



FRANKLIN COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Volume 25, Number 2, March/April 2020

Website: <https://www.fchatx.com>

Date: Monday, March 2, 2020

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Program: Matt White: A Natural History of Northeast Texas

Place: Masonic Lodge, Mt. Vernon, Tx

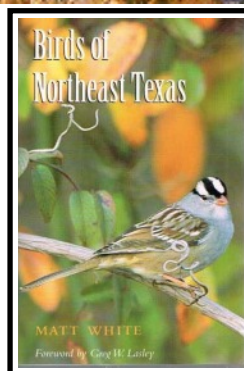
Hosts:

Joel and Laurie Dihle, Karen Smith,
BF Hicks, Steve Hammons

“To visit a prairie today is to walk on hallowed ground, a kind of Holy Grail for those who yearn to revisit the land as it looked before it was remade and reformed by the rushing onslaught of settlement.

To stand on the crest of gentle prairie hill and watch the gray and green clouds of an April thunderstorm advance over flowers so truly wild, like they have for millennia, is to witness a drama more suspenseful than the latest blockbuster.”

In just these few words written by Matt White in his Introduction to *Prairie Time—A Blackland Portrait*, you know for sure



this man loves the prairie and understands history.

Matt White is an author, historian, teacher and environmentalist. His lectures are entertaining and enlightening. He will talk about the pioneers and their arrival in Franklin County. Come for a fascinating program on the natural history of our region.

Matt teaches American History at Paris Junior College in Greenville, Texas.

In addition to *Prairie Time—A Blackland Portrait*, Matt is the author of *Birds of Northeast Texas* and is currently writing a new book dedicated to milkweeds.

Reflections on Membership Reports

From the President

A few years back we published a list of our “paid” members. What a mistake. The list was compiled based on the mailing list prepared for our nonprofit status and so the mailing list was grouped by zip code. We didn’t have an alphabetical list to start; dues had not been posted correctly because of some difficulty in the zip code mailing efforts. In short, members whose dues were paid were not listed as members at all. And then we had overlooked life-time members. An embarrassment.

A lifetime membership in the historical association is not bestowed lightly. I think that at this time there are four individuals holding that status: Jean Ann Marshall; Dominick Cirincione; J.D. Baumgardner; and Ray Loyd Johnson.

Others with the same life membership status have passed on: Beverly Brewer, who prepared countless works of art documenting our structural and our natural heritage (and we have an upcoming show of her work scheduled to open before the year is out). And Ron Milton, serving like J.D. as a president for years before me. We commemorate the service of life members with appropriate plaques in the Fire Station Museum.

Jean Ann Marshall and J.D. Baumgardner received the award when prior boards recognized a level of service which deserved an important recognition. In similar fashion, Dominick Cirincione, a regular visitor to this community since the early 80’s and primary sponsor for our library collection, received the status award about four year ago. And Ray Loyd Johnson who has authored two books (and paid for publishing 3!) and who then donated all proceeds from sales of the publications to our organization; yes, he holds the status.

This issue carries the names of members who have paid their dues. If you have paid and your name is not listed, please call Gail Reed and get that sorted out (903-537-4760). If you haven’t paid yet, please send in your dues. The newsletter alone should be worth the investment; and you’ll be in the loop for notice of opportunities throughout the year for participation in our programs and projects.

Next issue, we can pick up a list of “New and Renewing Members since February 10, 2020.” It won’t have to be a two page listing but it can pick up with pride from February forward the name of folks who endorse our service in Franklin County. Please call our manager Gail Reed and let her know if you want special mention made for memorial or honorific purposes; we will act to notify recipients and will carry tributes in our newsletter as you direct.

We administer the St. Clair Endowment through the generous memorial gifts made by Jimmy St. Clair of Houston in memory of his parents. We can’t touch the principal but the income from the endowment allows our organization to provide grants for humanitarian and cultural causes in the community, and we receive about \$20,000.00 each year toward our budgeted expenditures which approach \$80,000.00 annually.

Dues cover 15% of the budget; your support matters and is appreciated. Your payment of dues is an endorsement of our service to the community.

