAP in Fort Worth. WBAP's first broadcast was on May 2, 1922; WFAA's first was on June 26, 1922. Both stations are still broadcasting at 800 kHz and are two of the few radio stations west of the Mississippi with call letters beginning with "W" rather than "K."

Mother always listened to the noon news and the evening news. In between she listened to the radio dramas, nicknamed soap operas because of their sponsors, as did everyone else in my small world. I didn't pay much attention to the soap operas because they spoke of adult problems that I didn't understand. But I did use them to know what time it was for things like when the big kids would be getting home from school and how long until supper would be ready.

I needed to know when the big kids would get home from school so I could hide from Ron and Randy James. They lived in the duplex next door with their mother and little sister. I didn't like them because they played war. When they weren't firing their toy guns, they were running all over the neighborhood yelling at each other. They would run up on porches or through vegetable gardens and flower beds. Once Mother grabbed her broom and ran them out of the garden because they were tromping down peas and corn that had just sprouted. She hit them a couple of whacks, too.

One particular day in late spring I wasn't paying attention to what time it was. Mother had the radio on, but it was difficult to hear because of the noise of her sewing machine. I was constantly interrupting her with demands for her attention. She finally stopped sewing and turned to face me. "Why are you being so fussy?" she demanded, "I don't have anything to do," I whined. "I want a new paper doll book."

"I don't have any money to buy you a paper doll book," Mother answered. "Now you come with me. I'll give you something to do." She grabbed me by the arm and walked me out to the garage. "Here's a bucket. You can weed the flowerbed."

Mother had prepared a flowerbed along the side of the house and defined the border with bricks standing on edge. She walked me along the side of the house until we came to the corner close to the front door. "See all those little green leaves there? That's weeds that are sprouting. Pull up the weeds, shake off the dirt, and put them in this bucket." She reached down and demonstrated what she wanted me to do. "Now don't pull up these big plants. That's summer flowers, and they will be blooming soon. I'll get you a towel to sit on so you don't get grass stains on your clothes."

I knew I was being punished, and the tears were about to begin. "Can I have Tony?" I faltered.

"All right, I'll get him." Mother left and returned with an old towel and my boy doll, Tony. She handed him to me and spread the towel on the ground.

Tony was one of a set of dolls. Both dolls had soft bodies with hard arms, legs, and heads and big blue eyes that closed when they lay on their backs. I played with Polly, the girl doll of the set; but I talked to Tony. Like some lonely children who invent imaginary playmates, I pretended my dolls talked to me. Tony was my make-believe big brother, my champion.

I sat down on the towel and put Tony beside me. Mother moved the bucket closer to me and went back into the house without saying another word. I waited until she walked away before I started talking to Tony. I whispered because I didn't want her to hear. I told Tony I was going to pull up Mother's flowers, and then she'd be sorry. Tony said no, she would just get madder.

Then I'd just run away. Mother would get lonesome without me and be sad. Tony asked me where I would go. To Nancy's house, I told him. Nancy Deberry lived in the big white house at the end of the street with her mother and grandfather. Her father was a naval officer and had been called back to active duty. I thought she was very pretty and very smart because she went to school.

Tony and I were talking about Nancy when a voice behind me said, "Where'd you get that doll?" I turned and saw Randy James standing behind me. He grabbed Tony and tilted him back and forth, watching his eyes open and shut.

"It's my doll. Give it back," I screamed.

Randy threw my doll down and started walking along the edge of the flowerbed, kicking the bricks. When a brick fell over, he picked it up and walked back toward me. "Hey," he said, take this brick and bust open that doll's head and gimme the eyes."

"No," I said. I grabbed Tony and looked around for a place to hide.

“I’ll give you a rocking doll cradle if you give me the eyes.”

I tried to run away from him, but he shoved me down and snatched my doll. By the time I stood up and started toward him, he had landed a blow with the brick and Tony’s head cracked open. Randy grabbed the eyes and ran to his house.

My tears were really flowing now. Mother came around the corner. “Let’s go sit on the front porch and you can tell me what happened.”

I was sobbing too hard to talk. Nancy Deberry ran to us. “I saw Randy push Kay down and grab her doll. By the time I got to your yard he had already run away,” she said.

“Did Randy push you down?” Mother asked. I nodded. She looked at my knees and elbows and said to Nancy, “Stay with her. I’ll be right back.”

Nancy sat down on the porch beside me and waited while Mother walked to where Tony lay on the ground. She picked him up and wrapped him in the towel I had been sitting on. “What did Randy say to you?” she asked as she sat down beside me.

“He s-said he’d give me a rocking doll cradle if I’d bust open Tony’s head and give him the eyes.”

“Well, the doll’s head is broken and the eyes are gone. Where’s the doll cradle?”

