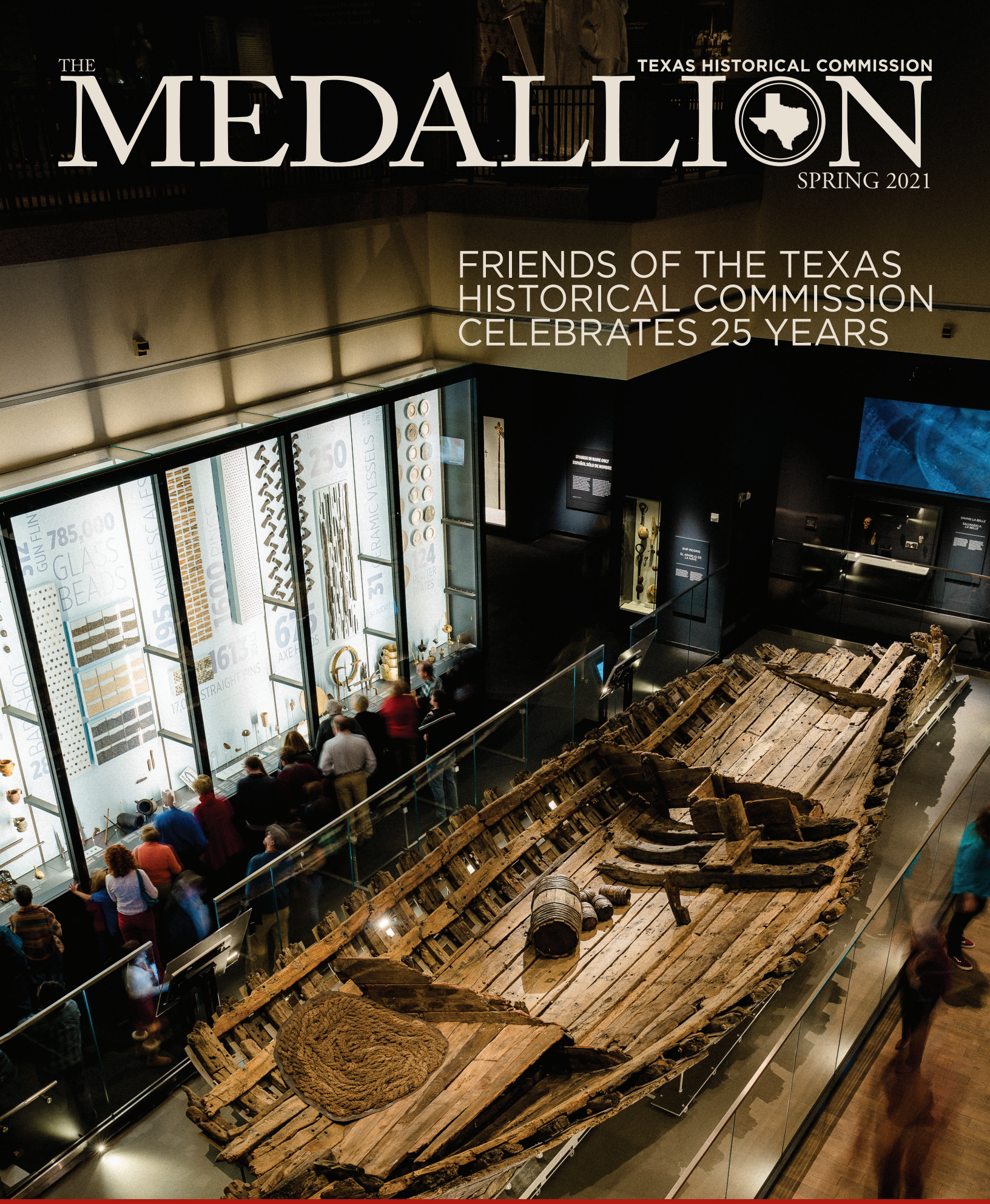
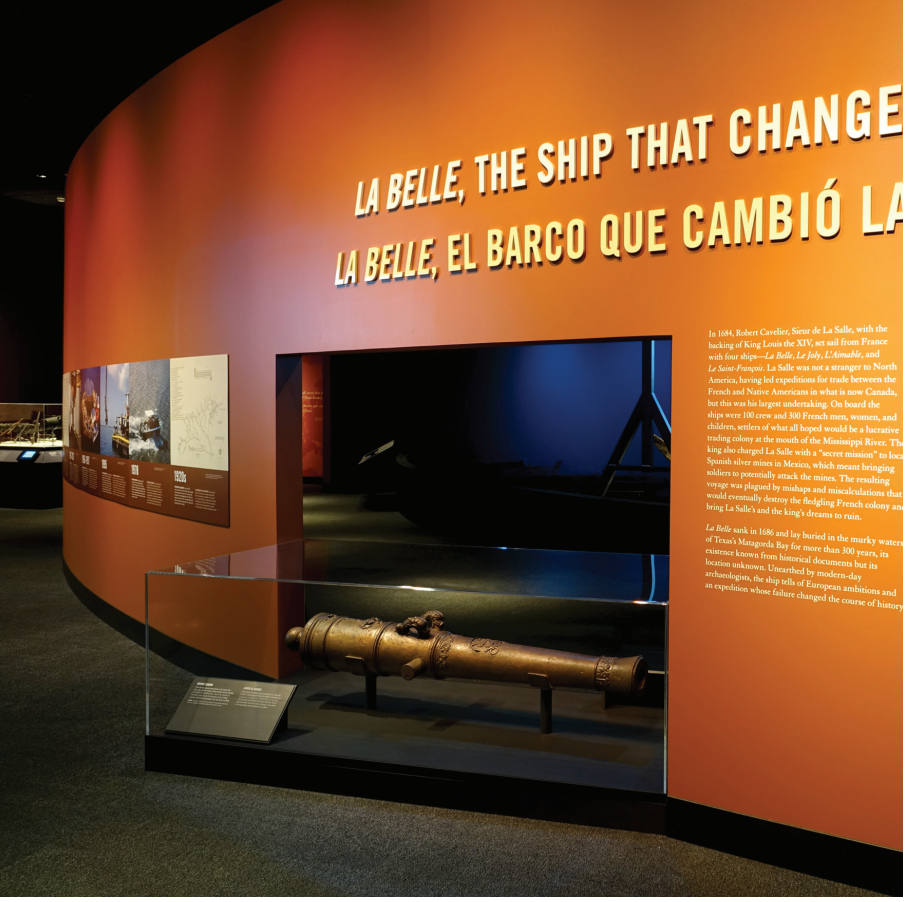
THE MEDALLION
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
SPRING 2021

