

Travels with the State Historian of Texas  
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It all started with a telephone call to my home in mid-November of 2008. It was late afternoon. My wife and I were leaving for an engagement. She was already at the car and I was outside locking the door when I heard the phone ringing. Momentarily, I debated not going back inside to answer but was very glad that I did when I found that it was John Crain calling. Everyone in field of Texas history knows John, who has done as much for advancing its causes as anyone else in this state and far more than most of us. A former president of the Texas State Historian Association, he is the president of Summerlee Foundation in Dallas. He also serves as a commissioner of the Texas Historical Commission—while he is active in most every historical association in the Lone Star State.

After a few minutes of pleasant visiting, John came to the point when he explained that he served on the selection committee for the Texas State Historian. Was I familiar with that office? "Yes," I replied because I knew Professor Frank de la Teja, whose term would be coming to an end in the spring of 2009. The legislation governing this office required that a broad-based committee pick a nominee for appointment by the Governor. John Crain advised me that he served on that selection committee along with other individuals drawn from the Texas Historical Commission and the Texas State Historical Association. I had been suggested to them as a possible nominee. Would I come to Austin several weeks later in order to be interviewed by the selection committee as the possible nominee to be recommended to the governor? I agreed to do so.

On the appointed day for the interview, I found myself in circumstances that for me were most impressive as I visited with the selection committee seated in the conference room of one of the most historic and important law firms in Texas. We looked down on the City of Austin from a high floor of one of the new skyscrapers that have in recent years gradually made the areas around Congress Avenue into a little bit of New York City on the Colorado River. Our location for the interview had been determined by the fact that the managing partner of this venerable Texas law firm was a member of the State Historian Selection Committee. I was further impressed because each of the individuals around that rather luxurious table were individuals well-known to me personally, or by their public reputations as people vitally interested in Texas and its history. We chatted for about an hour, and I recall that the entire interview was very relaxed as we talked about Texas history.

I do recall telling one story in that meeting as result of being asked about my views regarding the nature of being a State Historian. I volunteered that I had personally known one of the South's most venerable State Historians, Dr. Thomas D. Clark of the University of Kentucky. He lived to be 101 years old. In fact, when Dr. Clark was 100 years of age, my Austin College colleague Hunt Tooley and I had a nice visit with him at the annual meeting of the Southern Historical Association. Dr. Clark served for many decades as the official historian of the State of Kentucky. On one occasion many years ago, I was at a gathering of historians in Memphis when Dr. Clark related the following anecdote about one of his experiences as the Kentucky State Historian, and I told it to the selection committee during my interview in Austin. As does the State Historian of Texas, Dr. Clark gave a considerable number of talks throughout his state, sometimes to large groups, but also to audiences sometimes very small in number.

One Friday night, expecting a small gathering, Dr. Clark drove deep into the Kentucky hills several hours from Lexington to make a state history talk in a tiny farming community. Although he accordingly expected a small group, he did note that he was to speak in the arena of the agricultural barn at the local consolidated high school. Getting lost, he arrived there a few minutes before his speech, surprised to see several hundred automobiles and farm trucks choking the parking lot. Once inside, to his pleasure and satisfaction, he saw the seats of the agriculture barn crowded to the rafters with well over a thousand men, women, and children.

Looking up into the floodlighting, he could see them fading off into the darkness toward the walls, all of them vibrating noticeably as they brimmed with enthusiasm and excitement. How wonderful, Dr. Clark thought to himself, to be speaking about history to such a large and clearly interested audience. The people in this town, he decided, certainly must love Kentucky history. As he walked out with his host to the center of the arena, where spotlights shown down on a podium had been placed on the dirt floor with a microphone running back to the speaker system, the person walking with him to make the introduction turned to him and said: "Now don't speak too long, Doc, they're really anxious for the hog auction to start."

The selection committee must have liked that story since they nominated me to the Governor as his appointee to the post of Texas State Historian. I was sworn into office at a formal ceremony in the Governor's press room in the state capitol building in late May of 2009, which means that my two year term in this office is now nearing its end. That, indeed, is the occasion for this day here at Austin College.

