



# Bell County Historical Commission Newsletter

Spring 2010  
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Bell County Courthouse  
Belton, Texas 76513

## KAHA to host BCHC, county attorney

Bell County Attorney Rick Miller will discuss *Bloody Bell County*, a new book in progress, when he addresses the Bell County Historical Commission Monday, April 26, in Killeen.

The Killeen Area Heritage Association will host the event at the former Bethel Primitive Baptist Church building, 400 South Gray, at 7 p.m.

Miller is the author of several books about old-time badmen and the law enforcement officers who dealt with them in the historic American West. In 2006 *True West* magazine named his *Sam Bass and Gang* as one of the 50 best books ever written on the American West. On the same list was *Lonesome Dove* author Larry McMurtry.

Miller served three years as a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division and for almost 12 years served as an officer, detective and supervisor with the Dallas Police Department. He was also chief of police in Killeen and Denton.

After earning a bachelor's degree from The University of Texas-Arlington and a master's degree from Southern Methodist University, Miller received his Jurisprudence Doctorate from Baylor University Law School in 1983. He practiced law in Killeen until 1992 when he was elected county attorney.

## Temple to honor its namesake on June 29

The city of Temple will dedicate a Texas Historical Commission marker to honor Bernard Moore Temple, the civil engineer responsible for much of the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe line to and from central Texas.

The marker ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, June 29, at the Temple Visitor Center, 120 West Central Avenue.

Dr. Weldon Cannon, Bell County Historical Commission member and Temple College professor emeritus of history, prepared the marker narrative for THC. He notes that Temple's engineering accomplishments included serving as resident engineer for the Pecos High Bridge in west Texas, as well as working as Galveston's superintendent of waterworks beginning in 1899. When the devastating hurricane hit the island city in 1900, its death toll of 10,000-12,000 still the worst natural disaster in the nation's history, "Temple got the city water system up and working in three weeks – another phenomenal engineering feat," according to Cannon.

## 1968 in America exhibit to close May 25

The Bell County Museum's current exhibit, *1968 in America*, opened April 10 with a crowd estimated at 225 hearing speakers recall that unforgettable year in American history.

Visitors to the museum walk through 1960s hanging beads to reach the exhibit, which features photographs, posters, military attire, magazine covers and video from the era.

Retired lieutenant general Dave Palmer presented a summary of U.S. participation in Southeast Asia, Rev. Roscoe Harrison Jr. of Temple described his involvement in the civil rights movement and Mary Fairlie discussed rock music during the opening event.

A book signing by archeologist Michael Collins is scheduled for May 15, and a new exhibit, *The Wide World of Sports (in Bell County)*, will open on June 12.

Museum director Stephanie Turnham will lead free walking tours of historic downtown Belton on June 3 and 24 at 6 p.m.

"Blazing New Trails," a summer camp program, is scheduled for July 13-16. Interested persons should contact Kristen Reichert at 254-933-5243.

The museum is located at 201 North Main in Belton; hours are 12 noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Admission is free. More information is available at 254-933-5243.

### Bell County Calendar

BCHC meeting (Killeen) . . . . .	April 26, 7 pm
Dallas Cemetery marker dedication. . . . .	May 1, 10 am
Michael Collins book signing (BCM) . . . . .	May 15
RR&HM Family Fun Day . . . . .	May 15, 10 am-1 pm
'Battle of Temple Junction'. . . . .	May 21-23
BCHC meeting . . . . .	May 24, 7 pm
<i>1968 in America</i> closes . . . . .	May 25
Walking tours, downtown Belton . . . . .	June 3 and 24, 6 pm
RR&HM Summer Adventure . . . . .	June 11, 10 am-1 pm
<i>Wide World of Sports</i> . . . . .	June 12
RR&HM Family Fun Day . . . . .	June 19, 10 am-1 pm
CTAM genealogical workshop . . . . .	June 26, 8 am
RR&HM Cotton Belt lecture . . . . .	June 27, 2 pm
BCHC meeting . . . . .	June 28, 7 pm
B.M. Temple marker dedication . . . . .	June 29, 10 am
Independence Day . . . . .	July 4
BCM 'Blazing New Trails' camp . . . . .	July 13-16
RR&HM Summer Adventure . . . . .	July 10, 10 am-1 pm
RR&HM Family Fun Day . . . . .	July 17, 10 am-1 pm
BCHC meeting . . . . .	July 26, 7 pm

### **RR&HM plans busy summer schedule**

Family Fun Day events at the Railroad and Heritage Museum of Temple will offer a variety of programs in the next few months, including fire safety on May 15, astronomy on June 19 and law enforcement on July 17.

