



On The Vine

GRAPEVINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING GRAPEVINE AND TEXAS HISTORY • JANUARY 2022

SPECIAL MUSEUM ISSUE

The History of Our History

EXACTLY FIFTY YEARS AGO, THE GRAPEVINE HISTORICAL MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY TOOK SHAPE, PAVING THE WAY FOR MUSEUMS TO COME

2022 marks a milestone anniversary of the Grapevine’s efforts to preserve our past. It was fifty years ago that the town’s old rail depot was handed over by the St Louis Southwestern “Cotton Belt” Railroad to the city, and plans began to transform it into a museum and create a group to manage it.

Prior to 1972, museums and local history scarcely merited much consideration. As it happens, Tarrant County was home to the oldest museum in the entire state: what is now the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, which got its start back in 1892 as the “Fort Worth Public Library and Art Gallery.” But the only museum that local residents could boast of was Smiley’s Indian Museum, which Eric “Smiley” Moore opened in 1965, in what would now be considered part of Southlake.

The 1960s saw some early consideration given to the story of the town, and not a moment too soon since the first settlers had arrived 120 years earlier. In 1964, 84-year-old Weechie Yates Estill compiled and hand-published her seminal volume “Grapevine Recollections”

which recalled the early days on the Grape Vine Prairie.

Also that year, the city council passed a resolution designating that the Grapevine Public Library would be the official collector and compiler of materials pertaining to local history.

Grapevine was seeing a lengthy period of sustained growth at this time. By 1970 the official population had topped 7,000. A new airport was being built, and passenger trains had long ceased to run through town. Even freight train service

was no longer a critical contributor to the town’s vitality. By 1969 the St Louis Southwestern “Cotton Belt” Railroad was anxious to divest itself of the Grapevine rail stop and the old depot from 1902 which sat on the south end of Main Street. Although city government managed to keep the station from closing for several years, by 1971 regular train service ended and the depot was locked and shuttered.



Grapevine Sun March 23, 1972: “City Manager Floy Ezell arrives with the key to the building and Mrs. Gordon Nettleton unlocks the door for representatives of various clubs and organizations to see what they can do toward making the old depot into a museum.”

Update from the President

BY DUFF O’DELL

Happy New Year!

2021 began with hope for things to get back to “normal” and COVID to go away. Sadly, as we begin 2022 COVID is still with us and I don’t think most of us even remember what “normal” is like! I wonder what people will think 100 years from now when they read about the Pandemic of 2020 and the aftermath that changed the way we live and work. It’s all a part of our history and I’m sure it will be fascinating to the readers of 2120. There may even be a section in our Historical Museum dedicated to how Grapevine dealt with the Pandemic.

Actually, Grapevine survived quite well. Our City continued to improve streets and roads, build new buildings and when it was relatively safe, encouraged tourists to come back to Grapevine to shop, eat, play and enjoy all our entertainment venues and activities – even with masks still on. We maintained all our city employees and staff by doing work that needed to be done and helping those in our community. We survived “Snowmageddon” in February

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In February 1972 the Cotton Belt RR offered the old building to the city if they would only move it. At their February meeting the council asked Mayor Wills Pirkle and City Manager Floy Ezell to decide if the city even wanted to accept the gift, and if so, “what use could be made of it.”

It occurred to folks that such a vintage building would make an excellent home for a museum of local history. Several groups - led by the Grapevine Garden Club - saw this as a worthy civic project, and quickly pledged support. The idea took hold quickly.



October 4, 1972: The depot is carefully transported up Main Street and over to the City Park

The first step was to create an organization that would manage the museum, as it didn't seem feasible for the Garden Club, Bay View Club, Tuesday Study Club, 36 Club and others to share joint custody. By May 1972 the “Grapevine Historical Museum Society” had been organized and was meeting at people's homes to work out the logistics of creating a museum.

Money would have to be raised. Plans for a fundraiser began to take shape: a festival that would be held in the fall. Meanwhile, the building itself would have to be moved from South Main Street. The City agreed to haul it to the City Park at Ball and Wall Streets, adjacent to where the tennis courts still stand. The fundraising festival could be held in the park, so that visitors could inspect the salvaged structure.

On Tuesday October 3 1972, the old depot, its roof removed but the GRAPEVINE station sign still attached was lifted onto a flat-bed truck and creaked its way up Main, then across Wall Street to the City Park. That Saturday, October 7 the Community Fair started the money-raising in earnest. The fair, which ran from noon until 9 PM, included a Bake Sale, a Flea Market, an Art Show and Sale, a Square Dance and two musical performances, for the ticket price of \$1.

All proceeds went to the Museum Fund, and it gave the Depot and the Historical Museum Society it's first burst of momentum. The Depot would not formally open as the Grapevine Historical Museum until a year later, when new Mayor William D. Tate cut the ribbon during the second Fall Festi-

and opened our REC Center to citizens and their pets who had lost power and water for days. We fed and housed people who needed it for almost a week. Grapevine showed our true colors during the worst of natural disasters!