Please send what you can and order a book to help us even further. – B.F. Hicks

WELCOME NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS FOR YEAR 2020

Sponsor Level

Jaime Bennett
Jim & Karen Borders
Dorothy Lynn Brooks
T. C. Burgdorf
Frankie Cooper
Jenny Dennis & Joe Jancosek
Kay Frazier
J. D. & Debi Green
Robert C. Green
Ken Greer
Steve Hammons
Mike & Sharon Harper
Edee Harvey
Scott Harvey
B. F. Hicks

Dale & Jo Jordan
Jim & Sue Lavender
Lisa Lowry
Darwin & Connie McGill
Linda Moses
Jerald & Mary Lou Mowery
Ruby Neely
Rodney & Debbie Newsom
Michael & Annette Saragusa
Jimmy St. Clair
John Stanley
Jim & Ramona Stinson
Chuck & Jan Switzer
Jim Tatum
Steve & Pat Wright

Patron Level

Chuck & Nicki Armstrong
Ruth Averitt
Jan Bland
John & Julanne Boatner
Norm & Carol Horn
Sid & Pat Hudson
Larry & Mary Lange
Alan & Kay Leibel
Ann Holland

Emily Jean Lucid
Helen R. Myers
Gail Reed
Charles & Judy Shafer
Glen & Dianna Shelton
Ernie Snapka
Tom & Sandy Tower
Rona Vickers

Membership

Ralph Banks
Ron & Sue Barker
J. D. & Iris Baumgardner
Minnie Birdsong
Nancy Bolduc
K. A. Bolin
Kenneth & Sue Bolin
Curt Boyd
Mike Boylson
Phyllis K. Brown
Clint & Laura Calvert
Jim Clark
Joe & Janet Coe
Robert Cowser

Todd Lindley
Cynthia Loftis & John Bradberry
Robert Long
Russell & Janet Martin
Bob & Donna McFarland
Jim & Beverly McPherson
Mark & Ute Miller
William & Nancy Miller
Vivian Dennis Monzingo
James A. Moyers
Johnny Newsom
June Carr Newsom
Billy Bert & Mary Jean Newsome
Betty Odom

Lanny & Sandra Crow
Donald (Pete) Dyer
Don Easterling
Bert & Linda Edmondson
Jean Furman
Linda Hammond
Tres Hamrick
David & Sandra Hanson
Lauren Herman
John Hicks
Nora Holder
Kay Howell
Jerry & Elease Hubbell
Ed Joyce
Jerry & Ann Jumper
Earl Kirk
Ken & Linda Kirk
Kendal & Stephanie Kirk
Ben & Nancy Leonard
Johanna Deal

Mike & Lynn Overstreet
Ed & Jean Pamplin
David Parchman
Michael & Meredith Reed
Robin Sanders
Billie Bryant Schultz
Judd Scott & Jackie Stempel
Kris Sears
Walter & Margaret Sears
Kathy Shelton
Martha Smith
Carolyn Sortor
Robert Spearman
Cindy Stutts
Peggy Stutts
Hal & Jamie Wesson
Janet Wiman
Patricia Bass Wright
Glen & Betsy Zachary
William A. Winston

Lifetime Members

J. D. Baumgardner
Ray Loyd Johnson

Dominick Cirincione
Jean Ann Marshall

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

Regular Membership: \$15.00/Individual - \$20.00/Family

Patron Status Membership: \$50.00 - \$99.00

Sponsor Status Membership: \$100.00 minimum donation per year.

If you paid your dues for the year 2020 at any time from October 1, 2019 through February 12, 2020, and your name is not listed above, please contact our office (903-537-4760) and we will correct our records.

Newsletters will be mailed through our May, 2020, issue but will be discontinued after May, 2020, for individuals who have not renewed. If your name does not appear in the lists of members, and if you have not renewed, please do so. We need your support and your involvement in our mission to promote our community through our projects and programs.

Make History!

Become a FCHA Member in 2020

KINSHIP TIES

Introductory Notes by B.F. Hicks

A year ago our organization received a \$500.00 cash award from the East Texas Historical Association for our ongoing educational and preservation efforts. The East Texas Historical Association is headquartered at Nacogdoches and affiliated with Stephen F. Austin State University.