Once having taken my oath of office, I thereafter found myself in the enviable position as State Historian of Texas of having *all* of Texas as my classroom. I am now charged with advancing the study and appreciation of Texas history across the entire state. What a tremendously invigorating task! The legislation creating the post of Texas State Historian has some specificity as it notes the Statutes of Large the duties of the office: "(1) enhancing the knowledge of Texans regarding Texas history and heritage; (2) encouraging the teaching of Texas history in public schools; (3) consulting with the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the legislature on matters related to the promotion of Texas history; and (4) lecturing on matters of Texas history within the state historian's area of expertise." I have done all of these things and more.

Among the things that I do is that I maintain a blog site that with postings that chronicle my activities and interests, some of which are ceremonial as I represent the State of Texas at various history-related events. The URL for this blog is [www.historianoftexas.blogspot.com](http://www.historianoftexas.blogspot.com).

People all over the world follow this blog. I have received emails from people in Japan, Norway, all across Europe, and most of the United States. I also give a regular series of speeches on a weekly and monthly basis across the state. These have included formal addresses in hotel ballrooms containing several thousand people, to sitting in a small circle of chairs chatting with members of a local historical group. I visit schools, talk to elementary and secondary schools students, and give assemblies on Texas history. In addition to appearing on television for interviews and to publicize historical causes, I visit archives, museums, and libraries where I meet with the staffs and listen to their comments about Texas history. I routinely answer the queries of newspaper and television reporters who are looking for a source on their stories that touch on Texas history. I also write magazine articles and an occasional newspaper column that address various aspects of the state's history.

In fulfilling of these activities, I also seek occasions and opportunities to highlight two institutions that are significant to my own personal career as a Texas Historian: Austin College, where I have spent most of my academic career; and the Texas State Historical Association, the oldest learned society in the state and to which I have belonged to since 1971, some 40 years.

Each of these institutions is itself steeped in Texas history. Founded as you know in 1849, Austin College is the oldest institution of higher learning in Texas operating under its same name and original charter. The history of Austin College and the history of Texas are closely intertwined, and at times inseparable from one another. It is therefore not hard to talk about the history of Austin College and Texas together.

For example, I am an occasional contributor to a newspaper column called "All Things Historical," which is distributed as a public service to over 70 newspapers across the eastern part of the state by

the East Texas Historical Association. Most of these papers are in smaller markets, and many of them are weekly rather than daily. The papers prefer columns about 500 words in length that deal in some fashion with the part of the state defined as East Texas. On several occasions, I have turned to Austin College history as my subject, as I did with our renovated Temple Center, the home of our Education Department. Here is what I wrote in that column, entitled: *Texas Lumber Can Build a Durable House*.

“A well-built house made of East Texas lumber can stand for over a century and be in use every day. That is certainly the case for Thompson House, a venerable 1895 Victorian mansion located on the corner of Grand Avenue and Brockett Street in Sherman. It was constructed by John Martin Thompson of Kilgore, who made his fortune in the lumber business. He was one of the wealthiest men in Texas at the time of his passing in 1907.

Thompson and his wife had four sons, each of whom attended Austin College in Sherman during the 1890s and early 1900s. He and his family always made their home in Kilgore. However, rather than have his sons live in Austin College facilities while students in Sherman, Thompson constructed a three-story, Victorian mansion in the Queen Anne style across the street from the campus. Thompson had all of the wood used in the house hauled to Sherman by rail from Kilgore and Jefferson. Each of his sons lived there during his student career, sometimes in the company of their mother and other relatives during the academic year.

Thompson House was one of the largest private residences north of Dallas at the turn of the 20th century. In addition to having formal entertaining spaces, a carriage house, ample gardens, and a ballroom, it sported a third-floor gymnasium that was larger and more amply outfitted than the one at nearby Austin College. Hoxie Thompson, the last of the sons to graduate from Austin College, inherited the house and kept it for his use when he visited Sherman from Kilgore during his years of service on the college board of trustees.

In 1943, the Thompson family donated the home to Austin College. Over the years, it has served as a dormitory, a language house, and a space for classrooms. In 2000, it was completely renovated and remodeled to contain the Austin College Department of Education. Every effort was made to maintain the historic exterior of the home and preserve the opulence of the downstairs public rooms. Thompson House is in use today, soon to be one 115 years old and still counting, a testament both to the quality of East Texas lumber and the wealth it created for enterprising lumbermen who reaped its harvest.”

