

History of Gregg County

In 1873, Bluford W. Brown, a state representative from the Summerfield community, introduced a bill before the Thirteenth Texas Legislature to create a new county from parts of Upshur, Rusk, and Harrison Counties. The proposed name commemorated a popular Confederate Army general named John Gregg who was killed in action on October 7, 1864. Gregg County was officially created by passage of an act by the Thirteenth Legislature on April 12, 1873, and the new county was expanded by passage of another act the following April 30, 1874. However, Gregg County ended up being significantly smaller than all of the adjoining counties because representatives for Harrison County successfully prevented the western end of that county from joining Gregg County, as was planned by the legislative committee.



Gregg County Courthouse - 1879

The Southern Pacific Railroad established Longview in 1870 while constructing its transcontinental line, and the town was incorporated in 1871. Kilgore was created by the International Railroad near New Danville in 1872. The Texas & Pacific Railroad acquired the Southern Pacific Railroad and then continued construction westward from Longview in early 1873. The railroad established Gladewater near Point Pleasant. Longview, Kilgore, and Gladewater were primarily sawmill towns. Longview also had offices and shops for the three railroads, Kelly Plow Works after 1882, and the Graham Box Factory after 1903. However, cotton farming remained the foundation of the economy, occupying about half of the county's cultivated acreage.

In 1930, Gregg County was rescued from the Great Depression by the discovery of the East Texas Oil Field, the largest pool of petroleum ever discovered in the continental 48 states. "Dad" Joiner brought in the Daisy Bradford No.3 on October 3, 1930, and that well was quickly followed by the Lou Della Crim No.1 and the J.K. Lathrop No.1 wells within 60 days. Nearly half of the field's 200+ square miles lay in the western third of Gregg County. Over the past 70 years, it is estimated that 6 billion barrels of oil have been recovered. An estimated 1 billion barrels remain to be recovered.

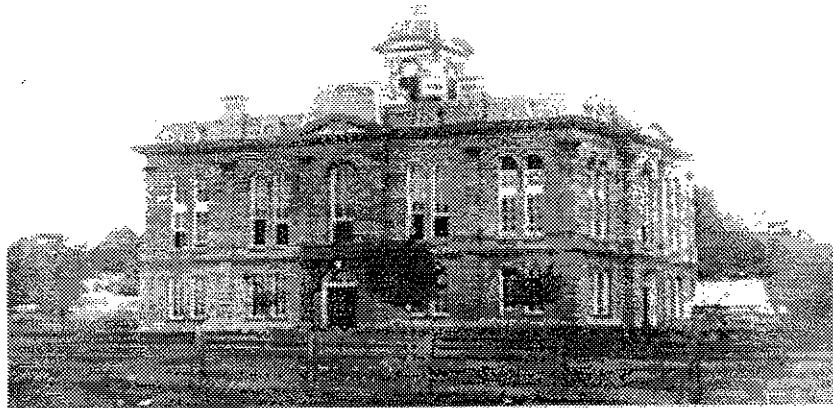
Transformed into boom towns almost overnight, Kilgore and Gladewater became incorporated cities in 1931. By the time drilling activity declined in 1935, there were about 15,000 wells and 95 refineries in the field. Among a multitude of civic improvements, the new wealth contributed to the creation of Kilgore College. Oil and gas exploration, production, and the related service industries continued to dominate Gregg County's economy for the next 60 years.

[Home](#)[Commissioners Court](#)[County History](#)[Departments](#)[Judicial Records Search](#)[Services](#)

~ The History of Gregg County ~

Gregg County was inhabited by Caddo Tribes until the early 1800s and partly by Cherokee immigrants until 1839. Gregg County was settled by farmers from the southern United States after Texas achieved statehood in 1845. In 1860, the future Gregg County, consisted of parts of Upshur and Rusk counties with nine rural post offices but not towns.

The Southern Pacific Railroad established Longview at Earpville in 1870 and paused there in constructing its transcontinental line. The town was incorporated in 1871. During 1872, the International Railroad (later called International & Great Northern Railroad) built a line between Longview and Hearne, eventually reaching Mexico. Kilgore was created by the International Railroad near New Danville in 1872. The Southern Pacific was acquired by the Texas & Pacific Railroad, which resumed construction westward from Longview early in 1873 and established Gladewater near Point Pleasant. In 1877, Longview businessmen formed the Longview and Sabine Valley Railroad (later acquired by the Santa Fe Railroad), heading toward Sabine Pass. Meantime, Longview acquired enough influence to have a county of its own.

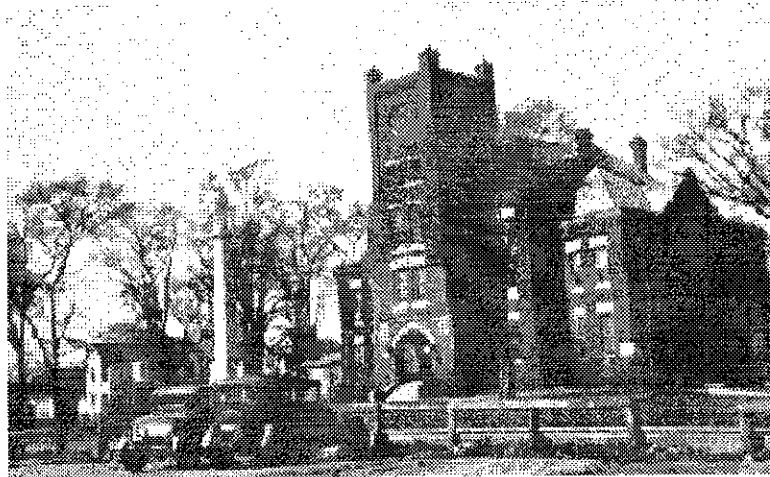


Courthouse 1879

In 1873, State Representative B. W. Brown (of Summerfield Community north of Longview) introduced a bill to create a new county from parts of Upshur, Rusk and Harrison counties. However, Harrison County successfully resisted fragmentation, and the Rusk County portion turned out smaller than desired.

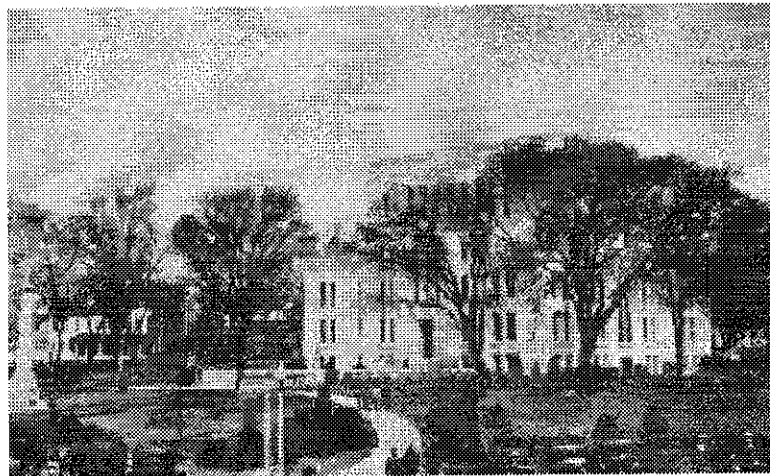
The name for Gregg County commemorated a popular secessionist leader named John Gregg who was killed in action as a Confederate General.

In Longview, Kilgore and Gladewater cotton was the foundation of the economy, occupying about half of the county's cultivated acreage, and the use of the uncultivated acreage was timber for the sawmills. Longview also had offices and shops for the three railroads, Kelly Plow Works after 1882 and the Graham Box Factory after 1903.