The Association publishes a biannual scholarly journal and hosts annual and regional conferences devoted to East Texas History. Dues are \$45.00 for regular memberships; K-12 Educators - \$20.00 annually and student members - \$15 annually.

All memberships include a subscription to the journal. Your organization encourages members to join the East Texas Historical Association; the address is PO Box 6223, SFA, Nacogdoches, TX 75962. Internet <http://www.easttexashistorical.org>. We have East Texas Historical Association journals spanning the last two decades in our library. From the files, we focus on the year 2001. In an article entitled "Antebellum Planters: Communities of Kinship on the Cotton Frontier" Carolyn Earle Billingsley reports on the travels of the Robert Calvert family. Calvert, an antebellum cotton planter, was born in 1802 in Tennessee and died in Texas in 1876. Calvert made three primary moves and always moved with a network of family members.

Billingsley discusses the common southern practices of intermarriage between families, sibling exchange, and marriage between cousins. She pointed out that these practices strengthened extranuclear family ties that may seem tenuous to modern sensibilities.

We reprint a few of the concluding paragraphs of the informative article by Dr. Billingsley.

Her report of the kinship ties of the Calvert family concludes that the kinship ties of the family are excellent examples of antebellum Southern lives rich with close interactions with family, kinfolk, and community. In a world where a husband could die suddenly and leave a wife and children alone, where having a baby was hazardous, where political and economic power were enhanced by family ties, and where it took a group effort to accomplish many tasks, people needed the security of a network of relationships – relationships as necessary to their well-being as they were comforting. Whenever an individual moved further west on the frontier, seldom did that individual move alone. Antebellum Southerners, plain folk and planter alike, migrated westward with great frequency, but it was almost never undertaken by less than a community of people, most of whom belonged to the same kinship group.

We cannot grasp the importance of family a century ago. Rapid technological advances have changed the ability for people to work, meet, and interact. In the last week I was studying the 1860 census for Titus County and realized that the Will Aikin family is enumerated and the next family shown is the Harmon Hughes family. Well: no wonder that my great grandparents marry; they lived on adjacent farms. The study of land ownership leads to a similar conclusion. People were not mobile and marriages of cousins and sibling exchange marriages where groups of brothers and sisters in one family marry siblings of a neighboring family are very common here. The Billingsley paper provided the reasoning behind the practices I have noted over many years of research in land titles.

Dr. Billingsley points out that she covers only the lifetime of one man. In that 70 years, it is hard to really grasp the broad family ties that were followed in a much less mobile society. Entire family groups moved together and this could include cousins tied from two generations earlier. She points out that families with different surnames (cousins through blood and marriage ties) would still be moving in groups in the westward migration. The sense of family ties was strong among these people. I see it in the joint migration of my maternal grandmother's family as they travel on the same boat with the Harvey ancestors in 1767 from North Ireland to South Carolina and a few decades later to Texas. All the while the kinship ties are reinforced as cousins continue to marry over five generations spanning at least two centuries and probably dating back a millennia in Great Britain. And I track my maternal grandfather's family as they make the

same westward journey from a landing in North Carolina to Tennessee to this county moving with the Rutherford clan.

It was enlightening to read the Billingsley paper for an understanding of marriage practices. Dr. Billingsley discusses the problems encountered in tracking family ties. Hard work, but rewarding and interesting and her paper supports the study of westward movement grounded in kinship.

Skipper Steely writes of Northeast Texas. Remember that John Humphrey arrived in what is now Franklin County in the summer of 1818 while this land was claimed as a part of the Louisiana Purchase; he never left and his descendants are legion. Steely says that Daniel Boone may have lead the westward movement but we should remember that a sister of Daniel Boone's crossed the Red River around 1815 having married into the pioneering Stout family.

Bettye Burns Delaney (a descendant of a survivor of the 1841 Ripley Massacre) makes two telling points in her presentations: That the human population was much smaller and it was certainly convenient for cousins to marry or for the siblings of neighbor households to all marry and it insured the protection of orphaned children on the frontier. Delaney also argues for the influence of the War of 1812 in instilling friendship ties (leading to marital unions); soldiers leaving their homes to travel across the open countryside in the south; and the urge to settle the land following service in that war. Delaney thinks that many of our settlers here knew each other from service in that 1812 War. Dr. Billingsley encourages us to think broadly. We should.

