

# museum musings

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MEET THE FERGUSONS

## *Two Governors for the Price of One*



The Bell County Museum is pleased to announce the opening of the newest exhibition. ***Meet the Fergusons: Two Governors for the Price of One*** is on view now through March 13, 2010. The opening, held on September 5, featured a wonderful performance by Bell County's inimitable Mary Jean Boston in the role of "Ma" Ferguson.

at left, "Ma" and "Pa" Ferguson, 1932

Mrs. Ferguson (1875-1961), a Bell County native, was the first woman to be elected governor in Texas. She served two terms as governor of Texas from 1925 to 1927 and from 1933 to 1935. Her husband, James E. Ferguson (1871-1944), was also a Bell County native and served as governor of Texas from 1915 to 1917.

The Bell County Museum is home to the largest public collection of Ferguson material, donated by the Ferguson family in 1991 (James and Barbara Watt). Included in it is First Lady Miriam Ferguson's inaugural ball gown, worn at her husband's first inauguration in 1915. Jim Ferguson's inauguration took place in the House of Representatives Chamber at the Capitol in Austin. In *The Fergusons of Texas*, eldest daughter Ouida Ferguson Nalle described the setting: "The Speaker's stand was a grotto for the orchestra; an electric fountain played water over the background. Balloons, flags, potted ferns and bunting decorated the rest of the House, but that electric fountain was really something!"

The Fergusons were very colorful and controversial characters in Texas history. Jim, a charismatic leader and speaker, is known for improvements to the farm tenancy system, his anti-prohibition stance, the creation of new schools, and of the Texas Highway Department, which he signed into existence on April 4, 1917. He is also known for his quarrel with the University of Texas Board of Regents, and his conviction on ten charges of misapplication of public funds and embezzlement. The state Senate, as the High Court of Impeachment, removed Jim from office and made him unable to hold any public office in the state. Although Jim tried to run for public office as Texas governor as well as the presidency under the American party ticket, he was unsuccessful. Still very popular with Texas voters, Jim nominated his wife for the governorship under the slogan, "two governors for the price of one." Miriam Amanda Wallace Ferguson won and became the first woman governor of Texas in 1924.

While Miriam Ferguson's governorship was marked by controversy (charges of excessive pardons and political patronage abuses), she defeated the "Klan man," Felix Robertson, and worked to take away the Klan's power. Her second term (1933-35) during the height of the Great Depression, was less controversial, but her liberal pardoning policies continued.

*Meet the Fergusons* is filled with artifacts from the Ferguson family, and includes large prints of Jim's newspaper, published in Temple, called *The Ferguson Forum*. An education station invites visitors to make their own campaign ribbons, discover how Texas government works, and take home some of Miriam Ferguson's favorite recipes. *Plan a visit!*

## Longhorns Receive Names



2009 Summer Camp kids!

We are pleased to announce that our Summer Campers of 2009 voted (by a narrow margin) to name our longhorns Jessie, Tex and Bullseye. These bronze bovines adorn our monument to the Chisholm Trail created by Salado sculptor Troy Kelley. We are thrilled with the distinctive appellations, and think that all 16 campers had a wonderful and educational experience at the museum. We can't wait 'til next year!

Join us for a book signing. . .

### The Polio Years in Texas: Battling a Terrifying Unknown

One of our first programs for 2010 will be a book signing by Heather Green Wooten, Ph.D. about the eradication of polio in Texas. Dr. Wooten states that from 1930 until the 1950s, "Texas researchers led a wave of discoveries in virology, rehabilitative therapies, and the modern intensive care unit that transformed the field nationally. The disease threatened the lives of children and adults in the United States, especially in the South, arousing the same kind of fear more recently associated with AIDS and other dread diseases."

Dr. Wooten received her Ph.D. in medical humanities from the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. The book signing will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 23, 2010.

Following is a brief article you might find interesting.....

***Ethics Behind Appraisals and Museums*** by Jason Y. Hall, Principal for Public Trust Strategies

In the US, museums are barred, both by museum ethics and the tax code, from being involved in the valuation process for a gift to the museum. The conflict of interest is obvious, and even if it weren't, curators aren't dealers; they typically don't keep real time track of the current market value even of objects about which they are substantive experts. Donors must get an independent appraisal. . . . And with respect to market values and donations in the US, all donors except artists donating their own works can take a full market value deduction.

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

James and Terry Boston recently donated materials related to Dr. Henry Clay Ghent of Belton. Objects include Dr. Ghent's day books, account books, photographs, letters and documents and Dr. Ghent's Civil War sword. The objects came from Alice Lee Shipp, a daughter, who had given the objects to Happy Durham, James' grandfather.

