

2015 Awards from the Collin County Historical Commission

Collin McKinney Achievement Award

Bear Creek Cemetery Foundation The Bear Creek Cemetery located near Nevada, Texas, had burials that date from 1873 to 1927. It is one and a half acres and has 186 known graves, including three Civil War Veterans.

The Bear Creek Cemetery Foundation was formed on June 3, 2000. The Foundation applied for Historical Designation from the Texas Historical Commission which was granted on December 27, 2005 and a state marker dedication was held in 2007. Since 2009 members of the Foundation have been mowing, trimming brush and removing stumps. Work has been done to level and repair markers, pictures have been made of all grave sites, a map of the cemetery has been created and a web site developed. In 2010 in conjunction with the Collin County Historical Commission the Foundation hosted an all-day, hands-on workshop on cleaning and repairing markers. The Bear Creek Cemetery Foundation has applied for and received grants from the Collin County Historical Commission every year since 2010 that were used to install fencing and repair grave markers. The Foundation has held additional fund raising drives.

Excellence in Historical Education Award

Loydell Seward, a retired teacher, has worked to make education another important segment of historic preservation. As a member of the Farmersville Historical Society, she and an illustrator wrote and produced a coloring book titled **Farmersville, a Colorful History** which is still available in stores in Farmersville. She and a fifth grade teacher at the local elementary school designed a study that would allow the children live a day in the life of the community as it existed in 1900. The activity became known as Farmersville 1900. Each of the fifth grade students is assigned to play the role of one the students of 1900 on the day that their class spent at the Bain-Honaker House.

Loydell and several ladies designed a bus tour that would make the history of the county come alive. In 2015 this project, know at the Collin County Cruise, still takes participants by bus to communities across the county.

She chaired the Historical Assets Survey Committee for the Collin County Historical Commission whose purpose was to locate and catalog any and all historic sites in Collin County. An interactive map was developed and placed on the Collin County web site. This map enables the public to click on sites across the county featuring historic churches, communities, schools, cemeteries, stores, houses, or events that have played a role in the development of the county. A second click brings up information and photos of the site. Collin County is the only county in the state that has undertaken a survey of the historical sites of the entire county.

Loydell Seward's promotion of historical education and contributions in preservation has stimulated interest in all age groups in Collin County.

Leadership in Preservation Award Texas Cemetery Restoration LLT Since 1997, Texas Cemetery Restoration has leveled, cleaned and restored thousands of monuments

in Texas cemeteries. This business provides the following services: monument leveling, cleaning and restoration; GPS Cemetery mapping and burial database generation; and ground penetrating radar. They have sponsored and hosted workshops and worked with volunteer groups to educate the public and help develop an understanding for the need of preservation and the correct methods to use when doing a restoration project.

The following cemetery projects have been completed by Texas Cemetery Restoration in Collin County: Bowman, Bear Creek, Chambersville, Mugg, Baccus, Hogge/Herring, Murphy Family, Bethany, Lair, and Old Celina Cemetery. There are future projects planned in 2015.

James “Rusty” Brenner and his team have worked long and hard for over 15 years to live up to their mission to provide exceptional conservation, preservation and restoration services to the citizens of Texas and Collin County.

Living Legacy of Collin County Award

Lolisa Laenger has lived in Murphy since the 1970’s and is the co-founder of the Murphy Historical Society and has served as Vice President in charge of programs. Yet her legacy reaches beyond Murphy.

She began her historical endeavor volunteering at the Plano Heritage Farmstead Museum. Then, she was named Curator of the Museum until she retired in 2012. Kathy Strobel, Director of Development at the Museum, said, “Lolisa had an incredible way of developing museum displays.” Lolisa still serves as a volunteer today at the museum. She researched displays and often worked on her own time to make sure the displays were historically accurate.

Lolisa researched local Murphy history and submitted historical articles once a week to the *Wylie News* during the 1980’s and has written articles for the *Murphy Monitor* and *Murphy Messenger*. She is a lecturer for the Murphy Historical Society and designs an historical exhibit at Murphy City Hall. She organizes a style show and tea to raise money for cemetery preservation, and is a member of Cemetery Association of Murphy where she volunteers at the Memorial Day Celebration each year.

Lolisa is a member and past chairman of the Collin County Historical Commission. Under her leadership the county marker program was implemented. She serves on a number of different committees and is the Chairman of the very successful Collin County Cruise Committee. Presently she is a member of a special committee to celebrate Collin County’s founder, Collin McKinney. Lolisa Laenger works endlessly recording, writing, speaking and preserving the history of Collin County.

Living Legacy of Collin County Award.

Shirley Carter Schell was immersed in the history of this area for most of her 88 years and has contributed greatly to the recognition and preservation of local historical events, sites and people. She was a charter member of the Heritage Farmstead Museum, the Plano Heritage Commission, a member of the Old Post Offices Museum in McKinney, and the Collin County Historical Society. In addition she served on the Collin County

Historical Commission for 30 years. Shirley contributed to and corrected information about Plano in the **Handbook of Texas**. She authored/co-authored **Plano, Texas-The Early Years**, the big green book that many consider the bible on Plano's early families, businesses and development since prehistoric times. Shirley wrote one-third of the book that was published in 1986 and is now in its second edition.

