

APPLICATION FORM FOR OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
P.O. Box 12276, Austin, Texas 78711

A written history, signed by the author, must accompany this form before it will be accepted.

Gregg

April 21, 1983

County

Date

1. The Kilgore I & G N - Missouri Pacific Railroad Station

Title of marker

2. Kilgore Railroad Station

Name of building, cemetery, public square, park, archeological site, etc., where marker is to be placed.

3. 201 N. Commerce St., Kilgore, Texas

Marker site (street address or highway number)

4. City or nearest city. If marker is to be placed on a highway or in a small community, you must briefly explain how to get there from nearest town shown on a Texas Highway Department road map. For example, "Marker will be in Bastrop Beach, which is 6 miles southeast of Angleton on FM 523."

5. Same location

Distance (miles, yards, feet) and direction (north, south, east, west) of subject from marker site. For example, "Subject is 1/2 mile southwest of marker site."

6. Kilgore Improvement & Beautification Association Box 1582, Kilgore, TX 75662

Owner of marker site

Address

City

7. Kilgore Improvement & Beautification Association Box 1582, Kilgore, TX 75662

Sponsor of marker

Address

City

8. Mrs. Paul Belding 602 Sylvan Drive Longview, TX 75601

County chairman

Address

City

"I have reviewed the narrative for this marker and attest to its accuracy."

9. Mrs. James H. Griffin 2600 Brookview Kilgore, TX 75662

Person to whom marker is to be shipped

Street Address

City

Note: If marker is to be placed on a highway right-of-way, it will automatically be shipped to your district highway engineer.

10. Surface to which marker will be attached (i.e., wood, brick, stucco over stone) if not on post.

ORDER FORM

Please consult page 7 for specifications of the markers available. Check the items desired below. Then mail this application and narrative history, together with a check made payable to the TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION, to the address above. No applications will be accepted unless payment is included. If marker application is cancelled after the inscription is written, the Texas Historical Commission will deduct the cost of writing the inscription from the refund.

HISTORICAL MARKERS

5% state sales tax must be added to the price, except if purchased by a tax exempt organization.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--|----------------|
| | | With Tax |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16" x 12" grave marker (comes with mounting bar) | \$175 \$183.75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16" x 12" building marker with post | \$225 \$236.25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16" x 12" building marker without post | \$175 \$183.75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | National Register plaque | \$ 35 \$ 36.75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 27" x 42" subject marker with post | \$575 \$603.75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 27" x 42" subject marker without post | \$525 \$551.25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 18" x 28" subject marker with post | \$325 \$341.25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 18" x 28" subject marker without post | \$250 \$262.50 |

MARKER REPLICAS PAPERWEIGHT

This item should be ordered at the same time marker is ordered. Indicate quantity desired. Allow six months for completion of marker for receipt of paperweight.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3" x 4" plastic paperweight mounted with replica of marker | \$ 75 \$ 78.75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Medallion paperweight, allows four lines of engraving | \$ 25 \$ 26.25 |

DIRECTIONAL SIGNS

Please indicate quantity desired and location:

24" x 24" Historical Markers In City sign \$ 65 \$ 68.25 With Tax

These will be placed by the District Highway Engineer

- Black and white (for farm-to-market roads, state and U.S. highways)
- Green and white (for interstate highways)

18" x 22" Historical Marker (in black and white only) ..\$ 65 \$ 68.25 With tax
For city and county roads. Applicant must supply post.