The other institution special to me is the Texas State Historical Association. This association enjoys an international reputation as one of the nation's most dynamic history organizations. Having engaged in well over 100 years of scholarship and educational programs, its mission is to further the appreciation, understanding, and teaching of the rich and unique history of Texas through research, writing, and publication of related historical material. It publishes the online *Handbook of Texas*, an absolutely unique resource for teaching and researching Texas history from the undergraduate level to that of professional publication.

Most every student in this room today, as I look around, has used the *Handbook of Texas* during their career here, indeed this very week. The *Handbook of Texas* has also proved useful to me in a way that I did not anticipate when I became State Historian. Hardly the week passes but that I get inquiries or historical questions about Texas history. Often, these questions come by email. This gives me the chance to think about my response, and sometimes do a bit of quick research. Other times, if I can't easily find the answer, I know another historian that can possible respond, and send the inquiry on to them. Sometimes, however, when the inquiry comes by telephone, there is not a tremendous amount of time to think or frame a response. For that reason, whenever I am at my desk, I keep my computer on with the web browser bookmarked to the *Handbook of Texas*. About 75 percent of the time, I am able to access the *Handbook* and answer the questions about Texas history that come to me from the general public.

Knowing how to search for information is sometimes the operant skill. Sometimes, however, even a little research is not necessary. I recall a very short and cryptic telephone call from a gentleman who was reading a biography of Sam Houston. He explained that he wanted someone to answer his question, so he put down his book and went to the internet.

He Googled Texas historians and this brought him to the telephone number on my home page. Here was his question: He knew that Sam Houston's nickname was the Raven. Yet, in the book he was reading, the Indians called him Kaw-Low-Nah. Which name was correct: the Raven or Kaw-Low-Nah? "Both," I replied, "Kaw-Low-Nah is Cherokee for Raven." "Thank you very much," he said, and hung up without so much as giving me his name or even saying good-bye.

In addition to the *Handbook of Texas*, the Texas State Historical Association's educational services division provides stellar quality enrichment to the teaching of Texas History at the elementary and secondary level. As I do with Austin College, I try to mention the TSHA in every public talk that I give. I also highlight its activities on my blogsite.

Last July, for example, I highlighted its activities, how it touches the lives of tens of thousands of young Texans living in every corner of the state. One of its most successful programs, for example, is the annual Texas History Day, which constitutes the Lone Star State's involvement in National History Day. The T.S.H.A. sponsors the Texas competition, which each year involves almost 50,000 young Texans statewide. As students move up through local and regional history competitions of this program, over 1,000 of them eventually advance as participants to the state-level History Day contest held each May in Austin, with students winners there moving up to represent Texas at the National History Day each year in Washington, D.C. I suspect that some of the college students in this room today participated in these competitions during their own school years.

Indeed, many of my activities as Texas State Historian have involved the Texas State Historical Association because I serve on its board of directors and because of the tremendous number of historical activities that it undertakes. One of my favorites is the annual meeting, which I usually attend. It was at the annual meeting this year in El Paso that I became involved in perhaps the most unusual thing that I have done as Texas State Historian. For many years, the association has sponsored as a fundraiser at its meeting: a live auction of rare books and other collectable items of Texana. This year I had the chance to serve as the auctioneer along with the Lonny Taylor, a distinguished historian who retired to Fort Davis after a long career as the senior curator of history at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

For me, it was an honor just to handle some of the items that went across the auction block, including books autographed by some of the greatest authors in Texas history, a Frederick Remington Statue, a copy of the invitation to the Dallas luncheon that would have occurred had President Kennedy not been assassinated minutes earlier, and works of art by artistic luminaries such as Tom Lea and Jose Cisneros. I must admit that I was a bit nervous, having never been an auctioneer.

I modeled my technique on the livestock auctions I remember as a boy at Hallettsville and Flatonia, and apparently no one minded. I did have one momentary pause. Shortly before the auction started, someone who claimed to know about such matters told Lonny Taylor and me that state law requires all auctioneers to have licenses. Having no such licenses, we did mention this to several auction attendees who were very well-known attorneys or prominent judges. They told us not to worry and affably offered to defend Lonny and me if we were caught and prosecuted, although one of the judges was finally kind enough to tell us smilingly that the state law did not apply to charity auctions held at not-for-profit events, which relieved us.