In July, we re-opened our Historical Museum to the public with all new safety protocols in place for our docents and our guests. Our numbers of visitors have continued to climb and we also began to hold our monthly Historical Society meetings again. In September we held our annual GHS Meeting and recognized three outstanding citizens and members of the Historical Society with lifetime memberships. This year's honorees were Bill and Mae Pearl Powers and Gayle Hall, who sadly passed away shortly before the event. Our Torian Cabin and Museum looked very festive with holiday decorations as once again Grapevine morphed into the “Christmas Capital of Texas” in November and December of 2021.

We have some exciting programs planned for our monthly meetings beginning January 24, 2022. I hope to see you there!

Duff O'Dell

val during dedication ceremonies Saturday, October 6, 1973.

The *Grapevine Historical Museum Society* eventually dropped *Museum* from its name and was chartered as the *Grapevine Historical Society* in May 1974. The “Fall Festival” also evolved. The Chamber of Commerce took over the event for several years... and when the idea of a fall festival was revived in 1986, it was re-christened... “Grapefest.”

--Larry Groebe

Railroad History... in Miniature

THE LONE STAR HI-RAILERS' MODEL TRAIN MUSEUM HAS ROLLED ON FOR NEARLY A DECADE

While the Grapevine Historical Society maintains two museums - The Grapevine Historical Museum (in the "Ice House") and the Torian Cabin Museum - the town now has many others.

One that you may not have heard of is the "Lone Star Hi-Railers Model Train Exhibit." Given the importance of rail transportation to the city's history since 1888 (including the 1902 train depot itself having housed the Historical Museum for decades) it deserves to be better known. It is west of the Historic Railroad District, alongside the railroad tracks west of Main Street at 298 West Dallas Road.



The museum is located inside a very long burgundy and silver Pullman Baggage Car originally built for the Lackawanna and Western Railroad, probably in the early 1950's. The museum/baggage car is behind the #771 Baldwin Mikado 282 steam engine.

Members of the Lone Star Hi-Railers Club built the exhibit for about \$26,000.00 over 18 months starting back in 2011. It opened to the public September 12, 2013. Inside you will find a highly-detailed O-scale model of an

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Burl Gilliam: Prescription for Main Street Success

To say that a pharmacist had the prescription for Main Street's success in Grapevine is not an understatement. In 1976 when he opened his pharmacy, Burl Gilliam knew that he was in the right place. The place just needed some revitalization!

Burl, a native of Godley, Texas, graduated from the University of Texas at Austin School of Pharmacy in 1962. He and his wife, Kay, owned and operated City Drug at 406 S. Main from 1976 to 1992. Beginning in 1979, he purchased eight buildings in the 400 block of South Main Street and restored them to their early 1900 elegance. Working on the old bricks proved to be quite a challenge, and a lot of preservation techniques and do's and don'ts were quickly learned.

After the buildings were restored, in 1991 he helped get the west side of the 400 Block of South Main listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1991, Burl was named a charter board member of the Grapevine Heritage Foundation. In 1992, when the Grapevine Historic Preservation Commission was formed, Burl stepped forward to serve as its chairman. He continued to be re-appointed as chairman by the Grapevine City Council and served until June 22, 2016.

Through the work of the Historic Preservation Commission, Main Street and the surrounding Original Historic Township have

been preserved, and properties continue to be landmarked and restored following the Grapevine Design Guidelines.

In the late 1970s, Burl served as chairman of the Main Street Committee and was one of the retail leaders who helped build the Gazebo on Main Street. In May 1977, he organized a "half-price or less" sidewalk sale and seven merchants displayed their merchandise. Burl hired Judge Gray and his Nursing Home Band to play from the bed of a truck parked in front of City Drug. In those days, Grapevine's Main Street was the principle route to



Burl Gilliam

Grapevine Lake, and Saturday traffic was busy. The event was a success, and it may well have paved the way for our current Main Street Fests!

Burl Gilliam saw the beauty of Main Street's historic buildings and capitalized on Grapevine's potential. He made a tremendous impact by appropriately and carefully restoring his buildings and encouraging others to follow his lead. He had the right prescription that he administered with love and care.

Excerpted in part from a story in Grapevine's Most Unforgettable Characters book written by Laura Gilliam Self. Burl's work is featured in the Settlement to City Museum. - Sallie Andrews

imaginary Grapevine with many of the buildings from the 1800s and 1900s along Main Street, including the old B+D Mills grain elevator and the train depot.

Around the scale model of downtown Grapevine are 65 feet of multiple independent train and trolley tracks which permit several trains to run at once. The model trains, both historic and modern, have lighting, horns, bells and some emit smoke as they run down the tracks and tunnels. One unexpected feature is Mount Grapevine - yep, Mount Grapevine - a four foot carved mountain featuring train tunnels and oil wells. The mountain was inspired by an actual mountain in West Texas with train tunnels.

The Lone Star Hi-Railers are a club of over 50 members; the current president is Larry Hoover. The exhibit is across from the old police station at 298 W. Dallas Road, 214-693-0258. It is currently open most Saturdays 10 AM to 4 PM and Sundays Noon to 3 PM. They request cash for the \$2 adult and \$1 children's fee for ages 2 to 12. Under 2 years is free.