FRIENDS OF THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION CELEBRATES 25 YEARS



LA BELLE EXHIBIT, BULLOCK MUSEUM | LEARN MORE ABOUT BECOMING FRIENDS



THE MEDALLION
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
SPRING 2021

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Our Mission
To protect and preserve the state's historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education, enjoyment, and economic benefit of present and future generations.

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TOP: The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin showcases *La Belle*'s excavation, partially funded through the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission.

ON THE COVER: *La Belle*'s hull is prominently displayed on the main floor of the Bullock Museum in Austin. Courtesy of the Bullock Museum.

LT. GOVERNOR DAN PATRICK

LEADERSHIP LETTER

Greetings:

Many things make Texas a special place, but our heritage and unique history set us apart from the rest of the nation. Our state's story features generations of settlers, immigrants, native people, and freedmen, all of whom have deep roots here and have made contributions to our shared history. It is a story of liberty, hard won through revolution by patriots and heroes.

We were reminded of this heroism during recent testimony about relocating the cenotaph at the iconic Alamo. The Texas Historical Commission's (THC) commissioners voted overwhelmingly to keep this important monument to Texas' heritage in its original place of importance.

This decision reminded people across the country that Texas stands up for its proud history. Our commitment to personal freedom and the opportunity to prosper is a model for the world.

It's up to each of us as individual Texans to honor this heritage and pass it on to the next generation. Educating our children and grandchildren about our state's history is one of the most important things we can do as Texans to ensure this. That's why I strongly support the Texas Historical Commission.

The agency's 34 state historic sites are valuable tools for parents and teachers to educate children about their history. The THC makes the sites' history compelling, engaging, and relevant while telling the story of Texas through structures, landscapes, and archeological resources.

I'm looking forward to working with the THC to discover new and exciting ways that they can empower individual Texans to better understand our culture of liberty and personal achievement.

Sincerely,
Lt. Governor Dan Patrick

THE FRIENDS OF THE THC

25 YEARS AND GROWING!

By Anjali Zutshi
Executive Director, Friends of the Texas Historical Commission

History drives our desire to know our past, enrich our present, and cultivate and inform the future. The Friends of the Texas Historical Commission (FTHC) is pleased to have played a vital role in supporting these endeavors for the past 25 years as the Texas Historical Commission's nonprofit partner. During this great adventure, the FTHC has developed and assisted with countless preservation projects benefitting Texans across the state. Highlights from the past quarter century appear on these pages.

LA BELLE EXCAVATION
Fundraising for this project and the ongoing preservation of *La Belle* continued through 2000. This was the Friends' first major fundraising effort, right after its incorporation as a nonprofit.

RED RIVER WAR BATTLE SITES PROJECT
Survey and documentation of Red River War battle sites were published in a book by the THC's Brett Cruse.

TEXAS HEROES ANNUAL FUND PROGRAM
Established.

TEXAS LAND TITLE ASSOCIATION PARTNERS WITH COURTHOUSE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
The TLTA has since provided over $345,000 in support for this program.

TEXAS IN WWII
The Ed Rachal Foundation, the Effie and Wofford Cain Foundation, and the Houston Endowment provide support for site surveys and an oral history project.

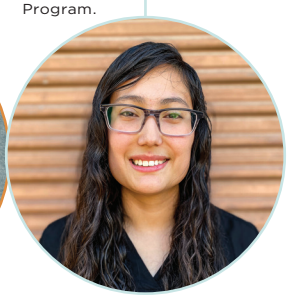
1996–2000 | 1999–2001 | 2003 | 2006 | 2005–2010

1999–2001 | 2004–2005 | 2007

THE TEXAS FLAGS 1936–1945 PROJECT
Over $389,000 was raised to restore and preserve 34 historic Texas flags exhibited in the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston.
Photo: Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

TEXAS IN WWI PROJECT
Funds raised.

PRESERVATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM ESTABLISHED
The program name was originally the Diversity Internship Program, then changed to the current Preservation Scholars Program.



2010

TEXAS HEROES ENDOWMENT
The endowment has now grown to over $130,000 and supports the THC's education programs.

CADDO MOUNDS GRASS HOUSE
Fundraising begins for the Caddo Mounds grass house and production of a PBS documentary.

2014–15

REAL PLACES CONFERENCE
A successful partnership begins with the THC to present the first Real Places conference in Austin, which has grown to over 800 participants and is Texas' premier historic preservation conference.

2016

DOING HISTORY SUMMER CAMP LAUNCH
These educational camps are supported through funding from the THC Education Fund.

2018–19

ALMONTE SURRENDER SITE
The Friends begins raising funds to support the acquisition of 50+ acres of the Almonte Surrender Site near the San Jacinto Monument.

2020

LEVI JORDAN MUSEUM/ VISITORS CENTER
The Friends begins developing a feasibility analysis for a capital campaign.

