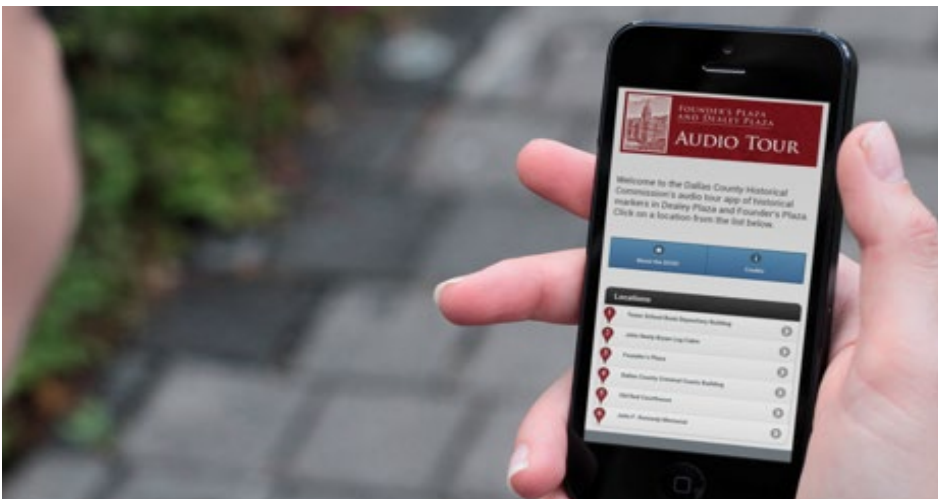


DALLAS COUNTY
HISTORICAL COMMISSION

THE DALLAS COUNTY CHRONICLE

VOLUME 39, ISSUE 2

JANUARY 2014



History 2.0: Augmenting Dallas County History with a Cell Phone Web App Audio Tour

By Charles Stokes

The Dallas County Historical Commission originally set out to record a historical podcast of some of Dallas County's downtown historical buildings that have Texas State Historical Markers. The plan was to research several of the sites with historical markers within walking distance of each other, record a short audio segment, and publish the recordings online as a podcast.

However, the Commission eventually decided to make a walking tour web app for cell phones that guides users through a tour of the historical markers. Charles Stokes, a member of the Commission and Computer Science student at Baylor University, recorded the speakers, created QR codes, and programmed a cell phone web app. The app lists the historic sites and shows the locations of the

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DALLAS COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

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markers and the user's cell phone on a map. Clicking on a site takes the user to a page containing an audio recording and photographs relating to the site.

FOUNDER'S PLAZA AND DEALEY PLAZA
AUDIO TOUR

Welcome to the Dallas County Historical Commission's audio tour app of historical markers in Dealey Plaza and Founder's Plaza. Click on a location from the list below.

About the DCHC Credits

Locations

- 1 Texas School Book Depository Building
- 2 John Neely Bryan Log Cabin
- 3 Founder's Plaza
- 4 Dallas County Criminal Courts Building
- 5 Old Red Courthouse
- 6 John F. Kennedy Memorial

John F. Kennedy Memorial

Map

Your location accuracy: 12 meters

Zoom to My Location

Zoom to Tour

Clock mechanism in tower

One of the four "Wyvirn" gargoyles

Texas School Book Depository Building

Back to Tour List

Click below to play audio.

Click to read transcript

View from Dealey Plaza of the Dallas County Administration Building, formerly, the Texas School Book Depository Building.

Sites include the School Book Depository Building, Founder’s Plaza, the Dallas County Criminal Courts Building, the Old Red Courthouse, the John F. Kennedy Memorial, and will soon include the John Neely Bryan Log Cabin. Scanning a QR code (posted on a sign near each marker) takes the user to the app, which can also be accessed at <http://www.dallascounty.org/plazatour>.



Graphic with QR code printed on signs

The software is designed as a web app so that it runs as seamlessly as possible across both mobile devices and personal computers. Mr. Stokes intends to develop an intuitive software program for creating audio tour web apps without technical experience. He will then release the program as a free open-source public -domain application for use by other County Historical Commissions, cities, and municipalities in Texas. The QR codes are printed on graffiti-proof laminate tiles produced by iZone Imaging (<http://www.izoneimaging.com>). Below are photos of the signs posted on or near tour stops.