- With arrow pointing straight ahead
- With arrow pointing left
- With arrow pointing right

CUT AND DETACH ON DOTTED LINE

The Kilgore I & G N - Missouri Pacific Railroad Station
by Helen McHaney Griffin

The property transfers taken from the deed records of Rusk County, Texas establish that C. B. Kilgore and F. Y. Kilgore, wife of said C. B. Kilgore of the County of Rusk, State of Texas, in consideration of two thousand and eight hundred gold dollars paid and secured to be paid by the International Railroad Company of Texas as follows: fourteen hundred gold dollars in hand paid and a promissory note of said railroad company for fourteen hundred gold dollars, due in six months from date bearing interest at the rate of ten percent per annum, granted, bargained, sold, and released one hundred seventy four acres of land in the Mary Van Winkle survey, a portion of the land sold by the United States Marshal for the Western District of Texas to satisfy a mortgage executed by Uriah Dunn to Thomas Henderson of New Orleans on the 27th day of June 1872. The part of the county in which this property lies became a part of Gregg County by an Act of the Legislature, 1874, being originally a part of Rusk County.^{1.}

On the 25th day of September A. D. 1874, the International Railroad Company conveyed to Edwin F. Hatfield, Jr., who subsequently conveyed the land to the Texas Land Co., the piece or parcel of land being part of a tract of 174 acres out of the Mary Van Winkle League conveyed by C. B. and F. Y. Kilgore, and comprising Right-of-Way and Depot Grounds. The 8th day of November, 1880, The Texas Land Company executed a deed for this piece or parcel of land heretofore described to The International and Great Northern Railroad Company as was recorded on the 7th day of July A. D. 1881 in Volume F, page 393, Deed Records of Gregg County, Texas.

From the evidence as stated in the deed records, tracks were laid and a depot was erected between the time of the original deed on the 27th day of June 1872 to the 8th day of November 1880 at which time the right-of-way and depot grounds were deeded to The International and Great Northern Railroad Company by The Texas Land Co. The station was known as the I & G N Kilgore station until 1956 at which

time the I & G N began to operate under the name of The Missouri Pacific Railroad Co. ².

The town of Kilgore, named for C. B. (Buck) Kilgore who was owner of the land purchased for the railroad right-of-way, was established at the time the railroad line was being built through what was, at that time, a part of Rusk County. Residents of a community about four miles to the east, Danville, moved to form the new town, taking advantage of the economic opportunities offered by the coming of rail transportation to this agricultural and lumbering area. The laying of the rail line began at Longview Junction in 1872 and was completed as far as Palestine by July of 1873. The townsite of Kilgore was established and platted by The International Railroad Company and the map recorded July 15, 1874 in the deed records of Gregg County. ³.

When the International Railroad Company engineers planned their new line through East Texas, they originally proposed to locate a station and build a depot at Danville, but the pioneer Hamilton family refused to give the railroad the requested right-of-way through their Danville farm, according to the recollection of a member of the family. ⁴ It happened that C. B. (Buck) Kilgore, then a 37 year old attorney and veteran officer in the Confederate Army, had purchased three years earlier, 840 acres of land at a U. S. Marshal's sale and offered to give the International line a 200 foot right-of-way through what is now Kilgore, a total of 15 acres, "in consideration of the enhanced value" the railroad would bring to his adjoining property. The deed which gave the right-of-way to the railroad company was dated October 28, 1871, whereas the deed which shows the sale of the original aforementioned townsite was dated June 27, 1872. As a progressive citizen, Kilgore recognized the advantage of living near a railroad, therefore he built his home near the railroad terminal. A number of his former neighbors, at Danville, fol-

lowed his example and Kilgore, the small community named for the Southern patriot who first settled on the site, was established.⁵ Thus, the location of the present city of Kilgore can be credited to the foresight of the young attorney and Justice of the Peace, later a member of the State Senate from the 7th District of Texas, C. B. (Buck) Kilgore. In 1875, Kilgore was chosen as a member of the Texas Constitutional Convention which drafted the present constitution. He served four terms in the U. S. House of Representatives moving from Kilgore to Wills Point, and was appointed by President Cleveland as a judge of the Indian Territory.⁶

For many years the I & G N purchased railroad ties at Kilgore. Here, lumbering, tie-making, and farming supported a population of about 300 people in 1880. Since forestry and farming did not encourage a rapid increase in the number of inhabitants, the village scarcely doubled in size during the succeeding half century.⁷

