

**Milam County Historical Commission  
October 5, 2020 – 10:00 AM  
Little River Baptist Church  
3446 FM 979, Cameron, TX (Jones Prairie Area)**

**Directions from Cameron: Take 77 North to FM 485 and turn right. Go about 5.5 miles to FM 979 and turn left at New Providence Baptist Church. Travel 3 miles and the church is on your right.**

(Masks and physical distancing required-- no refreshments)

**Or online**

Please join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

**MCHC Meeting  
Mon, Oct 5, 2020 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CDT)**

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/185182293>

You can also dial in using your phone.  
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**Call to Order - Welcome  
Email Volunteer Hours since February to Lynn**

Our deepest sympathy is with the Doss family upon the passing of former MCHC member Denice Doss.

**I. Approval of the August 3, 2020 Minutes**

**II. Treasurer's Report – John Pruett**

**III. Committee Reports**

**a. Cemetery Committee - Jack Brooks**

1. Holly is updating the listing of Milam County cemeteries on the THC Historical Sites database.
2. James Bradford has begun the research to nominate Liberty Hill Cemetery as a Historic Texas Cemetery.
3. Lynn has begun the research to nominate Old Salem Cemetery in Cameron as a Historic Texas Cemetery.

**b. CLG – Brenda Pruett**

1. National Register Nomination – the nomination is being revised as recommended by the State Board of Review for submission to THC by October.
2. Report of CLG meetings August 27<sup>th</sup> and September 24<sup>th</sup>
3. Partner with the Freedom Colonies Project to research colonies in Milam County
4. Will refinish historical markers at the Library in Rockdale and the Kay Theater on October 5<sup>th</sup> at 1:00. Let Brenda or Lynn know if you will participate.

**c. El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Association– John Pruett**

1. Report of September 3<sup>rd</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup> Rancheria Grande Chapter MTC meeting

**d. Marker Committee – Lynn Young**

1. Dedication of the marker at the Rockdale Chamber of Commerce Building tentatively scheduled for November.
2. The marker dedication for the Old City Cemetery will be scheduled once the marker is shipped.
3. Several members and non-members contributed to the cost of the Worley Bridge marker. Wayne Fisher contributed to the marker as well as a generous contribution to the MCHC.
4. THC will accept 2021 marker applications **March 1 – May 15**

**e. Preservation Grant Fund – Holly Jentsch**

Outstanding Grants:

1. Milam County Historical Museum - 2018 (\$1,000) & 2019 (\$700)
2. The Kay Theater – Rockdale offered to pay \$5,000 instead of \$4,349.20
3. Gause Cemetery Association
4. Gause Baptist Church
5. MCHC Cemetery Committee
6. Kay grant – Rockdale increased the grant amount from \$4,349.20 to \$5,000

**f. Public Relations – Beth Brooks**

1. Meetings have been promoted via newspaper and Facebook. Lynn was a guest on Judge Young's radio show on August 26th.

**g. Other Committees**

#### **IV. Old Business:**

- a. Courthouse – Lynn  
The request for full reimbursement for the Courthouse emergency grant has been submitted to THC.
- b. The revised MCHC website is currently in progress.
- c. STOCH – Collier and Peggy Perry have purchased the Old City Hall in Rockdale. It will cost approximately \$4 million to restore it. They have established Vision Historic Preservation Foundation and have applied for a 501(c)3 designation.

#### **V. Other Old Business**

#### **VI. New Business:**

##### **A. Establish a Freedom Colonies Committee**

- B. Melanie Reed and Lynn attended in the Freedom Colonies Project Facebook Coffee Talk on August 21<sup>st</sup>. Freedom ColoniesProject.org

##### **1. Appointment of Freedom Colonies Chair James Bradford**

Potential Freedom Colonies in Milam County:

Griffin Chapel  
Milano  
Six Mile  
Sneed Chapel  
Cox's Providence  
Liberty Hill – FM 908  
Minerva  
Lick Skillet?  
Oklahoma?  
Little Rocky Cemetery – CR 244

- C. Nominating Committee report and election of officers – Geri Burnett
- D. Due to the Pandemic, the MCHC will subscribe to an online meeting platform (approximately \$15 per month).
- E. Other New Business

#### **VII. History of Little River Baptist Church – Jack Brooks**

#### **VIII. Announcements:**

- TSHA is hosting a discussion of Tejano Patriot, the Revolutionary Life of Jose Francisco Ruiz, 1873-1850. with author Art Martínez de Vara on October 1, 7-8 pm in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month. Register online:  
<https://www.tshaonline.org/events/book-signing-event-tejano-patriot>.  
His land grant includes the Rancheria Grande area of Milam County.

