

**Milam County Historical Commission  
December 7, 2020 – 10:00 AM**

**Online Only**

**MCHC December 2020  
Mon, Dec 7, 2020 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CST)**

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

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/881263469>

You can also dial in using your phone.  
(For supported devices, tap a one-touch number below to join instantly.)

United States: +1 (646) 749-3122  
One-touch: <tel:+16467493122,,881263469#>

Access Code: 881-263-469

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**Call to Order - Welcome**

- Email Volunteer Hours since February to Lynn
- Our sympathy is extended to the family of former member Tense Tumlinson upon her passing.
- Best wishes are extended to Bryn McClaren and her new husband, Zach Hardy.

**I. Approval of the October 5, 2020 Minutes**

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

**III. Committee Reports**

**A. Archaeology Committee – Geri Burnett and Randy Billingsley**

- They were unable to make presentations in schools due to Covid

**B. Cemetery Committee - Jack Brooks**

1. Holly continues to update 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.
4. Billy McClenny is interested in nominating Hamilton Chapel Cemetery as a Historic Texas Cemetery

**B. CLG – Brenda Pruett**

- a. National Register Nomination – the revised nomination was sent to THC
- b. Report of CLG meetings October 22<sup>nd</sup> and November 19<sup>th</sup>
- c. CLG members refinished historical markers at the Library and the Kay Theater in Rockdale on October 5<sup>th</sup> and at St. Monica's Catholic Church, First Baptist Church, and the Dr. Nathan Cass home in Cameron.

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

- a. Report of November 5<sup>th</sup> Rancheria Grande Chapter MTC meeting
- b. Annual Meeting
- c. Next Meeting January 7<sup>th</sup>

**D. Freedom Colonies – James Bradford**

- a. Potential Freedom Colonies in Milam County – Volunteers are needed:
- b. Griffin Chapel
- c. Milano
- d. Six Mile/Oklahoma – site of Hopewell Church - Holly
- e. Sneed Chapel
- f. Cox's Providence
- g. Liberty Hill – South side of FM 908 – Lynn, James, Eunice
- h. Minerva – the church is gone, cemetery on private property
- i. Lick Skillet?
- j. Little Rocky Cemetery – CR 244 – Descendant owns property
- k. Two Mile – Gause – James, Holly

l. Texas Freedom Colony Coffee Talk Facebook Live on Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 AM CST. Link to access the event page on Facebook: <https://fb.me/e/WhxSStvG>

**E. Marker Committee – Lynn Young**

- a. Dedication of the marker at the Rockdale Chamber of Commerce Building and at the Old City Cemetery will be scheduled in 2021.
- b. THC will accept 2021 marker applications **March 1 – May 15**

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

Applications for 2021 grant will be available soon. Outstanding Grants:

- a. Milam County Historical Museum - 2018 (\$1,000) & 2019 (\$700)
- b. The Kay Theater – \$5,000
- c. ECR sign for Apache Pass (waiting on NPS) (\$1,000)

**G. Public Relations – Beth Brooks**

- a. Meetings have been promoted via newspaper and Facebook.

**H. STOCH - Collier and Peggy Perry have established the Vision Historic Preservation Foundation to raise funds to restore the Old City Hall.**

**I. Other Committees**

**IV. Old Business:**

The revised MCHC website is currently in progress.

V. **Other Old Business**

VI. **New Business:**

- a. The Executive Committee recommends using some of the Historic Tourism funding to create the website if needed.
- b. Joan will be proposing members to the County Court in January. Please let her know if you wish to remain on the Commission and your preference of committees on which to serve.
- c. c. Other New Business

VII. **Announcements:**

- a. THC Real Places Conference will be online Feb. 3-5, 2021 – early bird registration is \$99.  
[https://web.cvent.com/event/3c10bd4a-603c-4dc5-8731-8083boe1b7e1/summary?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://web.cvent.com/event/3c10bd4a-603c-4dc5-8731-8083boe1b7e1/summary?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)
- b. The Texas State Historical Association 125<sup>th</sup> conference will be held online Feb. 17- March 6th. Registration is \$25.  
  