-John Boyd



IPAT: A Gem of a Museum Hidden in Plain Sight

Grapevine's main collection of museums are clustered in re-purposed buildings in the Ted Ware Plaza: the Settlement to City Museum, the Donald Schoolhouse, the Keeling House Museum, the Grapevine Cotton Gin Museum, and the newly dedicated Sister City Fellowship Hall Museum.

But just a few blocks away on Franklin Street sits the 1920-era George Bushong house: home to a striking museum nearly unique in the country: *The Museum of Porcelain Art*. The building is actually the headquarters of the non-profit *International Porcelain Artists and Teachers*, an organization founded 63 years ago by Lucretia Donnell of Dallas. Twenty five years ago, when they needed to find a new permanent home, they selected Grapevine, and soon purchased the Bushong house, which they subsequently renovated and expanded several times. A major interior upgrade begun in 2019 resulted

in the Grapevine Heritage Foundation awarding the building their 2021 Preservation Advocacy Award.

IPAT is dedicated to the art of painted china, and the four rooms that make up the Porcelain Museum reflect a diverse and often-stunning set of historic and artistic accomplishments. The primary "Masters" gallery showcases works which range from contemporary artists to 19th century ceramic pieces, back when Victorian style made intricately hand-painted flowers all the rage. It is said to be the most complete collection of porcelain masters' painted artworks in the world, with works created by the famous artists like Franz Bischoff displayed next to modern pieces that command six-figure prices in the current marketplace.

An "Educational and Techniques" room explains the surprisingly laborious process behind creating



porcelain art - painting and firing, over and over again, to arrive at the finished result.

An “International Hall” displays porcelain art from across the world, with different cultures highlighting widely different creative visions for the medium. The final room, the “Hall of the Americas” spotlights a wide range of artists currently working in the field today, and offers selected items for sale.

Behind the museum IPAT has created the Carriage House studio space to host seminars, classes, and events. The organization hosts an international convention every two years, for which Grapevine will be the host city in 2024.

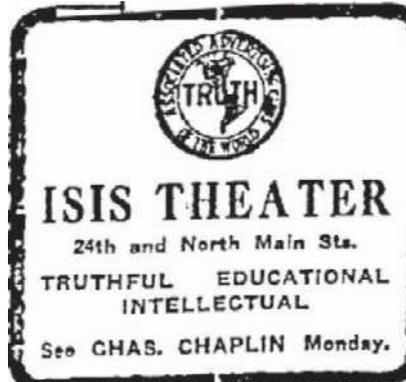
The modest exterior of the 1920s-era Bushong building belies the fact that the interior houses one of the most prestigious porcelain art collections in the country, a mix of beauty and history. The Museum of Porcelain Art is available to visit by appointment only, by calling 817.251.1185, and welcomes donations.

--Larry Groebe

Did you miss our November meeting with dynamic 83-year-old pilot and astronaut Wally Funk? Watch it on Youtube:

<https://youtu.be/87bWAVQL-co>

January 24 GHS Meeting: The rebirth of the New Isis Theatre



The historic Isis Theatre in Fort Worth’s Stockyards has a rich history dating back to its original 1914 opening as a silent movie palace.

Local resident (and former Grapevine school teacher) Jeffrey Smith and his wife Debbie Garrett-Smith spent five years working on their dream to restore the badly deteriorated movie palace. **For our January meeting, Jeff will discuss the epic transformation that’s been required to restore this gem of the Stockyards back to its full glory.**

Destroyed by a fire in 1935, it was rebuilt and reopened the next year and created lifelong memories for the community for decades. Sadly, the doors went dark in 1988. Time was not kind to this beautiful structure, but with care and dedication, the Isis is coming back to life.

Now known as Downtown Cowtown at the Isis Theatre, this city landmark reopened in 2021 despite the COVID pandemic. Downtown Cowtown at the Isis Theatre is now hosting all sorts of events from classic films to live entertainment.

Upcoming GHS Events:

February Meeting:
Black History Month

March 5: Texas Independence Day Special Event

March Meeting:
C.C. Box

April Meeting:
Local Sports Legends



2022 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Dues are payable annually every January)

[] New Member [] Renewing Member [] Business Organization

Email: _____

Email address will make your TAX deductible contribution go further.

Date: _____

Phone: _____

Name _____

Spouse's name if family membership _____

Address: _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Organization/Business: _____

<p>Select your level of membership:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership \$20.00</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership \$30.00</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> **Business / Organization \$50.00</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Historian \$100.00</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pioneer \$250.00</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Settler \$500.00</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Guardian \$1000.00</p> <hr/> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Additional Donation \$ _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Memorial Donation In memory of: _____ \$ _____</p>	<p>I would also like to help with:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Serving as a docent in the Museum</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Participating in Museum workday activity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Providing refreshments for a General Meeting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Museum research</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter and Social Media Support</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Filming + recording meetings and programs</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Torian Cabin maintenance</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>
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*Grapevine Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1973.
** Business level & above will receive special recognition in publications & directory
All contributions support our museum and society.*

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