Looking back, however, I almost wish we had been charged and brought to trial for having no auctioneer's license so that I could have had the unusual experience of being represented in

court by one of the best and most able team of high-powered attorneys and judges that would have ever been assembled in this state's history to defend a college professor *pro bono*.

In fact, I am happy to report that I have thus far in all of my many experiences as State Historian not had any encounters on the wrong side of the law, including traffic citations. That is somewhat remarkable because I have driven over 34,000 miles across Texas during the last 22 months in addition to the trips I have taken by airplane. Ann Richards once said that she never knew Texas as so big until she ran in a state-wide campaign. Many, if not most of the places I have visited, are simply too far from commercial airports to contemplate flying. So it has been the open road for me.

I can also say that it is filled with people passionately interested in history. Texans also love to join together in groups and associations that promote the history of this state. At one point, I attempted through various reference sources to count the number of historical associations, county historical commissions, genealogical groups, libraries with Texas history programs, and museums dedicated to the history of the state. The number of museums, both public and private at the state, county, and local level, is a particularly hard figure to determine. Indeed, I soon began to wonder what constitutes a museum.

Obviously, the Bob Bullock State History Museum in Austin and the Red River Historical Museum here in Sherman certainly qualify. What about the Toilet Seat Museum in San Antonio? What about the National Museum of Funeral History in Houston or the Museum of the Weird in Austin? Any ideas about the Cockroach Hall of Fame Museum, located in Plano, Texas?

I accordingly gave up trying to count, instead opting for the more imprecise yet accurate assessment that there are thousands and thousands of historically oriented groups and places in the Lone Star State, including museums, libraries, and historical groups or organizations. I soon learned that almost every one of them in Texas would not mind having the State Historian of Texas pay them a visit, if not give a talk to their membership. I have been happy to oblige to the best of my time and ability, having indeed been both to the Bullock Museum and to the Red River Museum. I have, however, not been to the Toilet Seat Museum or to the Cockroach Hall of Fame and, in noting this, I admit that I am somewhat relieved that the latter two never requested that I visit them or talk there.

I must admit that giving talks has been both the most time-consuming and personally fulfilling thing that I have done as Texas State Historian. Several of them come to mind as particularly memorable for various reasons. One of these I recall for a rather unusual reason and the lesson I learned that day. I initially felt unusual because I arrived at the event driving my trusty four-door Ford Focus sedan. It was a speaking engagement that involved my talking to a lady's study club. The hostess of the event had read in the newspaper about my having recently been appointed as the state historian.

Sitting at my desk shortly after that story had appeared around the state on the associated press wire, the phone rang. I answered it to find myself speaking the lady from the above referenced study club was calling to ask me to speak to her group. I naturally accepted her invitation to speak. Several weeks later, I arrived at her home at the appointed time. She lived in what was surely one the largest private homes in what is surely one of the most exclusive residential districts of her city.

As I turned onto the driveway from the street, I immediately saw security guards who were checking the arriving cars against the guest list. I passed muster to find myself in a line of automobiles including various models of most of the luxury brands that might be seen on Robin Leach's TV program *The Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*. As we inched up the hill towards the valet parking attendants, my little Ford fell into line dutifully behind a beautiful black Jaguar, preceded by a Maybach Landauet, the only one I have ever seen outside of a magazine.

I recall this day primarily because of the look of disdain with which the valet attendant greeted me when I pulled even with him. As I opened the door, making ready get out of the car and go inside, he gently stopped the motion of the door and rather coolly intoned: "Sir, if you are making a delivery, please stay in the car and turn left at the next drive for the side door." I explained that I was the speaker for this event and had been specifically told by the hostess to arrive at the front door.

Walking into the entry foyer, I was pleased to see that the officiousness of the parking attendant had remained completely outside. I was warmly greeted in a most relaxed manner by the hostess and spent a delightful several hours there. The ladies apparently liked my talk. I was sad to bid them goodbye after their social hours and refreshments. To a person, they were sterling conversationists, intellectually engaged, and very articulate on a wide variety of subjects. I remember that occasion because of what I learned that day.

I already knew that you can't judge a book by its cover. I also now know that you can't judge a palatial Texas mansion by its valet parking attendants. That is so because, as I have learned on a number of occasions as the State Historian, this state is filled with people of accomplishment and affairs, some of them wealthy and some of them famous. When it comes to their personalities and as people, however, they are very normal and most of them are very engaging. Indeed, I am struck today by how very normal Texas and her people really are.