Registration - <https://tsha-annualmeeting2021.secure-platform.com/a/organizations/main/submissions/submissionnotcompleted?solidcitationId=3>
- c. Next Meeting: February 1, 2021
- d. Lynn and Joan Remarks

**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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**Milam County Historical Commission**

**December 7, 2020**

**Call to Order.** After resolving various technical issues, the Milam County Historical Commission was called to order at 10:05 am by Chairperson Lynn Young. The meeting was attended virtually by members and guests of the Commission.

**Welcome/Volunteer Hours:** Chairperson Young welcomed members and requested members submit volunteer hours by mail. Lynn extended our sympathy to the family of former member Tense Tumlinson upon her passing. We extended our best wishes to current member, Bryn McClaren, and her husband Zach Hardy upon their recent wedding.

**Pledges of Allegiance.** The pledges were suspended because of the nature of the virtual meeting.

**Approval of the October 5, 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 October 1, 2020, was \$40,744.43. Revenue was \$23.05 and there were no disbursements giving an ending balance on October 31 of \$40,767.48 of which \$4,000 was in funds dedicated to the Rosenwald School.

The beginning balance for the MCHC Preservation Fund on October 1, 2020, was \$13,739.56. Revenue was \$5,008.47 with disbursements of \$1,436.39 leaving a balance on October 31 of \$17,311.64 of which \$7,771.64 is available.

The beginning balance in the general fund on November 1, 2020, was \$40,767.48. Revenues were \$25.90 and there were no disbursements giving an ending balance on November 30 of \$40,793.38 of which \$4,000 was in funds dedicated to the Rosenwald School.

The beginning balance for the MCHC Preservation Fund on November 1, 2020, was \$17,311.64. Revenues were \$9.51 and disbursements were \$578.94 leaving a balance on November 30 of \$16,742.21 of which \$7,202.21 is available.

Brenda Pruett made a motion to approve the reports. James Bradford seconded the motion which carried.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Archaeology Committee** – Geri Burnett and Randy Billingsley. Geri reported that because of the COVID protocol restrictions the annual presentations in Milam County schools were not possible.

**Cemetery Committee** – Jack Brooks. Jack thanked Holly Jentsch for her work and Lynn for her arranging for visits to various sites.

The following is the Cemetery activities performed by Holly. Holly reported that she is continuing research on the THC Atlas and the cemeteries in Milam County. This activity includes, but is not limited to:

- Identifying GPS locations on the cemeteries that do not have their own deed listing.
- Using the Milam County Appraisal District Map and the Google Earth application to map out the locations.
- Building a library of each listing using multiple resources and the THC atlas.

As a result, Holly purchased Microsoft Excel to submit information to the THC atlas.

In October, Jack Brooks, Lynn Young and Holly went to the **Salem-Wilson and Oakville-Rohde Cemeteries** to make photo inventories. Multiple memorial stones were cleaned. Photo inventories have been uploaded to Find A Grave, adding entries not already known. Using the Ancestry software, Holly was able to build ancestor trees on a few of the entries to find other members of the family buried in the Salem-Wilson Cemetery.

Visits were made to the **Cameron Pioneer Cemetery** to find missing entries from the 150 Year Cemetery Book and online with Find A Grave. The cemetery is in need of regular maintenance. All

markers were treated with stone cleaner. Also, Holly did research several to find missing family members and to identify other members buried in the cemetery that do not have markers.

An attempt to work at the **Prospect Cemetery** revealed a wire gap gate to the cemetery but the road was open.

