

JCHC JOURNAL

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- July 15, 2026
- September 16 , 2026
- November 18, 2026

COMMUNITY EVENTS

June 11—4:30 pm
Vietnam Veterans of America Collection
Talk

Tyrrell Historical Library
June 20—10 AM TO 2 PM

America 250—Culture & Community
Beaumont Heritage Society
French House Museum

July 7-July 10, Camp Lookin Back
Beaumont Heritage Society
French House Museum

November 14, 2026
Patillo v State marker dedication at Tyrrell
Park

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The Jefferson County Historical Commission is a volunteer organization appointed by the County Commissioners court. Each of the 254 counties in the state can have a Historical Commission which supports the Texas Historical Commission with the tasks of :

Surveying and documenting local history - being buildings, sites, events, and individuals.

Maintaining Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks and local historical markers.

Promoting heritage tourism and community education.

JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSION MEMBERS



Jefferson County Historical Commission Members: left to right-back row: Don Smart, Bruce Hamilton, Lynn Simon, Linda McMahan, Les McMahan, William Gray, Jay Camp, Kate Hambright, Laurie Leister (Coordinator), front row left to right: Steven Lewis, Jennifer Trenbeath, Theresa Goodness (Chair), Paul Prosperie and Jessie Davis. Not pictured: Katherine Leister, Brenda Jackson, Mike McGreevy, Matt Reeves, Linda Duhon-LaCour, Advisors: Gordon Williams and Judy Linsley

The Jefferson County Historical Commission is located at:
3rd Floor
1149 Pearl Street, Beaumont, Texas 77701
409-835-8701 HISTCOMM@JEFFERSONCOUNTYTX.GOV

**BEAUMONT HERITAGE SOCIETY'S
HERITAGE HAPPY HOUR
MAY 21, 2026
JEFFERSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

THE HERITAGE HAPPY HOUR WAS A GREAT SUCCESS EVEN WITH A DOWN POUR— 120 PEOPLE ATTENDED AND ALL ENJOYED THEMSELVES.

THE TOUR BEGAN AT THE OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDING, THEN MOVED INTO THE LOBBY, TWO COURTROOMS ON THE SECOND FLOOR, JUDGE FRIESZ'S DISTRICT COURTROOM #317 AND JUDGE SHELTON'S DISTRICT COURTROOM #279. THE TOUR CONTINUED TO THE 5TH FLOOR TO SEE THE ORIGINAL LOCATION OF THE COMMISSIONERS COURTROOM. THE FINAL STOP WAS THE 10TH FLOOR OF THE JAIL TO SEE THE INMATE ART.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE BEAUMONT HERITAGE SOCIETY AND THE JCHC VOLUNTEERS. THANK YOU TO THE COUNTY MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT AND THE SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT.

BHS Happy Hour at Jefferson County Courthouse on May 21, 2026



JCHC Tour of Jefferson County Courthouse



Inmate art—10th floor of the courthouse - Photo credit Laurie Leister

HISTORICAL MARKERS

HISTORIC TEXAS CEMETERIES (HTC)

THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION HAS BEEN ENCOURAGING COUNTIES ACROSS THE STATE TO RESEARCH AND RECORD CEMETERIES.

The JCHC has been doing incredible work researching deed and court records at the county courthouse to locate and honor these cemeteries. Paul Prosperie, Cemetery Chairman, Kate Hambright and Jessie Davis have been working hard to record the location of County cemeteries.

Jessie Davis is the founder of Historic Sacred Spaces, a newly formed non-profit organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and honoring military veteran, historic resting spaces and graveyards, both marked and un-marked.



The Commission has been very busy over the past year documenting historic sites, recording historical events, and recognizing individuals who made a positive impact on our county.

The history of many cemeteries in the county has been recorded with the Texas Historical Commission. Cemeteries receive a marker called a Historical Texas Cemetery (HTC) Marker. The list includes:

Blanchette Cemetery—Received a HTC and a dedication ceremony on November 15, 2025.

French Family Cemetery—Received a HTC in December, 2025 and the dedication celebration is pending.

Hillebrandt Cemetery—HTC designation approved 9/18/2025.

Magnolia Cemetery—Received a HTC in 2023 and the dedication celebration is pending.

Nona Cemetery—Received a HTC in August, 2025, the dedication celebration is pending.

Martha Mack Cemetery—The HTC application is pending approval by Texas Historical Commission.

Sheffield Cemetery—The HTC application is pending approval by Texas Historical Commission.

Murray Cemetery/Black Pauper Cemetery Established by Jefferson County is a “forgotten” cemetery and a Notice of Existence of Abandoned or Unknown Cemetery was filed in Feb. 2026.

HISTORICAL MARKERS *SUBJECT AND UNDERTOLD MARKERS*

The Texas Historical Commission grants Recorded Texas Historical Landmark (RTHL) markers, Undertold Stories markers and Subject markers.