2021–PRESENT

2013–14

FULTON MANSION PROJECT
The Friends partnered with the Friends of Fulton Mansion to raise funds for a $2.3 million restoration of the 1877 bayside mansion.

SAN FELIPE DE AUSTIN MUSEUM
A $6 million capital campaign launches for developing a state-of-the art museum, with implementation partnership ongoing from 2018 to present.

2016

RESTORATION OF THE FRENCH LEGATION
The Friends receives over $355,000 in support grants from Visit Austin and the City of Austin Heritage Grants Program.

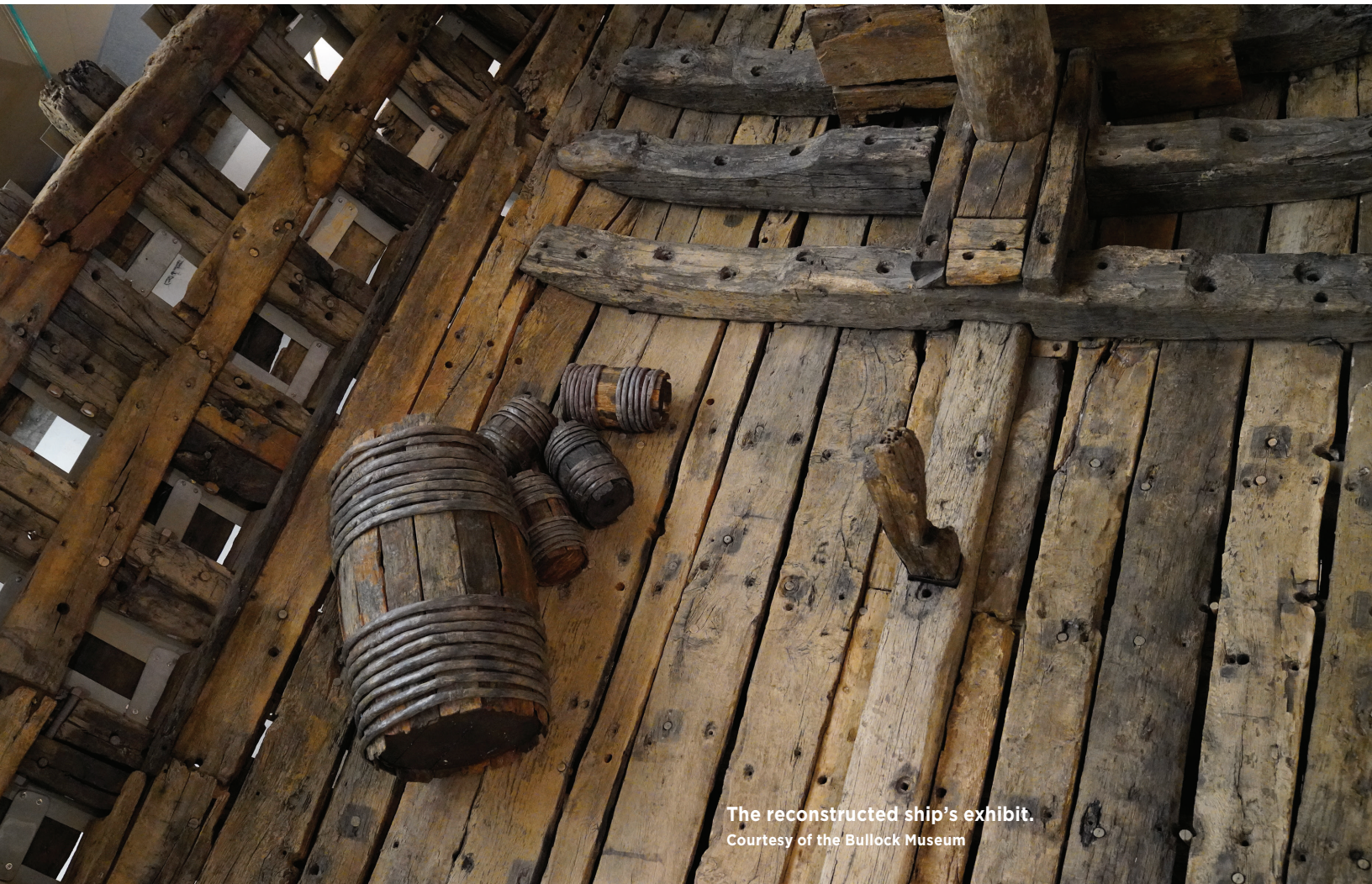
2018–19

CADDO MOUNDS EDUCATION CENTER
The Friends begins a fundraising campaign for construction of an education center at Caddo Mounds.

2020-PRESENT

French cannon from *La Belle*'s excavation.

La Belle's hull on the Gulf Coast floor.



The reconstructed ship's exhibit.
Courtesy of the Bullock Museum

By Andy Rhodes, Managing Editor, *The Medallion*

BECOMING FRIENDS

LA BELLE'S EXCAVATION PROMPTS FOUNDING OF THC'S SUPPORT GROUP

The origins of the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission (FTHC) lie nearly 12 feet below the surface of the Gulf Coast. In fact, the story can be traced all the way back to 1686, when La Salle's ship La Belle *met its fateful end.*

A few years after a powerful storm grounded *La Belle*, Spanish explorers found part of the ship protruding above water and drew a map of its location in the bay. More than three centuries later, this map became a valuable tool for the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) marine archeologists in search of the shipwreck.

"The bay they drew looked just like today's Matagorda Bay," says THC Commissioner Jim Bruseth, the agency's Director of the Department of Antiquities Protection at the time. "It was very helpful in giving us clues for where to look."

