

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Congratulations to Sarah Bellian on her election as Chair of JCHC. Sarah has stepped up each time we have needed her to further our mission to preserve, protect, and promote the rich history of Jefferson County. As the curator of the Museum of the Gulf Coast, she made available the museum's resources to conduct oral histories and other research. When we were in need of a Historic Preservation Officer to comply with the state's Certified Local Government regulations, she did not hesitate to volunteer; and subsequently conducted multiple community meetings to gather information crucial to our mission. JCHC will continue to grow under her leadership, and I know all of the members will be as helpful to Sarah as they have been to me. Thanks to all of you for your wisdom, knowledge and support during my tenure as Chair.

With sincere appreciation, Theresa Goodness

Dear Members and Friends of the Jefferson County Historical Commission: 2019 promises to be a big year for Jefferson County, especially the City of Beaumont which celebrates its 180th birthday. Some of our area resources, such as the Tyrell Library and Port Arthur Public Library are finally showing real improvements in their post-Harvey recovery. As I take the helm as Chair, I'd like to hear what projects our members (especially new members) have in mind for the coming year. My personal goals are to raise awareness about historical commission activities, and recruit new members to help facilitate our current and future projects. I'd also like to explore county-wide disaster preparedness efforts for our cultural and historic resources, including applying for grants. As we strengthen our current efforts to protect our history, I hope we can also reel in some new members and put em' to work!

Thank you, everyone, for your faith and support – and for everything you've yet to do.

Sarah Bellian



Mini-museum Exhibit of Postcards of 1893 Courthouse by Steven Lewis

VOLUME 2019, ISSUE 1

In this issue:

Ralph A. Wooster, In Memoriam	3
Cemetery Report	4
Mini-Museum Exhibits	6

JANUARY, 2019

Special points of interest:

- * Jefferson County Fast Facts
- * Area Museum Upcoming Events

JEFFERSON COUNTY FAST FACTS

1/6/1930

Date Commissioners' Court authorized application to the Secretary of War for approval of plans for construction of highway & railroad turn bridge across the proposed Louisiana & Texas Intracoastal Canal.

1/5/1959

Date of approval of request by County Health Officer, to employ as Chemical Consultant, Joe N. Fields, Professor of Chemistry at Lamar College of Technology, to assist with pin pointing sources of smog in the county.

\$1.75

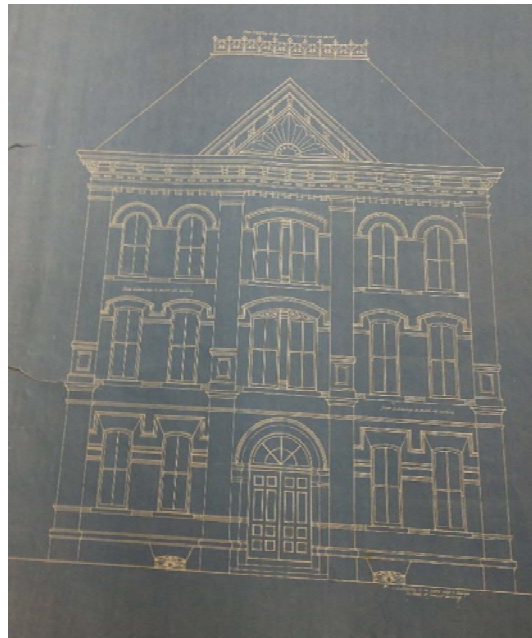
Hourly wage of 5 key-punch operators hired by Tax Assessor-Collector, W.T. Blackmon, in January, 1960, to prepare the poll tax list by working nights and weekends.

UPCOMING 2019 JCHC

Meetings to be held at Jefferson County Courthouse, 1149 Pearl Street, 3rd Floor, Beaumont, TX 77701 in the JCHC Conference Room at **12:00 p.m.**

- January 16, 2019
- March 20, 2019
- May 15, 2019
- July 17, 2019
- September 18, 2019
- November 20, 2019

PROJECTS IN PROCESS



What are you working on?

Share it! Email histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us. You do not need to be a member of JCHC to tell us about your historic preservation project or exciting find!

Photo: Jefferson County Courthouse blueprint (elevation), ca. 1915. *JCHC Archives*

VOLUNTEER HOURS AND MEMBERSHIP

Any work in the preservation or promotion of Jefferson County History may be counted toward your volunteer hours. JCHC meetings and travel time to and from meetings also count as volunteer hours. Members are reminded that at least 50 hours of volunteer work per year is required of each member.

Also with the number of hours, JCHC needs a general description of work performed, for example: 3 Hours – Marker Survey.