“He didn’t give it to me yet.”

“Then I’d better go talk to him. I have to go get my stick. Nancy, can you stay with her? This won’t take long.”

“Sure. We’ll wait right here.” Nancy took a deep breath. “Kay didn’t break the doll. Randy took it away from her and broke it.”

Mother smiled at Nancy. “I know. Just sit tight and wait. This is grownup stuff.”

Nancy and I sat on the porch and waited while Mother walked through the front door into the house. “What kind of stick was your mother talking about?” Nancy asked.

“Oh, it’s just a long stick, sort of like on a broom.”

“Well, I hope she whacks Randy good with it.”

“Me, too.”

A loud banging noise made me jump. Nancy and I peeked around the corner of the house and saw Mother banging on the duplex back door with her stick. She was yelling something I couldn’t understand except the last three words were “open this door.”

The door opened a crack, and Mother used her stick to shove it open enough to step inside. We heard muffled sounds—banging, yelling, and then silence. Mother walked out the back door, swinging her stick with one hand and holding something small in the other.

“I got Tony’s eyes back,” she told me. “I could probably put his head back together, but I don’t have any glue. It’s hard to find these days.”

“Grandfather can fix the doll. He builds model ships and has all sorts of glue and paint and stuff.”

“Would you like for Mr. Deberry to fix Tony?” Mother asked me.

I nodded.

“Good. Nancy, tell your grandfather I’ll be so grateful. I wrapped the pieces in this towel.” She handed the bundle to Nancy. “And thank you for helping.”

“You’re welcome. I hope you taught Randy a lesson.” Nancy looked at me. “Don’t worry, Kay. Grandfather will fix your doll. He can fix anything.” She turned and walked away.

Mother watched Nancy walk toward Mr. Deberry’s house and turned to me. “There’s a very important lesson here for you to learn, so listen to me. Randy doesn’t have a doll cradle, and there’s no way he can get one. But you had something special he wanted, so he lied to you to get it. Boys do that a lot.” She walked into the house.

I sat still and said nothing. I didn’t understand what she meant, but I remembered what she said.

Years would go by before I understood her warning.



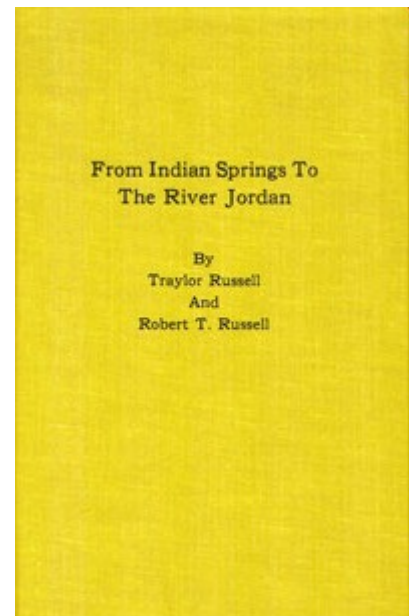
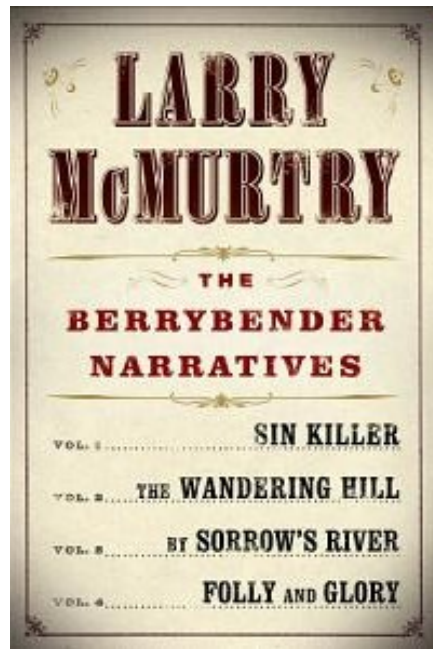
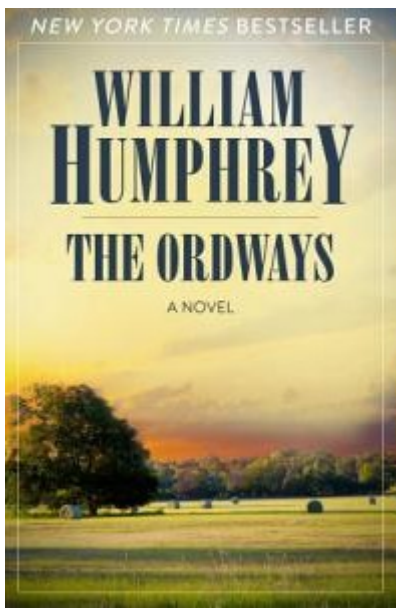
Presidential Ponderings – Literature and Bodies

The pandemic is awful. We aren't contending otherwise. For the most part, it has been a terrible distraction. I like to cook; I'm single; at the beginning of the thing, we weren't sure how the virus spread and I couldn't even share the production from my kitchen. I do like to read and the free time opening up by the inability to stir, has insured that I would read a bit more than usual. And it is so easy to order on Amazon; I didn't even rely on our library and I didn't have to mask up and deal with people and the public.

