Museum to open music exhibit October 28

A new exhibit about Bell County music will open at the Bell County Museum on Saturday, October 28. Also on October 28 the museum's tipi will be erected, and archeology pits will be open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. as part of the museum's observance of Texas Archeology Month.

Area archeologists will be on hand to help families learn more about archeological techniques and heritage in the Bell County area, according to museum director Stephanie Turnham.

On Tuesday, October 31, staff members will conduct a free moonlight tour of downtown Belton at 7 p.m. Meeting place is the north side of the courthouse.

“Christmas at the Oxbow Overlook,” a fundraiser for the museum, will be December 9, at 6:30 p.m.

A current exhibit, “A Bell County Quilt Treasury,” comprises 12 quilts associated with Bell County, including a “friendship” quilt made by Governor Miriam Ferguson and an “album” or “signature” quilt on loan from the SPJST museum in Temple. December 16 is closing day for the “E. A. Limmer Jr. Collection” exhibit.

Museum hours are 12 noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Phone number is 254-933-5243.

KAHA to host open house on November 11

The Killeen Area Heritage Association will host an open house on Saturday, November 11, at 1 p.m., following Killeen’s annual Veterans Day parade.

A new exhibit at KAHA’s headquarters, 400 South Gray, observes the 230th anniversary of the nation’s birthday, the 170th year of Texas’ independence and the almost 125th anniversary of the founding of Killeen (May 15, 1882).

Refreshments will be served, and new officers will be elected. Information is available at 254-699-5916 or 254-634-7750.

THC to honor local native Oveta Culp Hobby

The Texas Historical Commission will honor Killeen native Oveta Culp Hobby, first director of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (later known as the WAC) with a marker, according to David Evans, Bell County Historical Commission marker chairman. Site and dedication information will be announced later.

1st Cav Museum speaker to address BCHC

Carrie Lee Cutchens, collections specialist for Fort Hood’s 1st Cavalry Division Museum, will describe the museum and its resources at the Bell County Historical Commission’s meeting on October 23.

Cutchens, who holds a bachelor’s degree in museum studies from Tusculum College, joined the museum staff four years ago after serving four years in the United States Army.

Norwood home to receive Landmark status

The Salado Historical Society will unveil a Salado Landmark Award on Saturday, December 16, to honor the 103-year-old Norwood home on Main Street across from the Old Church Place shopping area. Time will be announced later, according to SHS president, Robert Denman.

The society’s annual general meeting will be Monday, November 6, at the civic center. The 6:30 p.m. event will feature a program of short, historic vignettes accompanied by local musicians, and is open to anyone interested in Salado area history.

Other history-related events in Salado include the installation of nine brown and white historic district signs and the annual Christmas tour of homes, scheduled for December 1-3 and 8-10.

A Texas Historical Commission marker honoring the late missionary Addie Barton will be dedicated on Sunday, December 10, at the First Baptist Church.

More information about these Salado events is available by calling 254-947-5040.

Bell County Calendar

Archeology Month events (BCM)....................October 28
Music in Bell County exhibit (BCM)..............October 28
Moonlight tour of downtown Belton..............October 31, 7 pm
SHS general meeting..............................November 6, 6:30 pm
Gathering of the Clans (Salado)...............November 10-12
KAHA open house.................................November 11, 1 pm
BCHC holiday meeting.........................November 27, 6:30 pm
‘Santa at the Depot’ (RR&HM)...............December 9, 9:30 am
‘Christmas at Oxbow Overlook’..............December 9, 6:30 pm
Addie Barton marker dedication..............December 10, 12 noon
Salado Landmark Award unveiling..............December 16
BCHC meeting..................January 22, 7 pm
Santa Fe china and silver exhibit..............through February 28
REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11: Dr. Jim Hawkins, left, and retired Major General Stewart Meyer confer before a Freedom Walk ceremony in commemoration of the September 11, 2001, attacks. Hawkins, Killeen Independent School District superintendent, served as master of ceremonies and led an estimated 300 participants on a walk around Leo Buckley Stadium; Meyer was main speaker. They were joined by Robert Shoemaker High School ROTC cadets, the Killeen High School Band, retired Chaplain Wilfred Brewster and retired General Shoemaker in the late afternoon ceremony.

* * * * *

Humanities institute continues fall lecture series

The Institute for the Humanities at Salado recently continued its fall series, “Let Your Life Speak,” with bioethicist Gregory Pence, who discussed “Adventures in Bioethics”.

