TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

MARKER RESEARCH GUIDE FOR TEXAS IN WORLD WAR II

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) created this guide to help county historical commissions and marker sponsors develop a strong application for a community as a topic for a historical marker. It is a guide in researching and preparing the narrative history.

NARRATIVE HISTORY: This is the key element to any marker application and the vehicle through which historical context and significance are demonstrated and proven. The narrative history is essentially a research paper that includes four key components — *context, overview, significance and documentation*. A sample is included.

I. **CONTEXT:** The historical context represents the broader set of facts or circumstances that explains how the topic fits into the broader scope of Texas in World War II history. What elements led to World War II era development in the community or people's role in the war effort? How does the community's or its residents' World War II history relate to the World War II history of nearby communities, its county or its region? What is its relevance to the broader World War II historical context? What other events took place (locally, regionally or nationally) that may have had a bearing on how or why the subject was important? History does not take place in a vacuum; it is dynamic and interconnected, and the context explores these elements.

II. **OVERVIEW:** This is the main body of the narrative history, and it represents the key facts in the story. The overview should be told, as closely as possible, in chronological order with clearly documented connections between earlier and more recent aspects of the historical context. While a complete overview is required, the central focus should be on the *historical period of significance* (see *Significance* section), i.e. the formative years of the pre-Attack on Pearl Harbor, the early years of the war, the war's conclusion and impact upon the community or region and important changes or developments in its history.

III. **HISTORICAL/CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**: A topic is considered to have historical significance if it had influences, effect or impact on the course of history or cultural development; age alone does not determine significance. Topics do not need to be of statewide or national significance; many historical markers deal with local history and a local level of significance. They may also have cultural significance. To determine significance, ask such questions as: How did the subject play a role in World War II history? How has the World War II subject made a difference in the context of local or state history? Who were the individuals on a local, regional or state level that have had a significant impact on World War II history?

IV. **DOCUMENTATION:** This is, in effect, the evidence necessary to develop the history of significance of a topic. It is the foundation of historical interpretation and accurate research. For the purposes of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, documentation associated with applications should be broad-based and demonstrate a survey of all available resources, both primary and secondary (see *Types of Sources* section below). Documentation serves as a detailed guide so future researchers can follow the research trail for their own purposes. As used in marker applications, it is most commonly manifested through endnotes, photographs or maps (see *Preparing the Reference Notes* section below).

TYPES OF SOURCES FOR TEXAS IN WORLD WAR II RESEARCH

The THC will consider the objectivity and reliability of information sources used in compiling a narrative history. Whenever possible, consult **primary source** material. Primary sources — those that are contemporary with the topic — include newspaper accounts, diaries, meeting minutes, deed records, census records and legal documents. Such sources, as well as the recollections of disinterested, unbiased and authoritative persons, are preferred over secondary sources.

When using **secondary sources**, check them thoroughly since they are often not as reliable as primary sources. Secondary sources, such as history books, are not contemporary with the topic's history. Oral histories collected from authoritative sources are valuable research tools if properly documented (see example at the end of this document). Any claims of uniqueness (earliest, oldest, first, largest, etc.) must be accompanied by factual documentation from an authoritative, unbiased source.

SUGGESTED SOURCES FOR COMPILING TEXAS IN WORLD WAR II HISTORIES

Government Records

- Municipal (land records, minutes of official meetings, ordinances, tax records, chamber of commerce)
- State (land records, infrastructure development, politicians papers and public records)
- Federal (census)

Institutional Papers

- Universities (Politicians papers, minority histories, museum and archival services)

Family Papers

- Deeds to property used by the military during the war (ownership, property value, associated improvements)
- Letters and diaries (biographical information, building information, social and economic history)
- Estate records (dates, building information, transfers of land not recorded by deeds)

Military Sites Maps and Plats

- Sanborn maps (plans, dates of construction, materials, settlement patterns)
- Bird's Eye View maps (building or post information, natural features)
- Property and subdivision plats (building or post hierarchies, dates)

Photographs and Printed Images

- Family photographs (biographical information, building evolution, landscape changes)
- Postcards (biographical information, building evolution, landscape changes)
- Museum, City, County, State or Federal (archival depositories and research centers)

Newspapers and Journals

- Obituaries (biographical information of former service men and service women)
- Articles (significant local events, economic history, social history, building information)
- Journal articles bibliographies

Oral Histories

- Minority history, gender history, social history, military and home front history