Family Day events, for which no admission is charged, begin at 10 a.m. and end at 2 p.m. Museum admission is normally \$2.

The museum's lecture series will continue on Sunday, June 27, at 2 p.m. Subject is the Cotton Belt Railroad.

More information about museum activities is available from Jeremy Krauss, events coordinator, at 254-298-5165.

The City of Temple recently dedicated Fred Springer Park at the museum's Santa Fe Depot, honoring former Bell County Historical Commission member Springer for his long-time support of the museum, located at 315 W. Avenue B in Temple.

The museum's archivist Craig Ordner recently acquired an 1892 linen-backed map of Temple. Measuring 36 inches x 32 inches, the lithographed map offers an abundance of insight to Temple's landmarks of more than 100 years ago.

### **CTAM plans genealogy workshop June 26**

"From Sea to Shining Sea," a genealogical workshop is scheduled for Saturday, June 26 from 8 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. at the Central Texas Area Museum.

Cost is \$30 for CTAM members, \$35 for non-members and \$25 for bona fide students. Mail-in registration should be sent to CTAM, P.O. Box 36, Salado, TX 76571.

### ***BCHC office needs volunteers . . . NOW!***

Volunteer coordinator Joe Button has issued a plea for assistance in the Bell County Historical Commission office at the courthouse. Dates for which help is needed are April 30, May 6 and May 7.

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*This newsletter is published quarterly by the Bell County Historical Commission, Box 712, Belton, Texas 76513-0712. Editorial material may be sent to Annette Lucksinger, 811 Oakhill Drive, Killeen, Texas 76541 (254-699-5916).*

*(E-mail: [annettelucksinger@yahoo.com](mailto:annettelucksinger@yahoo.com))*

*The commission meets at 7 p.m. on the fourth Monday of most months at the Bell County Courthouse. The BCHC office on the third floor of the courthouse is open from 9 a.m. to 12 noon Monday through Friday. Phone number is 254-933-5917.*

### ***Sleep expert to give Wilmer memorial talk***

William C. Dement, founder of the world's first sleep disorders center at Stanford University, will deliver the annual Wilmer Memorial Lecture at The Institute for the Humanities at Salado on June 5 at 4 p.m.

Considered the world's leading authority on sleep, sleep disorders and the dangers of sleep deprivation, Dr. Dement is completing his 39th year of teaching a popular class, Sleep and Dreams, at Stanford. The lecture and reception are scheduled for the Longhorn Conference Center at Stagecoach Inn.

Historian H. W. Brands, PhD will discuss "Barack Obama in History," on Saturday, May 22, at 4 p.m. at Salado Civic Center. The University of Texas professor is the author of 22 books, including best-sellers *A Traitor to His Class*, about Franklin D. Roosevelt, and *The First American*, the story of Benjamin Franklin, both Pulitzer Prize finalists.

Institute information is available at 254-947-5729 or at [www.salado-institute.org](http://www.salado-institute.org).

### **Kelseys publish Temple photograph book**

Mike and Nancy Kelsey of Belton have published a new book, *Highlights of Temple*, a collection of photographs dating from 1912, when Temple was the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad's highest revenue-producing station south of Kansas City.

Photos for the soft-cover book came from the Railroad and Heritage Museum, Temple Public Library and private collections.

Priced at \$21.99, the book is available at local bookstores and other retailers, as well as from Arcadia Publishing of Dover, New Hampshire.

Nancy Kelsey is a member of the Bell County Historical Commission cemetery committee.

