

Yesterday's News

**KAUFMAN COUNTY
HISTORICAL COMMISSION**
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Kaufman County Historical Commission
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Kaufman, Texas 75142

THE “COUNTY POOR FARM” KAUFMAN COUNTY’S HIDDEN TREASURE

In recent years the Kaufman County Historical Commission (KCHC) has held many public events at the “Poor Farm” in Kaufman and most visitors, including locals, have been unaware that the historic County Poor Farm existed. In KCHC’s effort to present Kaufman County history and educate the public and our youth on life in the “old days”, the history of county poor farms in the United States portrays a timely reflection of life in America during hard times for its people. The Kaufman County “Poor Farm” is the only such site in Texas, and believed to be the only one in the United States, that is still owned by the county.

The history of the Kaufman County Poor Farm begins after the Civil War ended and the number of indigent persons within the entire state became so high, by 1869 an addendum to the Texas Constitution, Article XII, Section 26, made the care for the poor the responsibility of each county. Under the new law, in 1874 Kaufman County Commissioners began scouting for land to establish a “poor house”, or in this case a “poor farm”. In 1881 the county purchased 408+ acres of land, which was located only 1 ¼ miles from the courthouse square. By November 1883 buildings were erected to house the residents and farm animals and the operation of the County Poor Farm was underway.

From the beginning the purpose of the poor farm was to offer a place where persons designated as paupers could remain there and support themselves by their own labor until they were either financially able to leave or until they died. The poor farm was also used as an Epidemic Camp in 1900 when smallpox hit the county. There existed a “place of burial” for transients and persons who died in jail, and where “quarantined” persons were buried away from the populace. In 1871 victims of a typhoid fever epidemic were ordered buried on “Dr. Snow’s place”, now known as the county’s indigent cemetery located on the north side of Hwy. 34, once part of the poor farm property, and still used today by the county as a burial site for indigent dead.

In 1931 acreage on the property was used in the Farm Demonstration Program Project of the County Agent. The use of the farm as such continued until the 1960s. From 1954 until 1973 the property was the site of the County Jail and a working prison farm. The jail building still stands and is part of the KCHC historical site. In 1998, a Texas State Historical Site Marker was dedicated by KCHC, and is now located on the eastern fence line of the KCHC “Poor Farm” property. KCHC holds a 99yr renewable lease on 27 acres of the original poor farm property that includes a stock pond, 19th century buildings, other outbuildings, and vintage farm equipment.

A complete history of the Kaufman County “Poor Farm” may be accessed on the Internet at

www.txgenweb5.org/txkaufman/oldplace/poorfarm.htm.

KCHC offers “Poor Farm” tours, classroom and service club programs, and student field trips on request.

Contact the KCHC office for information.



KAUFMAN COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION 2011-2012 MEMBERS

Precinct 1

Mary Kate Bengé**
Johnny Countryman**
Ginger Davis
Judy McSpadden
Charlene Orr
Pat Raymond

Precinct 2

Margaret Briggs
Jean Ann Ables-Flatt*
Dr. Horace P. Flatt*
Jamie Laywell**
Susan Roberts

Precinct 3

Jeff Baska
Betty Brown*-**
Ralph Davis
Crissy Stephens-Meador

Precinct 4

Elizabeth Grubbs*
Wendy Manning
Paulette Parker
George York

* Emeritus Member

**Executive Committee

The Kaufman County Historical Commission meets bi-monthly on the 2nd Tues. at 12:00 Noon.

Kaufman County Heritage/Preservation Societies

Forney Historical Preservation League

Contact: Charles Beason, 972-564-3512
Location: Spellman Museum, 202 Bois D’Arc

Kaufman Heritage Society

Contact Number: Eugene Schoenle, 972-932-6324
Meets 2nd Thurs. of each month at 12:00 noon
Location: Kaufman County Library

Terrell Heritage Society

Contact: James McCord, (972)524-6082
Meets Monthly, 1st Tues., 6:30 PM
Location: Terrell Heritage Museum, 207 N. Frances

Kaufman County - One Hundred Years Ago

Excerpts from The Terrell Transcript – January 18, 1911

BEAUTIFY CITY OF THE DEAD

A few weeks ago the Pioneer club of Terrell started a movement to care for and beautify the cemeteries of Terrell and in response to a call for a meeting a number of ladies and gentlemen met at the library and organized the Oakland Cemetery association, elected officers and adopted a constitution and by-laws.

The president of the association, T. S. Cows (merchant- Fair Store), announces the appointment of the following executive board and committees:

Executive board – Mesdames Matthew Cartwright, Oscar Price, J. E. McMorries, S. G. Edwards, C. B. Carswell, D. M. Purvine; Messrs, T. B. Griffith (insurance), James S. Grinnan (capitalist), H. Galbraith (newspaper editor), Ben S. Roberts (real estate), W. H. Monday (Doctor), S.M.N.. Marrs (school superintendent).