- Preservation Texas Cemetery Restoration workshop Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> in Kosse.  
<http://www.preservationtexas.org/cemeteryworkshop/>
  
- A. THC Real Places Conference will be online Feb. 3-5, 2021  
<https://www.thcfriends.org/realplaces>
  
- B. **Next Meeting:**  
December 7, 2020 – Location TBD

**11. Adjourn meeting**

Milam County Historical Commission is an appointed arm of the Milam County Government and is subject to the Open Meetings Act.

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Lynn Young, Chairperson, Milam County Historical Commission

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Milam County Historical Commission**  
**October 5, 2020**  
**Little River Baptist Church**  
**3446 FM 979**  
**Cameron, Texas (Jones Prairie Area)**

**Call to Order:** The Milam County Historical Commission was called to order at 10:00 am by Chairperson Lynn Young at the Little River Baptist Church, Cameron, Texas, in the Jones Prairie area. The meeting was attended both in-person and virtually by members and guests of the Commission.

**Welcome/Volunteer Hours:** Chairperson Young welcomed members and visitors and requested members submit volunteer hours by email. Barbara Jameson was recognized as representing our host, Little River Baptist Church.

**Pledges of Allegiance:** The pledges were led by Chairperson Young and recited by members and guests.

**Recognition of Death of Former Member:** Lynn Young announced the passing of former MCHC member Denice Doss and expressed our deepest sympathy to the Doss family.

**Approval of the August 3, 2020 Minutes.** The minutes were distributed by email to members prior to the meeting. Geri Burnett made a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. Brenda Pruett seconded the motion which carried.

**Approval of the Treasurer’s Reports.** John Pruett presented the reports as follows:

The beginning balance in the general fund on July 1, 2020 was \$39,270.41. Revenues were \$24.22 with no disbursements resulting in an ending balance on July 31, 2020 of \$39,294.63 of which \$4,000 was designated for Rosenwald School. The beginning balance of the Preservation Fund on July 1, 2020 was \$13,713.53. Revenue received was \$8.54 with no disbursements resulting in an ending balance on July 31 of \$13,722.07 of which \$2,332.87 was available.

The beginning balance in the general fund on August 1, 2020 was \$39,294.63. Revenues were \$25.04; disbursements were \$1,975 leaving an ending balance on August 31 of \$37,344.67 of which \$4,000 is a dedicated fund for Rosenwald School. The beginning balance of the Preservation Fund on August 1, 2020 was \$13,722.07. Revenue was \$8.74 and no disbursements resulted in an ending balance on August 31 of \$13,730.81 of which \$2,341.61 was available.

The beginning balance in the general fund on September 1, 2020 was \$37,344.67. Revenues were \$3,399.76 with no disbursements leaving an ending balance on September 30 of \$40,744.43 of which \$4,000 is designated for Rosenwald School. The beginning balance in the Preservation Fund on September 1, 2020 was \$13,730.81. Revenues were \$8.75 with no disbursements resulting in an ending balance on September 30, 2020, of \$13,739.56 of which \$1,699.56 is available.

Jack Brooks made a motion to approve the reports as presented. James Bradford seconded the motion which carried.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Cemetery Committee – Jack Brooks.** Jack has responded to several “Find a Grave” requests. Holly Jentsch is updating the listing of Milam County cemeteries on the THC Historical Sites database. Lynn Young has begun research to nominate Old Salem Cemetery in Cameron as a Historic Texas Cemetery. James Bradford has begun research to nominate Liberty Hill Cemetery as a Historic Texas Cemetery.

**CLG – Brenda Pruett.** Brenda noted that the National Register Nomination for Rancheria Grande is being revised as recommended by the State Board of Review for submission to the THC and It will be submitted soon. The CLG met on August 27 and again on September 24 and another meeting is scheduled for November. Activities include refinishing historical markers at the Library in Rockdale and the Kay Theatre. We are exploring partnership with the Freedom Colonies Project to research colonies in Milam County.

Lynn asked James to comment about the Freedom Colonies, especially Liberty Hill. James was told by his parents that the colony was founded by Bill Dykes. James noted that he was born in one of the houses that Dykes built. James’ parents are buried in the Liberty Hill Cemetery. The church burned in 1996; it had been rebuilt in 1962 from the lumber of the original church building. The old cemetery is in disrepair but the new one is well maintained.