### ***Temple library now LDS film depository***

Genealogists now have access to microfilm records from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' collections in Salt Lake City.

Reels may be rented for \$5.50 or purchased for \$11; purchased reels will remain at the library.

More information is available from Mike Kelsey, research librarian, at 254-298-5561.

### **BCM to host small-museum planning workshop**

The Bell County Museum will be the site of a small-museum planning workshop on Tuesday, May 4. Registration, including lunch, is \$25 and is available at [www.texasmuseums.org](http://www.texasmuseums.org).

## ***Green Oaks Farm = natural history + cultural history***

Bell County enjoys abundant historic sites, lovingly protected through the decades. It has lots of natural history, too, much of it also well protected. Green Oaks Farm, a site that combines both strands of history, will be recognized on June 9 at 2 p.m. with the dedication of a Texas Historical Commission marker, followed by lemonade and cookies on the historic property.

Hosting the event will be Raye Virginia Allen and her family. Her mother, Vivian Arnold McCreary, an early environmentalist and fan of Henry David Thoreau, named the 330-acre farm after she and her husband Irvin acquired it in 1941. The property then became a wedding gift to their daughter, Raye Virginia, when she was married to the late H. K. Allen on June 9, 1951. The McCreary-Allen family is only the second family to serve as stewards of the property.

Located just a few miles from Belton and Temple, the property is part of the original Maximo Moreno 11-league Mexican grant of 1834, from which Moses Griffin and his wife, Barzilla Curry Griffin, received one league (4,428 acres) of land, similar to the grants of seven other families who traveled to central Texas as part of the Nashville/Robertson Colony, named for empresario Sterling C. Robertson. Some of their land was transferred to one of their children, Cornelia Griffin Heard (Hurd) Rich, who built a prairie-style farmhouse on a hill in the southern part of the farm. As a result of 1960s interviews with the late Will Hartrick, a neighbor, the Allen family refers to the home as the 1882 House; one of three homes on the property, it was restored in 1941.

History abounds on Green Oaks: Spring-fed Friars Creek meanders through the farm's fertile east portion, then through typical "hill country" prairie land with rock outcropping on the west. A dependable source of water for both settlers and random adventurers, the creek's name derives, according to oral history, from the tradition that early missionaries walked along the creek in prayer and/or meditation. Another tradition notes that a "historic wagon trail" crosses a low point on Friars Creek and was used to transport remains of Rangers killed in the well-known Bird Creek battle of May, 1839, to the cemetery at nearby Fort Griffin.

Violence, human and natural, is undeniably a part of the property's history: At the tiny community of Echo, John Olive, sheriff of Williamson County, was shot and killed at the train station. Some of the land was involved in the deadly skirmishes of the Hasley-Early Feud after the Civil War; Sam Hasley was brother-in-law to Cornelia. According to Hartrick, a tornado in 1883 destroyed the Mount Vernon School that stood some 150 yards from Cornelia's farmhouse; Hartrick, a nephew of Cornelia's, was injured. Teacher Thomas A. McGregor saved the children by racing them to a ravine; his own home and housing for Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad workmen were destroyed.

People have lived, worked, loved, traveled and died on this land since prehistoric times. For the Allens, it has been a retreat, as well as a working, producing farm and ranch dedicated to stewardship of the land and preservation of its history. They invite lovers of Bell County history to attend the marker ceremony and enjoy the waterfalls of Friars Creek, the ancient live oaks and the view from Cornelia's 1882 hilltop home. *A.L.*

Directions by Raye Virginia Allen: Our place is between FM 93 and Waters Dairy Road in South Temple. We are also between South 31st Street and South 5th Street in South Temple. It is around four+ miles from Belton on FM 93 and almost one mile north from FM93 on Hartrick Bluff Road to our only entrance, where the marker will be mounted. The address is hard to see, "5880," as you head north toward Temple. From Temple, head south on Hartrick Bluff Road, off Waters Dairy Road. The road zigzags over the railroad track, then crosses the Friars Creek bridge. Take the first right (west) and turn into Green Oaks Farm.

