



# THE DALLAS COUNTY CHRONICLE

The Newsletter of the Dallas County Historical Commission

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## DALLAS COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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## Texas Historical Commission to Meet in Dallas July 24-25

By Buddy Frazer, DCHC Chairman

This year the Texas Historical Commission celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The THC was formed in 1953 by the state legislature to identify and interpret historic sites across the state. Thanks to its efforts, Texas has one of the most active historical marker programs in the country. The THC consists of 18 commissioners. Four of the commissioners, Diane D. Bumpas, Lareatha H. Clay, David A. Gravelle, and Dr. Mamie McKnight reside in Dallas County.

Under the theme **Growing Up Texan**, events are planned throughout the state this year to honor THC. "Dallas Style," the local celebration's theme, includes a party at the Old Red Courthouse. Coinciding with the regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission in Dallas, "Growing Up Texan: Dallas Style" will be the evening of July 24, 2003. Honorary chair of the event is Ebby Halliday Acers, with Lindalyn Adams, Brian Shivers, and Stuart Gleichenhaus serving as co-chairs. Guests will be able to tour the Old Red Museum construction site, and see the work being ac-

complished on the 1892 landmark building.

The event will benefit the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission. The "Friends" organization is a non-profit corporation formed for the purpose of supporting the work of the THC by offsetting some of its dependence on public funds. The "Friends" has supported the Commission's efforts such as raising LaSalle's ship LaBelle, the discovery of the original LaSalle's Fort Saint Louis, the Main Street revitalization project, the Red River War project and the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program.

Ten Dallas County preservation and historical organizations have come together to host the event. They are



Left to right: Linda Lee, Executive Director of the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, Friends of the Texas Historical Commission trustees Brian Shivers and Lindalyn Adams, and Old Red Museum Executive Director David Schulz are shown at a recent meeting.

Black Dallas Remembered, Dallas County Historical Commission, Dallas Historical Society, Dallas Landmark Commission, Friends of Fair Park, Friends of the Old Red Courthouse, Old City Park - The Historical Village of Dallas, Old Red Museum of Dallas County History & Culture, Preservation Dallas, and The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza.

Old Red Museum Director David Schulz contributed to this article.

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## Second Oldest Church Of Christ In State Plans August Dedication

By Jim Foster, DCHC Member

Carl Foster, 90, grew up in the Elm Grove community of northeastern Dallas County and became a member of the Cottonwood Church of Christ in 1927. He says that the early record book for the Cottonwood Church indicates that the first meeting of the church was at Skaggs School in Kaufman County (now Rockwall County) on July 22, 1866.

The members then started meeting at Wells Bridge when weather permitted. Wells Bridge, which is now under Lake Hubbard, was a privately owned toll bridge across the East Fork of the Trinity River.

Carl said, "Grandma Forster told me that about ten families total would gather at the bridge on a regular basis. It would take about twenty mules to pull all the wagons, and they needed a location with a lot of room as well as a place to water the horses and mules. Church was an all day affair back then.

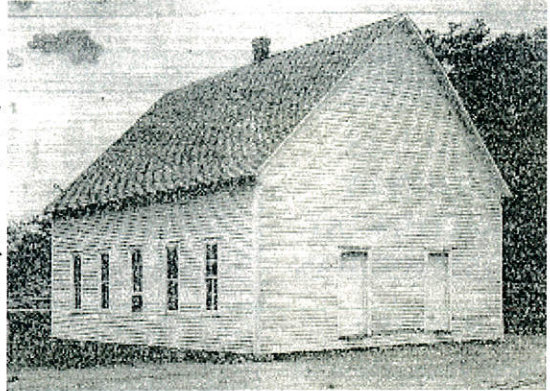
"They would have an early morning service in those days and then there would be a big dinner (noon meal) right there at the bridge. The second service would start about 2:00 p.m. The river

was just a few feet away and all the baptisms were held there in the river. Everyone would then hitch up their teams and head home so they could milk and tend to their stock before dark.

"About half of the families lived on the Rockwall side of the river and about half lived on the Dallas County side. She told me that they would come from all around. Some came from Rockwall and some from Rowlett, Pleasant Valley, Elm Grove and even Wylie."

Carl's Grandmother was about seven years old when the early church started meeting at Wells Bridge in 1867. They continued to meet there until the members erected a building in the Cottonwood community of northeastern Dallas County in 1876. All the work was performed by the membership with hand operated tools since electricity had not yet been invented.