Courthouse 1897

Late in 1930, Gregg County was rescued from the Great Depression by the largest pool of petroleum ever discovered in the United State. Nearly half of the field's 200 square miles lay in the western third of the county.



Courthouse 1932

Transformed into boom towns, Kilgore and Gladewater became incorporated early in 1931. By the time drilling slacked off in 1935, there were about 15,000 wells and 95 refineries in the field. Among a multitude of civic improvements, the new wealth resulted in the creation of Kilgore College.

Oil and natural gas enabled Gregg County to make the most of the national boom that accompanied and followed World War II. Due to local political influence, the government built Harmon General Hospital near Longview during the war and afterwards donated it for use as LeTourneau Technical

Institute (later named LeTourneau University). The hospital was part of the inducement for building the LeTourneau Factory at Longview.

The Texas Eastman plant, established near Longview in 1950, became the largest petrochemical complex in inland Texas. Another industrial milestone was the Schlitz (later named Stroh) Brewery in 1964. Also beginning in 1964, the construction of Interstate Highway 20 confirmed Gregg County's fortunate location on a natural east-west transportation artery. By the time the county celebrated its centennial in 1973, its position as a thriving industrial center and desirable place to live was assured into the twenty-first century.

Remembering the past...

Historical marker fetes courthouses

By ANNELLE JONES
Reporter

LONGVIEW — An official Texas Historical Marker was dedicated on the south lawn of the Gregg County Courthouse Tuesday.

After Beth Holloway Dodson, a member of the Gregg County Historical Commission, unveiled the marker, Helen "Pudge" Griffin of Kilgore, vice president of the commission, read it:

"The Courthouses of Gregg County.

"Gregg County was formed in 1873 and Longview was chosen as county seat. The first temporary courthouse was a small building at the corner of Fredonia and Tyler streets. It soon proved inadequate, however, and another temporary courthouse was set up on the second floor of the 2-story W.G. Northcutt Hardware store. The only brick building in town, the Northcutt store was also the only structure to survive a devastating downtown fire in 1877.

"The county built a jail in 1874 and levied a special tax to finance construction of a permanent courthouse. Designed by F.E. Ruffini
See COURTHOUSE, Page 4

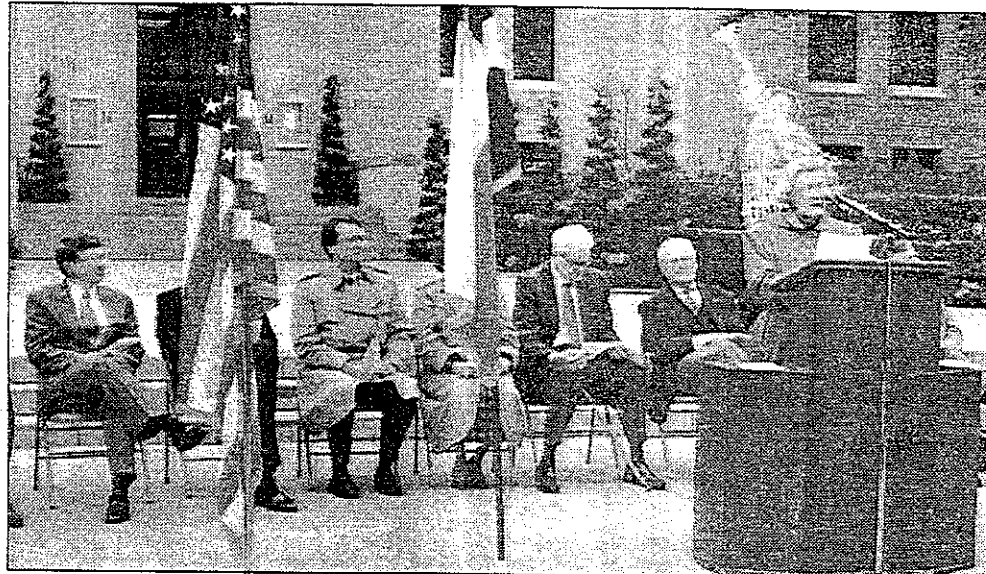


Photo by Annelle Jones

READING THE MARKER — Helen "Pudge" Griffin of Kilgore, vice chairman of the Gregg County Historical Commission, reads the text of an official Texas Historical Marker for the Gregg County Courthouses during Tuesday's ceremony dedicating the marker.

UNVEILING THE MARKER — Beth Holloway Dodson, a member of the Gregg County Historical Commission, holds a draping after she unveiled the official Texas Historical Marker for the Gregg County Courthouses Tuesday.



Photo by Annelle Jones



Gregg County Historical Commission

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.
Chairman

417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602
October 6, 1997

Phone 903-757-2261
Fax # 903-753-5337

Honorable John Sharp,
Texas State Comptroller of Public Accounts
Fax. 512-463-4965

Attention: Betsey Bishop

Dear Mr. Sharp:

The Texas Historical Commission and the Gregg County Historical Commission are dedicating an Official Texas Historical Marker entitled: The Courthouses of Gregg County, Tuesday, November 18, 1997, at 12:30 P. M. On behalf of Gregg County Judge Mickey D. Smith I would like to invite you to attend this ceremony and be the principal speaker.

This event will be held on the plaza and courthouse lawn in front of the Gregg County courthouse. The Kilgore College Ranger Band will play for us beginning about 12:15. After a few introductions by me Judge Smith will introduce you. The entire program, exclusive of the band music, will probably be about thirty minutes long.

I will send you a program very soon after I formulate it. Darlynn Jones, Judge Smith's secretary, asked me to request a brief curriculum vitae from you.

We in Gregg County sincerely anticipate your being here for this fine celebration.

Sincerely,

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.

YOU ARE INVITED TO AN
OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL
MARKER DEDICATION

The Courthouses of Gregg County

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18th

12:30 P.M.

COURTHOUSE LAWN

Featuring Gregg Co. Judge Mickey D. Smith

&

Honoring the Former Gregg County Judges

&

Special Honorees, The Four
Gregg County Commissioners

Sponsored by the
Texas and Gregg County Historical Commissions

INVITATION LIST
THE COURTHOUSES OF GREGG COUNTY H. M. DEDICATION

Other counties' historical commissions & T.H.C.

Miss Virginia Knapp, Chairman
Rusk County Historical Commission
P. O. Box 1773
Henderson, Texas 75602

Margaret Agnor, Chairman
Harrison County Historical Commission
Harrison County Courthouse, Suite 402
Marshall, Texas 75670

Alex Beall, Chairman
Smith County Historical Commission
102 North College Street. Suite 516
Tyler, Texas 75702

Bill Starnes, Chairman
Upshur County Historical Commission
101 Tyler Street
Gilmer, Texas 75644

Jeanette Graham, Chairman
Morris County Historical Commission
507 Whiskeystill Road
Daingerfield, Texas 75613

Virginia Nicholas, Chairman
Bexar County Historical Commission
117 Stanford
San Antonio, Texas 78212

Cynthia J. Beeman, Administrator
Official Texas Historical Marker Program
Texas Historical Commission
P. O. Box 12276
Austin, Texas 78711

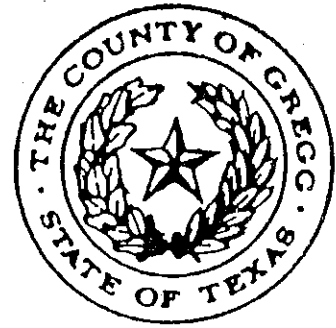
Roni Morales, Director
Publications
Texas Historical Commission
P. O. Box 12276
Austin, Texas 78711

A Fax Is Coming!