Since the railroad provided the principal means of transportation following the decease of the stage coach and before the era of the automobile, bus, and truck, the Kilgore station served the community needs faithfully through the period of the "Gay Nineties", the Spanish American War of 1898, the turn of the century and saw American Expeditionary Forces' troops transported by rail during World War I. The business and residential areas were built on both sides of the track, forming the nucleus of the town. A frame structure, across the street from the station, known as the Hearne Hotel, provided overnight lodging for railroad personnel, passengers stopping in town for a visit, and for "drummers" in the area for the purpose of calling on local merchants as salesmen.

The depot was the "center of things". Everybody went to see the trains come in. In Kilgore, one train came in from the south about 11:00 a. m. and two

in the afternoon about 4:00 o'clock. When everyone went to meet the trains, one from the north would unload while the one from the south was on a sidetrack; then, the one from the south would unload. All the store owners and clerks would walk outside the stores to see who would get off the trains. ⁸. Besides providing passenger and freight service, the railroad station was the chief communication's center for the town, dispatching and receiving both mail and telegraph messages.

Frank Culp, a local citizen, after several month's employment with the railroad in Palestine became the station master in 1906. Mr. Culp learned telegraphy there. He and his wife, Mary, who kept the books in the mornings, operated the station. He built his residence across the street from the station on Longview Street. A former school teacher, Culp had a private library in his home which he liberally shared with the children and adults of the community who showed an interest in reading. The station was a busy place during certain seasons because of the extensive cotton and cross-tie business. Mr. Culp continued to serve until ill health and death terminated his employment in 1925. Several agents served short terms until the discovery of oil in December 1930. ⁹.

By the end of the 1920's, as evidenced by photographs, the roof of the depot building had been lowered and the decorative gingerbread trim removed. These are the only apparent changes in the structure since 1906.

The year 1931 brought major changes to Kilgore and the surrounding East Texas area, with the discovery of oil at Joinerville (seven miles south) with the Daisy Bradford No. 3, the Lou Della Crim No. 1 (three miles south at Laird Hill), and the F. K. Lathrop No. 1 (four miles north of Longview). The three wells linked a discovery chain that constituted the East Texas Oil Field, largest in the United States at that time. On March 4, 1931, a new station master, T. E. (Elmer) Phillips, arrived from Willis, Texas to take over the operation of the station that proved

to be the experience of his lifetime. With the help of a line-desk clerk, Frank Scarbrough, and a cashier, Henry Carswell, Mr. Phillips doubled part-time as telegrapher and operated a sometimes twenty-four hour station. At the time Phillips arrived in Kilgore there were three oil derricks visible in town, a town that later saw some eleven hundred and fifty wells within the city limits. Before he moved his family to Kilgore, Mr. Phillips resided at the nearby Como Hotel, but often spent all night at the station, sleeping as he could on his desk with a chair cushion for a pillow. In December of 1931, the Phillips family moved to Kilgore and were housed in the former Jay Gould railroad car (now a tourist attraction in Jefferson) sidetracked adjacent to the Wiley N. Crim residence (Dean-Keener-Crim Home), a block north of the station. Although the car was elegantly built with the finest of wood, upholstery, and hardware, Mrs. Phillips cooked the family meals on a wood stove. Later several dismantled passenger coaches were sidetracked in the same area to provide lodging for the railroad station personnel. Mrs. Phillips, daughter Kathleen, son Thomas, and several young boys manned the Railway Express Agency in 1931. As many as 53 employees, under Mr. Phillip's supervision, worked as clerks, warehousemen, and expressmen to handle the more than twelve-hour daily operation of the Kilgore station during the first years of the oil boom. High administrative officials of the railroad company visited the Kilgore station intermittently in private railroad cars, which were sidetracked near the station for the term of their visit. The volume of shipments from the station in Kilgore skyrocketed to over \$1,000,000 per month in the early years of the boom and before the building of pipelines to transport the oil. 10.