Membership committee – Miss Ida Hodges, Mesdames S. J. Bass, B. S. Roberts, Ed R. Bumpass, John H. Gantt, J. W. Corley, O. F. Walton, F. W. Starr, L. C. Hammond, M. Sweeney, V. G. Brooks, W. A. Russell, Miss Eva Stamps, Mrs. A. J. Knipp and Mrs. Addie Alexander. (librarian): Finance committee – M. W. Raley (banker), O. F. Walton (owned lumber yard), T. E. Corley (banker), A. R. Andrews, J. H. Reeves (owned print shop), Matthew Cartwright (capitalist):

Grounds committee – Oscar Price (owned Mississippi store), A. H. Ables (owned lumber yard and cotton compress), S. J. Bass, (owned drug store), J. A. Muckleroy (owned hardware store), W. C. McCord (merchant), T. J. Brown (owned horse stable), W. H. Ingram (grain dealer), W. A. Moore (merchant), J. D. Gray (owned creamery), E. J. Lochhead (owned flour mill), Mesdames T.P. Ware, Ben Hodges, B. S. Roberts, E R. Bumpass, T. B. Griffith, Joe H. Keller, Frank Martin, W. A. Brumbaugh, J. W. Kerr, J. R. Whitfield.

Note: Women were identified by their husbands' names. There were 6 women and 6 men on the Executive board; only women on the Membership committee (15); only men on the Finance committee (6) and evenly divided on the Grounds committee (10 men and 10 women)

FRIENDS OF KCHC

For information on the Friends of KCHC,
Or becoming a member, please contact
Jamie Laywell at 972/563-0709 or
jjlaywell@aol.com

<p>LOCAL HISTORY BOOKS "A PART OF THE LORD'S BIG GARDEN" A History of Early Kaufman County.....\$25 by Horace P. Flatt HISTORICAL MARKERS IN KAUFMAN CO. A spiral bound list with script.....\$15</p>

Local Museums

Terrell Heritage Museum, 207 N. Frances - Open Sat. & Sun., 1:00pm-4:00pm, 972-524-6082
#1 British Flying Training School, Terrell, Open Wed., Fri., Sat., 10:00am-4:00pm, 972-524-1714
Spellman Museum, 202 Bois D'Arc, Forney – Information web site: www.historicforney.org

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The History Corner by Jean Ann (Written in 1st person)

T.C. GRIFFIN - Head of the Freedmen's Bureau during Reconstruction

My name is T.C. Griffin. I know most of you have never heard of me, but I was once your county judge – not elected, but appointed by the Union army after the Civil War. You can imagine how unpopular I was, but I had an even more unpopular job in the county just before that – I headed the Freedmen's Bureau here in Kaufman. It was an impossible job, one filled with lofty goals, but completely out-of-step with the times. I was supposed to aid the poor and destitute slaves who had been given freedom, set up an educational system for them, mediate disputes between former Confederates and Unionists, as well as between the freedmen and their former masters. I could only call upon the Union troops to help me, and that could make things worse.

It was a lawless time in Texas, and our county wasn't spared. Families once rich were now poor; many had lost fathers or sons or brothers. There was a lot of resentment, especially among the young men who had grown up without the strong guidance of a father. They were in the courts all the time, for gambling or theft, getting in fights, and even murder.

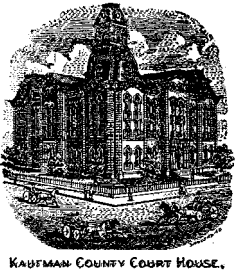
I'll tell you one tale to show you just how bad it really was. There was a young man, Ed Burton, who grew up near Rose Hill. His father had owned 17 or 18 slaves before the war. He was considered a rich man for the time. In 1867, Ed Burton was 19 years old, but his only occupation was that of a gambler. He had a friend in the county named John Hanby, and they were always in trouble. It seems they went down into Leon County and together with another young man named Dod Burrows, robbed and killed two freedman. The details of the crime were so horrendous that the Governor offered \$900 for their capture – that was a lot of money in those days.

Three months later, I had to report that the county's civil authorities were paying no attention at all to the numerous murders and outrages being committed on the freedmen. Even Burton and Hanby were going around the county in perfect safety, even though there was a large reward for them. As a result of my report, some Union troops were brought into the county to capture them, but to no avail. Burton fled the county, only to return about a year later. The sheriff refused to arrest him. Burton was threatening some of the freedmen and stealing from others. He even burned down a schoolhouse that had been built. One family was told they had to leave the county, and it was said the father and mother fled, leaving their children behind. I believe he killed the parents and hid their bodies. Our district judge had to report that Burton and other desperados were just running at large, and no one dared to try and arrest them.

However, one man decided enough was enough. He was James Brown, a former carpenter who was now the assistant federal marshal in Kaufman County. He formed a posse and they cornered Burton in a cabin out towards Poetry about 2 o'clock in the morning. When Burton attempted to escape, Brown killed Burton with a shotgun blast – it was said "greatly to the satisfaction of the law and order men of this locality", white and black.

This was a bad time in the history of our county. Many of us would like to forget such things happened, but we should never forget injustices done to our fellow man.

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KAUFMAN COUNTY COURT HOUSE.