In her conclusion Billingsley sums up her study of Robert Calvert's westward migrations in beautiful prose:

To an even greater extent than today, kinship played a significant role in the lives of antebellum Southerners. In history, as in life, no person exists in a vacuum. Every life is like a tapestry woven in the warp and woof of relationships and events. ... a tapestry leading into a complex interplay with the threads of the lives of others, and foremost, with the lives of a community of family. There were many influences - economic, political, religious, and social – shuttling in and out, weaving the structure of Calvert's life and directing his migrations, but none were as embedded in his concerns as the attachments of kinship.

Kinship exists in the world as a phenomenal thing, insofar as it is the concrete relationship of people to one another – relationships defined by ties of blood or marriage, or created in a legal sense. There are explicit referents matching the terms of kinship; when the term “sister” is invoked, for instance, there is a one-to-one correspondence between the word and a specific person. Yet, in a more abstract sense, kinship only exists in a noumenal way, somehow implicit instead of explicit, in the way it is played out in the lives of human beings. In this sense, it is constructed performatively on the needs and desires of each individual. These can consist of, but are not limited to, the need or desire for being a part of a group, for approval, for love, for support, for friendship, for economic facilitation, or for political support. During Robert Calvert's lifetime he constructed his concept of kinship and family through his actions – by showing concern for, by being responsible for, by living close to, and by being involved in the social, religious, economic, and legal lives of his family. As this study demonstrates, it is apparent that Robert Calvert's definition of kinship was deep and broad.

Not all of our family migrations stopped in Franklin County. The pull west continued. And with societal changes (free and open land no longer a factor; work and interests, the factor) we see our families moving to California in the 1930's and now to New York, Chicago, Portland or wherever the economy and the lifestyle beckons. Concerns for support from kindred are lessened and we now have a much greater opportunity for mobility. The historic motivations and limitations on human migration are much changed. We anchor a sense of place in the natural and historic landscape we maintain here for both tourists - especially the tourists with ancestral roots tied to our region.

Thanks to Dr. Billingsley and the East Texas Historical Association for inspiration and for service.

Memorials & Honorariums

Donated By:

Linda Moses
Kris Sears
Jan Bland & Timothy Bland
Chuck & Nicki Armstrong
Dorothy Lynn Brooks
Ruth Averitt
Lauren Herman

In Memory Of:

Howard & Lou Cargile
Dorothy Winfield
Mary Hicks
Dorothy Winfield
Penn & Brooks Families
Dorothy Winfield
Brock Herman

Donated By:

Jan Bland & Timothy Bland
James Tatum
Carolyn Sortor
Jim & Karen Borders
B. F. Hicks
B. F. Hicks
Jaime Bennett

In Honor Of:

B. F. Hicks
B. F. Hicks
B. F. Hicks
B. F. Hicks
Lillie Bush-Reves
Nonie Stringer
Jan Bland



We are always adding new content.

An Introduction to “The Feists.”

Shortly before her death, my grandmother wrote a detailed account of her family’s 1902 wagon journey from Alabama to Texas. I puzzled over her descriptions of the “little feist” that came along with the family.

My dad explained that this was a small dog that his mother treasured. His explanation did not justify the fond recollections in her journal. Then I stumbled across John Madson’s essay about “feists.” I finally grasp the praise she heaped on the family’s dog.

With a family history spanning generations of pets (most fading into obscurity for me), her “little feist” gained new appreciation when I finished reading Madson. The article is worth printing here for the light it sheds on the small dogs all of our families would have owned in the early part of the last century. - BF Hicks

THE UNFORGETTABLE FEISTS

By John Madson

Let’s talk about hunting dogs. Not the blooded champs of stately grace and high birth, but those bandy-legged heroes of a million squirrel and rabbit hunts – the feists.