Holly visited the site on the Milam County Appraisal Map and the THC atlas named "**Richards Cemetery**" off 77 south of Rockdale. A brief survey of the site revealed no graves on the property. Additional research has not revealed how this property became Richards Cemetery. Research included County deed and tax (appraisal) records. Holly reported that one might reasonably conclude that since land in this area that formerly belonged to Richard family members, it was included in land which became part of ALCOA and the Texas Highway Department, further, that the "cemetery" is part of the **Richard Providence Cemetery** which is now on ALCOA property. In a discussion with a Richard descendent working on the adjoining property we learned he had no knowledge that the property was a 'cemetery'. Holly also went to the **Greater Riverside** cemetery in Hearne to do tree work, research, cleaning and photographing based on an inquiry from Ancestry and Find A Grave.

Holly also researched several properties and other cemetery, defunct schools and church information.

Many of the Milam County cemeteries are not regularly maintained. Holly shared her multiple visits in which she did photo inventorying, cleaning markers, and researching requests. She also continues to research ownership of cemeteries located on private property. These cemeteries included:

- Sneed Chapel
- String Prairie Cemetery and Henry Family Cemetery, which are right next to each other.
- Salter Chapel Cemetery (aka Minerva Black Cemetery) as I noted on the Milam County Appraisal Map of a name change in owner. The church associated with the cemetery was gone. The cemetery was accessible but in very poor condition from lack of care.
- Oaklawn (could not find the marker desired but cleaned up and found several markers in the ground.) While the cemetery is mowed the condition of the old "East Lawn" portion is in poor condition.
- New Salem Cemetery (photo inventoried it but it was in poor condition, put out D2 cleaner and later uploaded the pictures to Find A Grave and to the Facebook page, Milam County, Texas cemeteries. There seems to be a couple of missing markers and she could not determine if they were destroyed/stolen or if the family moved them. Also found a few markers not listed.

Holly also contacted property owner, Sue Ann Kendall, concerning the **Rentsch Cemetery**. Research indicates that there is a single grave, that of Henry Rentsch. Further research did not disclose the death/burial of his son, so there maybe more than one grave there. Rentsch's daughter and her family were killed in the 1900 Galveston Hurricane; his wife was in the Letitia Rosenberg Home for aged women in Galveston at the time of the Hurricane but survived; she died in 1908 in Galveston. Research into the Letitia Rosenberg Home yielded no additional information.

Holly expressed appreciation for the volunteers who helped place and later remove flags for Veteran's Day on the graves of veterans in the **Gause and Peaceful Rest Cemeteries**.

In mid-November, Holly did a photo inventory **Tomacik-Kahut and Armstrong-Gause cemeteries**. Like other cemeteries, some markers were cleaned and later, the photos were uploaded. The Tomacik-Kahut cemetery is small but grown up with native grass. At the Armstrong-Gause Cemetery, Gause, Holly visited with Luann Smith, current caretaker, and her daughter. The cemetery was in much better condition than previously visited.

Holly discussed 'unknown' markers listed with Seth Lastor, the **String Prairie cemetery** contact.

Holly is researching the **'Stewart' Cemetery** near Milano. The markers are for a Stewart family members that are buried in the Hearne Norwood Cemetery. The death certificates and the obits in the paper all state that they have always been located in that cemetery. It may not be an actual cemetery but the dumping ground for old monuments. Efforts to contact the land owners have not been successful. Holly also cleaned picnic tables and brick entrances for the **Gause Cemetery** for the MCHC grant application. She has continued building the Gause Cemetery Tree on Ancestry to identify those buried without markers. She was successful in finding the burial locations of 4 individuals that died many years ago, pre 1900 for one.

Other cemetery committee activities include research to nominate cemeteries to be a Historic Texas Cemetery: Lynn has begun to nominate the Old Salem Cemetery in Cameron; James Bradford has begun research to nominate the Liberty Hill Cemetery; and Billy McClenny is interested in nominating the Hamilton Chapel Cemetery. Lynn will follow up with Billy McClenny.

**CLG** – Brenda Pruett. Brenda reported that the revised nomination for Rancheria Grande to be on the National Register has been sent to the Texas Historical Commission. The CLG meetings were held on October 22 and November 19. CLG members refinished historical markers at the Library and the Kay Theater in Rockdale and at St. Monica's Catholic Church, First Baptist Church, and Dr. Nathan Cass home in Cameron.

