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East Texas News and Events

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EAST TEXAS NEWS AND NOTES

By *M. Scott Sosebee*

The East Texas Historical Association held its spring meeting on February 14-16 in Tyler at the Holiday Inn Select. Once again, attendance was high and enthusiasm even higher. The program began on Thursday with a unique and welcome presentation by Dr. Gordon Jones, a San Augustine native, former Lufkin radiologist, and current resident of Broadus, Texas, on Lake Sam Rayburn. Dr. Jones regaled board members and early-arriving members with his original "cowboy poetry" on "Cowboys, Indians, and Louis L'Amour." His presentation was most definitely a hit and perhaps he will entertain us with a longer program at a future meeting.

The meeting's full program began bright and early on Friday morning at 8:00 and closed with the luncheon session on Saturday. Program chairs Linda Cross and Jeff Owens arranged twenty sessions ranging from the history of the Tyler Rose Festival to the unique development of sacred harp singing. The approximately two hundred attendees were all treated to sessions that presented variety, interest, and plain "old fashioned" fun. Dr. Jimmy Bryan, Jr., of Lamar University gave the keynote speech at Friday night's banquet entitled "Manly Tales and Texas Lore – Walter P. Lane and the Storytelling Traditions of Nineteenth Century Adventurism," a well-received talk that was a provocative insight into how the historical tradition of "adventurism" creates legends and myths that often find their way into the historical record as fact. The highlight of the meeting was the Saturday luncheon and our Executive Director, Dr. Archie P. McDonald's address, "Dan Utley Never Picked Cotton" (the text of that message is included in the current edition of the *Journal*). To say that his talk was well-received does not do it justice as Dr. McDonald was feted with a standing ovation, a deserved "log cabin" award for his thirty-seven years of fabulous and dedicated service, and even a chorus of "For He's A Jolly Good Fellow." All who attended were no doubt touched not only by Dr. McDonald's gracious speech but also by the heartfelt appreciation for him by ETHA's members.

An ETHA meeting would not be complete without awards and the Tyler meeting was no exception. The Lucille Terry Award went to Rob and Becky Wangner for their amazing preservation of Tyler's historic Fitzgerald House. The Wangner's (along with curator Linda Miller) devoted efforts to restore and save such a notable structure was truly inspiring. Last but certainly not least, the Ralph W. Steen Award went to Ms. Portia Gordon, the Association's long-time secretary/treasurer, an award that was overdue and most decidedly well deserved. As most of you no doubt know, Portia is the person who keeps the ETHA office organized and efficient; I would say a "well-oiled machine," and it would be if Dr. McDonald and I did not so often keep Ms. Gordon from her duties. I can say without hesitation that our meetings, programs, finances, and the *Journal* owe most of their proficiency and professionalism to Portia's tireless service and allegiance.

The ETHA Board of Directors have approved the appointment of three new members to the *Journal's* editorial board. We welcome the additions of Dr. Dana Cooper of Stephen F. Austin State University, Dr. Charles Gear of Prairie View A&M University, and Dr. Gene Preuss of the University of Houston-Downtown.

Association members should take note of an event that should be of interest. The National Cowboy Symposium and Celebration will hold its 20th annual event September 5-7, 2008, at the Civic Center in Lubbock, Texas. The National Cowboy Symposium is the largest of its kind and features exhibits, chuckwagon cooking demonstrations, music, cowboy poetry, and historical presentations. It is truly a "one-of-a-kind" experience and something you have to see to fully appreciate. If you are in the Lubbock area, make sure you make plans to attend.

The Texas State Historical Association is currently in the process of moving their headquarters and university affiliation. Since its inception in 1897, TSHA has been housed at the University of Texas, but UT has made the decision of ending its tenure as TSHA's host institution. TSHA has moved to temporary headquarters in the Austin area with the anticipation of making a permanent move to another location and university. As we go to press, the TSHA board has recommended locating their offices at the University of North Texas in Denton. Full approval is scheduled to take place at the TSHA annual meeting in March. So a final decision on the move should have taken place by the time we publish the *Journal*.

The History Center at Diboll, one of the true "gems" of East Texas, currently has on display an intriguing and worthwhile exhibit, "The American Lumberman Photographic Collection." The Collection consists of more than 300 vintage prints taken between 1903 and 1907. The images further document the lives and operations of the men and women of the Southern Pine Lumber Company as well as the Texas Southeastern Railroad – the company towns, logging camps, and day-to-day life. The exhibit is certainly worth a look. The History Center is located off Hwy. 59 on the east side of Diboll. You can contact them at 936-829-3543, and best of all, admission is free.