TO: BETH DODSON

FROM: Norman Black, D.D.S.

Gregg County Historical Commission



FAX #: (903) 753-5337

PHONE: (903) 757-2261

RE: SUPPLIMENTAL INVITATION LIST

TOTAL PAGES: 3
(INCLUDING THIS PAGE)

DATE: 10-16-97

F A X C O V E R S H E E T

DATE: October 15, 1997 TIME: 4:01 PM
TO: Dr. Norman Black PHONE:
FROM: Sue Brown FAX: 903/753-5337
PHONE: 903/984-3038
FAX: 903/984-6203

RE: Address List for Dedication

Number of pages including cover sheet: 2

Message

Attaching copy of addresses for mayors/city managers of cities in Gregg County. You will note that some have no managers but have secretaries which we included for your information. We got our first draft from the City Hall in Kilgore and were referred by our local chamber to the East Texas Council of Governments which verified our list. Also checked with public library so feel these are accurate. You will note that Liberty City is not listed since it is no longer incorporated therefore has no city officials.

If we can be of further assistance, please call

Dear Beth,

Address invitations only to those persons underlined. Thanks very much.



MAYORS AND/OR CITY MANAGERS OF GREGG COUNTY CITIES

<u>Clarksville City-</u>	<u>Mayor:</u>	<u>Mr. H. E. Griffin</u>
	<u>City Manager:</u>	<u>Mr. Billy F. Silvertooth, Jr.</u> P.O. Box 1209 Gladewater, Texas 75647
<u>Easton-</u>	<u>Mayor:</u>	<u>Mr. Leroy Mitchell</u>
	<u>Clerk:</u>	<u>Ms. Alice Maxcy</u> P.O. Box 007 Longview, Texas 75641-0007
<u>Gladewater-</u>	<u>Mayor:</u>	<u>Mr. Jackie Wood</u>
	<u>City Manager:</u>	<u>Mrs. Sharon Johnson</u> P.O. Box 551 Gladewater, Texas 75647-0551
<u>Kilgore-</u>	<u>Mayor:</u>	<u>Mr. Bill Wilson</u>
	<u>City Manager:</u>	<u>Mr. Ron Stephens</u> P.O. Box 990 Kilgore, Texas 75663
<u>Lakeport-</u>	<u>Mayor:</u>	<u>Mr. Ricky Shelton</u>
	<u>Secretary:</u>	<u>Ms. Susan Good</u> P.O. Box 7728 Longview, Texas 75607-7728
<u>Longview-</u>	<u>Mayor:</u>	<u>Mr. David McWhorter</u>
	<u>City Manager:</u>	<u>Mr. Ted Willis</u> City Hall P.O. Box 1952 Longview, Texas 75606
<u>Warren City-</u>	<u>Mayor:</u>	<u>Mr. H. L. Hearnberger</u>
	<u>Secretary:</u>	<u>Ms. Gail Kalinec</u> P.O. Box 222 Gladewater, Texas 75647
<u>White Oak-</u>	<u>Mayor:</u>	<u>Mr. Tim Vaughn</u>
	<u>City Manager:</u>	<u>Mr. Ralph Weaver</u> P.O. Box 98 White Oak, Texas 75693

INVITATION LIST
THE COURTHOUSES OF GREGG COUNTY H.M. DEDICATION

Former Gregg County Judges & Others

Judge Earl Sharp
800 Charlotte Drive
Longview, Texas 75601

Judge R. E. "Peppy" Blount
2100 Cotton Street
Longview, Texas 75602

Judge Kenneth J. Walker
501 Spur 63, Suite C6
Longview, Texas 75601

Judge Henry Atkinson
P. O. Box 3143
Longview, Texas 75606

Lou Galosy
Number 6 Huntington Street
Longview, Texas 75601

Neal A. Hawthorn
Number 6 Bedford Circle
Longview, Texas 75601

Gordon Ward
203 Doyle Street
Longview, Texas 75601

Dr. Ellie Caston

Waco, Texas

Mr. and Mrs. Eugene W. McWhorter
2008 Sunshine Square
Longview, Texas 75601

INVITATION LIST
THE COURTHOUSES OF GREGG COUNTY H. M. DEDICATION

Other counties' historical commissions & T.H.C.

Miss Virginia Knapp, Chairman
Rusk County Historical Commission
P. O. Box 1773
Henderson, Texas 75602

Margaret Agnor, Chairman
Harrison County Historical Commission
Harrison County Courthouse, Suite 402
Marshall, Texas 75670

Alex Beall, Chairman
Smith County Historical Commission
102 North College Street. Suite 516
Tyler, Texas 75702

Bill Starnes, Chairman
Upshur County Historical Commission
101 Tyler Street
Gilmer, Texas 75644

Jeanette Graham, Chairman
Morris County Historical Commission
507 Whiskeystill Road
Daingerfield, Texas 75613

Virginia Nicholas, Chairman
Bexar County Historical Commission
117 Stanford
San Antonio, Texas 78212

Cynthia J. Beeman, Administrator
Official Texas Historical Marker Program
Texas Historical Commission
P. O. Box 12276
Austin, Texas 78711

Roni Morales, Director
Publications
Texas Historical Commission
P. O. Box 12276
Austin, Texas 78711

MAYORS AND/OR CITY MANAGERS OF GREGG COUNTY CITIES

Clarksville City-	Mayor:	Mr. H. E. Griffin
	City Manager:	Mr. Billy F. Silvertooth, Jr. P.O. Box 1209 Gladewater, Texas 75647
Easton-	Mayor:	Mr. Leroy Mitchell
	Clerk:	Ms. Alice Maxcy P.O. Box 007 Longview, Texas 75641-0007
Gladewater-	Mayor:	Mr. Jackie Wood
	City Manager:	Mrs. Sharon Johnson P.O. Box 551 Gladewater, Texas 75647-0551
Kilgore-	Mayor:	Mr. Bill Wilson
	City Manager:	Mr. Ron Stephens P.O. Box 990 Kilgore, Texas 75663
Lakeport-	Mayor:	Mr. Ricky Shelton
	Secretary:	Ms. Susan Good P.O. Box 7728 Longview, Texas 75607-7728
Longview-	Mayor:	Mr. David McWhorter
	City Manager:	Mr. Ted Willis City Hall P.O. Box 1952 Longview, Texas 75606
Warren City-	Mayor:	Mr. H. L. Hearnberger
	Secretary:	Ms. Gail Kalinec P.O. Box 222 Gladewater, Texas 75647
White Oak-	Mayor:	Mr. Tim Vaughn
	City Manager:	Mr. Ralph Weaver P.O. Box 98 White Oak, Texas 75693

THE COURTHOUSES OF GREGG COUNTY HISTORICAL MARKER DEDICATION

INVITATION LIST

Gregg County Officials

- ✓ Judges
- ✓ Heads of Departments (all)

City Officials (all cities in county) Mayors & City Managers

Longview
Kilgore
Gladewater
Liberty City
Clarksville City
Warren City
White Oak
Lakeport
Easton

✓ Former County Judges

Earl Sharp
R. E. Peppy Blount
Henry Atkinson
Ken Walker

✓ Historical Commission Chairmen

Harrison Co. -
Rusk Co. - Miss Virginia Knapp
Smith Co. -
Upshur Co.
Morris Co. - Jeanette Graham

✓ T. H. C.