If you have any questions, please call the office at 409-835-8701 or contact Linda via email at histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us

PRESERVATION PARTNERS

Beaumont Heritage Society

Beaumont Landmark Commission

Port Arthur Landmark Commission

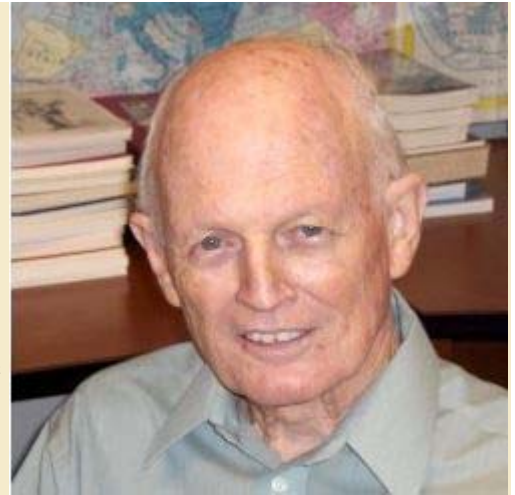
Texas Historical Foundation

Beaumont Main Street

Museum of the Gulf Coast

RALPH A. WOOSTER (1928-2018) IN MEMORIAM

Born to Cleo and John Wooster in 1928, Ralph Wooster grew up in the small town communities of Wooster and Baytown. He married Edna Jones soon after graduating from high school in 1947. Their son Robert was born in 1956. Paying for college by working at his father's service station, and with Edna's help and support, Ralph earned his BA (1949) and MA (1950) from the University of Houston, and his Ph.D. in History from the [University of Texas](#) in 1953. Following his graduate studies, Ralph was drafted and eventually assigned to the U.S. Army Historical Division and given Top Secret and Cosmic (NATO) clearance. He was stationed in Heidelberg, Germany. In a letter of commendation, his commander praised Ralph for his "superior work" in research, writing, and editing, and for "pitching in and carrying major responsibilities." The letter also perfectly captured Ralph's character: "very courteous, cooperative and friendly," with "a pleasing personality, characterized by a quiet, dignified manner." Returning from Europe in 1955, the couple settled in Beaumont, Texas, where Ralph joined the history faculty at Lamar University. Dr. Wooster was an outstanding teacher and received several teaching awards, taking pride never to refer to notes in his lectures. He authored or edited eleven books, including *Secession Conventions of the South*; *The People in Power: Courthouse and Statehouse in the Lower South*; *Politicians, Planters and Plain Folk*; *Texas and Texans in the Civil War*; *Lone Star Generals in Gray*; *Lone Star Regiments in Gray*; *Civil War Texas*; *Lone Star Blue and Gray* (2 editions); *Texas Vistas* (3 editions); *Texas and Texans in World War II*; and *Texas and Texans in the Great War*. He also co-authored *Texas & Texans* (1972, 1978, 1987, 1993, 2003). *Texas History* (2016), the work's latest edition, is the most widely adopted seventh grade Texas history text for public schools. Ralph held numerous administrative roles at Lamar University, lending his services to the institution whenever needed. In 1976, Dr. Wooster became Dean of Graduate Studies, and later served as Dean of Faculty and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. Ralph also served his profession with distinction. He was president of the Texas State Historical Association, the East Texas historical Association, and the Texas Association of College Teachers. Upon his retirement, Ralph was named Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus by the Board of Regents in 2006. With Edna's health declining in 2014, the couple moved to Corpus Christi, Texas to be close to their son and daughter-in-law, Catherine Cox. Although Ralph was a distinguished scholar and teacher, those who knew, loved, and respected him remember him most as a gracious and kind man, a loving and devoted husband, a wonderful father, and a good friend. He was a lifelong patriot and Democrat, a gentleman and a gentle man. An avid reader until his last days, Ralph died at the age of 90. He is survived by his son and daughter-in-law, his brother Richard Wooster, his sister Nell Teer, and his nieces Regina and Annette. "Hail and Farewell," dearest Ralph! Graveside Service was held Monday, December 31, 2018 at 10:00 A.M. at Rose Hill Memorial



Dr. Ralph A. Wooster, PhD.

Credit: [Lamar University website](#)

Park. [Published in the Beaumont Enterprise on Jan. 1, 2019](#)

CEMETERY REPORT—PAUL PROSPERIE

As cemetery chair for the JCHC, I try to visit most of Jefferson County's hallowed ground quarterly. My recent journey began on a clear, sunny Sunday at Oak Bluff Cemetery in Port Neches. I was not the only one there; the crisp cool air had brought out several others. Some cleaned and placed flowers on their loved ones' graves, and soft laughter could be heard from small group reminiscing about past times with their beloved. It was certainly a beautiful day for remembrance.



My next stop was Brewer Cemetery, just off Amoco Road. The lone grave has been well protected behind a concrete barrier for the past six months because Enterprise Products had been working on their new pipeline. Now that the work is finished, the cleanup can begin. You can find more information on Elisha Brewer and his story here: http://www.wtblock.com/wtblockjr/lone_grave.htm

Next, I headed south to visit Greenlawn, Calvery, and then on to Sabine Pass. All seem to be well maintained, and the feral hog damage to the grounds of the Sabine Pass Cemetery that I noticed in 2016 no longer seems to be a major problem. Unfortunately, however, I cannot say the same about my venture north to Beaumont's Magnolia Cemetery. Feral hog damage is quite considerable on the hill (near the Ogden plots) and along the road. The cemetery is taking steps to evict the unwanted guests, but it is a work in progress.