Dr. Pence will be followed by Dr. Thomas Moore, author of Care of the Soul, on Sunday, November 5, with “The Way of the Holy Fool.” Both lectures will begin at 4 p.m. at the Celebration Center, 216 Royal. Actor, writer, filmmaker and comedian Turk Pipkin will screen his film, “Nobility,” on November 12, at 4 p.m. at the Silver Spur Theater, followed by a discussion of the film’s production.

Information is available at 254-947-5729.

READY FOR VETERANS DAY: The Texas State Veterans Cemetery will raise flags of all five armed services on Veterans Day, November 11, according to Charles Walden, director. The POW*MIA flag flies 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The cemetery has interred about 400 veterans and spouses of veterans since its opening in January, with space for 50,000 in its first phase of operation. Depending on need, the site, located on 174 acres donated by Fort Hood, will accommodate some 150,000 burials. Located six miles south of U.S. Hwy 190 on State Hwy 195, the cemetery is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. More information, including free pre-registration for veterans, is available at 254-616-1770.
SPJST museum hoping to match $400,000

December 31 may be New Year's Eve for most people. For Sandi Wicker December 31 is Deadline Day for matching a $400,000 grant for expansion of the SPJST museum in Temple.

Wicker, executive director for the museum since February, says she hopes work can begin in January on the building at Third Street and French, purchased in 2001 for $1,000,000.

The facility, built for Dr. H. B. Mason in 1928, features intricate tile and brick work and will provide 7,200 square feet for the museum, plus possibly an outdoor learning center, according to Wicker. Mason, a physician and former Temple mayor rented space to other businesses, and, until recently, most of the building was occupied by an antique store.

The museum opened at SPJST state headquarters in 1971 after Nick Morris began collecting books and writing articles in the SPJST’s Vestnik newspaper about the need to preserve the Czech heritage. Otto Hanus served as the first curator, and Dorothy Pechal has directed museum activities for 15 years.

A library with more than 30,000 books, including many genealogical sources, will be moved to the new building. Some 18,000 of these volumes are in the Czech language. SPJST archives will remain at the insurance company headquarters, 520 North Main in Temple.

Current museum hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Information about the facility is available at 254-773-1575.

RR&HM Amtrak drawing closes October 31

New and renewing members of Temple’s Railroad and Heritage Museum have a chance to win two round-trip Amtrak tickets to Los Angeles.

Deadline for membership purchase is October 31, according to executive director Patricia Rye. Rules for the drawing are available at www.rrhm.org or at 254-298-5172.

Other museum events include “Santa at the Depot” on Saturday, December 9, with doors opening at 9:30 a.m. Santa is expected to arrive about 10 a.m.

The museum’s Southern Pacific Railroad china and silver exhibit will remain through February 28.

The recent Texas Train Festival proved “moderately successful as a fund-raiser,” Rye reports. The annual event attracted 2,500 to 3,000 visitors.

More Bell historical markers in the works

Six additional Texas Historical Commission markers are currently being prepared for installation in Bell County, according to Bell County Historical Commission marker chairman David Evans.

The following markers will be dedicated in the near future at listed sites, Evans reports; interested persons should contact marker applicants for more information: Brown Cemetery, near Killeen/Fort Hood Regional Airport entrance, Alice Bell (254-634-7006); Addie Barton, Salado Baptist Church, Charlene Carson (254-947-3651), dedication set for December 10 at 12 noon; Youngsport, Polly Peaks-Elmore (254-628-5002); Seven Star Cemetery, near Hillcrest Cemetery, Temple, James Jackson (254-774-8461); Capt. Milton Wesley Damron and Hermon Aiken, Salado Cemetery, MaryBelle Brown (254-947-5331).

Preservation Texas seeks endangered sites

Preservation Texas and the Texas Historical Commission are working together on a program to preserve Texas historic sites.

Preservation Texas has enlisted the aid of the public to help identify endangered sites for its 2007 list of Texas’ Most Endangered Historic Places, according to a recent Associated Press article. The effort is in cooperation with THC’s Historic Endangered Landmarks Program.

According to the AP, nominees for Preservation Texas’ listing “should represent a unique diversity that reflects the cultural heritage, geography, history and architecture of Texas.”

An Endangered Historic Property Identification Form is available at www.thc.state.tx.us for use by persons with knowledge about such a property.
64 years later, Jones recalls first shoot-down

Curran L. “Jack” Jones had a birthday on October 4.