Local History Programs
~~Director - Curtis Tunnel~~

~~TxDOT~~

~~Resident Engineer - Paul Jaap
Randy Davis
Randy Davis' replacement -~~

✓ GCHC Members

Speaker - State Comptroller - John Sharp

INVITATION LIST
THE COURTHOUSES OF GREGG COUNTY H.M. DEDICATION

Former Gregg County Judges & Others

Judge Earl Sharp
800 Charlotte Drive
Longview, Texas 75601

Judge R. E. "Peppy" Blount
2100 Cotton Street
Longview, Texas 75602

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501 Spur 63, Suite C6
Longview, Texas 75601

Judge Henry Atkinson
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Longview, Texas 75606

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Number 6 Huntington Street
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203 Doyle Street
Longview, Texas 75601

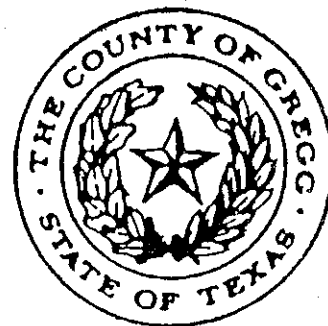
Dr. Ellie Caston

Waco, Texas

GREGG COUNTY HISTORICAL FOUNDATION
1997 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE
<u>OFFICERS:</u>		
President	P. O. Box 3523	757-5021 (O)
W. D. Northcutt III, DDS	Longview, TX 75606	758-7683 (H)
Vice President	2008 Sunshine Square	758-3965 (H)
Nancy McWhorter	Longview, TX 75601	
Secretary	2820 Bill Owens Pkwy	295-8646 (O)
Bruce Cammack	Longview, TX 75601	236-7261 (H)
Treasurer	2 Friendswood Drive	758-1200 (O)
Sally Brown	Longview, TX 75605	663-6701 (H)
<u>DIRECTORS:</u>		
Marilyn Bianca	11 Huntington Drive Longview, TX 75601	757-3348 (H)
Norman Black, DDS	417 S. Mobberly Longview, TX 75602	757-2261 (O) 757-5272 (H)
Gerald B. Bratz, AIA	820 Stuckey Drive Longview, TX 75601	753-1160 (O) 757-5498 (H)
Jack Buchanan	1403 LeDuke Blvd. Longview, TX 75601	757-9875 (H)
Van Craddock, Jr.	2800 Navajo Trail Longview, TX 75601	753-4463 (O) 758-9382 (H)
Ann Lacy Crain	P. O. Box 2146 Longview, TX 75606	758-8276 (O) 753-0368 (H)
Bonnie Dial	P. O. Box 1786 Longview, TX 75606	758-0648 (O) 753-5419 (H)
Beth Dodson	117 W. Edgefield Longview, TX 75602	753-1692 (O) 753-2940 (H)
Ken Durham, PhD	15 Country Place Longview, TX 75605	233-3305 (O) 663-1730 (H)
Claire Smith Foster	601 E. Melton Street Longview, TX 75602	758-5205 (H)
Helen McHaney Griffin	2600 Brookview Kilgore, TX 75662	984-3346 (H)
Risa Harris	120 Fountainbleau Longview, TX 75605	757-3180 (H)
Carol Little	P. O. Box 3123 Longview, TX 75606	758-0581 (O) 758-4086 (H)
B. F. Martin, Jr.	P. O. Box 1902 Longview, TX 75606	757-4232 (O) 757-5100 (H)
Nauty Byrd Mayer	P. O. Box 1428 Gladewater, TX 75647	845-2496 (H)
Latricia Nichols	P. O. Box 69 Longview, TX 75606	295-4400 (O) 758-7017 (H)
Wayman Norman, MD	40 Stonegate Longview, TX 75601	758-5996 (H)
Jeannie Pemberton	1505 Noble Drive Longview, TX 75601	757-3378 (H)
Charles Taylor	2310 Nixon Longview, TX 75602	232-3159 (O) 753-7792 (H)
Addijo Williams	917 Fisher Road Longview, TX 75604	759-4788 (H)
<u>DIRECTORS EMERITI</u>		
Frances Bristow	327 Eden Dr. #312, Longview 01	753-2994 (H)
Henry O. Gossett, Jr.	224 Crescent Drive, Longview 02	757-5333 (H)
Daisy Morris	1215 S. Fredonia, Longview 02	757-6550 (H)
Amelia Belding (1906-1992)	Lawson Keener Lacy (-1967)
Eugene R. McWhorter (1909-1991)	Dolly Northcutt (1892-1982)	
Bernice Smith (1904-1995)		

A Fax Is Coming!



TO: Honorable John Sharp, Texas State Comptroller
of Public Accounts
ATTENTION: Betsey Bishop

FROM: Norman Black, D.D.S.
Gregg County Historical Commission

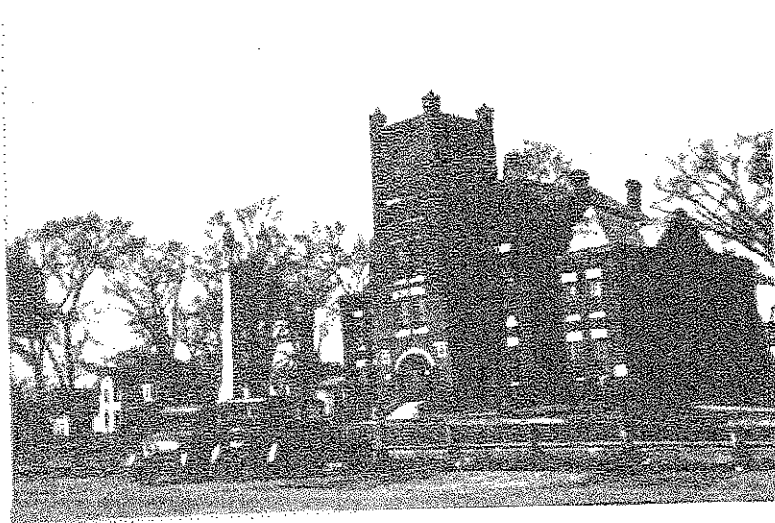
FAX #: (903) 753-5337

PHONE: (903) 757-2261

RE: Historical Marker Dedication: "The Courthouses of Gregg County"

TOTAL PAGES: 2
(INCLUDING THIS PAGE)

DATE: October 6, 1997



SECOND COURTHOUSE - 1897



Gregg County Historical Commission

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.
Chairman

417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602

Phone 903-757-2261
Fax # 903-753-5337

October 28, 1997

The Rev. Wayne Flowers, Pastor
First United Methodist Church
208 West Quitman Street
Gladewater, Texas 75647

Dear Reverend Flowers:

I am pleased to learn from Nauty Byrd Mayer, Secretary of the Gregg County Historical Commission, that you have accepted the invitation to give the benediction of the November 18th historical marker dedication.

Here is a little more detail of this ceremony. A complete program will follow in a few days. The Official Texas Historical Marker is entitled, "The Courthouses of Gregg County". The dedication will be held at 12:30 P.M. with the Kilgore College Ranger Band, with a few Rangerettes present, beginning to play about 12:10 P.M. I hope the entire program will conclude at 1:00 P.M. The principal speaker will be Gregg County Judge Mickey Smith. Former Gregg County Judges will be honored guests. The ceremony will be on the concrete courtyard or patio in front (south side) of the Gregg County courthouse. It would help me if you could be there about noon.

I am looking forward to meeting you and appreciate your being part of this long awaited event.