The ship's discovery in 1995 made international news. Bruseth and his team planned to mount a major excavation, which required extensive funding from private sources beyond the state's investment. He recalls working with a pro bono attorney in Dallas to establish the FTHC. With the attorney's help, Bruseth developed the bylaws and filed for an IRS determination letter granting the Friends a tax-exempt, nonprofit status.

With this important fundraising entity in place, he and his crew continued their excavation work. The team was energized by their recent discovery—a bronze cannon with the crest of French King Louis XIV—which confirmed it was *La Belle*.

"Our emotions varied between unbelievable joy to absolute disbelief," Bruseth says. "The joy was that we'd found *La Belle* after 309 years! The disbelief was that we thought we'd never really find the wreck, since we were looking for the proverbial needle in the haystack. There are hundreds of shipwrecks in Matagorda Bay, and the water is so murky you can't see anything."

It was the first of many obstacles Bruseth and his crew would face. The cloudy water, fragile-artifact excavation, and threat of looters resulted in the decision to build a cofferdam. This massive structure—with two concentric walls of interlocking steel measuring nearly 60 feet tall—held back the water while archeologists excavated on the "dry" gulf floor. Crews worked diligently to recover what would eventually be 1.8 million artifacts.

"One of our big challenges was keeping the artifacts wet all the time since the seawater was preserving them," Bruseth says. "If they dried out, they would start to disintegrate."

With costs averaging over $50,000 a month, funding became a priority. The Friends played a pivotal role by securing its first gift ($250,000 in AT&T stock) from the late Dennis O'Connor of nearby Victoria. Additional funds soon arrived, which, combined with a state appropriation of $1.75 million, allowed marine archeologists to dive fully into *La Belle*'s excavation.

Around this time, state officials, including Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock, discussed sharing this significant story by building a new Texas history museum in Austin. With the assistance of the Friends and other organizations, a museum was developed with *La Belle* as its centerpiece.

The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum opened in 2001 with a large hull-shaped design on the main level's carpeted floor. Thirteen years later, after an extensive preservation process, Bruseth participated in the museum's reassembly of *La Belle*'s hull as a live exhibit. Today, it commands a prominent location in the Bullock Museum's main gallery, fulfilling the goal envisioned by Bruseth and Bullock nearly two decades ago.

Looking back, Bruseth says the THC and its partners forged a legacy via significant discoveries about *La Belle* and

Continued on page 14

PRESERVATION PERSPECTIVE

THC FRIENDS BOARD MEMBERS REFLECT ON 25 YEARS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

By Andy Rhodes,
Managing Editor, *The Medallion*

With the Friends of the THC celebrating a quarter-century of achievements this year, we decided it would be a good time to ask a few of the group's board members to reflect on their experiences. Their insider insight provides a distinctive perspective on the organization's successes over the past 25 years.

LAREATHA CLAY
Former Chair

How did you first get involved with the Friends of the THC? I first became involved while I was a Texas Historical Commission (THC) commissioner, serving as a liaison to the Friends. When my term with the commission ended in 2007, I was nominated by the commission to serve as a board member, and I have been in that position ever since.

What are two of the most memorable projects you've assisted with as a Friends board member? The most memorable project for me is the growth of what is now the Preservation Scholars Program, since it is basically my brainchild. It has been very fulfilling to see this idea of putting real action behind making sure the preservation community (both professionals and volunteers) is a diverse one. I am very proud that the board has continuously supported the program through some pretty lean years, including funding at least one student when there were no other funds available. I am really excited that Anjali Zutshi has taken the program to the next level, to the point that we have funding for seven scholars for Summer 2021.

The second most memorable was fundraising for San Felipe de Austin. As the chair at the time, we were dealing with a very short timeframe and a board that was originally not 100% on board (primarily because of the short timeframe). We also had a change of executive directors right in the middle of the campaign. I am still amazed that we were able to pull that one off!

Tell us something about the Friends board that most people don't know. We try to live up to our adopted philosophy that every Texas history story is valued, and every donor is valued regardless of the size of their donation. I feel we have lived up to those values by the way all donors are acknowledged, and I'm especially proud of the intentional makeup of the board to reflect a variety of Texas stories. The 2021 board is more diverse regarding age, ethnicity, and geographical location than the board I liaised with in 2001 and joined in 2007.

Why is it important for Texans to celebrate the Friends' 25th anniversary? We have been the (many times silent) engine that has made sure Texas history is preserved. So many preservation projects, from *La Belle* to San Felipe de Austin to Caddo Mounds, would not exist at all, much less what they are today, without the support of the Friends. So many of the Texas jewels and accomplishments that the THC can brag about are the products of the work of the Friends.

HARRIET LATIMER
Founding Chair

How did you first get involved with the Friends of the THC? I became a committed supporter of preservation and the THC and its work many years ago. I participated in many activities of the commission over the years and was so proud that we probably have the best preservation program in the country (originally built by Truett Latimer, to whom I am related!)

I was amazed when Anice Read (Texas Main Street Program founder) called to tell me of the discovery of *La Belle* in 1995. She said La Salle's flagship was located near shore in shallow water and expressed concern that it would be looted after the discovery became public. I asked how we could help, and she told me we needed to form a nonprofit organization at once. It could be called the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, and we

could raise funds to protect the ship, excavate it, and move the hull and the artifacts to Texas A&M's Conservation Laboratory. I was to be the founding chairperson, and Killis Almond and Scott Caven would be the co-founders of the organization. That is what we did within 10 days—we started soliciting contributions right away, and the tale is told. It was a huge success, and today the ship resides in the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum as a permanent collection.

What are two of the most memorable projects you've assisted with as a Friends board member? *La Belle* has been my major focus over the years. I've also helped build the Friends organization into a strong preservation arm for the commission and the State of Texas. I've worked on almost all the other projects and believe that the transfer of historic sites to the commission will give us a huge opportunity to preserve and protect more important locations.

