

CHALKBOARD Notes - Summer 2015

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The CHALKBOARD annual newsletter comes to you from the Friends of the Gillespie County Country Schools in an effort to inform our membership and to inspire new members. As a Member-at-Large, there are NO meetings to attend. The CHALKBOARD provides a way for to us stay in contact and talk about what we are accomplishing.

HISTORY

Some “new” history was made by The Friends by placing our Friends’ brochures in some of the Texas Travel Information Centers for the past three years. This is made possible by invitation only from the State of Texas. The Texas Travelers Information Centers distributed literature for over 1,500 destinations and attractions last year—including ours! City Hot Funds Grants enabled us to produce and distribute these pamphlets.

READING ASSIGNMENT

“The Empty Schoolhouse” by Luther Bryan Clegg, published by A&M Press, 1997, is a good read about a time “when school played second fiddle to family duties but still served as a focal point of community life”, along with West Texas stories such as: “She went into the Classroom and Laid a Pistol on the Desk!” or “They Caught a Pig and Brought It in the Schoolhouse!”. Interviews with students and teachers produced a clear look at how it really was for the country students and teachers.

GEOGRAPHY

The small-sized early school districts were developed due to geography and ability to walk or ride a horse to school or ride in a car filled with family and neighbors that moved along at 20 miles an hour. The early school district was about 36 square miles or smaller. This size meant most were neighbors of common ethnic backgrounds, worshiped in the same church, shared common problems, and were pretty much alike. Not a lot of diversity, but perhaps this helped promote cooperation and the behavior of helping your neighbor, a common trait seen in these small country schools and communities. As more people moved into the difficult Texas country, the growing population varied and also created the need for larger schools.

HEALTH

Many Gillespie County Country Schools had only water from a nearby creek or water carried from a neighboring ranch. As soon as a well could be dug or drilled, no more time was wasted carrying water. It is amazing that these children drank from a common dipper and drank natural water that was not tested by the health department in those early years.

INDUSTRIAL ART

Our plans for conserving the Willow City School Painted Stage Curtain have been changed several times during the past six years of discussions. The need to follow up on the Road Scholar Life Long Learning Service Program was not necessary when we found 51 volunteers in our own community to assist us! Nineteen of those volunteers were artists of Die Künstler von Fredericksburg organization. Other volunteers were Friends' members or interested Fredericksburgers of all ages. The plan and training came from our professional art conservator consultant, Anne Zanikos, of San Antonio, Texas. The hands-on work began at the Willow City School in the upstairs classroom in April with completion in early May. Six weeks of consistent work was required. Ms. Zanikos complimented the original design of a bridge built to allow volunteers to lie face-down to work the center areas of the curtain not accessible from the sidelines. She said this was a first for conservation equipment and very much needed. L. D. Scott began the idea and turned it over to David and Austin Dreyer to develop and build. The project was funded by the following: City of Fredericksburg HOT Funds Grant of \$12,500; Hill Country Community Trust Grant of \$1,000; Pedernales Creative Art Alliance Grant of \$5,000; Community Foundation Texas Hill Country; private citizens' donations, assistance from the Willow City School, and the Friends of the Gillespie County Country Schools. With a balance of under \$6,000 at this time, several grant applications are pending. All contributors will be listed in our next CHALKBOARD Notes when the balance is zero. The grand viewing of the conserved curtain, hanging in the lower classroom at Willow City School, is scheduled for the June 13 Open House event. Drive out and see the preserved curtain and learn more about the whole project.

We are writing a booklet to guide other painted curtain restoration projects. The generous gift of producing this as an eBook was given to the Friends by Kay Hauptrief Guenther, the Friends GCCS Web Master. Laura Heiligenthal and Kent Rylander are assisting further research on the curtain with a goal of registering the WCS curtain with Curtains Without Borders. The Grapetown School/Grange Painted Curtain is already registered with them. This registering effort will help us answer basic questions about the curtain: (1) When was it produced and by whom? (2) Where was it made and who paid for the curtain? (3) Did the advertisers on the curtain cover the cost? (4) Why did WCS decide upon a painted school curtain instead of a less expensive and more commonly used fabric stage curtain? As we continue to finish the project, we will continue to thank all of our helpers and supporters. For now, we want to let you know that Mable Wilke and Frances Heimann were our "boots on the ground" at the Willow City School. Making ready, keeping the heat on as needed, unlocking, and watching out for all of us as well as working on the curtain. We have another constant at the WCS for the curtain project and that was Joe Houde, professional film producer. Joe drove out to film the whole procedure. He is editing it and will let us know when the film is ready to view. Thanks Joe. We'll keep you posted as we finish the research, the eBook, the printed book, and the telling of the whole story.