Sincerely,

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.

xc: Nauty Byrd Mayer



Gregg County Historical Commission

417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602

Phone 903-757-2261
Fax # 903-753-5337

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.
Chairman

October 29, 1997

Dear Judge Sharp:

There will be an Official Texas Historical Marker Dedication November 18, 1997, at 12:30 P.M. on the courthouse lawn. The marker is entitled, "The Courthouses of Gregg County".

The Gregg County Historical Commission would like to have you as one of the honored guests, the former County Judges of Gregg County. I understand your health may not permit activities such as this; however, I would like to extend a personal invitation to you to be present on this long-awaited occasion.

If there is a possibility of your being a part of this celebration please let me know.

Kindest personal regards,

Norman



Gregg County Historical Commission

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.
Chairman

417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602

Phone 903-757-2261
Fax # 903-753-5337

October 30, 1997

THE COURTHOUSES OF GREGG COUNTY

**Historical Marker Dedication
Tuesday, November 18, 1997, 12:30 P.M.**

Dear Participant:

Enclosed is the program for this marker dedication ceremony. Please be on the courthouse south lawn by 12:00 or 12:15 P.M. The Kilgore College Ranger Band will begin playing at 12:10 or 12:15 P.M. and the Program will start promptly at 12:30.

Again, the Gregg County Historical Commission and I appreciate your participation and fine cooperation to make this event a memorable occasion.

Sincerely,

The Texas and Gregg County Historical Commissions invite you to the Dedication of an Official Texas Historical Marker entitled, "THE COURTHOUSES OF GREGG COUNTY". This event will be on the south lawn of the Gregg County courthouse, Tuesday, November 18th at 12:30 P.M.

The Kilgore College Ranger Band and several Rangerettes will participate. Gregg County Judge Mickey D. Smith will bring the main address and former Gregg County Judges, R. E. "Peppy" Blount, Henry Atkinson and Kenneth J. Walker will also participate.

This historical marker commemorates all three courthouses which occupied the courthouse square as well as the other three courthouses.

Everyone is invited.

DEDICATION OF AN OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER

THE COURTHOUSES OF GREGG COUNTY

<u>Band Music</u>	Kilgore College Ranger Band and Rangerettes
<u>Posting of Colors</u>	V.F.W. Post No. 10375 Color Guard
<u>Pledges</u>	United States and Texas Flags
<u>Welcome</u>	Norman W. Black, D.D.S., Chairman Gregg County Historical Commission
<u>Invocation</u>	The Rev. Jim Welch, Pastor, First United Methodist Church, Longview
<u>Introduction of Guests</u>	Black
<u>Introduction of Honored Guests:</u>	Judge R. E. "Peppy" Blount, Judge Henry Atkinson, Judge Kenneth J. Walker
<u>Introduction of Speaker</u>	Black
<u>Address</u>	Hon. Mickey D. Smith, County Judge, Gregg County, Texas
<u>Dedication of Marker</u>	Black
<u>Unveiling of Marker</u>	Beth Holloway Dodson, Member, Gregg County Historical Commission
<u>Reading of Marker</u>	Helen McHaney Griffin, Vice Chairman, Gregg County Historical Commission
<u>Benediction</u>	The Rev. Wayne Flowers, Pastor, First United Methodist Church, Gladewater

Historical marker to be dedicated

The Texas and Gregg County Historical Commissions invite the public to the Dedication of an official Texas historical marker entitled, "The Courthouses of Gregg County." This event will be at 12:30 p.m. Nov. 18 on the south lawn of the Gregg County Courthouse.

The Kilgore College Ranger Band and members of the Rangerettes will participate.

Gregg County Judge Mickey D. Smith will give the main address and former Gregg County judges R.E. Peppy Blount, Henry Atkinson and Kenneth J. Walker will also participate.

This historical marker commemorates all three courthouses which occupied the courthouse square, as well as the other three courthouses.

November 13, 1997

Page 3

Dedication of county courthouse set

The Texas and Gregg County Historical Commissions invite you to the Dedication of an Official Texas Historical Marker entitled, "The Courthouses of Gregg County". This event will be on the south lawn of the Gregg County courthouse, Tuesday, Nov. 18 at 12:30 p.m.

The Kilgore College Ranger Band and several Rangerettes will participate. Gregg County Judge

Mickey D. Smith will bring the main address and former Gregg County Judges, R.E. "Peppy" Blount, Henry Atkinson and Kenneth J. Walker will also participate.

This historical marker commemorates all three courthouses which occupied the courthouse square as well as the other three courthouses.

Everyone is invited.

MONDAY

November 17, 1997

Vol. 66 No. 273

50 Cents

1 Section • 10 Pages

Courthouses to be dedicated

By **ANNELLE JONES**
Reporter

An official Texas Historical Marker, "The Courthouses of Gregg County," will be dedicated on the south lawn of the Gregg County Courthouse on Tuesday at 12:30 p.m.

The Kilgore College Ranger Band and Rangerettes will participate.

Gregg County Judge Mickey D. Smith will bring the main address. Former Gregg County Judges R.E.

*'The KC Band and
Kilgore College Ranger-
ettes will be included
in the festivities.'*

"Peppy" Blount, Henry Atkinson and Kenneth J. Walker will also participate.

This historical marker commemorates all three courthouses which occupied the courthouse square, as well as the other three courthouses.

Dr. Norman Black, chairman of the Gregg County Historical

Commission, will serve as master of ceremonies.

Beth Holloway Dodson, a member of the historical commission, will unveil the marker, and Helen "Pudge" Griffin, vice chairman of the commission, will read the marker.

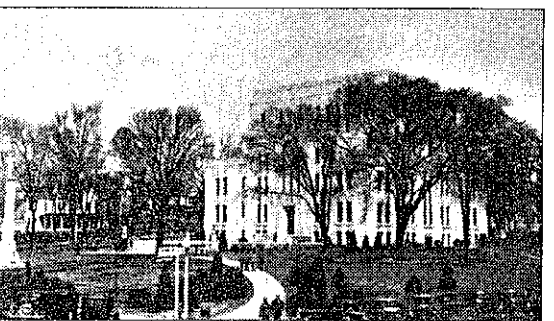
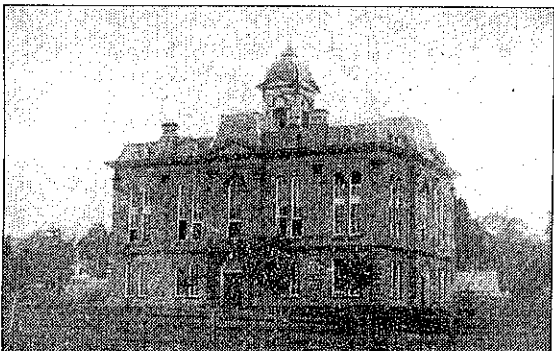
Invocation will be given by the Rev. Jim Welch, pastor of the First United Church of Longview, and the benediction will be by the Rev. Wayne Flowers, pastor of the First United Methodist Church in Gladewater.

MARKING HISTORY



Kevin Green/Staff Photographer

Dr. Norman Black, chairman of the Gregg County Historical Commission, leans against the flagpole as he looks toward the historical marker that will be dedicated Tuesday on the Gregg County Courthouse lawn. Below are three of the six buildings that have served as Gregg County Courthouses through the years.



Dentist's sleuthing uncovers county's many courthouses

By Beth McPherson
Staff Writer

Imagine going back in time 100 years or so, to a period in Gregg County history when dances were held inside the courthouse and children played on the lawn. Glancing up, visitors could check the time on the clocks in the courthouse clock-tower, and a hidden bell tolled every hour.