Tell us something about the Friends board that most people don't know. We work very hard to secure funding for our projects, which are now statewide, and have a great staff to guide and direct us.

Why is it important for Texans to celebrate the Friends' 25th anniversary? In this 25th anniversary year, we have great work to do with the huge new challenge of the recent sites transfer from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The more we acknowledge and acclaim our work, the more supporters will know about what we do, and we will gain their interest as well.

BRIAN SHIVERS
Chair

How did you first get involved with the Friends of the THC? Lindalyn Adams recruited me. I can never say no to Lindalyn. (Adams is a renowned preservationist and chairman emerita of the Dallas County Historical Foundation).

What are two of the most memorable projects you've assisted with as a Friends board member? One is *La Belle*. I came on board during the conservation phase and got to follow it all the way to completion of the Bullock exhibit. The other is probably Texas in WWII. I learned so much from that whole effort.

Tell us something about the Friends board that most people don't know. Unfortunately, there's a lot people don't know about the Friends. Specifically, I'd mention the Preservation Scholars Program. Also, because we aren't a state agency, we can do things like hire contractors, host the Real Places conference, pay for contract labor, and a number of other things that the THC can't do on its own.

Why is it important for Texans to celebrate the Friends' 25th anniversary? Because it represents a whole new era for the THC. Before the Friends existed, the THC couldn't raise money from private donors. That money has allowed the THC to take on more projects and initiatives.

For more information about the Friends of the THC, please visit thcfriends.org.

THROUGH THICK AND THIN

HISTORIC SITES' FRIENDS GROUPS OFFER RELIABLE SUPPORT

By Angela Reed
THC Community Partnerships Program Manager

While the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission (FTHC) celebrates 25 years of assisting the agency this year, it's also worth noting that Friends Groups across Texas are making a difference on the local level by supporting individual state historic sites. Similar to the approach of the FTHC, these Friends Groups can raise funds and community assistance for the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) state historic sites, which often face limited resources and state funding-related issues.

Friends Groups are organizations comprised of people who share a passion for the sites they support. These groups dedicate their time, talents, and treasures to ensure a site has financial, volunteer, and promotional support, sometimes filling in funding gaps where the state budget falls short. They can also enhance a site's programs by providing refreshments, entertainment, and event logistics which cannot be paid for with state funds. In addition, Friends Groups are the site's ambassadors. They draw from deep connections in their local communities to engage important stakeholders in supporting their partner site.

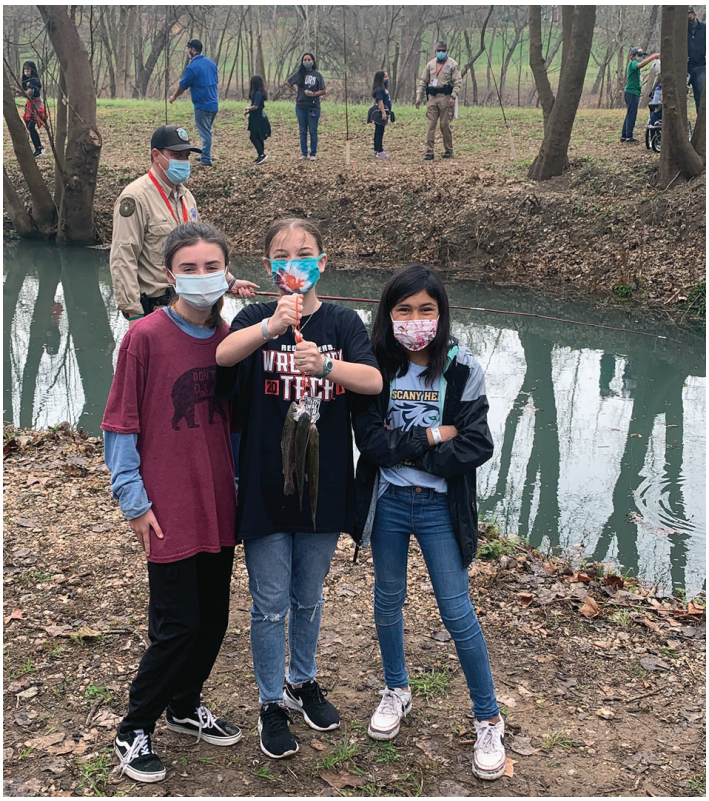
In 2020, as the world responded to the coronavirus pandemic, Friends Groups pivoted in sync with the THC's historic sites; no small feat for volunteers who were juggling changes in their own work and family lives. As usual, these nimble Friends landed on their feet, adjusting to new technologies to meet with board members virtually, learning tools to promote their partner sites online, and re-strategizing how they might continue to raise donated funds in a changing philanthropic landscape.

For example, the Friends of Sam Bell Maxey House in Paris, Texas, activated its funding and volunteer support this spring when site staff asked for help to restore the home's 1860s formal gardens, a project they could all engage in safely outdoors. Another example was in Castroville, where the Friends of Landmark Inn turned their attention to the site's annual Kid Fish program, an outdoor event where children and their parents fish in the Medina River that runs alongside the site's historic gristmill and inn. The Friends Group offered a unique solution to provide hard-to-find fishing supplies by harvesting and drying bamboo poles and stringing them with new lines and tackle.

Yet another example was when the Friends Group for Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site near Brenham realized that its annual Texas Independence gala, which typically attracted hundreds of visitors, would not be feasible. They opted instead to raise funds for a short film they produced with site staff, called "Independence: A Lone Star Rises," which debuted in March of this year (watch the 28-minute film on the THC's YouTube channel). These are just a few ways Friends Groups continued their unwavering support during this very trying year, and the many efforts of all our unsung heroes—our Friends volunteers—are too many to list.