# *Passion on the Prairie . . . . .*

*Passion* – that’s the word one hears over and over when people talk about the Robertson Plantation of Salado.

Built between 1858 and 1860 by Col. Elijah Sterling Clack Robertson, the home at the center of the plantation is undergoing early stages of an ambitious project to bring back the passion of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Texas pioneers, people with ambition, foresight and perseverance to settle a frontier fraught with danger but full of promise.

Passion describes the feelings Robertson descendant Sterling Ambrose exudes when he shares his family’s dream: “to restore this home where so much history has occurred and to preserve it for the people of Texas to enjoy for the ages . . . ” as well as to provide the Robertson family a place to gather as they learn and savor their family’s contribution to Texas history.

Austin preservation architect Gregory Free is passionate about the project, too, according to the Salado Historical Society’s past president Jim Bienski, who introduced Free at a recent potluck dinner at the “Old Brick School” community center.

“The Robertson Plantation is one of the most exciting preservation projects in Texas,” Free told the overflow audience of more than 140. The Robertson family has engaged Free to help direct preservation and restoration efforts at the historic property, consistently referred to as a “plantation” rather than a “ranch,” although its history is tied more firmly to cattle-raising than to the usual 19<sup>th</sup> century crops of sugar and cotton. Owners of nearby properties did the same thing, Free said, “calling their lands ‘ranches’ when they actually planted crops.”

Lamenting unfortunate “remodeling” in some parts of Texas and the nation, Free noted that “most Texans never had enough money to ruin our history . . . Here in the south we were so poor that we didn’t know when the Great Depression came.” Free pointed out that, unlike many historic homes, Robertson Plantation, situated today on 850 acres of the original land grant, still has breathing room. “So many historic buildings have lost ‘viability’ with newer properties crammed beside or around them,” he said.

The plantation’s main house is environmentally sound, Free continued. Noting the home’s expansive porches and tall windows, he said, “These builders knew how to come in out of the rain and to get out of the sun . . . This is where fine art met the backwoods.” Materials had to come overland, but the Robertsons had a vision for the community, Free said; in addition, they were able to hire craftsmen who had solid training in time-tested building practices. The stone kitchen, for example, was correctly oriented to catch a southeasterly breeze.

*(continued on next page)*

# *Salado's Robertson Plantation*

Free and Robertson family members are taking advantage of the many records kept in the home since before the Civil War. ("boxes and boxes," according to Free. "Col. Robertson never threw anything away" and, apparently, neither did his descendants.) Cile Ambrose Cowan, Sterling's sister, serves as the family historian and is the primary organizer of those records.

In addition, photographs from a historic American buildings survey conducted from 1936 to 1940 by the Works Projects Administration preserved important information about the property. These Robertson Plantation records provide more drawings, 17 sheets of them, than any other property in Texas, Free said. "We could build the house from those survey plans!" Even with so many records, he and Ambrose have appealed for any more records or photographs people may have as research continues on the home's architectural features and history.

Besides initial sound building practices, the home has remained in the same family, giving Free and family members the opportunity to study how and why the building was constructed. He congratulated family members for making sure that the home has never fallen into serious disrepair, although it does now require restoration and preparation for its use, on the ground floor, as a visitor attraction.

Pointing out unique features of the home, Free said that the rear gallery is the only one of its type in Texas, but, he added: "You see them in Creole homes in the Caribbean and in Louisiana."

"So," he continued, correcting a widespread, erroneous description of the Robertson home, "instead of being a 'Palladian-style' residence, this home is more like a French-Colonial house," indicating, he believes, that someone with a French Creole building background was possibly the builder or at least served to influence Col. Robertson, someone from perhaps Louisiana, Haiti, Guadeloupe or Martinique, Free suggested.

Evidence of the French-Colonial influence abounds and includes the *cabinettes* in the four corner rooms, the home's eight pairs of French doors and French casement windows. The John J. Audubon home in Key West and a similar house in Martinique share some of these influences with the Robertson property, Free noted. House slaves were sheltered in one long building, probably with a porch or gallery, at the Robertson Plantation, like those in the Caribbean; field slaves lived in cabins.