The details of that simpler age have always intrigued local dentist Dr. Norman Black, chairman of the Gregg County Historical Commission, whose tenacious sleuthing over two months has uncovered the history of Gregg County's courthouses.

Tuesday, Black's work will culminate with the dedication of a Texas Historical Marker commemorating the three major courthouses and three temporary courthouses that have housed Gregg County government since the county was founded. A dedication ceremony will begin at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday on the south lawn of the courthouse, where the marker is located.

"I got into it just because no one had ever done it before," he said. "No one else wanted to touch it because it was so confusing. My main hobby all my life has been Texas history — I just don't have time to do it all."

Black has been involved with the Gregg County Historical Commission since 1962, when he was appointed vice chairman of the organization. He became chairman 12 years ago and estimates he's been involved in the work behind half of Gregg County's 101 historical markers. The dedication ceremony for the Texas Historical Marker at the Gregg County Courthouse will begin at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday on the courthouse south lawn.

According to Black, who wrote a 35-page book detailing his research on the topic, the history of the Gregg County courthouse began in 1873, the same year

See Marker, 2A

Marker

From 1A

Gregg County formed from the southern part of Upshur County.

After Longview was chosen as the county seat, county officials organized and appointed a citizens' committee to find a place where the commissioners court could meet at no cost.

"Basically, what they found was a shack," said Black. "Officials began to worry that anyone could kick down a wall and steal the county records, and the sheriff complained that the walls leaked so much that the records were getting wet."

A short time later, the county courthouse was moved a block away to the second floor of the W.G. Northcutt Hardware Store, which stood at what is now 103 W. Tyler Street. It cost \$25 per month to rent the building.

The courthouse stayed in the Tyler Street location for about two years, and was apparently moved on Sept. 30, 1875, to another temporary location, which Black did not know about when he applied for the marker.

"I was cleaning out files and found a single sheet of paper listing events that had happened in Gregg County. They had the wrong date, but the courthouse did move," he said. "It's not on the marker, but they apparently moved the courthouse into the Caroll and Methvin Building. Unfortunately, no one knows where that was. The courthouse stayed there until the first permanent structure was put up in 1879."

In 1879, a two-story courthouse was built in the center of the downtown square. It cost less than \$14,000 to build the courthouse, which had a clocktower and a bell that rang each hour.

"They took great pains to lower the bell and take it to the second courthouse, but no one knows where the bell is now," Black said. "One

of these days, I hope to find it."

In his research, Black also discovered that the first courthouse had a fence around the perimeter of the property so county officials' cattle could safely be kept on the grounds. Children played ball on the courthouse lawn, and dances were held inside until the sheriff decreed in 1885 that "there will be no dancing or festivals held in the courthouse."

"The sheriff felt it would be safer that way," Black said.

Although construction of the first courthouse was uneventful, the building began to rapidly deteriorate. In 1896, an architect proclaimed the courthouse unsafe for use, and court proceedings were moved into a vacant school building.

In 1897, the first Gregg County courthouse was torn down and a second was erected in its place. This time, the county prepared a 15-page list of specifications and the courthouse was built for about \$30,000. The second courthouse was a red brick, Romanesque-style building that was two stories high and had a three-story rectangular tower.

The Texas oil boom of the early 1930s spurred furious legal activity in Gregg County that overwhelmed the second courthouse, which was deemed too small for the amount of business handled there on a daily basis.

The third, modern courthouse, which stands in the middle of the downtown area today, was built in 1932 for less than \$200,000. It had seven stories, three of which were used to house the jail.

But while the other two courthouses were built in the exact center of the lot, the final

courthouse was built cater-cornered on the lot, leaving a large lawn out front. The mystery of the unusual location was solved by Black, who discovered in his research that the reason was one of practicality:

"The first and second courthouses were in the middle of the lot, but during the oil boom of the 1930s, business was so frantic at the (second) courthouse that lawyers spread tables out on the front lawn and conducted business right there in the sunshine," he said. "It was too busy for them to tear down the second courthouse, so they simply built the new (current) courthouse right next to the existing one. They were literally about three or four feet apart."

Once the third and final courthouse was complete, the second courthouse was demolished and sold as scrap for \$1,000.

In 1958, a court and records annex was added to the existing courthouse. In 1958, an annex was built on the west side of the courthouse, the top two floors of which were made the county jail.

Although the bulk of Black's research is complete, he is still working to solve some of the smaller mysteries of the courthouses — such as where the bell went after the second courthouse was torn down, or where an old brass cannon that once stood on the grounds ended up. He is the first to admit that his search is far from over.

"I just know someone has that bell tucked away in a garage somewhere," Black said. "I've talked to some people who remember those times, but no one seems to know where it might be. It's just a matter of finding the right person, though, and I'm not going to stop until I find it."

Mauro

From 1A

1998, election were held today, Mauro would receive just 16 percent of the vote against Bush's 68 percent. Another 14 percent are undecided.

The Scripps Howard Texas Poll of 700 registered voters was con-

spokesman said of the latest survey.

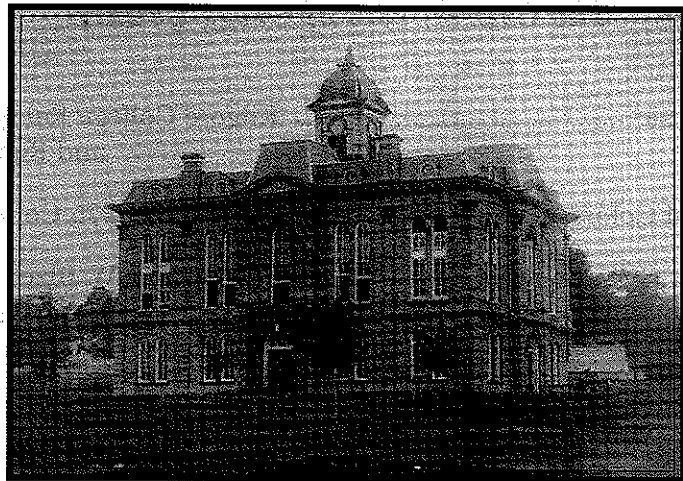
"This campaign begins in earnest now, and Garry will lay out a bold vision for this state that will sharply define the difference in both his life experiences and

polls, she said, "He won't take a single vote for granted. Gov. Bush intends to campaign aggressively and work very hard."

Hughes also rejected the notion that Mauro's views are those of most Texans. "The philosophical

Lottery

One ticket sold in Austin correctly matched all six numbers to claim the \$10 million jackpot in Saturday's Lotto Texas



"1879" Courthouse

Pledge to the Texas Flag

"Honor the Texas flag:
I pledge allegiance to thee,
Texas, one and indivisible."



DEDICATION
of an
OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER

The Courthouses of Gregg County

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1997

12:30 P.M.