The THC supports the sites' Friends Groups through the Community Partnerships Program, launched in 2017 to provide nonprofit resources and to serve as an agency liaison. Currently, the agency's Historic Sites Division stewards 34 state historic sites, and 18 of those sites benefit from nonprofit partnerships. The Community Partnerships Program frequently works with the FTHC to provide quarterly development seminars, fiscal sponsorships for Friends Groups under the FTHC's nonprofit umbrella, and the annual Friends Alliance Awards.

These awards are the THC's way of saying thank you to Friends Groups for their tireless efforts. The awards are offered to groups as a whole and to individual volunteers. Nominations



may be made by site staff, the public, or by the Friends Groups themselves. Final selections of awardees are made by a committee of the FTHC board of trustees, and the FTHC honors recipients with an awards ceremony at the THC's annual Real Places conference, along with a modest donation to the group.

Since the award program's inception in 2019, Friends Alliance Award winners have included the Friends of San Felipe de Austin, Fort Griffin, Mission Dolores, Caddo Mounds, Fulton Mansion, and Casa Navarro. Individual volunteers Lois Lacy with the Friends of Mission Dolores, and Sharon Cowell with the Casa Magoffin Compañeros were awarded in 2021. This year the Friends Alliance Award nominations are open through July 9. More information about previous winners, and nomination forms for 2022 awards, can be found on the Friends of the THC's website.

Visit thcfriends.org for virtual event topics and dates.

OPPOSITE: Friends Groups assist historic sites' communities via projects like Sam Bell Maxey House's garden, with staff and volunteers, from left: Reed Clark, Grant Taylor, and Mike Taylor. ABOVE: Friends Groups also supported Landmark Inn's Kid Fish program.

Please take a moment to get to know a group near you via their website, Facebook page, or simply introduce yourself at the next site event hosted by a Friends Group.

Friends of Caddo Mounds, Alto:
facebook.com/FriendsofCaddoMounds

Casa Magoffin Compañeros, El Paso:
facebook.com/Casa-Magoffin-Companeros-902012319813515

Friends of Casa Navarro, San Antonio:
friendsofcasanavarro.org

Friends of Confederate Reunion Grounds, Mexia:
facebook.com/Friends-of-Confederate-Reunion-Grounds-State-Historic-Site-217676581626661

Friends of Fort Griffin, Albany:
325-762-3592

Fort Lancaster Company, Sheffield:
432-836-4391

Friends of Fort McKavett, Fort McKavett:
ftmckavettfriends.com

Friends of Fulton Mansion, Rockport:
friendsoffultonmansion.org

Friends of Kreische Brewery & Monument Hill, La Grange:
friendsofkreischebrewery.org

Friends of Landmark Inn, Castroville:
friendsoflandmarkinn.com

Friends of Mission Dolores, San Augustine:
facebook.com/fomdtx

The Admiral Nimitz Foundation, Fredericksburg:
pacificwarmuseum.org

Friends of Sam Bell Maxey House, Paris:
facebook.com/visitsambellmaxeyhouse

Friends of San Felipe de Austin, San Felipe:
979-885-2181

San Jacinto Museum Association, La Porte:
sanjacinto-museum.org

Friends of Starr Family Home, Marshall:
903-935-3044

Varner-Hogg Volunteers, West Columbia:
979-345-4656

Washington on the Brazos Foundation, Washington:
wheretexasbecametexas.org

SCHOLARLY ENDEAVORS

FRIENDS' INTERNSHIP PROGRAM BUILDS CAREER GOALS FOR UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS

By Katie Cukerbaum
Friends of the THC Development Manager

Today's students are tomorrow's preservationists, and ensuring a future workforce of passionate individuals is vital to the future study of our past. The Preservation Scholars Program, administered by the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission (FTHC), was created in 2007 to build interest in historic preservation careers, specifically among students who identify as members of underrepresented cultural and ethnic communities.

Over the course of the internship, students work under the supervision of Texas Historical Commission (THC) staff at the agency's headquarters in Austin or in the field at historic sites to complete an active THC project of their choosing. Students meet with staff in each of the agency's divisions and attend weekly brown bag lunch presentations with non-THC preservation professionals and experts to learn about the important work happening across the state and beyond.

The Preservation Scholars Program offers the FTHC the opportunity to engage students from underrepresented ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the THC's work, from a focus on the economic impact of preserving a rural community's heritage, to building the digital presence of state historic sites, to assisting regional organizations with cemetery preservation.

Additional projects that students have worked on over the last 14 years include:

TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKERS AND UNDERTOLD MARKERS PROGRAMS:

Interns are responsible for processing applications for Texas historical markers and Undertold markers, researching and synthesizing the information submitted by applicants, and writing more than 100 marker inscriptions over the period of the summer internship.

WRITING AND EDITORIAL PROJECTS:

Students research and produce web content and blog pieces for the THC's Communications Division. Past articles have focused on cultural themes like German historical sites, Hispanic heritage sites, and African American sites.

TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM:

The Texas Main Street Program supports Texas communities in the preservation and revitalization of historic downtowns and commercial districts. Students have worked on various projects in this program over the years. A few examples:

- An architecture student worked with the historic Elm Street district in Waco to design streetscapes and restored facades for the neighborhood and the district. (2017)

- An architecture student worked on a series of adaptive reuse

German Historical Sites in the Hill Country Region

Submitted by Farah Merchant on Tue, 08/04/2020 - 1:46pm

Categories: Heritage Travel

Tags: heritage travel

By Farah Merchant, THC Preservation Scholar

German immigrants initially sought sanctuary in Texas from political and religious persecution. Many settled in the Hill Country, where the climate paralleled their native country. German Texans influenced life in the Lone Star State—they brought classical and opera music, breweries, biergartens, and their language. The German legacy continues to influence modern-day Texas.