SHS members are assisting with projects at the plantation home, including cleaning and serving as docents during Founders Day tours. They are also working to "reconnect the plantation and its history to the village of Salado," according to Bienski. A.L.

## Alexander Dienst: Physician, dentist, historian

(Dr. David Yeilding, former Bell County Historical Commission chairman and marker chairman, assembled this article about a man who came to Bell County in 1889, practiced medicine and dentistry for 40 years and became a respected historian as well.)

Alexander Dienst was born in St. Louis, Missouri, March 19, 1870, son of Dr. Alex and Augusta Moller Dienst. The elder Dienst, born in Breisgau, Baden, Germany, came to the United States when he was 14 years of age. Augusta Moller was the daughter of Christopher Moller, whose family was from Aix La Chapelle (city of Aachen, Germany). Christopher Moller lived in Hermann, Missouri, where, among other accomplishments, he founded a private school.

The elder Alexander Dienst was both a doctor of medicine and a doctor of dental surgery. He practiced his profession in St. Louis where he served as president of the St. Louis Dental College. The younger Alexander attended the Ozark College in Greenfield, Missouri, and Ohio Wesleyan University at Delaware, Ohio. He was graduated from Philadelphia Dental College. Following his graduation, he attended the Chirurgical College of Philadelphia for additional instruction.

In 1889, when Temple was only in its eighth year, young Dr. Dienst moved to the city and began his practice, which he maintained for the next 40 years. He accumulated considerable real estate holdings in Temple. He served as the city water commissioner and, during World War I, served as the city's postmaster, having been appointed by President Woodrow Wilson. He was president of the Bell County Historical Society from 1923 to 1929 and was an active member of Temple's First Methodist Church.

Dr. Dienst married Florence Gooda, whose father, George, was born in Yarmouth, England, and spent his life on the sea. After George Gooda's death, his wife and her mother, Eliza Williams, went to Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paula, and Pernambuco, Brazil, as Baptist missionaries. Both ladies died and were buried in Sao Paulo. Florence and Alexander Dienst had six children: Manley, Jamie (died at five years of age), Josephine (married H. C. Surghner of Temple), Ralph (died at 15 years of age), Grace Helen and Bob.

Although Dienst was a skilled dentist, he became exceptionally well known as a historian. For a number of years he was a member of the Texas State Historical Association executive council and served as the organization's president for three years. Recognized as an antiquarian, Dienst studied history and collected artifacts all his life. For years he studied pre-historic Stone Age remains in Central Texas and collected the largest holding of chipped flint work in the state up to that time. His collection includes all lines of stone work and contained between 50,000 to 100,000 specimens. Though this work was significant, this did not detract from his interest in more recent Texas history.

He spent decades gathering a phenomenal collection of valuable, in fact, priceless, historical documents, letters, manuscripts, broadsides, proclamations, books and pamphlets concerning Texas history. His collection of these items was exceptional. (*continued.....*)



Collection of Bell County Museum

**Alexander Dienst, left, was a member of the board of trustees of Temple State Bank, shown here with James E. ("Pa") Ferguson, center, and other board members circa 1910.**

## Alexander Dienst ..... (continued)

He spent so much time on his historical interests that it is difficult to imagine he had time to practice his profession. On April 8, 1902, the New York Times reported that President Theodore Roosevelt announced that he intended to write a history of the Texas revolution after he left the presidency and that he would use Dr. Alexander Dienst's collection for part of his research.

Dienst aided students of Texas history whenever possible. He wrote numerous articles and lectured extensively across the state, cheerfully traveling across the state to speak to groups both large and small.

In 1909 he wrote *The Navy of the Republic of Texas, 1835-1845*. He was widely regarded as "The Authority" on this topic. In 1936, in conjunction with Texas' Centennial Celebration, Dienst opened a museum on North Third Street in Temple. During the first two months of its operation, more than 6,000, visitors filed through to view it.

On May 6, 1938, Dienst died. He is buried in Hillcrest Cemetery in Temple along with his wife and two sons who predeceased them.