Courthouse Lawn

Sponsored By

THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

and

THE GREGG COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

**DEDICATION OF AN OFFICIAL TEXAS
HISTORICAL MARKER**

The Courthouses of Gregg County

COMMISSIONS COURT OF GREGG COUNTY

Mickey D. Smith, County Judge

Charles W. Davis Commissioner Precinct One
R. Darryl Primo Commissioner Precinct Two
David McBride Commissioner Precinct Three
Dan Lucy Commissioner Precinct Four

GREGG COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Mildred Wood Barker	Carol Morris Little
Norman W. Black, DDS, Chairman	Mrs. H. L. Long
Sue Martin Brown	Anne P. Mackenzie
Mr. Jack Buchanan	Nauty Byrd Mayer
Mrs. Pauline Cox	Amanda Pratt Nobles
Mrs. B.W. Crain, Jr.	Dr. W.D. Northcutt, III
Beth Holloway Dodson	Mrs. John W. Osteen
Dr. Ken Durham	Mr. Joe White
Mrs. Helen McHaney Griffin	Mr. W.A. Williams

Band Music Kilgore College Ranger Band
and Rangerettes

Posting of Colors V.F.W. Post No. 10375 Color Guard

Master of Ceremonies Norman W. Black, D.D.S.,
Chairman of Gregg County
Historical Commission

Invocation The Rev. Jim Welch, Pastor
First United Methodist Church - Longview

Introduction of Guests Black

Introduction of Honored Guests
and Special Honored Guests Judge R.E. "Peppy" Blount,
Judge Henry Atkinson, Judge Kenneth J. Walker

Introduction of Speaker Black

Address Hon. Mickey D. Smith, County Judge
Gregg County, Texas

Dedication of Marker Black

Unveiling of Marker Beth Holloway Dodson, Member,
Gregg County Historical Commission

Reading of Marker Helen McHaney Griffin,
Vice-Chairman, Gregg County Historical Commission

Benediction The Rev. Wayne Flowers, Pastor,
First United Methodist Church - Gladewater

THE COURTHOUSES OF GREGG COUNTY

HISTORICAL MARKER DEDICATION

November 18, 1997, 12:30 P.M.

ADDRESS BY GREGG COUNTY JUDGE MICKEY D. SMITH

(This text follows your opening remarks ad. lib., in your own words)

We're here to dedicate a historical marker for the Courthouses of Gregg County, but you'll hear more detail about the buildings when the text of the marker is read. I thought I would like to tell you some things about the block where three courthouses have stood since 1879, and about this fine courtyard or campus we occupy. You might have wondered why these buildings behind us are on the back of this block. With the flurry of legal activity which came with the oil boom, which started in 1930 or 1931, it was apparent that the fine old red brick courthouse, which was built in 1897, was just not adequate to accomodate all the lawyers, secretaries, clerks and records. A new and larger courthouse had to be built. There was no building in Longview which could serve as a temporary courthouse and the legal activity just couldn't be interrupted. So, it was decided that the new building would be built immediately north of the old courthouse, which was in the middle of the block. When the new building was ready for use, the old one

was, of course, torn down...with very little interruption of the business of the county.

Long before there was a Gregg County, this entire area of East Texas was once a vast pine forest. When Longview was founded in 1870, this block was a part of O. H. Methvin's "Flat Forty Acres" where he raised corn. For a short time it was the community ball park where many games of all kinds were played. When the first permanent courthouse on this block was built, in 1879, 23 red elms and three pin oaks were planted. One bois d'arc and many locust trees were present on the lawn. All of these trees are gone today. In 1919, pecan trees were planted on the Jefferson Highway as a memorial to the soldiers who fought in World War I. The next year, these were transplanted to the courthouse lawn where 10 remain today.

At one time a gazebo and a brass cannon stood on the grounds. The gazebo was about where the east entrance is now. The cannon was donated to the World War II effort when citizens once brought items made of brass and made a pile of them on the south east corner of the lawn.

The 35 foot Confederate Monument was first erected in Bodie Park, where the Glover-Crim Building stands now. It was moved to this site on January 15, 1932.

A more recent bronze statue of a United States soldier, dedicated to the fallen men and women from Gregg County who died in all wars stands to my right...over there.

The tall flag pole is the same one which was erected at the time of the 1932 courthouse and is lighted at night, as are the statues.

For many years the courtyard was a social center of the city and it was not an uncommon sight in the late evenings to see men and women in their best Sunday clothes making their way leisurely to the ice cream suppers and strawberry festivals which were a traditional social activities in the old days.

The courtyard has always been a center for patriotic celebrations. From the time when Spanish-American War veterans marched underneath the trees to be welcomed by the citizens, to this very time when we just celebrated Veterans' Day. Long before radio, movies and television, the summer revival meetings on this lawn were a part of the life of the community. Prohibition speakers often held the attention of anyone who would stop and listen. This was true of the many times politicians need a forum for their speeches.

[Longview was once placed under Martial Law and

Brigadier General Jake Wolters and his men camped on these grounds where they had gathered and stacked all the guns belonging to the citizens of Longview.]

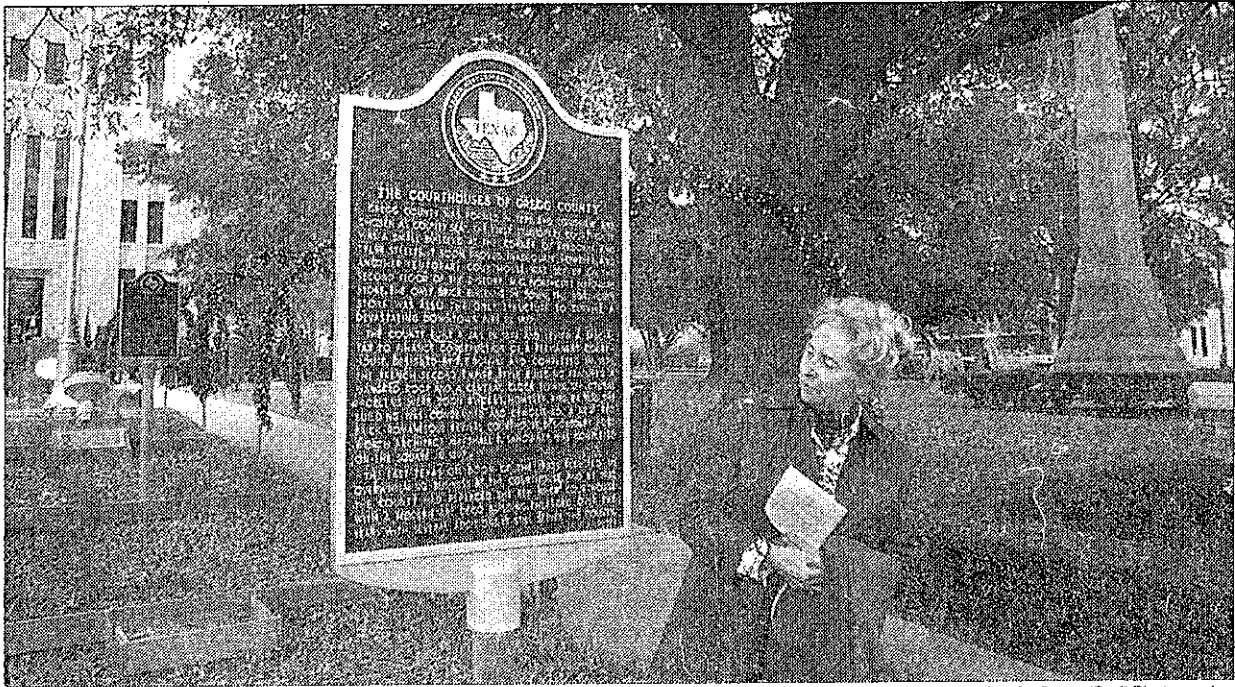
Not withstanding the brand new courthouse, during the times of the discovery of oil, conditions were so crowded that the inside of the courthouse was not large enough to contain all the lawyers, leasebrokers and secretaries, so the courthouse lawn had to serve as "offices" for these people.