**El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Association** – John Pruett. John reported that in the November 5 Rancheria Grande Chapter MTC that the current officers were elected to another year of service. He reported that the annual meeting of the Association was suspended because of COVID and instead a newsletter will be issued. He reported that at the recent board meeting Lynn was elected secretary and John Vice Chairman. Their next meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2021.

**Freedom Colonies** – James Bradford. James reiterated the need for volunteers to help research the potential Freedom Colonies in Milam County. The potential colonies include: Griffin Chapel; Milano; Six Mile/Oklahoma (site of Hopewell Church); Sneed Chapel; Cox's Providence; Liberty Hill (South side of FM 908); Minerva (church is gone, cemetery on private property); Lick Skillet; Little Rocky Cemetery (CR 244; Descendants own the property); and Two Mile in Gause. Holly is looking into Six Mile; Lynn and James into Liberty Hill; and James and Holly into Two Mile.

Holly reported that she had talked to Mrs. Cooperwood about the Two mile Black school near Gause and needs to hear back from her. Holly did research on where the local schools were to try to identify potential Freedom colony areas for the Freedom Colony project. She found no reference to the Oklahoma area being black but is trying to locate anyone with historical information about the area. She has looked up old Topo maps and other maps of the area to find the old roads and possibly the locations of the old schools.

Lynn noted that there will be a Texas Freedom Colony Coffee Talk Facebook Live on Friday, December 4 at 11:30 am. The link to access the event page is on <http://fb.me/e/WhxSStvG>

**Marker Committee** – Lynn Young. The dedications of the marker at the Rockdale Chamber of Commerce Building and at the Old City Cemetery will be scheduled in 2021 when COVID restrictions are more relaxed. Also, the THC will accept 2021 marker applications beginning March 1 through May 15.

**Preservation Grant Funds** – Holly Jentsch. Application forms for 2021 grants will be available soon. Currently we have the following outstanding grants: Milam County Historical Museum (2018 grant of \$1,000 and 2019 grant of \$700); Kay Theater (\$5,000); and ECR sign for Apache Pass – waiting on National Park Service (\$1,000).

**Public Relations** – Beth Brooks. Meetings continue to be promoted online on our web page, Facebook, and in various County newspapers.

**STOCH** – Geri Burnett. Collier and Peggy Perry have established the Vision Historic Preservation Foundation to raise funds to restore the Old City Hall in Rockdale.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Revision to the MCHC website is currently underway.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Funding.** The Executive Committee recommends using some of the Historic Tourism funding to create the website. A new website is needed because of software changes. John Pruett made a motion, seconded by Joan Ratliff, to accept and approve for action the recommendation. The motion carried.

**Commission Membership.** The incoming chairperson, Joan Ratliff, will be submitting MCHC membership for the County Commissioners approval in January. Members are to let her know of their membership continuance on the Commission and preference for committee assignments. As previously noted, Jack and Beth Brooks are resigning because of their planned move from Milam County. Also, Brenda Pruett is also resigning from the Commission.

**Thank You.** Lynn took a moment to express her appreciation to the Commission for the opportunity to serve as Chairperson for four years. Joan, the incoming chairperson, responded with heartfelt appreciation the Commission members feel for Lynn's leadership and accomplishments made during Lynn's tenure. A memento is planned for Lynn and will be presented when a more in-person environment is possible.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

THC Real Places Conference, February 3 – 5, 2021. Early bird registration \$99:  
[https://web.event.com/event/3ciobd4a-4dc5-8731-8083boe17e1/summary?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://web.event.com/event/3ciobd4a-4dc5-8731-8083boe17e1/summary?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

Texas State Historical Association 125<sup>th</sup> Conference, Feb 17-Mar 6 Registration is \$25

<https://tsha-annualmeeting2021.secure-platform.com/a/organizations/main/submissions/submissionnotcompleted/solicitationId=3>

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eunice Stigall, Secretary