"Hobo Heaven" was located in Kilgore at the railroad station. Three sides of the station had a large platform where the tramps and wandering people would gather and sleep. In those days the number of incoming cars was limited to 175.

Oil tank-car shipments daily numbered about 500 to 600. So thick were the shipments in and from Kilgore that the Missouri Pacific had to adopt a special routing for empty tank cars from Texas City, Galveston and Houston. The empties would be routed from Houston to Spring, switched off onto the Fort Worth line on reaching Valley Junction, then they were routed into Palestine. At Palestine the cars waited their turn to get on the one-line track to Kilgore. It was common to have as many as 15 northbound and 15 southbound trains daily. Seven switch engines were used here.^{11.}

Innumerable times the station personnel were awakened from their "passenger-car" homes in the wee hours of the morning by oil operators and refinery operators seeking the location of available empty tank cars for the shipment of their oil cargoes. The railroad oil tank cars were dispatched on a first come-first serve basis, which resulted often times in the offering of attractive monetary bribes to the railroad men for "spotting empties". Such fraudulent operations were strictly forbidden by carefully controlled and audited railroad administrative policies.

Frank Scarbrough, line-desk clerk, moved his family by train from a six-room home in Palestine to a dismantled passenger-car home sidetracked in Kilgore. A small shower was installed in a part of the partitioned bathroom while toilet facilities were those provided for former train passengers. Section hands would routinely empty the chemical buckets once a week. Knee boots had to be purchased for all members of the family because of heavy mud, since there was no street pavement nor were there any sidewalks. The Scarbrough family immediately identified with the church, where Sunday School and church services were held in a tent. Since all the churches were burned, tent facilities were provided until church buildings could be replaced. During the months of the passenger-car residences, a tragic engine explosion rocked the immediate area. A switch engine, on the sidetrack, exploded killing one watchman and hurling the crumpled boiler

to the side of the Scarbrough passenger-car dwelling. The temporary residents were all shaken by the near tragedy directly adjacent to their make-shift homes. 12.

Though the depot building was structurally strong, the I & G N Company did remodeling, mainly on the exterior, more than one time according to photographs. A local builder recalled one job was done during 1932-1933, since it was among his first jobs after coming to Kilgore in 1931. For reasons of economy, a brick wainscoating was added and the board and batting covered with asbestos shingles. The original siding remains under the veneer covering. No evidence exists as to the person or persons responsible for the original building, however it has been described by members of the building trade as a "good, well-built" structure. 13.

As the vestiges of the turmoil of the oil boom era faded, World War II approached. The station again saw a stage of troop trains; supply and armored vehicle movements. With the rationing of gasoline, passenger travel increased, resulting in an increase in station activity. Again, the Kilgore station stood by as the hometown boys returned from the Pacific and European arenas.

Following the war years, automobile, bus, and air travel gradually increased with the resulting decrease in passenger travel by rail. Despite the increase in commercial trucking, freight traffic by rail continued. By January 1977 the Kilgore station was closed and all further railroad service was transferred to the Longview customer service center. Negotiations to buy the depot building began immediately by the Kilgore Improvement and Beautification Association Board of Directors. In September 1980, the sale of the building and lease agreement for the land were finalized. The building has been refurbished by the owners and houses a bazaar, space for railroad artifacts, and provides headquarters for an annual arts and crafts festival, the Kilgore Depot-rama.

The railroad station was an integral part of the life of Kilgore from the

Page 8

time of its inception as a town, through its illustrious history as a "boomtown" with some 1,150 oil wells within the city limits, and until its closing as a service to the citizens of the area. Commemoration of this site is important because of the highly significant role rail transportation has played in the formation, progress and economic development of Kilgore and the entire East Texas area.