My godson Jason Borders had read the BERRYBENDER NARRATIVE – a 4 part series by Larry McMurry and Jason described the book as a great read; “hilarious” – and that last adjective is true for some of the descriptive scenes. I'll recommend the book as being a good historical novel and the setting (American West – 1830's) a good review of that decade in the world. What does this have to do with Franklin County?

Well, in the novel, the heroine finally makes her way back to St. Louis. Along the way she has lost a child or two; she has lost siblings; she is sending her husband back to recover the bodies; she wants them buried in a proper cemetery and not in a trench under rocks beside a trail. In THE ORDWAYS by William Humphries of Clarksville, Texas, Sam Ordway's family will travel from Tennessee after the Civil War and they bring the bodies of their ancestors in barrels with them. There is some sort of accident when crossing the Red River and a few barrels get swept away with the current. But they are moving bodies. And in INDIAN SPRINGS AND THE RIVER JORDAN, Traylor Russell has Martha Stewart sending laborers into Oklahoma to retrieve the body of her husband Charles S. Stewart who was killed by Indians – first casualty of the Civil War as our local men marched north to fight Yankees in 1861. And later, Stewart's grandson John B. Stephens Jr. will move the Stewart burials from the cemetery at West New Hope over to Adams Chapel – totally destroying the integrity of the location of the first marked burials in Titus County from 1843. Charles Portis has one great novel in which a work crew is assigned to remove the bodies from cemeteries about to be inundated with lakes; maybe I can abide that. This fanatic interest in moving bodies. Why? What's the basis? Read the books; good historical fiction and, to some extent at least, the authors aren't making up the business about moving the bodies.

I always recommend THE ORDWAYS; it is truly great philosophy. He has some good points about the background for “the war” which was the defining war for a couple of generations coming of age in the first half of the 20th century. And you'll puzzle over the motivation of those Ordways as they plod along the ox carts loaded down with barrels of dirt and bone.



Pandemic Report

Ray Loyd Johnson

Ray Loyd Johnson is a member of the Class of 1956; a classmate of Don Meredith; and a faithful member and supporter of historical association projects. He now lives in the Mt. Vernon House and has spent a great deal of the past year sequestered – as have most of us. Ray Loyd was reviewing some old newspaper clippings regarding high school football and turned in his commentary on the October 1953 Winnsboro game:

Game was in Winnsboro. Mother would not let me go. Winnsboro was way across Cypress Creek. Too far! Those Winnsboro Kooks had boasted since school began that their Quarterback Hero Pat Patterson was a better passer than Don. On Thursday night before the game Red Raider pranksters launched a dummy #88 atop the Mt. Vernon High School flagpole. You can imagine the excitement around our school all day Friday.

SCORE: Mt. Vernon 32; Winnsboro 14

This isolation thing, for me, is as good as Merle Hill's 2 dips for 5 cents

Social distance has always been my idea of perfection. Never quite reached Zenith till now. Barber/Beauty operators had fled because of threat of the contagion. Now on Friday we have cuts by Marlo assisted by Dalianna and Marie. No charge. Marie could have worked in Pete's shop.

~~ Ray ~~

Editor's note: Merle Hill's grocery was on west side of South Kaufman; you got two dips of ice cream for a nickel. The grocery occupied the south half of the present-day Optic-Herald offices. Pete's shop was the Pete Johnson Barber Shop – Ray's father's barber shop – On Scott Street, facing south, midway between Kaufman and Houston; demolished and now a parking lot.

Below are tokens from our archives. Late 1800's. Slightly enlarged photographs.



J.A. Turner had a saloon where the genealogy office is: "Good for 1 Drink"



J.W. Johnson had a barber shop on S. Kaufman, south of the present bank: "Good for 1 Shave"

Defense Research Laboratory Missile Guidance Group (Radar Divison)

Around the beginning of World War II, the U. S. government established a number of civilian laboratories to conduct research and development for the military.

One of these was the Harvard Underwater Sound Laboratory (HUSL) under the direction of Professor Ted Hunt. Hunt recruited Paul Boner to be one of his Associate Directors.

At that time Boner was professor of physics at the University of Texas and was becoming well known for his research in the field of architectural acoustics, noise control and musical acoustics.

Boner took with him to Cambridge a number of his students, including Richard Lane, Wilson Nolle, Charles Rutherford, Frank Seay, Reuben Wallace, and others.