Webster defines feist as a “small dog.” Properly, a hunting feist is a pup of tangled ancestry and nondescript coloring that is always found in the company of small boys and single-shot .22’s. There should be a special field trial class for such dogs. In such a competition, these should be judging Points:

1. All good hunting feists are small, and yip. Authorities claim that the best hunting feist is never more than 12 or 15 inches at the shoulder. He should have a high, shrill voice and be happy to use it. He must be able to get under barns, corncribs, log piles, brush heaps, and into farm culverts and gooseberry Thickets.
2. The hunting feist can go over, under or through barbed wire without being cut. While going to or from a hunt, the feist will often carry something in his mouth to relieve the boredom of travel. This may be a stick, a chunk of corn cob or an old shotgun shell.
3. A likely hunting feist always trots on the bias. That is, when he’s heading west his hinderparts are trailing somewhere in the southeast. As he runs he will hold one leg off the ground as if his foot is sore. His foot is not sore; the dog is simply saving it for later use, or something.
4. This dog must be able to swim, climb, dig and dodge expertly, and be happy to roll in carrion and hunt incessantly. He must be absolutely fearless. And every feist dog worth his gravy must be able to salute three posts out of every five, no matter how long the fence.

Color and shape are not important judging points, although it is preferable that a feist be low-slung and dirt-colored. You may choose from a vast variety of stripes, blotches and spots. The best breeds are usually obscure crosses of terriers, beagles, dachshunds, or anything else that happened along.

Because of this patchwork lineage, the hunting feist usually lacks the frantic timidity of some finely-bred gun dogs and is consistently loyal, rugged, healthy and calm.

Feists are superb squirrel and rabbit dogs, but they’re good for hunting almost anything. They consider skunks personal insults that must be avenged at all costs. They’ll tangle with turtles, groundhogs, goats,



pigs, snakes and catfish. They will fight badgers into their dens and climb up inside hollow trees for big 'coons and 'possums. They are often whipped by such critters, but are never defeated.

These dogs are long remembered. Many hunters mistily recall their boyhood feists long after they've forgotten the blooded pointers and setters of manhood.

That's because being a good gun dog isn't simply a matter of pastern, stifle and spring of rib.

It's a matter of heart.

FCHA SPRING 2020 EVENTS

*March 2nd, 6 p.m.: Membership Meeting
Masonic Lodge, Pot Luck Dinner
Matt White, Speaker: A Natural History of
Northeast Texas*

*April 4th, 6-8 p.m., Night at the Museum
Fire Station Museum and Cotton Belt Depot*

*May 4th, 6 p.m., Membership Meeting &
Civil War Journals Banquet
Cultural Arts Center*

*May 11th-12th First & Second Grade Field
Trip Days
Fire Station Museum, Cotton Belt Depot,
Thruston House & Dupree Park*



**WE WELCOME VOLUNTEERS
FOR THESE EVENTS!
CALL 903-537-4760 FOR MORE
INFORMATION**

Historic Documentation

Members: Here's an example of the sort of documentation we follow for historic designations in the city. This was a recent research effort and I thought it might be of interest for the membership. Both from a standpoint of reading an interesting title but also checking out a fairly simple early 20th century house and reflecting on the age of buildings in our community; they are all around us. The following report was sent to Torin Slater who had inquired about the history of his home at 600 S. Kaufman in Mt. Vernon.

Dear Mr. Slater: You asked me to check on the title history for your home at 600 South Kaufman. I have slowly sorted through old records and can offer some comments. I'll work backwards in title.

The title was held by the Dr. Otto Walling Family (Otto Charles Walling, Jr. and wife, Lucy Walling). The home was occupied by Eula May Younger, mother of Lucy Walling. After Mrs. Younger's death, the property was sold by the Walling family to your grandmother, Lynda K. Osborne. We enclose a copy of the deed to your grandmother (recorded v. 314, p. 824, Franklin County Official Public Records).

I think that the house was built in 1906 or 1907 by Mrs. Martha Carolina Bolin Mahaffey. The property stayed in the Mahaffey family for 60 years from the purchase in 1906 until it was sold to the Wallings in 1966.

We enclose a copy of the 1966 deed from the Walter T. and Arkie May Mahaffey heirs to Otto C. Walling and Lucy Walling. The deed is recorded in v. 87, p. 84, Franklin County Deed Records.