This building was located on Vinson Road and served the congregation for 82 years. A newer air-conditioned



Old Cottonwood Church of Christ building on Vinson Road.

building was erected on Elm Grove Road in 1958.

A larger, more modern building, which is scheduled for completion in early August, will be located about fifty yards west of the current facility. This 13,000 square foot facility will give the congregation almost three times more room.

Mr. Foster stated that the church will be 137 years old when the new building is dedicated in August. He said, "This church has never been in any town. It's always been a country church."

## Jeff Dunn Honored for Service to DCHC

By Buddy Frazer, DCHC Chairman

Jeff Dunn was honored at the DCHC's April meeting for his service to the Commission. He served as a DCHC member from 1997 to 2003 and was named Chairman in 1999.

Under his leadership the DCHC expanded its reach into all phases of the community. He created the DCHC website ([www.dallaschc.org](http://www.dallaschc.org)) in 1998, and he oversaw the approval and dedication of over 30 Texas Historical Markers.

He collaborated with the Kaufman County Historical Commission and

Historic Mesquite, Inc. to organize the reenactment of the first automobile trip in Texas for the event's 100th anniversary.

Through his efforts the DCHC was honored with the Texas Historical Commission's Distinguished Service Award for the last four years.

He is currently establishing the Friends of the Dallas County Historical Commission, a non-profit organization which will support the DCHC's work.

In private life he is shareholder and attorney with the Dallas firm of



DCHC member Mike Hayslip presents former DCHC chairman with a plaque recognizing his years of service to the Commission.

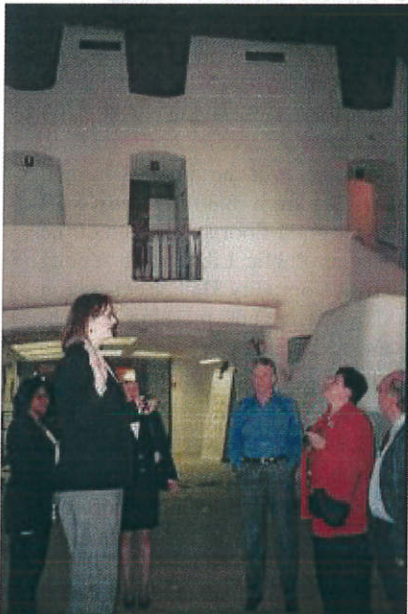
Munsch, Hardt, Kopt & Harr, P.C. He is married and has two children.

# Restoration of Texas Theatre Underway

The Dallas County Historical Commission conducted its April meeting in Oak Cliff. The meeting was hosted by the Oak Cliff Foundation and the Oak Cliff branch of the Bank of Texas. The business meeting was followed by a briefing on the renovation and restoration of the Texas Theatre given by Beverly Mendoza, President of the Oak Cliff Foundation. A tour of the theater followed. It was inside the Texas Theatre that Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested following the Kennedy assassination November 22, 1963.

The Texas Theatre Renovation and Restoration Project is a collaborative venture that will renovate the 72-year-old 12,000 square-foot theater. The results will restore the viability of an old movie house to a multi-purpose arts venue for live performances and movies. The renovation also will be a catalyst to clean and diversify the growing economy of northern Oak Cliff.

The theater's proposed rehabilitation consists of a Phase I *renovation* of the theater to a live performance venue



Oak Cliff Foundation President Beverly Mendoza shows DCHC members to restoration work.

and movie house and then a Phase II *restoration* of the theater's interior and exterior to reflect the 1963 period. Phase II also will include an expansion to adjacent property to provide additional bathrooms, dressing rooms, balcony use and access, and classroom and office spaces.

A business plan developed by the Oak Cliff Foundation outlines three primary goals for the theater's rebirth. These goals emphasize (1) the theater's accessibility and use by culturally and economically diverse community interests; (2) economic stimulation and diversification of Jefferson Boulevard and the surrounding area; and (3) the theater's preservation. Dallas Summer Musicals Management Group, Inc. (DSM) will manage the theater, and will continue its mission of providing quality, accessible family entertainment.

An exciting component of the business plan is the "Tours from the Texas" concept. A series of four to six productions will be produced in Oak Cliff and premiere at the Texas Theatre. A number of smaller cities outside of Dallas (Gainesville, Sherman, Austin, Marshall, Abilene, Waco, and Amarillo, to name a few) already have made commitments to host the production series. This traveling series will cut production costs dramatically, take quality Dallas performances to other cities, and keep ticket prices affordable (\$15-\$25).