CASTROVILLE: LANDMARK INN STATE HISTORIC SITE

Originally a home and dry goods store with a rear-detached kitchen, the Alsatian-style structure was transformed into an inn by John Vance. Vance constructed a second story and a bath house, which was the only man-made bath between San Antonio and Eagle Pass at the time. The inn, called the Vance Hotel, operated until sold to Joseph and Margarethe Courand in 1899.

Landmark Inn State Historic Site

proposals. These included the development of temporary "pop-up" retail establishments in Houston's historic Emancipation Avenue neighborhood to generate economic and community development in the area. (2019)

• Two students worked on the restoration of the Jamison Building in Texarkana, and also on a related oral history project. The students presented the research and recommendations from this project to the Texarkana Main Street program. (2020)

CEMETERY PRESERVATION PROGRAM:

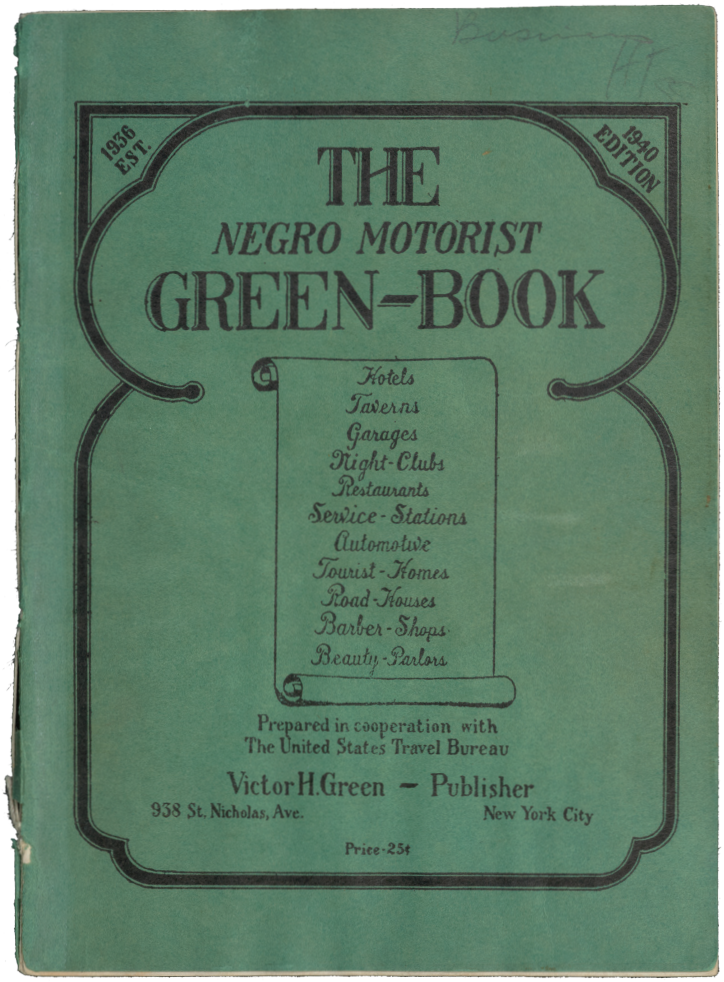
In 2019, a student worked on developing a cemetery preservation resource guide for volunteers to use within their own communities. This resource is used by the Cemetery Preservation Program at the THC in its work with communities across Texas.

ARCHIVAL CATALOGING PROJECT:

A student interested in library sciences and archeology worked on a project to update the agency's system for archiving and cataloging collections and preparing them for digitization. This work was done pre-COVID-19, and thankfully positioned the THC to more easily access and offer collections virtually to educators, researchers, and students.

THE GREEN BOOK RESEARCH PROJECT:

This project involved cataloging and creating a visual guide of sites across Austin that were part of the original historic "Negro Motorist Green-Book." The student selected a list of sites in the Austin area, did in-depth research on these sites, and created a visual aid that can help educators, students, and history enthusiasts learn more about these sites, many of which are gone.



The FTHC is honored to have the support of the Still Water Foundation, the Fondren Fund for Texas of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Sally Anne Schmidt and Marc Tabolsky, Renee Rupa Dutia, and many individuals who have donated to this program in memory of José Contreras for the 2021 Preservation Scholars Program.

For more information about this fund and the Preservation Scholars Program, visit thcfriends.org. To read profiles about three past preservation scholars and their success stories, visit thc.texas.gov/blog.

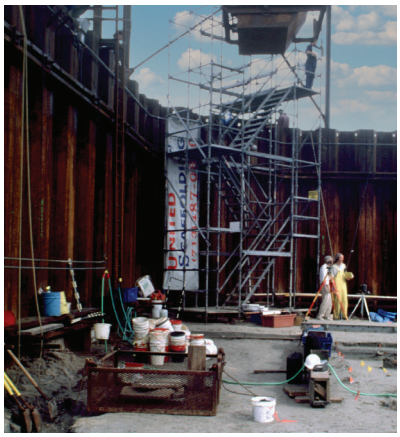
OPPOSITE, FAR LEFT: Preservation Scholars have assisted with the THC's Undertold Markers program, which recently commemorated Leah Moncure of Bastrop (right), the first woman in Texas to be a licensed professional engineer (1938). American Society of Civil Engineers. OPPOSITE: German Historical Sites in the Hill Country Region blog entry by 2020 Preservation Scholar Farah Merchant. ABOVE, LEFT: Preservation Scholars assisted the Texas Main Street Program with a 19th-century building restoration project in Waco, and cataloguing Austin sites for a guide about The Negro Motorist Green-Book, ABOVE, RIGHT. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. "The Negro Motorist Green-Book: 1940" The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1940.

Continued from page 7

its contributions to global history. As they studied the ship and its historical documentation in the U.S. and France, they gained a better understanding of La Salle's 1685 expedition to North America.