## *Community garden yielding more than veggies*

Killeen's Municipal Court Community Garden, now entering its third growing season, just grew bigger by 100 tomato plants during a recent Saturday work session. Forty teenagers and approximately a dozen adult mentors planted and weeded the garden, under supervision by Killeen juvenile case manager Johnny Brooks, left, above.

Named for Barbara A. Weaver, center, first woman to serve as a Bell County municipal judge, the one-half acre garden was conceived as a way for teenagers who break traffic laws to perform community service, paying their fines in sweat and saving themselves or their parents fines that average \$200-250 per offense. Above, right, Master Gardener Beverly Wickersham shows off part of a fresh crop of kale from the garden, the first in central Texas. By the end of 2009, more than 1,000 pounds of vegetables had been donated to the Mission Soup Kitchen in Killeen and to food care centers in Killeen and Harker Heights. More than 700 teens have participated in the project, which won the 2009 Traffic Safety Award from the Texas Municipal Court Education Center in Austin.

"We wanted to provide constructive punishment for these young offenders of Class C misdemeanors," Weaver says, "allowing them to contribute to the community in a manner that would benefit the less fortunate and also provide them with experiences needed to assume the most important role they need in our society – that of a citizen." Most of the misdeeds are traffic violations, she says.

Weaver's friend Wickersham, as well as Dirk Aaron, Bell County extension agent with Texas Agri-Life Extension, Texas A&M University, helped bring the project to life after a ground-breaking ceremony in 2008. Volunteers from Killeen Volunteers Inc., the Keep Killeen Beautiful committee and the City of Killeen Public Works Department assisted with start-up construction work of the garden so that the city council had no financial responsibility for the garden. With construction funds provided by individual *(continued)*



## TSHA speakers hail Killeen native Oveta C. Hobby

Several speakers praised the accomplishments of Killeen native Oveta Culp Hobby at a recent Texas State Historical Association conference in Dallas.

"She was transformational," said Kelli Walsh of Fayetteville (North Carolina) State University. "She got things done, and she got others to get things done." The first director of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, later called the Women's Army Corps (WAC), "challenged people to think differently about womanhood" in an era when most married women remained "at-home" wives and mothers.

The first female executive hired by the U. S. War Department, Hobby took on the task of explaining the military to women; her second challenge was to answer the question: *Why should women leave home and join the military?* Sent by her bosses to testify before the House Military Affairs Committee, she had to address all sorts of "irrelevant" questions, according to Walsh. Hobby, wife of former governor William P. Hobby and mother of future lieutenant governor William P. Hobby Jr., "knew that women would be judged differently from men" and managed to "change the existing order." More than 100,000 women volunteered for the WAC during World War II. Today, women comprise about 50 percent of the military, Walsh said.

Robert Pando of Houston observed that, in researching Hobby's life, he had located only three dissertations on Hobby, and "none from anyone in Texas." He described teenaged Hobby as being "lawyerly" and reminded his audience that she had become parliamentarian in the Texas House of Representatives at age 20, serving in that position for five years. Involved in many civic activities at a young age, she served on a planning committee for the Texas Centennial in 1936. After the end of World War II, Pando noted, Hobby was involved in planning for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Radio Free Europe, as well as serving as the first secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare during the Eisenhower administration. During her tenure at HEW, Hobby made some 150 speeches and was sometimes called "the best man in the Eisenhower cabinet." After leaving Washington in 1955 to care for her ailing husband, 27 years her senior, she managed the couple's multiple businesses in Texas. Born January 19, 1905, in Killeen, Hobby died August 16, 1995, in Houston.

In the Dallas audience was her son, Bill Hobby. Asked how his mother accomplished so much, he quoted her: "I just did the next thing that came along." A.L.

### *Community garden yielding (continued . . . .)*

and organizations' contributions, teens built raised flower beds that can be enjoyed from the street. A local landscaping firm donated the curved walkway. So far, donations from local citizens, civic clubs and businesses have guaranteed that taxpayers aren't being billed for garden maintenance. According to Wickersham, more than 100 volunteers, including many Master Gardeners, have assisted with the garden, located behind the Killeen Civic and Conference Center on South W. S. Young Drive.