Published Histories

- County (information on buildings, posts, airfields, Naval installations, prisoner of war camps, people, institutions, events)
- Community (information on buildings, posts, airfields, Naval, prisoner of war camps, people, institutions, events)
- Business (commercial trends, economic base of community, economic impact from federal spending)
- *The Handbook of Texas*, Texas State Historical Association, online or print

Online Sources

- Texas Historical Commission, *Texas in World War II* (http://www.thc.state.tx.us/)
- Texas Reference Sources (http://www.txla.org/pubs/trs/trsonline.html)

- Portal to Texas History (http://texashistory.unt.edu/)
- The Handbook of Texas Online (http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/)
- Texas Military Forces Museum (http://texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/)
- Air Force Historical Research Agency (http://www.afhra.af.mil/)
- United States Army Heritage and Education Center (https://ahec.armywarcollege.edu/library.cfm)
- United States National Archives and Records Administration (http://www.archives.gov/)

PREPARING THE REFERENCE NOTES

For the specific purposes of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, the **required** means of resource documentation to be used in preparing the historical narrative are reference notes. Generally speaking, facts that cannot be assumed to be common knowledge should be documented with a reference note. They can be either footnotes (placed at the foot of the page on which the fact is mentioned), endnotes (listed sequentially at the end of the history) or parenthetical notes (placed in parentheses immediately following the fact within the narrative history). The notes must be complete so the reader finds the referenced source quickly and easily.

Regardless of which type of reference note is used, the first use of a source should include a full first citation (all relevant resource details) with abbreviated information thereafter in subsequent citations (see examples below). NOTE: With the use of full citation footnotes, a bibliography is no longer a required element of marker applications.

Examples of First Full Citations (Footnotes or Endnotes):

[1] Terry Jordan, *Texas Graveyards: A Cultural Legacy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), p. 79.
[2] Orange County Deed Records, Book 4, p. 139; August 2, 1981.
[3] 1900 United States Census, Fort Bend County, Texas (Roll 1553) Enumeration District 16, p. 16.
[4] Bessie Jones. Interview with Scotty Jergenson, June 21, 1991. Tape recording and transcript available at the Darrouzett Public Library.
[5] Letter from Maria Gutierrez to Henry Guerra, May 23, 1922. Private collection of Henry Guerra, Dallas. Copy on file at the Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco.
[6] "San Jacinto Monument Reconditioned." *Temple Daily Telegram*, Vol. 76, No. 256; July 31, 1983, p. 5-C.

Examples of Subsequent Citations:

[9] Jordan, p. 83.
[10] Orange County Deed Records, p. 140.
[11] 1900 United States Census, p. 23.
[12] Jones, 1991.
[13] Gutierrez letter.
[14] *Temple Daily Telegram*, 1972, p. 5-C.

Note: For sources used in preparing the text but not specifically cited, list them separately under the heading ADDITIONAL SOURCES. For further assistance on reference note styles, see the following guides, or contact your local library.

Chicago Manual of Style, 14th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations. 5th ed. New York: Modern Language Association, 1999.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. Revised by John Grossman and Alice Bennett. 6th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

TEXAS IN WORLD WAR II RESEARCH CHECKLIST

Narrative histories submitted to the THC in support of marker applications for Texas in World War II should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following information. **Note**: Texas in World War II military and home front topics may be considered eligible for subject markers if they have been in existence at least 50 years and are considered historically significant. Some may also be considered for the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) designation if they are both historically and architecturally significant, and in good condition.

- ☐ Current and former individual or site names, with background information on the origins of the names
- ☐ Current location; include specific locations within county, as well as relation to significant natural features (rivers, creeks, mountains, etc.)
- ☐ Former locations and reasons for relocations (railroads, natural disasters, etc.)
- ☐ Significant people associated with Texas in World War II; provide brief biographical information with vital dates of association, as well as birth and death. Significant persons include:
  - ☐ Post, base, or airfield commander
  - ☐ Significant military, political, civic or business leaders
- ☐ Economic base, including commercial, agricultural or industrial development brought on by or ended due to World War II
- ☐ Cultural institutions and ethnic associations
- ☐ Causes of growth or decline brought on by government spending for the war effort
- ☐ Important events associated with the site or with units that trained at the site
- ☐ Significant structures/architecture/design or plat of area, post, airfield, camp or base.

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real places telling real stories

SAMPLE HISTORY: Texas in World War II

Note: This sample history, comprised of fictional information, represents in format, scope of content, documentation and length the type of narrative history required for a historical marker application. It is presented as a general guide for developing a narrative for Texas in World War II.