Additional business plan components include expanding the Dallas Summer Musical School of Musical Theater to the Texas Theatre; strategic alliances with community arts groups, merchants and sponsors to hold special events and festivals; and commercial rentals for corporate and convention groups, weddings, quinceñeras, debutante events, and anniversaries. A Community Advisory Committee will make recommendations to the Oak Cliff Foundation on programming and an appropriate tiered fee structure for various groups.

Cultural districts are breathing new life into communities by using the arts to attract people and businesses to strug-



DCHC members toured the Texas Theatre after a recent meeting in Oak Cliff.

gling neighborhoods. According to a Deloitte & Touche study conducted in April 2003, for every \$1 invested in the arts and cultural organizations, \$34 in economic activity is generated.

To date, approximately \$1 million has been spent on construction at the theater. The Oak Cliff Foundation has raised \$2 million and is seeking \$1.5 million to complete Phase I of the project. The theater's opening is targeted for the first quarter of 2004.

Partners in the Texas Theatre Renovation Project include: Oak Cliff Foundation, Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce, DSM Management Group, City of Dallas, Komatsu Architecture, Phoenix I Restoration and Construction, Patton Boggs, Options Real Estate, Marvin V. McDonald Family Enterprises, SBC, Don DuBois, Graphic Content, Ninette McDonald, Bank of Texas, Don Herring Mitsubishi, Urban Gardener, Old Oak Cliff Conservation League, and the National Trust.

For more information, contact Beverly Mendoza at 214-942-6465, visit [www.oakclifffoundation.org](http://www.oakclifffoundation.org).

Oak Cliff Foundation President Beverly Mendoza contributed to this article.

# Restoration Planned For Moorland YMCA Bldg

By Jim Foster, DCHC Member

The Dallas Black Dance Theatre (DBDT) has purchased the historic Black YMCA building located at 2700 Flora Street in downtown Dallas. The Moorland Branch of the YMCA was founded in 1926 and was the only Y for blacks in Dallas.

The cornerstone of this magnificent building was set in 1930. The building



Ann Williams

now serves as a landmark for an earlier generation of Black Dallas. Engraved arches over the main entrance allowed boys to enter through one door and men through the other. Women were later allowed to enter through the side door for special events and swimming classes.

The building served as the center of activity for the community's social, civic and political gatherings. Thurgood Marshall planned strategies for desegregation

of the nation's schools here. It was also one of the few places where black men could stay while visiting Dallas during segregation. It was the "town hall" for leaders of the black community until sometime around 1969.

Pearl Forester bought the building in 1971. She had established Forester Telephone Answering Service in 1921 and needed a place to consolidate two locations into one building. The old YMCA was selected because it was close to both the downtown central phone office and the old Taylor exchange on Bryan St. Mrs. Forester remained active in the business until she retired in 1985 at 86 years of age. Proxy Answering then occupied the building until it was purchased by



Old YMCA building to be new home for Dallas Black Dance Theatre

DBDT.

Ann Williams, founder and artistic director of DBDT, started the dance theater in 1976. She says that interior renovations should begin shortly. The new location will bring 32,000 square feet of space to the internationally recognized dance troupe. Mrs. Williams says that she'll be happy to finally have a permanent home for the dance theater.

# Annual Dallas History Conference To Honor "People Who Shaped Dallas" September 20

By Michael V. Hazel, Ph.D.

This fall's Fifth Annual *Legacies* Dallas History Conference will salute a variety of people who shaped the community. Among those featured will be George Bannerman Dealey, newspaper publisher and philanthropist; Harland

Bartholomew, city planner; William Sidney Pittman, architect; Ermance Rejebian, author and book reviewer; Bruce Alger, politician; and J. Erik Jonsson, businessman and civic leader. A final paper will study the members of

the Dallas Artists League, including Jerry Bywaters, Alexandre Hogue, and Otis Dozier.

The conference will be held Saturday, September 20, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., in the ground-floor auditorium of the Central Dallas Public Library, on Young Street across from City Hall. Registration fee of \$20 will include morning refreshments and will also cover underground parking at the library. A registration brochure will be mailed in mid August.

A special feature of this year's conference will be the presence of several used and rare book dealers, specializing in regional and Texas history. They will be open for business throughout the conference.

The Dallas County Historical Commission is one of ten institutional sponsors for the conference.

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