

HAYS COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

NOVEMBER 12, 2009

ROBERT HIXON BELVIN HOUSE

730 BELVIN STREET, SAN MARCOS

ORIGINALLY THE CORONAL INSTITUTE

Donna and Gerald Hill graciously invited us into their beautiful, but comfortable home for the last meeting of 2009. As we entered through the door, crossing over the threshold, both believed to date back to 1875, we entered into the original schoolroom with walls covered in beaded paneling and with wide pine plank flooring and ceiling, which was built in 1859. The Hills have lovingly restored this room, adding a fabulous oak fireplace mantel from another historic home on Belvin Street, and furnished it with comfortable antique furniture. French doors in the dining room, family room and master bedroom were brought from an old school in San Antonio. Bullseye molding above the doorways and window frames throughout the home are either original or milled to match. Nothing was left to chance. Period lighting cast a soft glow over comfortable furniture; inviting members sit and stay a while.



The Hill's living room is the original one-room, Coronal Institute school, located on its hillside site in San Marcos.

Photo by Linda Kees

What a shame we could not see the kitchen, which was extensively remodeled in 1989, as usual it was bustling with activity! The next time this home is on a tour, come here first! Diana Murphree hand painted the tiles complete with a trompe l'oeil cat on a windowsill on a garden setting. An original gas light fixture in front of the painting adds an air of authenticity to the vignette.



The old Coronal Institute's one room classroom has been expanded through the years by its different owners to accommodate their families to its current two-story size for Donna and Gerald Hill. Photo by Linda Kees

Throughout the decades, the building has been home for many. Reverend Robert Belvin, president of the Methodist school, later converted the one-room schoolhouse into a two-story residence for his family. Reverend J.W. Vest purchased the home in 1890 and enlarged it to accommodate his family. After the deaths of the Vests, Professor J.S. Brown, one of the first faculty members of Southwest Texas State Normal College, bought the home. During WWII the home was divided into five apartment units, before it was restored by the Chambliss family back into a single-family residence. In 1973 the Murphrees, extensively remodeled the home, adding several rooms, including a large master suite, before selling it to the Hills.

As twenty-four HCHC members and guests made themselves comfortable with delicious hot crab dip, an assorted cheese and fruit tray and drink in the old schoolroom, Chairman Kate Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm. and asked member Linda Kees to take the minutes in Secretary Helena Hauk's absence. October HCHC Minutes approval was tabled until our next meeting. She announced that Capt. Jack Hays' video would be shown December 9 at 7 pm. in Umland. Gary Rush was astounded at the turnout for Capt. Jack showing at Thurman's Mansion at the Saltlick in Driftwood. We all thought the draw was "Indian" ropers from Wimberley in the film who brought Hays story to

life. Other showings are scheduled for Seguin, Bandera and San Antonio. She heaped praise onto Richard Kidd for his work on the DVD. He demurred, giving credit to his wife Margie.

Kidd took this time to relay information that came his way on a rather long, rambling email about the Liberty historic program – a two minute long, self-guided tour connected by cell phone to an 800 number, accessed to a prerecorded history for a flat fee to promoters. “Clearly a program like this would work for places like San Marcos,” he said. It is \$200 for the 800 Guide by Cell to a self-guided tour with graphics, which can take the program to any level, especially for phones capable of displaying information. Liberty currently has 80 properties on their tour program. Linda Keese added that the historic and scenic road maps could be part of a cell-guided program for Hays County.

Chairman Johnson announced we have received \$75,000 towards the renovation of the old jail, bringing the total amount to \$150,000, which is enough to begin the first phase of renovation. She expressed an interest in obtaining the Art Deco ball & chain that adorned a jail in downtown San Marcos. Robert Frizzell volunteered to track it down for display at the old Hays County jail.

Chairman Johnson warned us in October, now here came the pitch ... no dinner unless we (members) coughed up \$30 to join the Jack Hays Chapter of El Camino Real de la Tejas. “It is your contribution to all these fabulous meals,” she cajoled. By joining El Camino Real she told us, we would be entitled to some of the funds available to them from the National Park Service. For every \$30 we pay in each year, HCHC would receive \$10 back and also would be able to petition for project funding. I don’t know if it was the great appetizers or wonderful smells emanating from the kitchen but everyone paid up!

Jack C. Hays Chapter, El Camino Real de la Tejas new members:

Linda Coker
Shelley Henry
Ofelia Vasquez-Philo
SarahAnn Lowther
Bonnie Eissler
LaMarr Petersen
Betty Harrison
Dorothy Gumbert
Gary Rush
Robert Frizzel
Linda Keese
Richard Kidd



In the Hill's dining room addition, a design on the wallpaper is repeated on the fabric-draped ceiling.
Photo by Linda Keese

Betty Harrison and the Historical Marker Committee have been busy of late. Clemmie New worked on the Jacob's Well Cemetery application, which will be considered at the January THC meeting. Application for the Lane House in Wimberley is in progress and should be ready to submit later this week.