Walter Thomas Mahaffey and wife, Arkie May Mahaffey, purchased the house in 1918 from his mother, Martha Carolina Bolin Mahaffey. Deed recorded v. 38, p. 449, Deed Records. W. T. Mahaffey lived in it until his death in 1947. He is buried in the City Cemetery. Arkie May Mahaffey lived on until May 25, 1965. On May 24, 1966, the property was sold to the Wallings by her heirs.

Martha Carolina Bolin Mahaffey was widowed Sept. 6, 1901. Martha Carolina (went by Mrs. M.C. Mahaffey) purchased the land where your house sits from W.W. Rourk. Deed recorded in Book T, page 591, Deed Records. Watch for the description in this deed with a boundary College Street. Now known as Kaufman and even earlier called the Mt. Vernon to Winnsboro Road.

Martha Carolina Bolin Mahaffey was born in 1856 and will live until 1945. After she sold her home in 1918, she apparently moved into the home of her son, M.M. Mahaffey. Her obituary reports that she died in his home. She is buried in the Mt. Vernon City Cemetery.

Martha Carolina Mahaffey added a 10 foot wide strip on the north side of your house lot to her land in 1910. She purchased the 10 foot strip from J.H. and Leila Holbrook. Again: you have to read carefully because the deed is for 10 feet off the south side of the Holbrook lot. See Deed at Book N, p. 526, Deed Records. The corner lot which now belongs to Walter and Margaret Sears was the Holbrook homestead. There were many Holbrooks and the family farm was on the west side of present-day Holbrook Street (earlier called the Mt. Vernon to Pittsburg Road).

The Holbrooks intermarry with the Rutherfords and you see the connection with the Rutherford Farm being the land lying on the south side of present-day Rutherford Street.

The Holbrooks refer to this being out of a tract they purchased from Mrs. C.G. Parker in 1900. We enclose a copy of that deed for good measure (Book M, p. 456, Deed Records). Why is this deed of interest? Note

how the Seller says that the land is “south of and near the town of Mt. Vernon.” Mt. Vernon had not grown much beyond the village around the public square at that time.

The Parker deed references ownership through Shelby, Rourk and back to Oliver A. Matthews. Oliver A. Matthews was a successful businessman and held land from the first development of the town. Oliver Matthews owned the land across Kaufman Street where my old Methodist Church building stands. And Majors Street was nothing more than the lane between the Methodist property and the 30-acre Majors farm which ran south to the Rutherford farm.

The deeds up to the time of the purchase by Martha Carolina Mahaffey in 1906 refer to your property as essentially being used as a garden. One boundary was along a string and that’s written into the deed. It appears that the garden use ended with Martha’s purchase and subsequent construction.

There is a side note regarding your land title. Yes, Mrs. Mahaffey had acquired the 10 foot strip on the north. And she passed title to a fairly good lot – with clearance on both sides of your house (north and south). Martha Carolina Mahaffey had passed this on to her son, Walter, in 1918. Walter dies in 1947. In 1958, his wife (Arkie) and his children sell 10 feet off the south side of the property to W.B. Meek and his wife, Melba Meek. This is the Melba Coe Meek who will be killed in the school bus wreck in 1959; her husband goes on to become our County Judge. See Deed at v. 77, p. 611, Deed Records.

If you carefully read the description for the deed into the Wallings (v. 87, p. 84, Deed Records) you see that this is all laid out. Two tracts into your family title but then “less and except” that 10 foot strip sold to the Meeks. By the time you read all of the deeds I send you, you will see a huge number of early family names. The deeds describe boundaries with many families, including Parchman, Petty, Joyce and Williams names.

The obituary for Martha Carolina Mahaffey says her funeral was in the Baptist Church; services conducted by Brother John E. Whitt assisted by Rev. S.M. Williams of the Methodist Church. “Innumerable friends feel keenly the loss of “Mother Mahaffey” whom they have loved, honored and revered as a fine example of Christian motherhood, respected citizen and active church worker for more than four score years.”

