

**HAYS COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
TEXAS REDS STEAKHOUSE & SALOON  
SAN MARCOS, TX  
SEPTEMBER 25, 2008**

Long gone are the days when the old cotton gin bustled with activity, with wagons pulling up to the doors and unloading bales of cotton gathered from fields around the area to be processed. Although the outside remains much the same and inside, pulleys and heavy beams are still in place, gone is the Farmer's Union Gin original name and purpose. It is now a restaurant. Current owners Nancy Gail and Troy Miller renamed the building Texas Reds Steakhouse & Saloon, with locals calling it simply, Texas Reds. Brick and tile flooring still mirrors the old gin layout somewhat, with a few minor improvements to facilitate food service. Close your eyes and you can still hear farmers calls and smell the bales of raw cotton just in from the warm fields. We met in a very large room with wooden floors and extra heavy wooden beams crossing overhead, just below the vaulted ceiling.



Chairman Kate Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:17 p.m. with 28 members and guests present. She made several announcements:

A Vice-chairman will be elected at the October meeting. Four more people have joined HCHC for the trip to California.

Applications will be available at the October meeting for re-application to the commission as our two-year appointments are up.

Mary Giberson passed around information to be printed on plaques for the Buda Sportsplex for members to proof for errors and/or omissions.

Dorothy Gumbert made a motion to accept the minutes from HCHC August 28 meeting. Jim Cullen seconded. It is good to have friends.

Betty Harrison was out of town, but Shelley Henry who needs no magnifying glasses, read the historical marker report she sent in. HCHC members received an invitation to the Butler Cemetery historical marker unveiling, which is a low-key affair. Those attending will meet at the Zimmerman's Lazy Z Ranch gate on FM 1826 at 9 a.m. sharp and then travel through the ranch to the cemetery as a group. The marker was sponsored by Ed Wendler, husband of the late Juanima Johnston Wendler and son-in-law of the late Rache Johnston who is interred at Butler Cemetery.

Daughter of Farmers Union Gin wishes the restaurant building still carried the old name.

**BUTLER CEMETERY MARKER**

This is the final resting place of some of the earliest settlers of the Driftwood area and their



Farmers Union Gin was the largest industrial

company operating in Hays County at one time.

descendants. The earliest marked grave is that of Opal Cannon, a young girl who died in September 1872. The Butler Cemetery is predominantly a family cemetery, with the majority of the interred related to the Butler family with other area residents represented.

The cemetery is named for Reece and Lucy (Meeks)

Butler, who were among the first settlers in the area. The

Butlers came by wagon train from Missouri in 1851 and settled on Onion Creek, south of present-day Driftwood. Reece Butler was a blacksmith, wagon maker, rock mason, hunter, miner, fisherman and farmer. He was skilled at finishing out cypress shingles for market and sold thousands of these shingles to pay for land. The Butler family owned the land out of which this cemetery was set aside, and Reece and Lucy's graves are among the earliest marked graves here. Many families were drawn to the Onion Creek area in the mid-1800, and the cypress trees along the creek banks provided lumber for homes and shingles that were sold or exchanged as a commodity. The Mayes, Johnson and Speed families were among the early settlers, and several of those surnames are also represented here. There are dozens of known burials here, though more than thirty are unidentified graves indicated by limestone markers. At least two graves are believed to be those of slaves of the Butler family. One unnamed limestone crypt is believed to mark the grave of Colonel John Mayes. Descendants of those buried here meet regularly to maintain the graveyard.

Bonnie Eissler reported there is one more interview Oral History has set up for next month. Several suggestions have been submitted for future interviews. Richard Kidd videotaped the 98th Driftwood Highschool reunion that graduated three men and twelve women, with one surviving teacher who lives in Austin. The school closed in the early 1940's.

Jim Cullen reported much work has been done in Coronado (Goforth), Cocke (Buda), Cheatham (San Marcos), Byrd Owen-Payne (Stringtown), and Bading (Centerpoint) Cemeteries the past few weeks through volunteer and hired labor. Lehman High School's National Honor Society is tentatively set to return to Coronado on Saturday, October 11. Their priority this fall



will be finalizing an application to the Texas Historical Commission for "Historic Texas Cemetery" designation at Coronado.



Dorothy Gumbert has made tentative contact with Storm Ranch about a soon-to-happen excursion to the ranch to re-visit at least three grave sites documented by Dorothy Kerbow and Jo Ann Elam Hearn. Jim has secured permission and a key, to visit Middlebrooks Cemetery southwest of Dripping Springs and also made contact with family associated with Reeves Cemetery just north of Driftwood.