Footnotes

1. Judge Richard B. Levy, History of the Creation of Gregg County, Texas, pg.1
2. Wm. C. Dowdy, Jr., letter from Legal Department, Missouri Pacific Railroad Co., Dallas, Texas, dated January 3, 1983.
3. Judge Richard F. Levy, op. cit.
4. Foster T. Bean, Personal Interview.
5. Flossie J. Porter, Kilgore, The Center of the Great East Texas Oil Field, pg.29
6. Charles K. Devall, Kilgore News Herald, Buck Kilgore: City's Fiery Founder, pg. 1
7. Helen R. McHaney, The East Texas Oil Field, pg. 65
8. Liggett N. Crim, Interview, Kilgore News Herald, Old Depot, A Kilgore Landmark.
9. Mrs. Kenneth (Nannette) Wickham, Personal Interview.
10. Mrs. T. E. (Myrtie) Phillips, Personal Interview.
11. T. E. Phillips, Interview, Kilgore News Herald, Boom Town Was "Hobo Heaven".
12. Mrs. Frank Scarbrough, Personal Interview.
13. Tol Smith, Interview, Kilgore News Herald, Old Depot A Kilgore Landmark.

Bibliography

- Arnold, Flossie J. Porter, Kilgore The Center of the Great East Texas Oil Field, 1943
Bean, Foster T., Personal Interview, Kilgore, Texas, March 25, 1983
Crim, Liggett N., Interview, Kilgore News Herald, December 23, 1976
Devall, Charles K., Kilgore News Herald, January 14, 1972
Dowdy, Wm. C., Jr., Legal Department, Missouri Pacific Railroad Co., Dallas, Texas
Levy, Richard B., The History of the Creation of Gregg County, Texas
McHaney, Helen R., The East Texas Oil Field, Stephen F. Austin University Press, 1953
Phillips, Mrs. T. E. (Myrtie), Personal Interview, January 1983
Phillips, T. E., Interview, Kilgore News Herald, July 19, 1970
Scarbrough, Mrs. Frank, Personal Interview, January 1983
Smith, Tol T., Interview, Kilgore News Herald, December 23, 1976
Wickham, Mrs. Kenneth (Nannette), Personal Interview, January 1983

The station officially closed in 1977. In 1980, the sale of the building and a land-lease agreement with Kilgore Improvement and Beautification Association were finalized. Immediately, the building refurbishment began including: painting; replacement of broken windows; reproduction of original gingerbread at roof-overhang, frieze and finials at ridge of roof; interior walls and floors; and painting of murals at windows on the track-side of the building.

The building houses the White Elephant Bazaar, perennial fund-raising project of the local non-profit civic improvement organization, the interior of which/^{also} provides space for railroad artifacts. In addition, the depot-building serves as headquarters for the annual arts and crafts festival, Kilgore Depot-Rama.

Mr. —
I trust that this is sufficient. Good
to talk with you —
Rutzy

KIBA discusses variety of topics at Monday afternoon meeting

By GREG A. COLLINS

The Kilgore Improvement and Beautification Association heard several reports during a meeting Monday afternoon in the Kilgore Chamber of Commerce office.

Membership has slowed to a trickle, Carmel McElyea, treasurer, said. He urged all board members to check their lists and talk to those who haven't yet paid their dues.

Melvin Marshall, president, complimented Charla Hopkins and all of the people involved in the Christmas in the Patch lighting ceremony, even though it was somewhat canceled by rain.

"There is definite interest in a ceremony of this type," he said. "A lot of hard work went into the project, so if leadership next year wants to try it again the blueprint is already in place."

Mrs. Hopkins said the lights were turned on for about 250 who stayed through the rain to see them, and she said the Kilgore Historical Preservation Foundation had a "Happy New Year" sign put up this year to compliment the KIBA "Merry Christmas" sign.