Another of the hundreds of speeches that I have given also remains in the forefront of my memories and for personal reasons. In May of last year, I gave a talk at the Alamo. As a native of San Antonio, I must admit that I grew up pretty much taking the Alamo for granted. It was no more remarkable to me than the local dry cleaners, the grocery store, and the dozens of other facades that provided the background scenery to my growing up. I remember very clearly during my youth seeing Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Richard Nixon speak at the Alamo, a place that was in those years nothing special to me.

I particularly recall one instance with I was 12 years of age that speaks to the everyday blaze with which I viewed the Alamo. Just before Christmas in my seventh grade year, I took the bus downtown to buy presents for my family at Joske's, the department store that then stood next to the Alamo. I also purchased some wrapping paper with the intention of finding a place to wrap the gifts before I caught the bus home. I walked across the street to the Alamo and used a big slab of stone on the side of the courtyard fountain as the surface upon which to wrap my gifts, cutting the paper with my Boy Scout knife. A security guard soon appeared to ask me what I was doing. I replied that I was wrapping my family Christmas gifts. "Here at the Alamo!" he exclaimed. "Its OK," I said. "I'm from San Antonio."

I was therefore more than a little surprised to find that when it came time for me to speak there, I was more than a little awed by the prospect. The place rather unexpectedly worked an unanticipated spell on me. That was so because I realized that I was going to stand on the ground where Crockett and the others had earned immortality, speaking at the very same spot where Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nixon, LBJ, and a host of others—including from my own personal childhood memories, John Wayne, Chester Nimitz, Douglas McArthur, Eleanor Roosevelt, and a phalanx of additional luminaries such as J. Frank Dobie and Walter P. Webb—had also stood to talk about what that place had meant to them and to the nation. I apparently did fine, since at least to me, everyone that day said that I gave a good talk on why the Alamo was important in the diversity of our own times. I was particularly proud that my 95-year-old father was able to attend that speech and that he approved of what I said.

I was also proud that on one occasion, my two daughters Katy and Leslie got to have an adventure with me as Texas State Historian. The legislation creating the position noted that the State Historian should work and assist the Texas Historical Commission if needed. That resulted in my participating during the summer of 2009 in archeological explorations at the Groce Plantation near Hempstead, Texas.

Several months prior to our visit, Dr. Greg Dimmick and several other investigators had discovered what they were fairly certain was the location of the historic Jared Groce Plantation, one of the earliest and largest in Texas during the 1820s. The Texas Historical Commission, under the leadership of Dr. Jim Bruseth, decided to undertake a thorough magnetometer exploration of the area.

As an historian very interested in Texas plantation history, I had the opportunity to be a part of those activities. My two daughters also spent the week at Hempstead working as field assistants to the archeologists. I can say that we have never been hotter in our lives than we were then. The August temperature routinely rose in mid-afternoon every day above 110 degrees Fahrenheit. We all walked about carrying gallon milk jugs filled with water and which we refilled very frequently. We did, however, have the time of our lives, although I soon learned that my expertise as an historian did not translate into archeological field work. On one occasion, I inadvertently moved a grid marker that through off the archeologists calculations, but they were very polite about it and for that I was most appreciative. I have thus come to the conclusion that my archival skills are better than my abilities as a field assistant in archeology.

In terms of acquired skills, I have also developed some experience in talking to reporters. I have very much enjoyed meeting and talking with newspaper, radio, and TV reporters who have contacted me regarding various stories they have been doing on Texas history. I have been called by the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and most of the major papers in Texas. All of these contacts have been very satisfying, although in one case a bit controversial. On San Jacinto Day last year the *Austin American Statesman* asked me to write a special op-ed column on that important event in Texas. As a modern historian, that presented a bit of a dilemma for me since some readers of Hispanic heritage might have a different viewpoint than Anglo-Texan readers who might be descended from members of Sam Houston's army.