Contact was also made in a personal visit to American Cat Con on I-35 between Kyle and Buda, the location of the old Porter farm site of a 1870s era tombstone, which was undocumented in the Kerbow-Hearn book. Jim made sure they know that HCHC is aware of the stone; it's getting crowded around the company's site.

We do have some good sites to visit later this fall. And finally, both of the Kerbow-Hearn cemetery inscription books, Volume I and Volume II have been re-printed (25 copies each).

Kudos were given to Richard Kidd for an up to date, good looking website with over 9300 hits. Where else can you get such good information about what happened so long ago?

Emily Little, an architect that helped renovations on the Porter House in Kyle, and currently serving as president of the Heritage Association in Austin has been hired by Preservations Associated to direct work on the Old County Jail. And what memorabilia should the building house? Well it could be a grass-roots music collection, or Sheriff Allen Bridges asks how about Texas Rangers stuff? What is your favorite museum collection?

Chairman Johnson has been busy. She attended the Historic Road Preservation conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico in September and came back with all sorts of ideas for Hays County pamphlets and one unused complimentary agave margarita ticket. Wonder how long that is good? Of course, the mother of all scenic and ionic roads, Route 66 runs through New Mexico, but Hays County has its share of roads that can also qualify as Nationally Designated or Scenic Byways. Linda Keese passed around a map of Hays County for members to highlight their favorite scenic roads as well as information on any historic roads for future use in a map and road markers. El Camino Real and Fitzhugh Road are two candidates.

LaMarr Petersen will submit an item from HCHC to the raffle for Dripping Springs. Newly reprinted cemetery books are in stock, but the price has increased to \$20 each reflecting the higher cost of printing.

With HCHC business over, Chairman Johnson introduced special guest Gwen Smith whose father had built the cotton gin where we were meeting. We sat back to listen to her story, as a young girl growing up around the gin in the very room where she lost so many straw hats to a huge hole situated in the press room. The incandescent bulbs cast a warm glow over the wooden walls and ceilings, spanned by huge beams hung across to support ropes and pulleys for loading heavy bales of cotton.

"You are sitting over a huge hole," she told us. Evidently we were supping in the press room where after the cotton had been run through the gin and separated from its seed and hull and became lint, was pressed into this burlap-lined hole with a hydraulic wooden mallet until it could hold no more. The burlap was then pulled up the sides of the cotton lint and metal strips were fixed all around. A hydraulic lift then pushed the 400-pound bale of cotton lint up and chains secured around overhead

beams lifted the bale out and onto a waiting dollie to be carried away. Gwen reminisced how she had lost many a straw hat leaning over to look at the cotton lint inside the deep hole.

She and her brothers grew up in San Marcos around the cotton fields and spent many a day inside the gin. Her father built the gin in 1909 of brick and mortar, replacing a wooden building that had burned. Never again would he build with anything but brick and mortar. Several buildings are still standing which were built in the brick and mortar style of the Farmer's union Gin in Buda, Martindale and along the Blanco River.

The three ginning machines hummed along busily during the harvesting season, fed by large vacuums that sucked up wagonloads of fresh picked cotton from the fields east and south of San Marcos. Across the street Oscar Smith built several warehouse to store bales of cotton and all the byproducts; seed and hulls used for cattle feed. He planted hundreds of pecan trees for extra income. He also stored and sold coal to heat homes and businesses, buying several boxcar loads to supplement the winter income. He sold burlap bags constructed of excess burlap fabric not used for cotton baling as well. Nylon and gas put us out of business recalled Gwen.

In 1966, the oldest and largest industrial complex in Hays County closed its doors. The old gin sat vacant, used only for storage. Slowly the neighborhood changed as more family homes were built around it. Several of the old storage buildings were torn down or burned. One was put to use as a garden nursery and now houses an air-conditioning company. The old gin was finally sold in 1980 and reopened as a restaurant, keeping the original name. After several years it was sold to the current owners and opened under a new name, Texas Reds Steakhouse & Saloon. See more on [www.texasreds.com](http://www.texasreds.com).

Her dad loved to work with concrete and adding special touches remembered Gwen, pointing out the arches above doorways and openings. She pointed out a particular favorite of hers, the round window with its special glass, just above the pressroom. We were all reminded to notice and read the historical markers as we left when LaMarr Petersen moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 p.m. and Bob Flocke seconded.

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Keese  
Recording Secretary