THC did not approve the application for a marker for the old sanctuary of the Kyle First Baptist Church because the new sanctuary that was added is so much larger than the original building and

extensive alterations that have been done on the original building.

Jim Cullen has talked to people that are submitting a cemetery application for the San Pedro Cemetery in San Marcos. Mary Giberson has completed her research for the Antioch Colony marker, and I will submit it to THC later this week.

In closing, she reminded us the deadline for marker applications to be submitted to the Texas Historical Commission is Monday, November 30.

Oral History committee members Bonnie Eissler and Richard Kidd interviewed William Burrell Cochran in Dripping Springs on November 4. Burrell is the great grandson of Pleasant Wimberley, founder of the town of Wimberley. They hope to have their next interview with Red Simon of Kyle in the coming week.

The next completed video they plan to show is of Bradley Davis. Eissler visited the Hill Country Care Center on November 12 to finalize plans. It can either take place next Wednesday (Nov. 18) in the morning or the following Wednesday before thanksgiving, either at 10 am or 2 or 2:30 pm. She did not get a chance to speak with Bradley today to see which day he would prefer. He was away on a field trip! She will confirm the date and alert us.

The committee is working on the photographs for Gwen Smith's video, which they would like to screen ASAP. They plan to show her video at the Price Center in San Marcos. Invites will be sent to HCHC members.

Linda Coker of the Cemetery Committee reported the wholesale cutting of trees at Cementerio del Rio has changed the complexion of it completely. It is no longer a shaded sanctuary by the San Marcos River. The county workers cut down a total of 60 trees denuding the peaceful space. Ofelia Philo almost had another heart attack when she first saw the damage.

On a happier note, San Pedro Cemetery celebrated their centennial anniversary with a very successful turnout lead by Mistress of Ceremonies Ana Juarez, Department of Anthropology Texas State and member of the cemetery board. Gerron Hite, Cemetery Preservation Coordinator from Texas Historical Commission spoke as well as current members of the San Pedro Cemetery board. Ken Villasenor, Funeral director of Los Angeles Funeral Home brought his very cool, new hearse complete with flashing lights for all to see. San Pedro Cemetery was dressed in her finest for the grand occasion with all the red roses and bright yellow Mexican Mint Marigold flowers in bloom. The lush, soft carpet of horse herb around the graves had been freshly mowed, filling the air with its fragrance.

White centennial flags marked graves of the known founders. There was plenty of white cake and juices for refreshment as 70-75 attendees toured through all the graves and flowers.

Jim Cullen and Linda Coker represented HCHC at DRT ceremonies at Hugo Cemetery earlier this month.

Hays County Historical web site continues to receive modest hits says Richard Kidd. Three DVDs are on it now. He has removed all the old stuff. He would like for more people to use it and hooking up with an interactive 800 number might just be the trick.

Emily Little architectural firm has requested a survey of property meets and bounds for the old Hays County jail and the Calaboose before restoring the jail. All trees with a diameter larger than 6 inches must also be listed on the survey. Jeff Barton is funding the survey. Gerald Hill is helping to raise some of the restoration money. Mary Mattis questioned if HCHC had a time line goal for the funds.

LaMarr Petersen said a slogan was needed for tee shirts and bags if we were going to sell them to raise the rest of the money. Someone suggested we needed to restore the old jail because "The new one is going to hell." Shelley Henry noted we needed to have a meeting to brainstorm for a better slogan. We will hear more on this later.

Chairman Johnson relayed CR266 Markers Beautification was progressing very slowly. Bob Lyons needs Andrew to start on the fence and the El Camino Real markers are a mess.

Scenic and Historic Byways will have signage and a folding map as well as interactive hookup with the 800 number, encouraging visitors to explore Hays County. Hopefully we can petition for some funds from the Visitors and Convention Bureau to help cover the costs.

Mary Mattis said Dia de los Muertos booth at the second annual celebration in Kyle was manned all day by Chairman Johnson with help from HCHC members from 9 am set up to 9 pm tear down. Four Kyle books were sold @ \$100 apiece along with Hays DVDs.

Chairman Johnson will present DVDs of Ofelia Philo and Capt. Hays to San Marcos Independent School District. Richard Kidd will sniff out possible film festival entries for the Hays DVD.

Chairman Johnson announced the formation of a Courthouse Brochure committee chaired by Linda Coker and a Bylaw Committee also chaired by Linda Coker.

Linda Coker moved to adjourn at 7 pm, seconded by Betty Harrison. We moved to a heavily laden buffet table in the family dining room with a ceiling draped in fabric to match the wallpaper and gathered around tables inside and out by the pool to feast on roast beef, vegetables, salad and bread pudding.

Submitted by,
Linda Keese, acting secretary