Dr. Ghent (1831-1912) was born in South Carolina and grew up in Alabama. He studied medicine and became a doctor in 1854. In 1861 Dr. Ghent served the Confederacy as a surgeon and was at the Appomattox Courthouse during the surrender of Gen. Robert E. Lee. After the war he moved to Texas and was a member of the 13<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature. In 1873 Dr. Ghent moved to Belton and was elected president of the Texas Medical Association. He was an active member of the Methodist Church and the Masonic Lodge. He is buried in North Belton Cemetery.

## Christmas at Twelve Oaks

Please mark your calendar for Saturday, December 12, 2009... our annual holiday fundraiser will be held at Twelve Oaks in Salado. This wonderful party will feature tours of the beautiful home and grounds, fabulous food prepared by the Stagecoach Inn, and entertainment by Angelic Strings of Austin. This will be a memorable event that you will want to attend!

### Speaking of the Stagecoach Inn . . .

Our **Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon** was held at the Stagecoach Inn in August. About 15 of us enjoyed each other's company and had the traditional chicken salad plate, replete with tomato aspic, hush puppies, and olives. If you are a volunteer for the museum that did not attend the luncheon, please stop by when you can for your gift, and know that you are appreciated.

Please join us! Take part in preserving the rich history of the Bell County region by joining the Friends of the Museum Association. Your membership allows us to continue award-winning programming through exhibits and educational activities that enhance our county-wide community. Benefits of membership include discounts in the museum bookstore, invitations to special events, and the satisfaction of knowing that YOU are an important part of the preservation of Bell County and Central Texas history. *Together, we make our community great!*

Yes! I want to support the Bell County Museum by becoming a member of the Friends of the Museum Association.

- \$10 Student
- \$25 Friend
- \$50 Family
- \$75 Advocate
- \$100 Patron
- \$250 Partner
- \$500 Associate
- \$1000+ Benefactor

*Friend:*

Debra Brock \* Mary Cannon \* Terry Crain  
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Michael Dunson \* Cynthia Dykes  
Sharon & Jim James \* Bettye & Bob Kennedy  
Mike Thompson \* Yoshie & Takeshi Wajima  
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Dr. & Mrs. R.J. Carabasi \* Linda & Buck Prewitt  
Amy & Lloyd Thomas

*Benefactor:*

Mary Jean & Paul Boston

**IN MEMORY OF:**

***Kelly Britt***

by Bettye & Bob Kennedy

***Bob Burleson***

by  
Hon. C.W. (Bud) Duncan  
Carol & David Kehl  
Mary & John Odom  
Jane & Mickey Wade  
Marianna & Dr. Raleigh White IV

***Jamie Clements***

by Jane & Mickey Wade

***Joe Holt***

by Stephanie Turnham

***Martha James***

by  
Carolyn Clarke  
Julie & Tommy Kimmel  
Edgar Monteith  
Ken Peel  
Jane & Mickey Wade  
Mary Warrington  
Bertha Wenzel

***Robert James, Jr.***

by Bettye & Bob Kennedy

***Keifer Marshall III***

by  
Mary Cannon  
Bettye & Bob Kennedy  
Stephanie Turnham

***umhb volunteers***

UMHB students are terrific! We thank them for the crew sent over to help clean flower beds and move exhibit furniture at the beginning of the Fall semester. Thank you!

The museum has established regular guided tours to the Gault Site. They will be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday every quarter. They are free, but participation is limited and you must register. Call to find out more.

GAULT TOURS



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### ¿Qué Pasa?

Now through March 13, 2010 - *Meet the Ferguson: Two Governors for the Price of One*

September 19, 2009 - *Taste of Bell County* from 2-4 p.m. Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month with activities and fun foods!

Every Saturday in October – commemorating Texas Archeology Month, both pits will be open for “excavation.” Make sure all your young friends know!

October 10, 8:30 a.m. – Guided tour of the Gault Site: FULL

October 17, 2009 – *Taste of Bell County* from 2-4 p.m. Enjoy pemmican, a staple among Native American peoples long ago, commemorating Texas Archeology Month.

November 21, 2009 - *Taste of Bell County* from 2-4 p.m. Taste one of Ma Ferguson’s recipes, Home Sweet Home Potato Pie!

December 12, 2009, 6:30-9:00 p.m. – *Christmas at Twelve Oaks*, a benefit for the Bell County Museum

December 19, 2009, 2-4 p.m. – *Taste of Bell County* and holiday ornament workshop! Bring the family!

January 23, 2010, 8:30 a.m. – Guided tour of the Gault Site; limited to 30 participants; call to register