LANGUID ARMY AIR FIELD

I. CONTEXT

During World War II, the U.S. Army Air Forces (AAF) built Languid Army Air Field, an Advanced Pilot Training School, roughly seven miles northeast of Jergenson. Located in the northeast corner of Post Oak County, the airfield utilized the surrounding flat prairie land as part of its training mission. In historic times, the area experienced little development; however, during the Reconstruction era following the Civil War, the U.S. Army experimented with a series of Signal Flag Corps ranges in the area. The Army discontinued the signal flag ranges in 1890 when the military cut federal funding for the project after the local need for such facilities diminished with new technologies. In 1891, Abe "Links" Froman bought the 1,200 acre tract from the military and utilized the land for pig farming. In 1922, Froman moved his sausage business to Chicago, Illinois, and the land went unused until the late 1930s, when local Jergenson citizens began a movement for a regional airport.[1]

II. OVERVIEW

In 1919, the first recorded airplane flight over Post Oak County occurred when Kerry Chandler, a U.S. Army Aero Corps pilot flew his JN-4 "Jenny" aircraft over the town of Turnbuckle. Chandler, disoriented by a significant cloud bank, flew nearly 40 miles off course while conducting flight training exercises for the Army. Chandler's errant flight captured the imagination of a 20-year-old Jergenson resident named John McCoy, who was in Turnbuckle on a business trip, and spurred him toward a love of flying. Nineteen years later, in May 1938, McCoy's efforts as president of the Jergenson Chamber of

Commerce led to the establishment of a Civilian Aeronautics Administration (CAA) funded airport in Post Oak County. [2]

The Great Depression had a particularly devastating effect on the citizens of Jergenson and the farmers of east Post Oak County. Many residents found the lack of good roads a major difficulty, and farmers struggled to move their crops efficiently toward major markets to the east. Furthermore, many of the young people in the county began to leave in increasingly larger numbers, as they sought job opportunities across Texas and the United States. The economic misfortune of east Post Oak County's susceptibility to the Great Depression nearly ended many long established families' abilities to continue to survive in the region. However, in 1936, the misfortunes gave way to increased hope for local economic development. U.S. Congressman Ben Mathey utilized his political clout to influence significant New Deal projects in the hardest hit county in his district. That year, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) both began construction projects that led to economic recovery and eventually a need for a regional airport. The more significant of the two, the WPA project created new federal buildings in Jergenson for a modern regional U.S. Post Office collection and distribution center. This new facility was the centralized postal center for Post Oak County and the surrounding ten counties. The Lehman Regional Federal Postal Collection and Distribution Office created more than three hundred new government jobs for the residents of Post Oak County and eventually led to the need for a regional air facility to cope with the increasing demand for the delivery of mail to the region.[3]

Although the Lehman postal center created some limited economic recovery for Jergenson and east Post Oak County, the strain on the county's transportation facilities (a network of highways and the Texas and Natchez Railroad Line) had begun to limit the growth and constrain the efficiency of the postal center. Fearing a decline in productivity and possibly a cut in potential future jobs, the citizens of Jergenson, led by John McCoy, contacted Congressman Mathey about the possibility of establishing a CAA airport facility near Jergenson to accommodate the growth of the Lehman postal center. McCoy's love for airplanes and desire to assist his beloved community led to a substantial grassroots effort to

solicit a new federal project in Post Oak County. The citizens of Post Oak County hoped the construction and establishment of a new regional airport would provide a third transportation medium for the regional postal center, create more jobs for county residents and hopefully lead toward new economic viability for a county trying to pull itself out of the Great Depression.[4]

In 1938, the storm clouds of a new war formed in Europe and Asia and threatened global peace. All the while, memories of the "War to End All Wars" (World War I) were still fresh in the minds and hearts of many Americans. Nevertheless, reality for many Americans was that sooner or later, America would be involved. The United States War Department and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration knew that American forces were deficient in the tools and training of modern war. As a result, President Roosevelt, in preparation for the possibility of war, directed federal funds toward the financing of new municipal airport construction projects across the nation as part of the country's war-preparedness program. Congressman Mathey contacted the CAA offices in Washington D.C. in June 1938, and once again his effective political clout garnered federal funds toward an airport project in Post Oak County.[5]

