

Permian Historical
Society

The University of
Texas
Permian Basin
Campus

Summer 2002

Permian Historical Society
Officers and Directors
2002-2004

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Todd Houck, *Program*
Peggy Kelton, *Membership*
Sue Ann Damron, *Secretary*
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Executive Committee Attempts to Rebuild Permian Historical Society

**Fall meeting: 19 October 2002 at the Depot in
McCamey, Texas**

President's Letter

Dear Members and Friends of Permian Historical Society,

At the Spring 2002 meeting held in April at the Permian Petroleum Museum, the board of directors voted unanimously to amend the society's by-laws in order to establish an Executive Committee to conduct society business without the added expense of asking all directors to attend a planning session prior to the fall meeting, scheduled for October 19, 2002, at McCamey. The Executive Committee, made up of nine persons, held its first meeting on May 16, 2002, and will conduct a second meeting on August 28 to wrap up planning for the fall session.

The Permian Historical Society, now entering a new century of activities, will be undergoing some changes—some badly needed—as we strive to meet our future responsibilities of keeping the society strong.

I believe the membership will approve of the changes, and each member will have the opportunity to voice his or her approval in October. As your new president, I want you to know that I believe in teamwork to accomplish our mission, in making sound financial decisions in order for the society to stay out of debt, and in working together to encourage new memberships.

I look forward to visiting with you in the fall. Please bring ideas and/or suggestions about how our society can be improved. We are looking forward to a fine program.

Best wishes for the summer,

Ross McSwain

Life in West Texas

Down from New Mexico it coursed, a sinuous and sinister moat slashing across an arid empire burned by the sun. It had been known by many names down through the centuries—Pa-co-as Te-hu-as, Rio de las Vacas, Salado, Puerco. The river had also moved pioneers to curse it with a vengeance, for the Pecos, as it was known by the 1870s, was only one bend away from hell, and some claimed it wasn't even that far. Buffalo hunters were of the opinion that when a bad man died, he went to one to two places—hell or the Pecos.

The distinction wasn't clear because the Pecos had crushed so many lives that even iron-willed Charles Goodnight, who knew the river intimately, damned it as "the graveyard of the cowman's hopes."

The reasons were myriad. Its waters were briny and alkaline, the "world's worst," according to a 1932 study. Only occasionally, was it potable, and even then it had remarkable purgative properties that sent many a cowboy scurrying for the bushes. Prone to flooding—sometimes reaching a mile wide—the river would recede and invariably leave deadly pools glistening in the desert.

Moreover, the Pecos currents were swift (like a war horse, said one traveler) and ominous in their silence. The banks were high and sheer...

—Patrick Dearen, *Halff of Texas: Merchant Rancher of the Old West* (Austin: Eakin Press, 2000), 35.

News of Permian Historical Society

Questions & Answers

Q. *When will I get my 2001 copy of The Permian Historical Annual?*

A. Although PHS has traditionally mailed copies in the summer to those who did not attend the spring meeting, copies will be mailed this year after the fall 2002 meeting. Copies will be distributed to those members in attendance at the fall meeting.

Q. *Why was no Best Article Award made at the spring meeting?*

A. Since the newly-formatted *Annual* was not yet completed, the Best Article Committee had no articles from which to work. Best Article Award for *The Permian Historical Annual* 41 will be made at the October 19, 2002, meeting at the Depot in McCamey, Texas.

Events and Members

New Committee Chairmen for the 2002-2004 Term

Program: **Todd Houck**

Membership: **Peggy Kelton**

Best Article Award: **Donna Bell with Bud Lindsey and Lanita Akins**

Fellowship/ Scholarship: **Dr. J. Tillapaugh**

Serious thinkers in spring board meeting. Beginning in foreground: **Dr. Terrance Schults, Eula Huffman, Cecil Drake, Dr. Warren Gardner, Ross McSwain, and Pat Zellmer.**

*Image: Todd Houck
Enhancement: Lorene Barbee*



From *The Permian Historical Annual* Editor

The Editorial Board of *The Annual*, with the concurrence of the Board of Directors of the Permian Historical Society, decided that in order to cut the cost of *The Annual* we would have to approach the printing of it much differently. Cutting the cost of printing *The Annual* was of the highest priority for the PHS since this is the single largest expense that we incur each year, and the return on our investments is not getting larger to compensate for these increased printing costs. Therefore, we decided to try to provide a camera-ready *Annual* for the printer. Additionally, we sent bids far and wide to attract competitive bids.

I am happy to report that we have succeeded on both fronts. We received an extremely competitive bid that will cut our *Annual* printing costs by two-thirds. And by utilizing the services of The University of Texas of the Permian Basin's wonderful Publications Department, we are providing a camera-ready proof of the 2001

Annual. This also now enables us to use photos in a much more satisfying and pleasing manner, embedding them in the text as most contemporary publications are able to do. Finally it is making a much more accurate text, since we are able to use computer disks from the authors, thus eliminating errors that come from re-typing the material for *The Annual*.