The John F. Kennedy Memorial



The Dallas County Administration Building, formerly the Texas School Book Depository Building



The Old Red Courthouse

The Historical Commission intends to add new locations to the tour, as well as create new separate audio tours in other areas using the same software.

Historical Marker Restoration

It seems that the beautiful standard cast Texas State Historical Markers degrade in about twenty to thirty years. The black paint fades in the sun while the letter faces oxidize, greatly lowering the contrast and making the markers difficult to read. Many need to be restored, although it is not clear who is responsible for restoring them. The State of Texas owns the markers but makes no provision for restoration. Charles Stokes, a member of the Commission, and his father Ret. Judge Charles Stokes researched the restoration process and have honed the technique. They followed a guide published by the Texas Historical Commission published [here](http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/state-historical-markers/refinishing-official-texas-historical) (<http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/state-historical-markers/refinishing-official-texas-historical>), and discovered a few tips of their own.

Their first restoration was of a cemetery marker in Garland. After learning that the School Book Depository's marker had not only faded but also suffered vandalism, they obtained permission from Dallas County to restore the marker. An article about the restoration was published by the Dallas Morning News [here](http://dallasmorningviewsblog.dallasnews.com/2013/11/historical-commission-member-restores-jfk-plaque.html/) (<http://dallasmorningviewsblog.dallasnews.com/2013/11/historical-commission-member-restores-jfk-plaque.html/>).



Historical marker on the School Book Depository Building, shown here before the restoration of the marker. Note that the word “Allegedly” is defaced, and the paint is faded.



Historical Commission member Charles Stokes and his father with the marker after the restoration work was complete

The Commission is in the process of building a community-outreach program, to be led by Commission member Jesse Tafalla, that will teach volunteers how to restore damaged markers. First on the list is the Pike Park marker, which is faded and shows signs of graffiti damage.

Featured Member Profile Jesse Tafalla



Commission Member Jesse Tafalla

Jesse Tafalla was appointed to the Dallas County Historical Commission in 2013, but he has been active in community affairs for many years.

Jesse, a consultant for Dallas Area Rapid Transit, is also the President of LULAC #4782, the Dallas Rainbow Council; Vice-President and Secretary of the Board of Directors for Cara Mia Theatre Company; an active member of the Dallas Mexican American Historical League; Board Member of the South Dallas /Fair Park Trust Fund long-time member of the Knights of Columbus; and a dedicated volunteer at the Latino Cultural Center. In 2006, Jesse was a finalist for the 2006 Hearts of Hope Award from the Volunteer Center of North Texas.

Featured Member Profile Helen Widener



**Commission Member
Helen Widener**

Helen Ogden Widener was appointed to the Dallas County Historical Commission in 2013. She was born in Conway, Arkansas and is the fifth of ten children. Her father was a cotton farmer until the boll-weevils and drought destroyed his crops. The family moved to Texas in 1950 and to Irving in 1954, where Helen attended Irving Public Schools. She is a graduate of Byrne's Commercial College in Irving. Helen was married forty years to the late James F. Widener, a long-time Irving attorney.

History is one of Helen's greatest passions. She is the author of four historical books: *Scraps of Life*, a look at the life of Elizabeth Patton Crockett, wife of Alamo hero David Crockett; *James MacKay: a Man to Cherish 1761-1822*, an account of the man who drew the most complete map used by the Lewis and Clark expedition; *Irving Centennial Cookbook and Family Histories 1903-2003*, a gift to Irving's Centennial Celebration in 2003; and *Hutchins of Pine Mountain: 300 Years of Migration*.

The Dallas County Chronicle

The Dallas County Historical Commission is a County board appointed by the Dallas County Commissioners Court. The Dallas County Chronicle is a publication of the DCHC for historical groups in Dallas County and the general public. This issue was edited by Charles Stokes, Don Baynham, and Rick Loessberg and was published with the assistance of The Sixth Floor Museum. Articles should be sent to:

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