



# Making History in the Prairie

Grand Prairie Historical Organization

GPHO Volume XIII

August 2008

Our meeting this Month is on August 21st at 11:30 am and will be held at the

## Mountain Creek Retirement Facility

2305 Corn Valley Rd, Grand Prairie, Texas 75051, 972-237-2515

Please call Angela Giessner for reservations, 972-262-5151—seating will be limited

Your cost will be the same: \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members. Buffet style lunch.



### The Speaker for the next meeting will be Ouida Lewis

FOR OUR NEXT MEETING, MRS. LEWIS IS GOING TO GIVE A TALK ON THE RESEARCH SHE HAS BEEN DOING ON THE HISTORY OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH. MRS. LEWIS HAS BEEN WORKING ON THIS PROJECT FOR SOME TIME, AND IT PROMISES TO BE VERY INTERESTING.

THE FBC WAS STARTED IN 1880, BUT IN 1929, IT BURNED. THEY STARTED THE BASEMENT IN 1929 AND THEN IN 1930 THEY TOOK A SPECIAL OFFERING TO CONTINUE BUILDING THE CHURCH.

IT WAS THAT OFFERING WHERE A LARGE DIAMOND RING APPEARED GIVEN BY AN ANONYMOUS DONOR. SOME THINK IT WAS GIVEN BY MRS. COLLINS, BUT NOBODY KNOWS FOR SURE. EITHER WAY, IT

WAS A NICE DONATION THAT HELPED THE FUND GET STARTED.

THE FBC HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE START-UP OF MANY OTHER CHURCHES. THE CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH, THE TWIN AIRPORTS CHURCH AND A SPANISH SPEAKING CHURCH AT THE CORNER OF NE 4<sup>TH</sup> AND NORTH STREET WERE JUST A FEW THAT FBC HELPED START.

THE PROJECT MRS. LEWIS IS WORKING ON IS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE HISTORY PICTURES BOOK THAT WAS FROM 1880-1965. FBC IS LOOKING FOR A NEW LOCATION TOWARD THE SOUTH PART OF GP.

MRS. LEWIS WILL GIVE MUCH MORE INFORMATION IN HER TALK AND FOCUS ON THE PEOPLE THAT HELPED SHAPED ONE OF THE OLDEST AND MOST RESPECTED CHURCHES IN GRAND PRAIRIE. PLEASE JOIN US.

## THE GRAND PRAIRIE HISTORY BOOKS ARE HERE !!!!

VISIT: [WWW.GPHISTORICAL.COM](http://WWW.GPHISTORICAL.COM)

\$35 Each

They will be available at the next meeting on the 21st



**QUOTE OF THE MONTH:**

*"The difference between 'involvement' and 'commitment' is like an eggs-and-ham breakfast: the chicken was 'involved' - the pig was 'committed'."*

*Anonymous*

## History 101: State Fair of Texas®

For 122 years, the State Fair of Texas has made its home in Dallas, Texas. The Dallas State Fair & Exposition, to which the present State Fair of Texas traces its origin, was chartered as a private corporation on Jan. 30, 1886, by a group of Dallas businessmen. An 80-acre tract located within the modern boundaries of Fair Park in East Dallas was chosen and construction began on exhibit facilities and a racetrack. Attendance at the Dallas State Fair was estimated in excess of 100,000, and the following year the association merged with a rival becoming the Texas State Fair & Dallas Exposition. Despite indebtedness of more than \$100,000, the directors voted to expand the fairgrounds by purchasing 37 acres adjacent to the East Dallas site.

The early years of the Fair featured the finest racing stock, cattle sales, concerts, balloon ascents, displays of farm machinery and contests for the ladies. When the Texas Legislature banned gambling on horse races in 1903, thereby eliminating the Fair's main source of income, the association faced a financial crisis. To protect this valuable community asset, the Texas State Fair spurned offers from developers and sold its property to the City of Dallas in 1904 under an agreement that set aside a period each fall to hold the annual exposition.

The reorganized State Fair of Texas prospered immediately, establishing new records for receipts and attendance as 300,000 people streamed through the gates in 1905. Automobile races and stunt flying exhibitions became the top attractions. Attendance topped the 1 million mark in 1916.