"These volunteers check on the garden during the week and when the kids are out on school vacations – anytime the garden needs watering or other attention," Wickersham notes. Besides tomatoes and kale, this year's garden features onions, carrots, collard greens, potatoes and cabbage.

Weaver, a distinguished alumna of the University of Central Texas, received a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from Texas Tech University School of Law. The wife of retired Col. Charles Rex Weaver, she is the mother of three and grandmother of five. Appointed by the Killeen city council to the position of presiding municipal judge in 1999, she served until her retirement in 2009 and continues to practice family and personal injury law in Killeen. Oh, yes, and she bakes cookies for the adults and kids who work at the garden on Saturdays. A.L.

## *Civil War Sesquicentennial observance underway*

For at least two years, institutions around the nation have worked to initiate a variety of ways to observe the 150th anniversary of the country's Civil War, 1861-1865. Reactions to the observance vary widely, as demonstrated by scholarly historians, re-enactment organizations, governmental entities and, of course, bloggers.

Many agree on one point: In spite of progress in civil rights, some issues have not yet been resolved. At the time of the war's Centennial observance, 1961-1965, the nation had not yet reached consensus on the issue of civil rights issues, even though the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments had been passed shortly after the end of the Civil War. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 did push, exponentially, the agenda forward. Today, 50 years later, some believe that anniversary activities must, at last, examine and try to resolve remaining questions from the time of Appomattox.

Along with the "leftover" questions is perhaps a bigger consideration: What did/does the Civil War mean for American democracy?

Scholars, such as Yale's David Blight, divide reaction to the Civil War into three narratives: 1) the "emancipationist" narrative, the promise of freedom to four million slaves, as the "single most important event in the war"; 2) the "lost cause" narrative that the South was justified in seceding, that its soldiers fought honorably and that "states' rights" were the real reason for secession; and 3) the "reconciliationist" narrative, which honors soldiers on both sides of the conflict for their dedication to a cause, but without serious examination of those causes. (An online video, "A Few Minutes with David Blight" may be found by "Googling" the video's title.)

Many Americans, as well as foreign visitors, will visit Civil War battle sites, study military strategies, argue about who "lost" which struggle, who was the "best" leader and so on. Some will experience indescribable sadness, mingled with awe, as the carnage of those battles becomes clear, its impact on families devastating. Re-enactors will strive, for the most part, to portray accurately the unhappy lives of Americans, military and civilian during this tragic era.

The deadliest conflict in the nation's history, the Civil War maintains an emotional hold on Americans that is difficult to explain. Kevin M. Levin, a high school history teacher and blogger in Charlottesville, Virginia, notes that, "although academic and National Park Service historians have worked tirelessly (since the 1960s) to revise our understanding of the Civil War by emphasizing the importance of slavery, race and emancipation . . . the general public continues to hold onto a sanitized, white-only interpretation . . . We prefer a heroic past that is . . . exceptional compared to the rest of the world."

"For most people," Levin writes, "the news of foreign civil wars conjures up images of confusion, sadness, corruption, uncertainty and violence . . . foreign civil wars are reflective of the failure of governments . . . Where is the confusion, uncertainty, violence and sadness in our Civil War?" Levin sees the Civil War as an "humbling event that serves as a reminder of the fragility of governments and the depth of violence that we all too often reach."

Levin quotes the late Harvard historian William Gienapp: "The outbreak of war in April, 1861, represented the complete breakdown of the American political system. As such the Civil War constituted the greatest failure of American democracy."

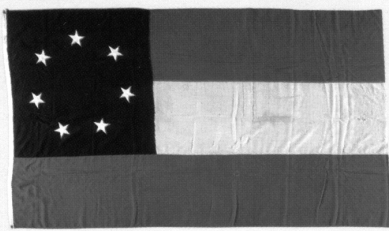
During the Sesquicentennial observance, controversy will surely be a given. Controversy, though, could lead the nation to a more nuanced understanding of issues still not settled. *A.L.*

## Remembering the Civil War in Texas and Bell County

Bell County men voted 468 to 198 in February, 1861, to secede from the Union. Statewide, the vote was 46,153 to 14,747. The decision became official on March 2, 1861, 25 years after Texas had declared her independence from Mexico. Texas was the seventh state to secede and the last to secede before the April 12-13 attack by Confederates on Union forces at Fort Sumter, South Carolina.