The social activities were not confined to the courthouse lawn in the early days. Community activities including dances were held in the court room. It isn't known "exactly why" but on May 13, 1885, the sheriff ordered that there will be "no dancing or festivals" held inside the courthouse.

In the early days the courthouse square was fenced with various kinds of fencings. Officers of the court kept some of their cattle and other animals within these fences. Other than a few unclaimed or stray animals within these fences, all the animals belonged to the officials of the county.

Gregg County holds a very important part of Texas history and has a very rich, colorful and important past.

We have continually progressed and the growth we enjoy is based, in part, on the foresight and wisdom of some of the finest people in Texas. We are blessed with having one of the finest complexes for county government in the State of Texas.



Kevin Green/Staff Photographer

Beth Holloway Dodson, a member of the Gregg County Historical Commission, takes a look at Gregg County's newest of 102 historical markers during unveiling ceremonies Tuesday on the courthouse lawn.

Gregg unveils historical marker

County courthouse receives permanent place in Texas history

By Beth McPherson
Staff Writer

Standing in front of the courthouse that has been the focus of his research in recent months, Dr. Norman Black on Tuesday presided over the unveiling of a Texas historical marker dedicated to Gregg County's courthouses.

The marker, which was sponsored by the Texas Historical Commission and the Gregg County Historical Commission, is the 102nd historical marker to be placed in Gregg County.

"A lot of times we forget about the past, which is what we build on for the future," said County Judge Mickey Smith, one of several past and present county officials who spoke at Tuesday's ceremony on the front lawn of the Gregg County Courthouse.

Former county judges R.E. "Peppy" Blount, Henry Atkinson and Kenneth J. Walker, all thanked Black for his work and stressed the importance of preserving the past. Also on hand were the Kilgore College Ranger band and the Rangerettes, who performed for an audience of several county officials, historical

During his speech, Black dedicated the new marker to the memory of three men who shaped the future of Gregg County: tavern owner Britton Buttrill, Killingsworth preacher Blueford W. Brown and Gen. John Gregg.

While Brown and Gregg are two of the more famous residents of Gregg County, Black's research revealed that the lesser-known Buttrill also had a hand in the creation of the county.

"Buttrill was sort of like Gregg County's Paul Revere," Black said. "At one point, the people of the county had to raise \$50 to pay for the creation of the county. Buttrill got on his horse and rode all over to collect that money, but he only raised about \$6. Someone donated the rest, and the county was formed. What he did, though, deserves to be recognized, and I wanted to include him."

The new marker was unveiled by Beth Holloway Dodson, who is a member of the Gregg County Historical Commission and a direct descendant of Longview founder O.H. Methvin.

It took Black two months of

history of Gregg County's many courthouses. After the county was founded in 1873, the commissioners court used three temporary locations to house county records before the first major courthouse was built in 1879.

The first courthouse lasted for little more than a decade before it began to deteriorate. In 1896, the structure was found unsafe for use, and all the court documents and proceedings were temporarily moved to a schoolhouse.

In 1897, the first courthouse was torn down, and a red-brick Romanesque-style courthouse was built in its place. The second courthouse lasted until the oil boom of the early 1930s sparked frantic legal activity in Gregg County, overwhelming the existing facilities.

With the second courthouse still standing in the center of the downtown lot, the third courthouse was built at the back of the lot, leaving 4 or 5 feet of space between the two. The third courthouse still stands today, though additions were later built onto the structure to house the records division and a larger jail

BAND PLAYS — Jerry Hale, director of the Kilgore College Ranger Band, directs the college band in prelude music at the dedication of an official Texas Historical Marker honoring the Gregg County Courthouses Tuesday.



Editorial**Booms & Busts****A roundup of East Texas picks and pans**

There are few turkeys in recent events around the region:

▲ The Junior League of Longview deserves a standing ovation for its contributions to the community. A donation of \$25,000 for parks improvements at McWhorter Park and the new South Ward Elementary School Park is a wonderful gift to the community. The Junior League's good deeds have increased in recent years because of its partnership with the Neiman Marcus distribution center. That partnership has allowed the Junior League to donate funds for computers to the Kirkpatrick Center and Longview Habitat for Humanity. Further, the Junior League is planning major donations to the Longview Art Museum, the city's Family Self-Sufficiency program and Asbury House. You just can't say enough good words about the Junior League of Longview members who are involved in so many important community projects. Take a bow.

▲ While we're on the subject of Longview's parks, the city staff deserves a tip o' the hat for obtaining \$70,000 for a matching grant program that will encourage nonprofit organizations, such as youth sports groups, make park improvements. There are some wonderful partnerships that can be developed through this program that will benefit park users and improve the quality of our parks.

▲ Blue Bell ice cream is on the menu today as state Rep. Ted Kamel will be paying off his friendly wager with state Rep. Tommy Merritt by scooping it up for the Longview High School student body. Former pro football star Early Campbell, known as the "Tyler Rose," instigated the bet between the two Republican lawmakers based on the outcome of the Lobo-John Tyler Lions game. He'll be on hand to help out.

▲ Speaking of Lobo Mania, the high spirits continue as the No. 1 ranked team goes into the second week of its playoffs Saturday against the Plano East Panthers in Texas Stadium. You can bet that there will be a healthy contingent of Longview fans cheering the Lobos toward victory. Go, Lobos.

▲ Once more, a hearty congratulations to the East Texas Literacy Council for 10 years of service to our region. All the accolades received at the reception Tuesday were indeed deserved.

▲ Dr. Norman Black is another unsung hero in our community. This dentist is a dedicated history buff who undoubtedly is personally responsible for more than half of the 102 historical

markers in Gregg County. The latest state marker approved by the Texas Historical Commission honors the memory of the people who shaped the future of Gregg County and details the history of Gregg County's courthouses. Black's important research and tireless work to make sure that local history is not lost enriches our lives.

▲ There's exciting news for students at Kilgore College. Trustees have approved awarding of a bid and issuance of bonds to build a new, long overdue student center. The current center has seen better days and students need this facility for a number of activities.

▲ There are some downsides to the 26 percent sale price increases for homes in Longview over the past five years. It costs consumers more to buy, the insurance rates are higher, and property taxes are higher. However, it also signals a booming economy, a robust housing market, and a greater return on homeowners' investments. That's why the news is good.

▲ Persistence pays off and the Marshall Depot Inc.'s efforts to save and restore a historic 1912 railroad depot has reached a new benchmark. It has taken nine years to raise \$1.3 million for the project and the restoration has begun. More money will be needed for the design and furnishing of the museum the depot will house, but the group of people working on this project already have shown that determination wins out.

▼ Brrrr. Weather dropping into the 20s last week was a rude reminder that winter is just around the corner. It's time to insulate pipes, winterize cars and boats and take the other cold weather precautions.

▲ If you received a "Scouting for Food" bag on your front door, don't forget to fill it with canned goods and leave it for the local Boy Scouts to pick up Saturday. It's all part of the 13th Annual Thanksgiving Food Drive. If you didn't receive a bag and want to participate, call Roma Roberts at 759-6342 or Kathy Lansford at 759-8600.

▲ Perhaps someone should refilm the movie "The Color Purple" to settle the confusion over what shade of purple should be used to mark property against trespassers and timber thefts. State Rep. Tommy Merritt, R-Longview, sponsored the new law but didn't specify the color in the legislation because he thought it would have bogged the measure down in argument. Now, he notes, the precise shade may end up the courts. Why not just use the same color purple that is used in Arkansas?