Marshall also had high praise for Justine Stanley on the recent KIBA Lighting Contest. Certificates were handed out

this past Friday, and photographs of the winning yards, doors and businesses will be published in the Living Section of the *Kilgore News Herald* on Sunday, Dec. 27.

"I would have to say Justine and her committee did an excellent job on the lighting contest," Marshall said. "They were out two nights judging lights, and it was a tough job. There are a lot of beautiful displays."

Mrs. Stanley agreed, and said she couldn't have completed the process without the help of Louise Florey and Wanda Bittick.

"Louise and Wanda were great," she said. "And there were so many beautiful displays to choose from. It was not easy to select the winners."

Nelda Lewis said the renovation of the depot is progressing nicely.

"The work is going well," she said. "We are running into a lot of rotten lumber which needs to be replaced, and the ledges on the windows will need to be replaced. But, all in all, the project is going well."

Mrs. Lewis said the workers are getting rid of as much as possible at the location so it will look nice. She also said three clothing racks will be

purchased for merchandise.

"We are planning now for the future," Marshall said. "We want that building to be as nice as possible so that, maybe, in the future KIBA may want to do a project on the other end of the structure."

Speaking of the White Elephant Bazaar at the depot, Lucille Keel reported the operation is having a great year and needs only \$200 more in sales to reach the goal she set at the beginning of the year.

"We will be open three more Tuesdays this year (today, next Tuesday and Dec. 29), so we stand a good chance of reaching our goal," she said. "We have some nice items for people to look at."

City Manager Ron Stephens said Second Saturday Recycling was again a success, although he did not have an exact number of cars for this past weekend.

"We had a good flow of traffic the entire time," he said.

He also commented the bins are still behind City Hall and still in operation. There had been concern that Laidlaw Waste Systems would come and pick them up because of misuse.

"As of today, they haven't come to pick them up," he said. "So, we are still OK."

KIBA to celebrate with special events

By GREG A. COLLINS

The Kilgore Improvement and Beautification Association, with 29 projects going in the community, will celebrate two events in the next few weeks — an open house for the Commerce Street Depot it has owned since 1980, and its annual banquet to honor those who have worked hard in the area of beautification over the last year.

The open house, to celebrate the end of the renovations which began last fall, is scheduled Tuesday from 2 to 4 p.m. at the depot on Commerce Street.

According to Nelda Lewis, incoming president of the organiza-

tion and one of its founders 25 years ago, the depot was closed by the Missouri-Pacific Railroad in 1977 and was not used again until the association bought it in 1980.

"Transients lived in the building, and it was not maintained until we finally got it in 1980," she said.

After the association purchased the building in 1980, work was done on the outside so a historical marker could be secured for the structure, and work was completed on the inside so that the White Elephant Bazaar, a source of income for the organization, could be housed there.

"The outside work was finished,

but we only did enough renovations inside to house the bazaar," she said. "The other portion of the building needed some work, and that is what we did this past fall as well as paint everything and redo some shelving."

Mrs. Lewis said the building was repainted, some wood was replaced and other repairs were made with association funds from recycling and the White Elephant Bazaar.

"There is some work on the doors which will not be finished by the time we have the open house," she said. "But it will be done soon."

Mrs. Lewis said the White

See KIBA, Page 8

★ KIBA

(Continued from Page 1)

Elephant Bazaar, membership and recycling enables KIBA to keep up with the 29 projects it has undertaken. She added the renovated building makes it look attractive, but it also serves to make the structure durable for many years to come.

"When we got it, it was run down," she said. "We have tried to restore it to its original beauty."

The open house, again, will celebrate the completion of this work. KIBA officials, White Elephant Bazaar workers and other dignitaries will gather Tuesday for the event, which will feature refreshments.

The public is invited to this event, as well as the annual banquet which will be held at the Roy H. Laird Country Club on Tuesday, April 13. The event will begin at 7 p.m. and tickets can be purchased from any board member as well as