State markers for the Ammie Wilson house, the First United Methodist Church of Plano, the Plano National Bank/100F Lodge were researched, submitted and written by Shirley Schell. She did extensive research on the Muncey Massacre site which was known as the last Indian attack in Collin County for a state marker.

Shirley's research and love of history have taken her many places. Some are elderly citizen interviews throughout Collin County, McKinney courthouses, state agencies in Austin, Barker history library, UT library, state archives and the National Archives. She is still working on history projects. Shirley is now researching and writing about the Sawyer, Risher, and Hall Stagecoach route.

Shirley Schell has contributed much to the recognition and preservation of our local history over the past many decades. She has enjoyed every minute!

Young Visionaries Award

Caleb Eichenberger-Gay has been an important part of the annual Memorial Day Observances held at historic Decatur-Maxwell-Murphy Cemetery each year since 2008 when he was a Murphy Middle School student. He is now a junior at the University of Arkansas where he and his trumpet are part of the marching band.

At the conclusion of the Murphy Cemetery Association's Observances, Caleb has skillfully and beautifully played Taps to close the programs. He has also played additional pieces during the programs. Even his playing in 2014 of "Home Sweet Home" during the placement of roses on the veterans' graves was played inconspicuously. But what the eyes don't see the ears hear, and Caleb's music often causes eyes to well up with emotion.

Caleb's contribution since 2008 to the event by playing Taps and period music in honor of our veterans (some well-known pioneers of Murphy), is indeed worth fine praise.

Other nominees

Boy Scout troop 1814 of Nevada, Texas has been involved in several cleanup, restoration, and commemorating projects in the Bear Creek Cemetery since March 2013. The boy scouts cleaned 100 markers in one day on 2013. The next year, 2014, they leveled many grave markers. In 2014 the person who had been mowing the cemetery was unable to continue. The members of Troop 1814 volunteered to mow, weed eat, trim trees and haul brush in the acre and a half historic cemetery every other month during the growing season. Most recently the members of the troop joined with one of their number who was working to become an Eagle Scout and participated in erecting a flag pole in the cemetery.

Aurora Chancy In 2014, Aurora Chancy ended a 22 year reign as the editor of the **Collin Chronicles**, a quarterly publication of the Collin County Genealogical Society. The **Chronicles**, which began in 1981, published material related to Collin County history—including profiles of towns and communities, stories of pioneers, church histories, family information, and transcriptions (or abstracts) of diaries, soldiers' names, marriage records, newspaper articles, cemeteries, and obituaries. In addition to researching and writing many articles herself, Aurora recruited other volunteers, prepared the page layout, worked with the printers, even folded and mailed the journal to Collin County Genealogical Society members and libraries across the county. Today, all issues of the **Collin Chronicles** (116 issues) have been donated to the University of North Texas for inclusion on their Portal to Texas History web site. As of March 2015, the **Collin Chronicles** had received over 36,000 “hits” on the web site.

Collin Maxwell approached the Allen Heritage Guild about a project for his Eagle Scout Badge. The guild suggested St. Mary's Church needed beautification and a screen of foliage from the street. Collin cleaned up the old asphalt drive area, poured concrete for a pad, ordered and installed a park bench, purchased 5 large shrubs, irrigated them which were installed on the hillside in front of the church. He washed and repainted the wooden porches with skid resistant paint. Most of the work occurred last fall and he was diligent with watering the shrubs every other day in order to keep them established. He did his Eagle project in a very professional manner.

Order of the Black Rose – Sue Ann Kinsey Black Rose members must be a member of the Order of Confederate Rose. The order was named in honor of Rose O’Neal Greenhow who died during the Civil War. Members must have complete period mourning attire. Each year since 2009, the ladies of the Order of the Black Rose have donned their heavy black 1860’s dresses, layered undergarments and veiled bonnets for the annual memorial day observances at the historic Decatur-Maxwell-Murphy Cemetery. In honor of all known veterans in the cemetery, the ladies are escorted to each grave of a Veteran and then they curtsey and lay a rose on the grave. In addition the ladies are available to the public prior to and after the program to educate the public and answer questions posed to them.

Larkin Toler has promoted historical education about Murphy, Texas, in Collin County, Texas, through teaching and donating books, historical photographs, letters, and original documents about a pioneer family in Murphy and Collin County. He is the great grandson of the J. M. Louise Back and family who arrived in the Murphy Community in 1883. He is a member of the Murphy Historical Society and has been a speaker and on numerous occasions with members of the society discussed how his family impacted the history of Murphy. He has made donations to the society such as the World War I “dog tags” of Oscar Back. Larkin’s expertise and family history is a gold mine of information for Collin County and the residents of Murphy.

Fan Slater has lived in or around Blue Ridge in Collin County for most of her life. Whenever historical information is needed about anything in the Blue Ridge northeast Collin Area, Fran is the first person people go to for answers. She is known as a

repository and expert for the history of that area. She is active in the First Methodist of Blue Ridge. For many years she has been the neighborhood correspondent for the *McKinney Courier Gazette*, the *Farmersville Times* and the *Sherman Democrat*. In 1976 Fran wrote a complete history of Blue Ridge for the *Sherman Democrat*'s Bicentennial issue. Most of this information is on the Blue Ridge state Historical marker. She was the main speaker for the marker dedication and submitted information about sites in the Blue Ridge area for the Collin County Historical Commission's Historic Assets Survey. Fran Slater is a truly a consummate Historian for the Blue Ridge area of Collin County.