On November 3, 1938, CAA officials arrived in Jergenson and conducted a survey of the proposed airport site. Two months earlier, McCoy's financial security enabled him to purchase the former Froman tract from Krista MacDonald, who inherited the land from her uncle Abe Froman in 1926. Of significant note, in 1928, an enterprising young Post Oak County resident, Amy Cockreham, purchased a portion of the MacDonald land in an attempt to establish a hunting and fishing camp with a grand lodge. However, her funds evaporated as the Great Depression's grip tightened on the country and her vision never materialized. The land she purchased defaulted to MacDonald. Interestingly, Cockreham volunteered for the U.S. Army Nursing Corps following her failed enterprise and eventually served in France during World War II. Cited for bravery while attending to wounded near the front line, Cockreham returned to America after the war and pursued a career in medicine.[6]

In 1939, eleven years after purchasing the 1,200 acre tract from MacDonald, McCoy donated the land to Post Oak County as a selfless contribution toward improving the viability of his beloved county. After reviewing the viability of the McCoy tract, CAA officials communicated their recommendations for

the new air facility to Congressman Mathey. On June 4, 1939, Congressman Mathey telephoned McCoy to inform him that construction would begin on the new airport facility within the year. As part of the increased war preparedness effort on the part of the federal government, work began on the new airport on December 19, 1939, when Acme Power & Light Company extended utility lines from the city along U.S. Highway 190 toward the airfield and construction of a paved road linked the highway northward to the airfield. The airport's main contractor was the Houston firm of Wadham and Filardi, who had previously constructed similar airport projects. Workers pushed the airport's construction forward rapidly, clearing the 1,200 acres of trees and brush. On February 1, 1940, the *Jergenson Vindicator* reported that the new airport was, "similar to a young city teeming with activity and is giving Post Oak County carpenters and other craftsmen an abundance of work." The project eventually employed more than 250 local workers in the construction of the airfield and another 75 in road and utility construction. Named Kinney Airport in honor of Jon P. Kinney, an early Post Oak County settler and distant relative of McCoy, the airport opened on May 16, 1940.[7]

The history of Kinney Airport was brief, from May 1940 until America's entry into World War II the following year. The airport nevertheless steadily increased the efficient distribution of postal cargo out of the Lehman postal center, while increasingly opening up Post Oak County to outside visitors. On December 8, 1941 (the day the U.S. declared war on Japan), the airport, which had its roots in the need to increase productivity of the regional postal service, prepared to take on a new role. The AAF, in a desperate race to locate and establish sites for flying training activities, looked across the nation for suitable locations for new Army airfields. Kinney Airport offered exactly what the military needed during the desperate early days of World War II—an established air facility away from major cities and mountains with open vistas that would enable the rapid training of pilots to meet America's urgent war needs.[8]

On December 19, AAF officials, led by Major Apple White arrived in Jergenson on an official fact finding trip. After meeting with McCoy and other city officials, the AAF officers returned to Washington D.C. to report to the War Department. Three days later on December 22, the War

Department officially accepted the Jergenson offer to lease the air facility to the military for $1 per year until the conclusion of hostilities. On January 1, 1942, Congressman Mathey and the widow of Texas State Senator Roberto Languid (who vigorously supported state legislation for the growth of civil aviation in Texas) publicly announced on the steps of the Post Oak County Courthouse the government's plans to covert the civilian air facility into an Army airfield. The Army created housing for 3,000 to 4,000 personnel and services for nearly 800 trainer aircraft and fifty P-40 fighter planes. The 106th Advanced Flight Training Command utilized AT-6 "Texan" trainers, which arrived from Cleburne Army Air Field and Arlington Field. Languid Army Air Field's mission meant that the facilities, even with planned expansions, were not sufficient to handle the training mission and number of aircraft. As a result, the Army began construction on three auxiliary landing fields to help accommodate the overflow of trainer aircraft from Languid Air Field and to provide cadets the requisite space to practice landing and night flying exercises. The AAF named the largest field—McCoy Field (located 25 miles due south of Languid)—in honor of John McCoy's early support of aviation in the region. The AAF named the other two fields Dobesh (8 miles northwest of Languid) and Dubois (33 miles southwest of Languid); no specific reason for these names has been discovered to this date.[9]

In all, Languid Army Air Field graduated 23 flying classes, or approximately 5,700 highly qualified advanced fighter pilots, who saw action across the skies of Europe and the South Pacific. Languid Army Air Field hosted female and minority units while in service. A contingent of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) arrived in early 1943, and worked in the hospital and administrative offices of the 106th Sub Depot Air and Service Command. In 1944, a contingent of Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) arrived as well. During their time at Languid Army Air Field, the female test pilots trained for the purpose of ferrying new planes to deployment centers along the U.S. coast. The military also recruited local Post Oak County women to work at the airfield. The women received 60 days training in welding, wood millwork and hydraulics, and went to work in local industries. Due to the restrictions of the then-segregated military, the African American soldiers assigned to Languid Army Air Field primarily

served in the transportation platoon. Most eventually served overseas, though, providing important support for the military front in Europe.[10]