The last stop on my journey was Lincoln Rest Cemetery on LaBelle Road. Nearly four years ago, the county cleared three acres of the eleven-acre cemetery and, I assume, tries to mow it quarterly. The cemetery was abandoned in 1950 after 20 years of providing low-income families with a final resting place for their beloved. I am unsure when or if the county will continue to clear the rest of the cemetery.



Old Survey locator link: <http://www.earthpoint.us/TexasLandSurveySearchByDescription.aspx>

Jefferson County, Texas Cemetery book links:

http://www.co.jefferson.tx.us/Historical_Commission/Jeffco_History_Cemeteries.html

http://www.co.jefferson.tx.us/Historical_Commission/default.htm

Jefferson County Historical Commission link:

http://www.co.jefferson.tx.us/Historical_Commission/default.htm

http://www.co.jefferson.tx.us/Historical_Commission/default.htm

Park. Published in the Beaumont Enterprise on Jan. 1, 2019

AREA MUSEUM UPCOMING EVENTS

Museum of the Gulf Coast

Southeast Texas Sports: Hometown Heroes

Opening January 19, 2019. Reception - 3:00—5:00pm. This exhibition will run until April 30th. See jackets, sweaters, jerseys, trophies and other memorabilia from 100 years of Jefferson County teams, with a special emphasis on Port Arthur and mid-county basketball and football state championships. This exhibition was researched and designed by Sarah Bellian.

Credit: [Museum of the Gulf Coast website](#)



Photo Credit:

Sarah Bellian, for Cindy Dennis Wylie/MOGC

Did You Know?

In the 1920s Port Arthur boasted “The Fabulous Port Arthur Pirates”, a “Semi-Pro” team of high school graduates and coaches who still wanted to play. The Pirates famously lost only one game to a team brought to Beaumont by Jim Thorpe—one of the greatest athletes of the 20th century according to *Sports Illustrated* (#7) - and the first commissioner of the NFL. The collection of Port Arthur High School football coach Tom Dennis was donated recently to the Museum of the Gulf Coast by his granddaughter Cindy Dennis Wylie. Tom Dennis played as a “Pirate” and coached Port Arthur/TJ to 1929 and 1944 State Championship victories.

Beaumont Heritage Society

Heritage Happy Hour: February 28 @ 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm



The twelve stall stable building was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps Company 845 as part of a city park project from November 24, 1935 through June 30, 1941... so come check it out!

Credit: [Beaumont Heritage Society website](#)

McFaddin-Ward House Museum

Free Lecture: A Butler’s Life

February 14, 2019, at 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Ever wonder what it’s like to be a butler? The McFaddin family regularly employed a butler on their full-time staff. Our guest speaker this month is Christopher Allen, former butler, and his wife Kimberly Burton Allen. Together they penned a part memoir and part how-to-book about his real-life duties behind the silver tray.



McFaddin-Ward House Museum

Photo Credit: [McFaddin-Ward House Museum website](#)

**JEFFERSON
COUNTY
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION**

1149 Pearl Street
Third Floor
Beaumont, TX 77701

Tel: 409-835-8701

E-mail:

histcomm@co.jefferson.tx.us
Linda McMahan, Coordinator



*To preserve and
promote history within
the County.*

We're on the web!
[http://co.jefferson.tx.us/
Historical_Commission/](http://co.jefferson.tx.us/Historical_Commission/)

Jefferson County Historical Commission

Executive Board 2019 - 2020

Chairman, Sarah Bellian

1st Vice-Chairman, Bruce Hamilton

2nd Vice-Chairman, Les McMahan

Secretary, Jen Trenbeath

Immediate Past Chair, Theresa Goodness

JCHC Mini-Museum - Two New Exhibits

The Jefferson County Historical Commission is proud to announce a collection of 22 postcards of the 1893 and 1931 Jefferson County Courthouse is on display in the Mini Museum located on the first floor of the courthouse.

Fourteen of the cards are of the 1893 building and eight are of the current structure. The items on display are photographic scans of the postcards, printed larger than actual size. Some of the cards have been posted while most have not. The ages of the postcards are from the early 1900s to the mid-1950s. A guide for aging postcards is included.

The second exhibit consists of 22 photographs of the exterior of the current courthouse showing architectural details of the art deco building. Most of the photos were taken with a telephoto lens to get a better view of features high above ground level, including eagles, ram's heads, cattle skulls, laughing faces, windows, and friezes.

Two additional items are an 1899 photograph of the 1893 courthouse and a representation of the current courthouse as a line drawing.

The exhibits will be on display through January 2019.

1893 Jefferson County
Courthouse -
Photograph taken by
Harry Potter Jirou in
1899

Credit: *Frank Weber
Collection at the Texas
Energy Museum*