This Bell County Historical Commission member, who represents the Holland area, is now 87, according to the calendar. He refers often to that calendar age, his soft South Carolina voice a reminder of an earlier era as he recalls stories he heard as a boy, stories about the Civil War exploits of William Tecumseh Sherman in and around Jones’ hometown of Columbia. Occasionally he forgets a detail he wants to share; frustrated, he blames the lapse on age.

Ask him about his own World War II exploits as a fighter pilot in the Pacific Theater, and the same muted tone returns, the details sharp and clear. Honored as an “ace,” Jones says he always wanted to fly.

“I wanted to be a ‘pursuit pilot,’” he says, then explains that “pursuit pilot” is a World War I expression that eventually became “fighter pilot,” the term used today. An “ace,” of course, is a pilot with five “victories,” Jones’ term for “kills.” Jones has those five, plus two “probables.”

After high school jobs at Columbia’s airport, where he more or less taught himself to fly small planes, Jones attended Clemson Agricultural and Mining College, but dropped out halfway through to join the Army Air Corps. Commissioned a second lieutenant in May 29, 1941, at Maxwell Field, Alabama, he was serving as best man in a wedding in Michigan when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He returned to his base Bear Field at Fort Wayne, Indiana, and left immediately for Bellingham, Washington.

Jones sailed from the West Coast to Australia, where planes were reassembled to begin operations against the Japanese, who were threatening the continent from territory they had captured on the northern coast of New Guinea. Severely outnumbered, American pilots flew from Australia to Port Moresby on New Guinea’s southern coast for rest and re-fueling before raids against the Japanese.

Jones’ first shoot-down occurred June 9, 1942, as he led one of two squadrons of four fighters each, assigned to accompany wartime visitor Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson on a raid against Japan’s strongly defended air base at Lae, New Guinea. Johnson, serving as a lieutenant commander in the Navy, had been sent by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to check on U. S. forces in the Pacific. Johnson flew in the 22nd bomber group, one of three groups on the mission. The mission is described in detail in American Warriors by Duane T. Hove, a 2003 book that extensively quotes Jones.

Weather and technical problems beset the mission from the beginning. The B-26 in which Johnson rode developed engine trouble 40 minutes into the flight and was forced to return to Port Moresby. Hove quotes Albert Stanwood, flying a B-26 that day: “The B-17s and B-25s were supposed to suppress the Japanese fighters, but actually stirred up a hornets’ nest... they dragged the Zeroes right into us.” After dropping their bombs, Hove writes, the B-26s dived and headed out to sea to escape the Zeroes.

“Precisely as planned, eight fighters from the 39th Fighter Squadron met the flight north of Cape Ward Hunt and intercepted the Zeroes. Seven of the pilots were on their first combat mission.”
Jones, aged 22, was flying a P-39 Airacobra. Its “crucial weakness,” he says, “was that it was only good to about 12,000 feet, not supercharged like the Zeroes.” Writer Jon Guttman says of the P-39: “For every thoroughbred World War II fighter that engendered fond memories for its fliers, there is another whose pilots may feel lucky just to have survived flying it.”

Jones, like the others, had had little to no weapons training. The only shooting he knew anything about was “leading” birds back in South Carolina. Only one of the eight fighter pilots had any combat experience. He continues the account: “We were strung out in a line after the attack. Then I heard a radio call from my fourth pilot, John C. Price. I did a 180-degree turn and flew down the line. There was a Zero on Price’s tail. The Zero went into vertical climb (the typical Zero tactic designed to get the American aircraft to stall). I climbed farther than the Zero expected because I had the speed coming down from altitude. I fired on him with all of my (five) guns and saw two or three 20-millimeter cannon shells strike just forward of the cockpit . . . Then the pilot climbed out . . . He was hanging onto the cockpit . . . I followed the Zero down and saw him crash into the water.”

Forty-six years later, at a symposium in Fredericksburg, Jones learned that the pilot he shot down was Warrant Officer Satoshi Yoshino, a Japanese ace with 15 kills on his record.

“You must have been a great pilot yourself to have downed my comrade,” Japanese ace Saburo Sakai told him at the National Museum of the Pacific War. Sakai, credited with 64 Allied kills, was “just the nicest man,” Jones says. Jones’ wife Joyce adds: “Those two really hit it off.”