At the end of WWII, the Harvard Lab was closed; the sonar work, which was directed by Boner, was transferred to the U. S. Navy Underwater Sound Laboratory at New London, Connecticut.



Back L to R: Groves White, technician; Otto J. "Obie" Baltzer, division head; Walter Kuehne, physicist; Warren Hicks, technician; Clay Johnson, mechanical engineer

Front L to R: Chester McKinney, physics graduate student; Tom Stevens, electronic technician; Frank Seay, physicist; Charles R. Rutherford, physicist; George Brooks, stock room clerk

Editor's Note: Allison Rutherford Ogburn of San Angelo, Texas, submitted this material regarding her grandfather's service. Charles R. Rutherford was another beneficiary of the educational programs offered to graduates of Mt. Vernon High School in the 1930's.

Memorials & Honorariums

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In Honor Of:

The Hicks Family
B. F. Hicks
B. F. Hicks



Robert Sterling Long
September 6, 1952 – February 12, 2021

Robert Sterling Long, born September 6, 1952 to Robert Billy Long of Majors, and Dorothy Mae Williams Long of Mt. Vernon, Texas. He passed away of complications of Covid-19 on Friday, February 12, 2021, at UT Health Hospital in Tyler, TX.

He is survived by his sister, Reba Long Lunsford and his brother-in-law, George Lunsford of Houston, Texas. He will be greatly missed by his nephew and wife, Elijah Lunsford and JoAnn Fullmer-Lunsford of Idaho, and niece, Meggen Lunsford Rhodes, of Houston. His great nieces and nephews include William David Rhodes, Caitlyn Rhodes, Abigail Rhodes, and Cash Hermstedt.

Robert was a friend to all. He could speak intelligently on almost any subject. His knowledge of the arts and history was broad and well-rounded. He could regale with amazing and interesting stories of past family history, incidents from his life, famous people he'd met, places he traveled, and was always interesting and enthralling.

He was kind, considerate, and polite - a true Southern Gentleman. He made everyone feel comfortable with his East Texas charm.

Robert served on the board of directors for FCHA for a number of years and was Curator of the Texana Library located in the Fire Station Museum.



J. D. Baumgardner
September 30, 1924 – February 14, 2021

James Daniel Baumgardner was born on September 30, 1924, the middle child of five children born to William Charley and Stella Baumgardner. J. D. passed away on February 14, 2021, just in time to join Iris, his wife of 73 years, in Heaven for Valentine's Day.

J. D. was born in Parsons, Kansas, and graduated from Parsons High School in 1942. When he turned 18, he enlisted in the Navy and served during World War II as a radar man on the aircraft escort carrier U.S.S. Natoma Bay CVE-62 in the Pacific.

When he returned home from the war in 1945, he married his high school sweetheart, Iris Wilson, in the Chapel at the Naval Shipyard in San Diego, California. They lived in Los Angeles for several years before they returned to Parsons where J. D. began his business career as an entrepreneur.

J. D. began his business with his childhood best friend as a journeyman carpenter building custom cabinets. It wasn't long before he was called into active duty with the U.S. Army Reserve, serving with the 930th Ordnance Ammunition Company stationed in Korea.

Upon returning home in 1952, he began another business building homes in Parsons. He simultaneously became an Allstate insurance agent and then started his own independent insurance agency, Baumgardner & Seaton. While continuing the agency, he became a real estate broker and founded Baumgardner Real Estate.

J. D. was a man of limitless energy, discipline and inimitable work ethic. He was a people person who loved celebrations, especially parades, and he organized and participated in thousands of events over his lifetime. He was an avid fisherman who enjoyed cooking fish fillets for family and friends on his deck on the lake. God blessed J. D. with a beautiful tenor voice that he used to glorify God by singing in church choirs most of his life. J. D. embodied the "can do" spirit and tackled all issues with zest for life and leadership skills.

J. D. fought in two foreign wars to preserve the American values of individual freedom and democracy. He lived the American dream of working hard to provide a higher standard of living and a better life for his family. No doubt he lived a long life because of his commitment to his family and service in his community. J. D. was the patriarch of the Baumgardner family, a true example of what it means to be an honorable man. Our hearts are broken by his passing.

J. D. served as a past president and board member for FCHA.

J. D. was preceded in death by his wife, Iris, his parents, his brother Charles Baumgardner, his sister and husband, Lillie Mae and Arthur Laurell, his brother and wife, Tom and Jo Baumgardner and his sister-in-law and husband, Lois and Ken Markham. J. D. is survived by his children, James Daniel Baumgardner, Jr., of San Antonio, and T. S. Morgan of Dallas. J. D. is also survived by six grandchildren.

Photo Credit: *Mount Vernon Optic-Herald*