**El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Association – John Pruett.** John gave the report on the July 2<sup>nd</sup> and September 3 meetings of the Rancheria Grande Chapter. Meetings have been virtual with guest speakers. John was nominated as Vice Chair and Lynn was nominated as Secretary of the Trail Association. A recent MTC email highlighted Geri Burnett’s and Randy Billingsley’s archeological activity.

**Marker Committee – Lynn Young.** Lynn shared that the Rockdale Chamber of Commerce building marker dedication has been tentatively scheduled for November. The marker dedication for the Old City Cemetery will be scheduled once the marker is shipped. She noted that several members and non-

members contributed to the cost of the Worley Bridge marker. Wayne Fisher contributed to the marker as well as made a generous contribution to the MCHC.

Lynn reminded us that the THC will accept 2021 marker applications from March 1 through May 15.

**Preservation Grant Fund – Holly Jentsch.** Holly reported that on the following outstanding grants:

- Milam County Historical Commission - recipient of grants in 2018 (\$1,000) and in 2019 (\$700).
- The Kay Theater – Rockdale recipient and benefitting from a City payment of \$5,000 instead of \$4,349.2
- Gause Cemetery Association
- Gause Baptist Church

MCHC Cemetery Committee – Holly has purchased needed supplies and is awaiting permission from the cemeteries for action.

Lynn noted that the City of Rockdale will consider grants for historic preservation projects on a case-by-case basis.

**Public Relations – Beth Brooks.** Beth noted that meetings have been promoted via newspaper and Facebook. Also, Lynn was a guest on Judge Young’s radio program on August 26.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Courthouse** – Lynn Young reported that the request for full reimbursement for the Courthouse emergency grant has been submitted to the THC.

The revised MCHC website is in progress.

A Save the Old City Hall (STOCH) update was given by Geri Burnett. The Old City Hall in Rockdale has been purchased by Collier and Peggy Perry. It is anticipated that restoration will cost approximately \$4 million. The purchasers have established the Vision Historic Preservation Foundation and have applied for a 501(c) 3 designation. They’ve also commissioned the building of a model of the original building. A celebration is planned when the model is delivered.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

The appointment of a new committee was announced by Lynn. James Bradford will chair the Commission’s Freedom Colonies Committee. Potential Freedom Colonies in Milam County include:

Griffin Chapel

Milano

Six Mile

Sneed Chapel

Cox’s Providence

Liberty Hill (FM 908)

Minerva

Lick Skillet (undetermined)

Oklahoma (undetermined)

Little Rocky Cemetery (CR 244)

From 1865 to 1920, former slaves founded hundreds of Freedom Colonies, or Freedmen's Towns, across Texas. Since then, a variety of factors accelerated Freedom Colony descendants' dispersal, leaving behind intangible geographies where structures and populations associated with early African American communities have nearly disappeared. However, annual celebrations, land stewardship, and oral traditions sustain enduring commitments to these Black settlements' survival. Formerly enslaved Black Texans aggressively pursued land ownership after the Civil War in Texas. Clusters of agrarian, land-owning settlements or "Freedom Colonies" emerged from secluded areas. At one time, as many as 557+ settlements existed in Texas alone. The Freedom Colonies Program (also known as The Texas Freedom Colonies Project) is an educational project preserving the heritage of Texas' African American towns, settlements, and the planners/preservationists that made them possible.

**Nominating Committee Report and Election of Officers – Geri Burnett.** Geri presented the report of the Nominating Committee for 2021-2023 Officers as follows:

Chairman – Joan Ratliff  
Vice Chair – Holly Jentsch  
Treasurer – John Pruett  
Secretary – Eunice Stigall

Brenda Pruett made a motion, seconded by Jack Brooks, that the recommendation be accepted, and officers elected by acclamation. The motion carried.

**Virtual Meetings – Lynn Young.** Lynn explained that because of the COVID 19 pandemic, the Commission will subscribe to an online meeting platform. The cost will be around \$15 per month.

**History of Little River Baptist Church – Jack Brooks.** The history of the oldest Baptist Church in Milam County was shared by both Jack Brooks and church member, Barbara Jameson.

#### **Announcements**

- TSHA is hosting a discussion of Tejano Patriot, /the Revolutionary Life of Jose Francisco Ruiz on October 1 at 7 pm. His land grant included the Rancheria Grande area of Milam County
- The Preservation Texas Cemetery Restoration workshop will be held November 2 in Kosse.
- THC Real Places Conference will be online February 3 – 5 2021:  
<https://www.thefriends.org/realplaces>
- Our next meeting will be December 7, 2020

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:09 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Eunice Stigall, Secretary