Like many of life’s experiences, that first shoot-down is the one Jones remembers best. Three more occurred during the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, described by Lex McAulay in his 1991 volume of the same name as the “destruction of the crucial Japanese reinforcement convoy to Lae” by the combined efforts of Australian and American fliers. After his fifth “victory,” Jones became severely ill with dengue fever and returned to the U.S. He recovered, then served in a fighter replacement training unit at Perry Field, Florida, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel. After the war ended, he went to Europe, served as liaison officer to the British Royal Air Force, volunteered to fly C-54s during the Berlin Airlift and served with a squadron of F-84s in Bavaria. During the airlift, he says, he learned to respect Russian MIG pilots, who would occasionally line up alongside U.S. cargo planes in the corridor but never, in his experience, crossed into that corridor to challenge the operation. Jones served three years at Air Force headquarters in Japan and participated in nuclear testing at Camp Desert Rock, Nevada. He taught air science, then served as ROTC commander at Brooklyn College and headed a jet fighter training unit of T33s near Bryan.

Since retirement in Bell County Jones has been active in business and ranching enterprises, as well as serving an adviser and supporter of Temple High School’s ROTC, organizing Memorial Day ceremonies at the Salado Cemetery and staying in touch with wartime friends through organizations like the American Fighter Aces Association, the Berlin Airlift Veterans Association and the 39th Fighter Squadron Association. For many years he wrote a column for several local newspapers and hosted “The Skies of Texas” on KNCT-TV.

For someone whose memories of The War are limited to scrap paper drives, victory gardens and absent uncles, listening to Jack Jones is a treasured opportunity to learn about a piece of history from a man who lived it. And Jones seems to enjoy the chance to share his experiences as well.

Twenty-five years ago Jones flew a stunt bi-plane at an El Paso air show. The plane? A Pitts Special, described as a “small plane that acts like an F-16.” Quite a bit tamer was a commercial flight last year to California accompanied by daughter Mary Catherine, 24, a pilot herself.

A.L.
BCHC honors 10 Bell County properties, owners with preservation awards

The Bell County Historical Commission recently recognized 10 Bell County historic properties and their owners at a ceremony and reception at the Bell County Museum. Presenting awards was County Judge Jon Burrows. Awards went to the T.B. Harris Community Center in Belton, accepted by Les Hallbauer; the Boles-Aiken Cabin, Salado, Robert Denman; the Old Red School House, Salado, Lloyd Parks and Robin Battershell; Old Scott’s Hotel, Salado, Tim Brown; Downtown Santa Fe Railway Depot, Temple, Patricia Rye; Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe Railroad Planing Mill, Belton, Noel Curb; Tulloch Brothers Building, Belton, Carol Bigham; Citizens Exchange Bank, Troy, B. J. Finch; Santa Fe Railroad Depot, Killeen, Gerald Skidmore and Don Christian; and the Bethel Primitive Baptist Church, Killeen, Henry Lucksinger.

Commission schedules annual holiday meeting, election at Bell County Museum

The Bell County Historical Commission will gather for its holiday meeting on Monday, November 27, at the Bell County Museum. The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. Members will provide refreshments. New officers will be elected after presentation of a slate on October 23. Nominating committee members are Berneta Peeples, Shirley Holleman, Robert Denman, Amanda Dyer and Nancy Kelsey.

* * * * *

This newsletter is published quarterly by the Bell County Historical Commission, Box 712, Belton, Texas 76513-0712. Editorial material may be sent to Annette Lucksinger, 811 Oakhill Drive, Killeen, Texas 76541 (254-699-5916). (e-mail: asl@vvm.com) The Bell County Historical Commission meets at 7 p.m. on the fourth Monday of most months in Justice of the Peace #1 courtroom, Bell County Courthouse. The BCHC office on the third floor of the courthouse is open from 9 a.m. to 12 noon Monday through Friday. Phone number is 254-933-5917. (e-mail: hist.comm@co.bell.tx.us) Current commission officers and chairman include Ron Gates, chairman; Margaret Williamson, vice chairman/advisory chairman; Dena Hill, recording/corresponding secretary; William Stanley, treasurer/finance and budget chairman; Berneta Peeples, reporter; David Yeilding, historical preservation; David Evans, historical markers; Stephanie Turnham, history appreciation; Patty Benoit, media consultant; Joe and Dorothy Button, grants; Weldon Cannon, Distinguished Service Awards; Amanda Dyer, program; and Annette Lucksinger, newsletter.
Miller sisters visit family history sites in west Bell County

When Velma Miller Holck of Austin called the Killeen Area Heritage Association to learn about the location of the old Crossville School her sister Dora attended in the 1920s, everyone thought surely she referred to the Okay School, thought to be the Bell County’s westernmost school. But thanks to History of Bell County Public Schools, compiled in 1976 by Temple-Bell Retired Teachers Association, KAHA learned that Crossville School was located on the Bell-Coryell county line northwest of Okay. According to writers/teachers Mae Stevens and Althea Copeland Taylor, Crossville School consolidated with Copperas Cove Independent School District in 1939.