*Estimates of Civil War veterans buried in Bell County vary. According to Sons of Confederate Veterans Robert M. White Camp member Rocky Sprott, some 2,500 to 3,000 Confederate veterans lie in Bell County cemeteries, with about 97 in South Belton Cemetery. A recent bequest of \$5,000 will be used to erect new flag poles at the historic resting place.*

The Texas Historical Commission will update its *Texas in the Civil War* brochure for distribution during the Civil War Sesquicentennial. Meanwhile, the current brochure offers a readable and fairly comprehensive summary of Texas' participation before and during the war, with numerous photos, maps and engravings, as well as timelines of the era for the United States and for Texas. It is free and may be ordered from THC, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276 or an abbreviated version online from [www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us).



**First national flag of the Confederacy, used from March, 1861, until March, 1863**

*"Let me tell you what is coming. You may, after the sacrifice of countless millions of treasures (sic) and hundreds of thousands of precious lives, win Southern independence but I doubt it. The North is determined to preserve this Union. They are not fiery, impulsive people as you are, for they live in colder climates. But when they begin to move in a given direction they move with the steady momentum and perseverance of a mighty avalanche."* from a speech by Governor Sam Houston a short time before passage of the Ordinance of Secession

*Population of Bell County was a bit more than 4,000 in 1861. Of the 1,100 men who joined Confederate forces, only about one-third returned. About 300 men signed onto the Union cause. **Story of Bell County, Texas** contains many details of homefront efforts and attempts by the commissioners court to assist families whose heads were at the front.*

The Robert M. White Camp, Sons of Confederate Veterans, will sponsor the fictional "Battle of Temple Junction" on May 21-23 with living history encampments and battles on Saturday and Sunday. Friday will be Education Day. Last year's event featured seven living history stations with 500-600 elementary students in attendance. Location: 0.8 mile west of I-35, exit 304. More information available from [greg.manning@us.army.mil](mailto:greg.manning@us.army.mil) or from [saddler@embarqmail.com](mailto:saddler@embarqmail.com)

*The Texas Historical Monuments Fund, established by the Texas Historical Commission, has provided for 18 identical red granite monuments to honor Texas Confederates who participated in battles in Texas and in other states. These include engagements at Pea Ridge, Chickamauga, Kennesaw Mountain, Mansfield, Antietam, Raymond, Vicksburg, Bentonville, Gettysburg, Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Galveston, Sabine Pass, Rowlett, The Wilderness, Richmond, Anthony and Corinth, a unit of Shiloh National Military Park. The Corinth monument will be dedicated in October, 2010.*

## Tired of reading? *Then look at the pictures!*



The Czech Heritage Museum and Genealogy Center, located at the corner of Third Street and French in Temple, received a City of Temple historic plaque at its recent opening. The museum is housed in a 1931 building originally constructed for Dr. H. B. Mason, physician and former Temple mayor. With a generous donation from Louis Hanus of Houston, it was purchased in 2001. Museum hours are Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is charged, and memberships are available. More information may be had by calling 254-899-2935.



Killeen's recent Avenue D biennial reunion drew more than 150 graduates from the 1923 school, now Killeen's city hall at College and Avenue D. Reminiscing with a 1948-49 Kangaroo Kook Book are, left to right, Annie Roe Bowen Buckley, class of 1933; Peggy Whitley Johnson, class of 1949; Dorothy Davenport Conder and Sue Williamson Hallmark, both members of the class of 1950.



Jim Bienski, left, Salado Historical Society secretary, congratulates Doris Denman, who, with MaryBelle Brown, was named a "citizen of the year" at a recent dinner in Salado. The two were honored for their many years of work in understanding, preserving and sharing village history. Both Denman and Brown are longtime members of the Bell County Historical Commission.