

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

Meridian Retirement Center, 2228 Seawall Blvd., Galveston, TX 77550

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 12, 2011

Board Members Present: President Ed Jamison, FVP Jack Watson, SVP Kathy Modzelewski, TVP Ginny Roberts, Secretary Carolyn Peterson, Editor Dan Cote, Technology Director Rob Peterson, Archivist Larry Porter, Publicity Director Dave Roberts

Board Members Absent: Coordinator of Research Pam Keyes, Treasurer Nancy Beaman, Parliamentarian Diane Olson

Advisory Board Present: Jeff Modzelewski, Kathy Modzelewski

Advisory Board Absent: Pam Keyes, Robert Vogel, Dr. Reginald Wilson, Jean Epperson, R. Dale Olson

President Ed Jamison called the meeting to order at 6:29PM. Editor Dan Cote said that he hoped to publish another addition of the Chronicles late August or early September. Ed then welcomed visitors and returning members Ken Olson-brother of Dale Olson, Tom Linton, and Margie and Norm Sachnicks.

Program Speaker – Bill Kroger

Topic – Galveston County Historical Records

FVP Jack Watson introduced the evening's presenter, Bill Kroger, to speak about efforts being made to preserve historical records in Texas. Bill is a partner at Baker & Botts and is active in several state and local professional organizations. At this time he is the co-chair of the Historical Records Task Force that works with county court administrators around Texas to help identify important records in need of preservation. The task force then recommends the best method of preservation for their specific needs depending on the type of specimen and the area's climatology.

Bill spoke about the threats to historical treasures. First he mentioned about theft, citing a 1970's case involving a janitor who stole 1850's slave records then sold them. This still goes on using online auctions with important signatures holding great interest to collectors. Now the task force monitors these sites and prosecutes offenders. He said that negligence is the greatest threat, though. He showed some slides with records being preserved by several unorthodox means such as duct-taped binding and scotch-taped pages. Preservation can be very costly.

He said that the Galveston District clerk is quite concerned about preserving the records here, especially in light of Hurricane Ike. Bill said that probably the most important record in this area is the Galveston 1900 storm record and that it is very unremarkable indicating that people were busy trying to get the city back into working order. He also said that Galveston may have the oldest minute book in Texas (1839) which has not been preserved. Minute books contain the courts' opinions.

Bill cited several interesting court records his group has found such as one in Galveston involving the Jewish fighter, Choynski, and Jack Johnson. Even though prize fighting was against the law and the fight was witnessed by many, they were acquitted twice. While the fighters were awaiting trial Choynski sparred with Johnson in jail acting as Johnson's mentor. Johnson went on to become a champion prize fighter. Bill said that besides court files, immigration records should be preserved in regard to the current interest in genealogy.

He ended his presentation by naming the most important county records in need of preservation. They are the Galveston County Minutes "A", Travis County Minutes "B", Bexar County Minutes "B", Ellis County Minutes "A", Comanche County Minutes "B", Cameron County Minutes "B", Galveston "1861-1865", Jack County "Minute Book", Comanche County "C", Hamilton County Minutes, Donley County Minutes, Choynski-Johnson, Ledbelly Criminal Conviction, Galveston Immigration records, Bell County Minutes, 1930 Ma Ferguson-Ross Sterling, Daniels-Bob Wills suit, Lyndon Johnson-Coke Stevenson suit, and Balinese Ballroom criminal case. These will be recommended to the Texas Supreme Court in September for preservation.

Questions:

Is Gray Street in Houston named for Peter Gray? Yes.

In Galveston County are older records indexed by name or date? It depends on the type of record.

How are stolen documents recovered? When the document is spotted, the Attorney General is notified and the seller is contacted. About 10% are recovered.

How do you volunteer for preservation work? Focus on your own county and have the district clerk speak to your group. This lets the clerk know that people are interested. Small fundraisers could be held to sponsor small preservation projects.

How are documents with ink containing iron preserved? He did not give details, but said that it was a complex procedure.

How are archived documents in Galveston secured? Galveston does a good job in that the general public does not have access to these documents. They have hurricane plans. Motion sensor cameras are in place to prevent theft or damage.

Miscellaneous

Lynette Haaga talked about the East End garage sale being held this weekend (April 16) at the Cottage. It begins at 8:00AM Saturday at 1501 Post Office. There will be a champagne preview party of Friday evening from 6:00PM-9:00PM for a donation of \$10/person.

TVP Ginny Roberts asked that people sign up to bring food items for the upcoming monthly meetings.

Ed Jamison said that Jeff Modzelewski had agreed to take over the Treasurer's duties from Nancy Beaman and asked that a nomination be made. Ed Connor made the nomination, it was seconded by Larry Porter and the motion was carried.

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The meeting was adjourned at 8:13PM.

Submitted by Carolyn Peterson
Corresponding/Recording Secretary