Dalton and Joy Fromme have been long-time members-at-large and supporters of the Friends. You have seen them set up our Open House Events for the past several years. Dalton and Joy offer Dalton's school art for sale with 25% of his sales going to the Friends of Gillespie County Country Schools. Dalton's Studio is at 308 W. Travis St., Fredericksburg, so do visit them at his studio to see his larger selection. Dalton designs and produces our school posters and many other items to assist us. The Willow City School Painted Curtain certificates of Appreciation were designed and produced by Dalton and he is the originator of our Friends' logo. Dalton is a retired graphic designer and Joy is a retired reading specialist teacher. Thanks to both of them for their generous gifts.

WRITING

On the 2014 CSAA Program, Dr. Mary E. Outlaw of Berry College in Georgia presented “Identifying, Collecting, and Preserving Country School History”. Her handout included some electronic sources. Let us know if you would like a copy of her recommendations. One we're sharing today: <http://www.nkpr.org/series/5178603/america-s-one-room-schools>. This site stated; “One-room schools still exist, but they’ve dwindled from 190,000 in 1919 to fewer than 400 today.” Her listed sources are filled with data and information of interest. Gillespie County had 44 country schools in the peak years. It is amazing that 42 of those buildings are still standing today . . . 17 of which are shown on our Gillespie County Country Schools DRIVING TRAIL brochure. Some of the schools have two on their property, such as the Cherry Mountain Schools or others maintained the older school houses to serve as the teacherage. It would be a service to us, Gillespie County, and to America for an up-to-date survey to be completed and placed on the electronic sources. See the permanent map mounted directly behind the Vereins Kirche to start your investigation. This map was a Friends GCCS Project in the past few years.

ASSIGNMENT

It is time to become a Membership-at-Large or to renew your annual Membership. You can do this on our website by visiting our [Membership at Large](#) web page or email us for a Membership-at-Large envelope to jane423@austin.rr.com. Memberships begin at \$25 a year. Your support assists us in finding new Friends, as well as keeping Friends informed about our work and plans for the future. We have recently added a new member, Emily Heiligenthal, a teacher in the Austin area. Her membership is so encouraging for several reasons. Emily’s roots are in Gillespie County as she has family here. She cares that our historic schools are maintained and is willing to help with a Membership-at-Large. She has already volunteered to assist us next June, 2016, when we will be hosting the Country Schools Association of America’s national convention. Just Remember!! With a Membership-at-Large there are NO MEETINGS to attend.

SCHOOL EVENTS

Open House Events for this quarter are:

June 13th - Willow City School: Special Day in store. This is the official viewing of the conserved Willow City Painted Curtain.

July 4th - Wrede School: Remember you can see the fireworks from their schoolhouse.

NOTES

The Country Schools Association of America convention in June in Saratoga Springs, New York, will be attended by 6 Friends' members: Doris and Don Spraggins, Jo Jenschke, JoElla Rode Lewis, Mary Roye, and Jane Woellhof. Our CVB is shipping Goody Bags from the Friends to promote next years' CSAA Convention. It will be hosted by the Friends at the Pioneer Museum in conjunction with a Schoolgirls Sampler Exhibit.



Until our next update in Chalkboards Notes:

Jane Woellhof and Don L. Spraggins

Directors at Large
Friends of the Gillespie County Country Schools

Members of Country Schools of America, listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, and a Member of National Trust for Historic Preservation. Most of our schools have Texas Historic Markers. Hosts of 2016 Country Schools Association of America national convention at White Oak School at Pioneer Museum, Fredericksburg, Texas.