The following markers were installed in late 2025:

1. Sprott Hospital (RTHL) - 9/27/2025
2. Pandit Mehar Chand - Texas Historical Commission (THC) subject marker - 11/15/2025 - sponsored by Beaumont Heritage Society

Public dedications coming soon are:

1. Patillo v. State—THC subject marker—dedication date 11-14-2026—sponsored by the Beaumont Heritage Society

Approved Markers waiting for their physical markers to be delivered :

1. Jefferson County Courthouse—RTHL marker
2. Beaumont Race Riot—subject marker
3. French Family Cemetery—HTC marker
4. Matchett Herring Coe—subject marker
5. Nona Cemetery— HTC Marker

Marker Applications filed during THC's March 1 to May 15, 2026 cycle period:

1. Blanchette Settlement—subject marker
2. Buda End-of Track Steel Bumper—subject marker
3. Neva's—subject marker
4. Coastal Patrol Base No. 10, Civil Air Patrol—subject marker
5. Beaumont Masonic Lodge No. 286, A.F. & A.M.—subject marker
6. Cosmopolitan Masonic Lodge No. 872, A.F. & A.M.—RTHL



Pandit Chand Marker Dedication—Left is Chands grand son and right is his son. *Photo Credit*

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Another job of the Commission is to recommend properties be placed in the National Register of Historic Places.(NR). The Temple of the Brave was awarded its NR designation this year.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

In 2026, the JCHC has been working to increase the number of structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places outside the cities of Beaumont and Port Arthur.

The first step in this process is to submit a Determination of Eligibility (DOE) to the Texas Historical Commission for properties the Commission has identified as being worthy for listing in the National Register.

So far, the Commission has researched the following properties and the Texas Historical Commission has confirmed these are eligible for a National Register nomination.

- **Old Port Neches Jail, 633 Ave. C, Port Neches, TX**
- **Tex Ritter Historical Park/Dutch Windmill Museum, 1500 Boston Ave., Nederland, TX**
- **Nederland Branch Library, 923 Boston Ave., Nederland, TX**

Jefferson County has been awarded a \$5,000.00 grant from the Texas Historical Commission to pay for the work needed to write the nominations.

Other properties being researched for eligibility for the National Register nomination are:

- **Douget's Rice Milling Co. Rice Dryer, 5702 Industry, Cheek, TX**
- **Livingston Funeral Home, 5601 39th Street, Groves, TX**
- **Former school known before desegregation as "Nome Colored School," 1000 Block N. 3rd St, Nome, TX**
- **Central Middle School, 200 N. 17th St., Nederland, TX**
- **Langham Elementary School, 800 S. 12th St., Nederland, TX**



Dutch Windmill Museum, 1500
Boston Avenue, Nederland, Tx
Photo Credit, William Gray



Above: Port Neches Jail, 633
Ave. C, Port Neches, Tx
Photo credit Theresa Goodness



Douget's Rice Milling Co.
Rice Dryer, 5702 Industry,
Cheek Tx. *Photo credit,
Theresa Goodness*

BRIEF HISTORY OF STATE HIGHWAY 73 IN JEFFERSON COUNTY AND SURROUNDING COUNTIES

Texas State Highway 73 is currently a 42-mile-long highway in the southeastern section of Texas that connects the towns of Winnie at Interstate 10 and the area near Orange at Interstate 10. The highway traverses Chambers, Jefferson, and Orange counties, passing through Port Arthur along its route.

Originally established in 1923, State Highway 73 has undergone several changes over the years. Initially, it extended from Oldenburg in Fayette County to Houston, but various re-routings and extensions over time have altered its route. Notably, in 1936 a proposed route from Houston to Port Arthur was designated as State Highway 228. In 1939, a proposal to extend State Highway 73 eastward to Port Arthur effectively cancelled the proposed State Highway 228 route and part of then-State Highway 125 between Anahuac to Winnie. Construction on the new route was slow due in part to World War 2, with only scattered sections having been completed by 1954.



Hwy. 73 & Hwy. 69 interchange
Photo Credit—TxDOT

By 1961, the western portion of State Highway 73 in Chambers County up to Winnie was replaced by Interstate 10. East of Winnie, the State Highway 73 designation continued, ending at its connection to State Highway 87 in eastern Port Arthur. In 1982, the State of Texas extended the State Highway 73 designation to run concurrent with State Highway 87 from eastern Port Arthur to State Highway 62 in Bridge City, and with State Highway 62 to Interstate 10 at Orange. This effectively created an Interstate 10 bypass over what might have been the original route for Interstate 10 had Beaumont interests not been successful in securing its current route.

In September 2008, Hurricane Ike caused significant disruptions along State Highway 73, including the closure of the highway due to debris and two 200-ton barges being pushed inland by the storm surge. Over the ensuing years, the highway has been widened and rebuilt.

Currently, the Texas Department of Transportation continues to work on upgrading the interchange at State Highway 73 and US Highway 69. The out-of-date cloverleaf design is being replaced with a modern turbine design, and at-grade lanes on both highways are being updated. Construction was begun in 2021 and is expected to be completed by late 2027.