Between Languid Army Air Field and its three satellite auxiliary fields, the military built a city of 500, roughly half the size of Royville, in less than a year. According to Nathan Spears, a teenage resident of Jergenson during World War II, in his 2001 book, *A History of Kinney Airport-Languid Army Air Field, During the Second World War*, "the construction jobs at Languid came as a welcome relief to unemployed workers in Post Oak County." Nevertheless, the assurance of an Allied victory in Europe marked the beginning of the end for Languid Army Air Field as an active military training facility. In June 1945, the AAF reassigned Languid's Commanding Officer, Colonel Trent Hagar, to an overseas assignment in the Pacific, and Colonel Credius G. Purdy assumed command. The military placed Languid Army Air Field on stand-by status until the AAF determined its future role, and as they did with many airfields across the Lone Star State and across the nation toward the end of the war, the AAF eventually deactivated the base. Languid Army Air Field official closed on July 15, 1945. In November, Congressman Mathey assisted Post Oak County by gaining authorization for the airfield's conversion back to local civilian use. After the war, the site attracted aircraft-oriented industry to the town for many years. Several businesses and a flying school quickly sprouted up after the war, and in 1952 the Texas Flying Industries Company, an aircraft rebuilding outfit, leased a portion of the airport, which later under the name of Marion Systems Inc. remained the single largest employer in Post Oak County for years. In the book *Texas and the United States Army Air Forces during World War II,* historian Marcus Homburg stated, "the army airfield that ultimately emerged from the initially modest project proved to be a critical turning point in [Jergenson's] history, reshaping and improving its economy forever."[11]

III. SIGNIFICANCE

Kinney Airport, later Languid Army Air Field, played a pivotal role in the economic development of Jergenson and Post Oak County. With historic ties dating to the years of the Great Depression, the air field was a source of employment for many years. On a broader scale, it reflected the U.S. war

preparedness effort at the local level, a story told in similar communities across the state and nation during World War II. Many of the individuals associated with the field, both civilian and military personnel, eventually made their homes in Post Oak County. As a training base, Languid was a significant element in the federal pilot training program. Pilots and units that trained at the field served with distinction overseas.

Many foundations of Languid Army Air Field's buildings remain in evidence today, as do the air field's taxiway and its original primary runway. Although the present day airport uses a longer runway to accommodate jet aircraft, the remains of the once mighty Army air field remain visible to the educated or persistent observer. Of special note, one of the air field's original World War II era buildings remains. Service Hangar #2 is located on the southwest corner of the taxiway and in 2006 serves as a storage facility. Nevertheless, the hangar still casts an imposing shadow of the once great Army Air Forces experience in Texas during World War II.[12]

VI. DOCUMENTATION

[1] Smith, Jim, ed. "Abe 'Link' Froman," *The Texana Handbook*. Austin: Smith Texana Publishers, 1999. Vol. 14, pp. 1-4.

[2] Smith, "Jergenson," *The Texana Handbook*, Vol. 12, p. 23.

[3] Prater, Elihu, *Beyond the Rim: A History of Early Post Oak County*, Jergenson: Post Oak County Historical Commission, 1978, pp. 139-144.

[4] Prater, 139-144; Bueche, Trey. Interview with Bryan Leaf, October 8, 2005, tape and transcript in possession of interviewer, a resident of Jergenson. Leaf worked in the motor pool at Languid Army Air Field, 1944-45.

[5] Hack, Ted, *U.S. Army Air Forces*, Leakey, Texas: Ruthrauffer Publishing, pp. 210-213.

[6] Prater, 76-79.

[7] Bathon, Collen, "Jergenson's role in World War II," *Jergenson Vindicator*, November 9, 1968. Section C,
p. 1.

[8] Prater, 323

[9] Bathon, "Jergenson's Role in World War II," 2

[10] Spears, Nathan, *A History of Kinney Airport-Languid Army Air Field, during the Second World War*, Mission, Texas: University of Texas Light and Industry Press, 2001, p. 36

[11] Homburg, Marcus, *Texas and the United States Army Air Forces during World War II,* Kyle, Texas: Texas State University Press, 2003, pp. 198, 201 and 223.

[12] Bueche, Trey. Interview with Allison McCoy, John McCoy's daughter**,** October 9, 2005. Tape and transcript in possession of interviewer.