Unfortunately, this first time in using all these new approaches, we are well behind in our usual printing and distribution schedule. *The Annual* is now ready for the printer and will soon be sent to him. But our completed *Annuals* will not be ready for distribution for another month or so. We appreciate your patience as we work out the kinks in what will become an essential cost-savings process for the PHS.

—Warren Gardner

About the Future of Permian Historical Society

From the Program Chairman

Everyone expects a program of good papers for the bi-annual meetings of Permian Historical Society and we plan to continue that tradition. However, your help is needed in finding good presentations.

Since you know people I have not met, I am counting on all of you to actively solicit and encourage researchers and long-time residents to present their scholarly papers or personal reminiscences at our meetings. Institutions of higher learning are one source for program papers, but we also need to find those people in our smaller communities who maintain an avid interest in regional history. Let me know who they are in your community. We will consider all presentations on a history-related topic, including reminiscences, and authors who wish to promote their work.

We want to give our programs broad appeal, with something for everyone. Let me hear from you. Contact me at 915/683-4403 or thouck@petroleummuseum.org.

—Todd Houck

From the Membership Chairman

I don't remember the exact quote or who said it, but the gist is: If we don't study, read, and learn about our history, our past, and our mistakes, we are bound to repeat them.

What more exciting and interesting way to learn about our history—especially the Permian Basin—than to become a member of Permian Historical Society! I challenge each current member to recruit a new member and bring him or her to McCamey on October 19 for the fall meeting. If no new member can be found, then bring a guest to share the fun and stories. We in Upton County are putting together a meeting you will be talking about for months to come—with good food, a tour of our museum, and an interesting program. If you have not been to Upton County in a while, this is an opportunity for you to visit us again.

Any suggestions you may have for me as membership chairman will be carefully considered. Contact me at 915/652-8738 or pkelton@netwest.com.

—Peggy Kelton

Tell Us What You Think

Please complete the following form, clip, and return it to the editor in the enclosed envelope or email her at [<cauble@apex2000.net>](mailto:cauble@apex2000.net). You may or may not choose to sign your form.

I prefer that the program of papers be first on the meeting agenda. yes ___ no ___

I prefer that NO meal be planned for the spring meetings when PHS meets in Midland. yes ___ no ___

I prefer that PHS hold fall meetings in counties other than Midland. yes ___ no ___

I prefer that papers be _____

Something else I want you to know is _____

Upton County, Texas

Sheep and cattle ranchers began to move into the area now known as Upton County in 1880, after the U. S. Army removed the Apache and Comanche in the 1870s. Upton County was created on February 26, 1887, as one of twelve counties carved from the over-sized Tom Green County.

Upton County was organized in 1910, when population reached 501. The first seat of government was Upland and a courthouse was built there, but the railroad changed the history of Upton County. In 1911, the Panhandle and Santa Fe Railway Company stretched its tracks into the county and laid out the town of Rankin. After ten years and in 1921, Rankin replaced Upland as the county seat. In 1925,

oil was discovered in the county and a courthouse was built in 1926 at the cost of \$30,000.

The county was named for two brothers from Tennessee—John Cunningham Upton and William Felton Upton. Settling in Fayette County, the brothers served in the Civil War. John was a lieutenant colonel in Hood's Texas Brigade and was killed at the Second Battle of Manassas. William served in the same unit and with the same rank, but he survived the war to become a businessman and a Texas legislator.

Today, the economy of Upton County depends upon agricultural products—cotton, cattle, pecans, sheep, and goats—in the amount to

\$7.7 million per year. Oil and gas are also important to the economy.

In 2000, the population of the county was almost evenly divided between Anglos and Hispanics with a small number of black citizens. The county has three populated sites—McCamey (1,805), Rankin (800), and Midkiff (98). Upland is now a ghost town. The 3,404 people who live in the county appreciate local and regional history and seasonal celebrations, including Mendoza Trail Museum, Barbados Cookoff, October Chili Cookoff, and a Christmas Bazaar. All of them welcome us to McCamey in October for our fall meeting. —*Julia Cauble Smith*

Upton County members of Permian Historical Society, widely-known for their hospitality, are planning an interesting and enjoyable fall meeting on 19 October 2002 at the Depot in McCamey, Texas. Mark your calendar and come help make this a well-attended meeting. If you need a ride to McCamey, call the editor.

If undeliverable, please return to:

J. C. Smith, Editor

2905 Sentinel Drive

Midland, TX 79701

cauble@apex2000.net (915/697-4955)

PHS dues per year: individuals, libraries, museums, historical groups \$15; life \$200; sustaining \$300. Send to Eileen Welch, 3610 S. Co. Road 1187, Midland, TX 79706