I thus wrote an even-handed column in which I lionized Houston and his army, also noting that: "Texas history now acknowledges that the Battle of San Jacinto was a complex historical drama. We realize that fighting as comrades alongside Sam Houston were Juan Seguin, Martín Flores, Antonio Treviño, José Molino, José Palonio Lavigna, and others of Tejano heritage. Readable, well-researched and timely histories written from the Tejano viewpoint allow us to focus on that part of our history. And what of the Mexican soldiers? Did they not also have letters, lockets, and trinkets from loved ones back home tucked away in their shirt pockets on the battlefield, as did the Texians? Did they not have their battle-charged moments of human emotion during the fighting? Is there not a meaningful story to tell about the Mexican army, too—especially the regular soldiers?"

Well, some people took offense at this viewpoint and let me know it. At the same time, however, I heard from a number of people across the state who agreed with me, including several very well-known scholars of Hispanic genealogical heritage. I have thus learned that many, many Texans from all walks of life, backgrounds, and viewpoints take their history very seriously. It has been my strategy to listen to all of them that tell me something, and take them very seriously. I can say that every reporter and newspaper person who has contacted me about Texas history has been very interesting.

I have also learned that one can't be too busy to take the time to listen, visit, or respond to people about their interest in Texas history. Occasionally taking the time to do so can have very satisfying consequences. I thus always try to stop and do so when the opportunity presents itself. I particularly recall a visit that I made a year ago to the Texas Prison Museum in Huntsville. A speaking engagement had brought me to Houston and, after it, I was en route to Corsicana as I drove up Interstate 45. Several weeks earlier, I had crossed-paths with staff members from the Prison Museum, who had invited me to stop there the next time that I passed through. I was on a limited time schedule, but decided to do so.

On touring the exhibits, I came across one that highlighted the career of Lee Simmons of Sherman, Texas, a person I already had known about but had never taken the time to consider his career. As a result of that, I wrote a newspaper column about Mr. Simmons, a former Grayson County sheriff who was the director of the Texas Prison system from 1930 until 1935. He is chiefly remembered today as the Texas official who directed the manhunt for Bonnie and Clyde. Mr. Simmons also was a reformer who started the Texas Prison Rodeo.

My column about him also appeared in *Texoma Living Magazine*. Shortly thereafter, a senior honors student in history approached me about directing her project. As a pre-law, she was interested in the history of criminal justice in Texas, the preferred topic she brought to me. After some discussion, that student decided to write about Lee Simmons. She has just completed her senior honors thesis on Simmons, and I am very proud of her fine research. Had I not stopped that day at the Prison Museum, my student would never have found her topic.

Of course, working with students here at Austin College has been one of my most important activities as State Historian, as I have consistently tried to find ways for my classroom activities to be enhanced. A good example of this occurred soon after I became State Historian. I was visiting with the editor of the Arcadia press when she mentioned that it would be fantastic if I did a pictorial history of the college. The thought occurred to me that this might be a collaborative learning project that my students could undertake. I discussed this with the Arcadia editor, and she agreed. I accordingly taught a research seminar to eight students who worked in tandem with four students in the Archives under the direction of our archivist Justin Banks. Justin and his students assembled several hundred photographs for which the students working with me wrote the narrative of the book. I edited the student's writing for stylistic flow and continuity. It proved to be a great deal of fun working on this book project, and it has become a model for several similar projects at colleges and universities.

Now, as my term as State Historian draws to a close, I am left with the memories of a lifetime. I have stood on the far southeastern corner of Texas at Sabine Pass and looked across at Louisiana. I have been to the furthest reaches of the Texas Panhandle and looked across at Oklahoma. I have been to the Rio Grande and seen Mexico across the river, while I have been to El Paso and looked west to see New Mexico. I have straddled State Line Avenue in Texarkana with one foot in Texas and the other in Arkansas.

I agree with John Steinbeck when he said: "I have moved over a great part of Texas and I know that within its borders. I have seen just about as many kinds of country, contour, climate, and conformation as there are in the world. Texas is a state of mind."

As I leave this stage at this moment, I must observe that Texas as one single state is almost too much to contemplate, as is its natural beauty and diversity. The scope and sizable interests being manifested across Texas regarding the history of this state are also almost too much for one person to contemplate. I have met thousands and thousands of people in my travels as State Historian. In spite of what one might see on the evening news, 99.99 percent of Texans that I have met from all backgrounds, walks of life, and stations of life are hard-working, sincere, forthright individuals who get up each morning resolved to do the right thing. They have a deep and abiding interest in the history of Texas, and of the role this state plays in the nation and in the world.