The 1920s brought significant development and increased activity to the fairgrounds. A magnificent auditorium – which eventually would be known as the Music Hall – was completed in 1925, and outstanding New York shows were presented to Texas audiences for the first time. The Texas-OU football game was established as an annual fairtime event in 1929. And in 1930, the race track complex was razed to permit construction of 46,000-seat Fair Park Stadium – later renamed



### **Life Members of the Grand Prairie Historical Organization**

Judy Armstrong, Billy Joe Armstrong, Carol Bell, Grant Bell, Brian W. Bingham, Verna Brown, L.R. Cannon, Ouida Chapman Lewis, Lisa Chennault Brown, Helen Chennault, Thomas Chennault, Thomas B Chennault, City of Grand Prairie Marketing, Marge Copeland, H. Victor Copeland, Jerry Corley, Cheryl Friman Dover, Charles and Janice England, Kirk and Marcie England, Olive Galloway, Norma Hale, Marvin J (Jack) Hays, Lee D. Herring, Thomas Hight, Jorja Jackson Clemson, Marie Kerr Stufflebeme, Blythe Kizziar, Duane McGuffey, Kenneth R. Miller, Lynn Motley, Betty Phillips, Charles Powers, Bob Roberts, Susan Shuffler, Fynlon and Eugenia Simpson, Ouida Daughtery Smith, Amy Sprinkles, Angela Sutton Giessner, Donald Taylor, Ruthe Thompson Jackson, Laura Thompson Potter, Paul and Madie Vernon

the Cotton Bowl.

In 1934, Fair Park was selected as the central exposition site for the proposed Texas Centennial celebration and construction began on a \$25 million project that transformed the existing fairgrounds into a masterpiece of art and imagination. The 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition attracted more than 6 million people during its six-month run.

Following World War II, the State Fair of Texas entered an era of unprecedented growth. Attendance reached the 2 million visitor level in 1949. The prosperity continued into the 50s with the development of an international livestock show, installation of a monorail system, and the first appearance of Big Tex, a 52-foot cowboy figure erected in the center of the fairgrounds.

The modern day Fair emerged during the four decades that followed. In 1968, the total number of fairgoers exceeded 3 million for the first time. A combination of theme park entertainment and State Fair traditions earned national and international recognition. In 1986, Fair Park was designated a National Historic Landmark, and the State Fair of Texas hosted a 31-day exposition celebrating both the Texas Sesquicentennial and the Fair's own 100th anniversary.

As the Fair moved into its second century of operation, the traditional fair season was extended from 17 to 24 days. Errol McKoy became president of the association in 1988 and brought unique managerial skills to the event. His proactive approach to produc-

ing events within the event captured the attention of major companies. Sponsorships rose to an all-time high. Extreme rides, first-class entertainment, traveling exhibits, eating competitions, and countless awards and recognitions, catapulted the annual event into a league of its own.

The State Fair of Texas has selected "Ignite Your Senses!" as the theme for the 2008 season (Sept. 26 – Oct. 19). Following on the heels of last year's event – the most successful in the Fair's history – organizers will entice and excite the senses with a menu of world-class entertainment, thrill rides, and mouth-watering edibles.

An octagon screen serves as centerpiece for the return of the reflecting pool's popular, evening multi-media performance. High tech visual effects, specialty lighting, fire and pyrotechnics are choreographed to music from every genre, and the Esplanade provides the perfect setting to *stop, relax and enjoy the show*.

Sensation-seekers will appreciate a high-flying daredevil stunt team appearing in free shows daily on Gateway Plaza. The troupe incorporates sway poles, motorcycle stunts and an acrobatic cage while showcasing their death-defying skills and keen agility.

In the Band Shell, animal trainer Steve Martin will host feathered performers from around the globe in a 20th anniversary celebration of his debut at the Fair. Since 1989, Martin has offered fairgoers a glimpse into the world of birds through an amazing free flight bird show.

With an eye towards the future, The Women's Museum and the State Fair of Texas will present *The Smart House*, demonstrating 21st



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**Susie Roberts—Secretary**  
**Carol Bell—Treasurer**



century "green" technologies that simplify complex electronics and conserve energy. Proving that dominoes aren't just for kids, the State Fair of Texas is bringing a couple of *toppleologists* to the African American Museum. These expert domino toppers will construct and topple a project each day during the 24 day run.

The Chevrolet Main Stage will feature top entertainers every weekend, plus live bands throughout the week. All concerts are free for fairgoers. A complete lineup will be announced in the coming months.

This year's State Fair Musical is *The Color Purple*. Based on the classic Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Alice Walker and the film by Steven Spielberg, the production tells the story of a woman's triumph over adversity. Performances will be offered daily (except Mondays), September 30 – October 19, in the Music Hall at Fair Park.

The State Fair of Texas has enormous economic impact on the City and has been voted the top annual event in Texas. The contribution of the Fair to the City of Dallas and vice-verse is historic and incalculable.

*\*Big Tex goes up this year on Sept 22nd at noon. Come join the watching party.*