I hope you appreciate the home you now occupy after a century of occupancy by truly stellar citizens. I remain at your service in working to preserve our heritage,

B.F. Hicks
President, Franklin County Historical Association

The Gift of Time

An Interview with Jimmy St. Clair

By Gail Reed

“Time and tide wait for no man.” Or, so the famous Geoffrey Chaucer saying goes. It is certainly a great analogy for the 150th anniversary commemorative clock made by the E. Howard Company that has been ticking faithfully in the lobby of Alliance Bank (formerly First National Bank) in Mount Vernon for well over a decade.

The clock was presented to the bank by Jimmy St. Clair who now resides in Houston, however; the St. Clair family has deep roots in Mount Vernon. His parents, Harris and Irene St. Clair, were well known in our community. Harris St. Clair was a charter member of the Mount Vernon Rotary Club and a prominent businessman who made a living as a trader. From his perch on the town square, he bought and sold all types of goods. Once, while making one of his famous deals, Mr. St. Clair was approached by Mr. McDonough about buying McDonough’s appliance store, so he did. Earlier, he had owned a grocery store called St. Clair’s Cash Grocery, but had to sell it due to an allergy to the cattle feed he carried in his inventory.

Irene Zercher St. Clair was also a notable citizen in Mount Vernon. Her father was Postmaster, and she was organist at First United Methodist Church before Peggy Lowry’s 50-year run. Mrs. St. Clair was a talented artist, and later, taught math after the family moved to Austin.

“My father was a collector and mechanic of antique clocks,” said son Jimmy St. Clair.

In 1992, when Irene became aware that the E. Howard Company was about to produce a 150th anniversary commemorative clock, she ordered one for her husband. It was a custom piece that would include Harris St. Clair’s name inscribed inside. The timepiece was expensive and Mrs. St. Clair announced that it would be for Christmas, birthday and every holiday gift in between.

“I couldn’t believe a clock could cost so much until I looked inside and saw the intricate workings,” said Jimmy. Obviously, it has stood the test of time.

Edward Howard was a clock-making apprentice and commenced business with David P. Davis, manufacturing high-grade wall clocks under the name of Howard & Davis in 1842. About 1843, they began to also manufacture tower clocks. The clock in the Franklin County Courthouse, built in 1912, is an E. Howard and continues to strike at the top of every hour.

In 1857, Edward bought out his partner and began manufacturing under the name E. Howard & Co., in Waltham, Massachusetts, making it the oldest clock company in America.

Harris and Irene St. Clair passed away within months of each other in 2003, and Harris had always hoped his cherished clock would stay in the family. Without any descendants of his own, Jimmy was concerned about where the family heirloom would end up. “When I found out that Ken Greer was collecting old photos for the bank, I knew that was where the clock belonged.”

Although the beloved clock did not remain within the St. Clair’s immediate family, it found its home in Franklin County. The next time you’re in downtown Mount Vernon, stroll into Alliance Bank and ask to see the unique, banjo-shaped clock. You’ll be looking at history.



Left: James Harris St. Clair (1911-2003), and wife, Irene Zercher St. Clair (1910-2003). Civic, church, community leaders and activists in Mt. Vernon. Their son, James H. (Jimmy) St. Clair, graduate of Mt. Vernon High School, established the Harris and Irene St. Clair Endowment in their honor. The Endowment funds approximately \$25,000 annually for Franklin County non-profit humanitarian programs to enhance and better our community's quality of life.

Right: E. Howard & Co. 150th anniversary commemorative clock in Alliance Bank donated by Jimmy St. Clair.

Ice Box Cookies

By Pat Hudson

2 sticks butter
 ¾ cup sugar
 2 cups flour
 1 tsp. soda
 ½ tsp. salt
 2 tbs. dark maple syrup
 1 cup chopped pecans



Mix and roll in wax paper and refrigerate. Slice and bake 10-12 minutes at 350 degrees.

Pat Cheatwood Hudson was born and raised in Bogata, Texas. She married Sid Hudson and the two worked in education in the Mesquite School District for 34 years. They have two children, Chris and Stephanie.

In 2001, Sid and Pat moved back to Franklin County and Pat serves on the FCHA board of directors.