Visiting the former Killeen High School, later Avenue D Elementary School and today Killeen’s city hall, are, left to right, Velma Miller Holck, Dora Miller Hayden of San Antonio (who was positive she had attended Crossville School because that’s where she learned English), Helen Miller Stephenson of Bastrop, Esterleen Miller Fischer of Bartlett and Joyce Miller of Houston. The Miller family moved to Killeen in 1928, and Dora entered first grade. Her teacher was Annie Mary Gilmer. Dora remembers crawling under a stalled train beside the school one day in order not to be late reaching home.

Erich Miller and Selma Kriegel Miller were the parents of 10 children and farmed land originally settled by Miller’s ancestors and located southwest of Killeen. None of the immediate family lives in Killeen anymore, but relatives are buried in the Immanuel Lutheran Cemetery in the southern part of town. Five Miller sisters and three brothers survive; of these, four were delivered by early Killeen physician and drugstore owner, Dr. D. L. Wood. The family moved to Copperas Cove in the early 1930s and eventually lost their farmland when Camp Hood was established.

While in Killeen, the sisters visited Central Texas College, approximate location of the Crossville School district, according to History of Bell County Public Schools.

Other references to both Crossville School and community of the same name are made in two publications furnished by Cultural Resources Management personnel at Fort Hood. According to Agricultural and Rural Development on Fort Hood Lands, 1849-1942, Crossville was named for early settler James Madison Cross. Its post office opened in November, 1872, on the same day Palo Alto’s post office opened. By 1872 Crossville had a store, gristmill, gin and wood shop; its school had 35 students and served several church congregations as well. The gin burned in 1873. The community had 40 residents in 1880, and the post office closed in 1881; mail was sent to Palo Alto. A storm in 1914 destroyed the school, but no one was hurt. A new two-room school was built to replace it. By 1935 the school had just 16 students.

A.L.
Dyers ask: Your museum or mine?

Each holiday season a certain Dallas-based specialty store features His & Her Christmas gifts. They’ve probably not considered this one: His & Her museums. For Chris and Amanda Dyer, every day is His & Her museum day. From their Salado home, Chris travels to Georgetown to his job as director of the Williamson County Museum, located in the Farmers State Bank building on the west side of the courthouse square; Amanda drives to her job as curator for the Bell County Museum, 200 N. Main in Belton, one block north of the courthouse square.

Do these two ever squabble about whose museum is better? No, they insist, but “we do talk about work a lot.” They cooperate with each other on projects, too. Chris jokes that his contribution on Amanda’s projects is “mostly labor.” She’s the detail person, they agree, who enjoys organizing artifacts, reading all the signs in museums they visit; he’s a “big-picture” type who enjoys working with people to get resources his museum needs and planning exhibits he himself would like to visit.

The Dyers met when both were working on master’s degrees in museum science at Texas Tech. They married in Fort Worth in 2004. Amanda, a native of Iowa Park (near Wichita Falls), earned a bachelor of arts degree in history at Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University–San Marcos); Chris, a graduate of China Spring High School (near Waco) holds a bachelor of arts degree in forensics and museum studies from Baylor University. Both worked in history-related positions before assuming their present jobs, Amanda on a contract at SWTSS and Chris, for two and one-half years surveying old cemeteries for the Texas Historical Commission.

As curator at the BCM, Amanda is responsible for collections management and preparation of exhibits. Until recently she also served as educational program coordinator, a position now held by Jody Wright-Gidley, former BCM curator. Chris Dyer says his biggest challenge since becoming WCM director two years ago has been getting the museum “stable,” after it was incorporated in 1997. The most impressive success was an August cattle drive that attracted more than 3,500 visitors to the Georgetown courthouse square, with more than 1,000 visitors to the museum. Amanda’s work on BCM’s recent expansion counts as her most-appreciated success.

The BCM, organized in 1975, boasts a membership of 250, with average monthly visits numbering 700; museum membership in Williamson County is 180, with about 500 visitors a month. Museum hours at the BCM are 12 noon to 5 p.m., Tuesday–Saturday; WCM hours are Wednesday and Thursday, 12 noon to 5 p.m.; Friday, from 12 noon to 6 p.m. and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Both museums offer group appointments.

A.L.