According to Bruseth, La Salle's goal was to find the mouth of the Mississippi River, build a colony there, and hold all the associated land for France. Due to faulty maps, he missed the Mississippi River and landed on the Texas coast, thinking he was near the Mississippi.

"If *La Belle* had not been lost, La Salle would have had all the supplies onboard for his use and could have sailed the ship to French settlements in the Caribbean for help," Bruseth says. "The sinking of *La Belle* changed the course of Texas history from what could have been a French heritage—much like New Orleans—and opened the door for Spain to occupy the area, resulting in our wonderful Hispanic heritage."



Reflecting on more-recent history, Bruseth credits the FTHC with playing a significant role in bringing this history to light due to its funding of the excavation and related preservation initiatives.

"All these projects have broadened our knowledge of Texas history and in many cases helped preserve the tangible remains of our state's past," Bruseth says. "Having been deeply involved in setting up the Friends, I find it extremely gratifying today, 25 years later, to see the great success the organization has achieved, thanks to the hard work of many dedicated and talented board and staff members."

To learn more about the Friends of the THC, please visit thcfriends.org.

ABOVE, LEFT: A steel cofferdam held back the gulf waters while THC archeologists excavated *La Belle*. ABOVE, RIGHT: Marine archeologists with the French cannon they discovered during *La Belle*'s excavation.

FRIENDS 25 YEARS OF THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

YES! I want to preserve the real places telling the real stories of Texas and to celebrate the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission's 25th Anniversary!

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Gifts to the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. For more information, please visit our website at thcfriends.org.

NEWS BRIEFS

GOVERNOR ABBOTT APPOINTS FIVE THC COMMISSIONERS

Gov. Greg Abbott has appointed Donna M. Bahorich and reappointed Dr. Jim Bruseth, John W. Crain, Renee Rupa Dutia, and Gilbert E. "Pete" Peterson, III to the Texas Historical Commission (THC) for terms set to expire in February 2025.

DONNA M. BAHORICH of Houston previously served as Chair of the State Board of Education (SBOE). She was elected to represent the SBOE's District 6 in 2012 and reelected in 2016.

JIM BRUSETH, PH.D. of Austin is an independent archeological consultant and the author of several books and articles on Texas archeology. He is a member and former treasurer of the Society for American Archaeology and a member of the Society for Historical Archaeology, Register of Professional Archaeologists, and the Texas Archaeological Society.

JOHN W. CRAIN of Dallas is the former vice-chair of the commission. He serves as chairman of the board of directors of the Summerlee Foundation and is a director of the Bryan Museum.

RENEE RUPA DUTIA of Dallas is president of Regali Inc., which owns and operates retail and food and beverage concessions at DFW and Dallas Love Field airports. She serves on the Dallas Fort Worth Asian American Citizens Council Board and is the founder of Asian 100.

GILBERT E. "PETE" PETERSON, III of Alpine has more than 50 years of professional experience in the fields of education, investments, timberland, and ranching. He has served as an agency commissioner since 2007, and has served in many volunteer capacities in the Trans-Pecos region.

NEW DIGITAL FILMS HIGHLIGHT TEXAS REVOLUTION SITES

San Jacinto Battleground and Washington-on-the-Brazos state historic sites recently premiered digital films celebrating Texas' fight for independence.

San Jacinto Battleground celebrated the 185th San Jacinto Day with the premiere of "San Jacinto: A Lone Star Shines." The digital film depicts four pivotal scenes from the Battle of San Jacinto and the fight for freedom.

Washington-on-the-Brazos premiered the original movie, "Independence! A Lone Star Rises," filmed with participation from local Brazos county students and Texan reenactors.

The San Jacinto video series project is made possible by San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site, San Jacinto Museum of History Association, and the THC. The Washington-on-the-Brazos project is made possible by Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site, Washington-on-the-Brazos Historical Foundation, and the THC.

The videos are available on the THC's YouTube channel: youtube.com/user/TxHist.

FAREWELL TO LARRY OAKS

Lawerence Oaks, who led the THC from 1998 to 2009 as executive director and State Historic Preservation Officer, passed away in February 2021. Oaks was one of only four executive directors the THC has had since 1966.

Before Oaks arrived in Austin, he served as director of the Alabama Historical Commission from 1980 until 1998. As the THC's executive director, he oversaw growing programs that preserved historic courthouses and Main Street districts, *La Belle*'s excavation, and restored the Texas Governor's Mansion. Oaks served as a trustee for the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, and he was among the honorees who received the 2008 Preserve America Presidential Award for the THC's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program. His legacy lives on in the THC's successful programs, and he will be greatly missed by Texas' preservation community.

ABOVE, TOP: A screen shot from the THC's "Independence! A Lone Star Rises" digital film. ABOVE: Lawerence Oaks, former THC executive director and State Historic Preservation Officer.

NOTICE

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WHERE ON EARTH...IN TEXAS

KNOW YOUR TEXAS HISTORY? Put your skills to the test by identifying the pictured site! The first three people who correctly identify the location will receive a prize and be named in the next issue of *The Medallion*. Send your answer to: *The Medallion*, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276 or email to medallion@thc.texas.gov. Limit one prize annually per contestant.

NEED A CLUE? A nearby town was named for this significant historic landmark, which has ties to a 1767 Spanish land grant.

ANSWER TO THE PHOTO FROM THE LAST ISSUE: The photo at left is part of Fort Travis in Port Bolivar near Galveston. In early 1836, army recruits and enslaved laborers built an octagonal earth and timber fortification. These concrete defense facilities were added during World Wars I and II.

Congratulations and (eventual) prizes go to the first readers who correctly identified the site: Linda Brawley of Austin and Kayce Coll of Crosby. Thanks to all who participated!