A Story – When I Started to College

One day near the end of my high school days I encountered in the school hallway the Assistant High School Football Coach one morning, who invited me to travel along with him one afternoon that week with others to a local junior college football practice. He said that if I would “try-out” and make a good showing, I could probably earn a scholarship to play football for the junior college the next fall. So I did accompany the Coach one afternoon that week, over to the junior college and “tried out” at a session of spring practice.

First, after an interview with the junior college head coach in his office in the back of the college gymnasium, the next chore was to report to the football equipment room and get “suited up”.

And, we did get suited up that early afternoon with the assistance of the student equipment managers. I noticed that all the equipment handed me was clean and fit me well. Then, with the shrill blast from a whistle that someone blew outside, we “try-out” players and veterans all trotted out to the practice field and formed-up for the usual calisthenics. By the end of the strenuous calisthenics I was wondering if I really wanted to do this. After calisthenics the backs and ends lined up for passes from the quarterbacks. The passing drill was followed by full scrimmage in which the coaches watched as we “candidates” participated.

After the intensive workout, the group was dismissed with all heading to the showers, followed by the regulars making their way to the school cafeteria and we candidates “lining up” to have an “exit interview” with the head coach.

I learned from the junior college head coach during my “exit interview” with him that spring, that he thought I had a future as a player for the college and that in return I would be earning a “partial scholarship” that consisted of tuition, books, fees and one-half my meals; I would be receiving through the mail later, a scholarship form contract to sign.

So, on Sunday of the following September 1, after my Mom and Dad helped me load their car, they then drove me over to Paris for my reporting to the campus and initial fall football camp. And, as I retrieved my last packed bag from my parents’ automobile that Sunday morning, my Mother handed me a new Holy Bible that I am sure she had shopped for before my beginning of college that year.

As I moved into the Athletic Dormitory I began meeting some newly recruited players, like myself, as well as some of the 2nd year players. I also spoke to several players which I had played high school football, and ran track, against.

Then, after I had stowed away my belongings in the dorm and had lunch in the school cafeteria, the word came around that we were to have a meeting with the head coach in the nearby Stadium that afternoon.

And, on that first Sunday of my first football season in college, the head coach of our football squad had us some 125 “candidates” assemble in the west stands of the football stadium in front of the “press box”, which area had become shady and bearable under the usual hot Texas summer sun by that time of day. And, during that first meeting our head football coach literally “laid down the law”. The “curfew” was to be 11:00 pm on week-nights and 12:30 pm on Saturday and Sunday nights. And, there was to be no cutting of classes any day; no eating between meals and no poker playing in the dormitories. Also, no smoking or drinking.

In the following days we had football practice twice daily at 9 in the morning and 4 in the afternoon, and although it was in the middle of the “Texas heat”, the practices seemed to go well for me as I had gotten in good shape over the summer and was ready for the rigorous work-outs. At the end of the first week we were then bused about 35 miles away to a small senior college where we had a scrimmage game with the

team of the school there. Following the scrimmage we were then fed a “steak dinner” which made a great impression on us all.

At the end of the third week our names were posted outside the head coach’s office where I learned that I had been assigned to the 3rd team and would be a member of the “traveling squad”.

EPILOGUE: The “junior college” was Paris Junior College located in Paris, Texas. I suppose the college was supported by taxes from a “junior college district” made up of the counties that were in the immediate vicinity of Paris.

The high school football coaches who escorted me over to the junior college were Don Jones and Mark Boatwright.

The head football coach of the Paris Junior College “Dragons” was Dewitt Alexander, with the assistant coach being Boyd Converse. Coach Alexander had been a long time coach of high school baseball and football in Texas, with Coach Converse who was originally from Oklahoma, was a graduate student at the local East Texas State University (now Texas A&M University at Commerce).

The senior college with which we played a scrimmage game after the first week of junior college workouts, was Austin College, home of the “Kangaroos” which was a Presbyterian supported parochial school located in Sherman, Texas.

*Ralph K. Banks
Austin, Texas*



Brandon Howley, grandson of Chuck Howley, and Michael Meredith, son of Don Meredith, pose in front of picture of of their famous Dallas Cowboys relatives at the Meredith exhibit. A reception at the Fire Station Museum topped off the evening on January 4th, following the Mount Vernon premiere of “NFL Presents Don Meredith,” a film documenting the career of Meredith.

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