

BASTROP COUNTY MUSEUM & VISITOR CENTER NEWSLETTER

Winter 2025

A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings and Happy New Year,

As we head into 2026, and the 250th Birthday of our nation, I want to take a moment to look back at the last quarter of the year and everything we have accomplished; from hiring new staff to a successful Holiday Weekend of fundraising.

As I look back, I find myself thankful for my first few months serving as Executive Director of the Bastrop County Historical Society. This town and its community has gone out of their way to make me feel welcome in my new home. The dedication and passion shown by the board, staff, and community members and partners is inspiring and I am fortunate to be here leading this organization forward.

In November, I brought on Alyson Ache to serve as the new Visitor Center Manager and I have watched her grow and excel in her role in the short time she has been with us. I have confidence in her abilities to help us keep moving forward as Bastrop grows.

Speaking of growth, we could not continue our mission of preserving and promoting the history of Bastrop County without all of you. Our membership and volunteers consistently give their time, expertise, and sometimes their homes to help fundraise and further our mission. The 2025 Historic Homes Tour is always a favorite and this last year was no different. With the homes beautifully decorated, the owners welcomed in over 500 visitors on the day of the tour. The night before, we celebrated with *Rendezvous*, a gala to benefit the historical society. It was so nice to see everyone dressed in their best and coming together to support our mission. You are the reason we are able to keep sharing history and reaching more people.

The new year brings in new ways to celebrate our history and this year we hope to keep moving forward and expanding our reach throughout the county and beyond because "Bastrop history is Texas history!"

Chelsea Stewart

Chelsea Stewart
Executive Director



ABOUT THE 250TH

Throughout 2026, the Bastrop County Museum & Visitor Center will join communities across the nation in celebrating the 250th birthday of the United States of America.

America began with revolution 250 years ago, and in honor of this milestone anniversary, the Museum & Visitor Center will dedicate each month of 2026 to highlighting the people, events, and places that revolutionized Bastrop County and carried forward the enduring legacy of 1776. Through themed programs, exhibits, and educational content, visitors will be invited to explore how local history connects to the broader American story.

2025 LEADING MEMBERS

Benefactor

Glenda Dayton
First National Bank
Frontier Bank of Texas
Michele Graham and Louis Earle
Kathy Holberg
L.C. Wright Cattle LLC

Member of the Month

Joan and Kent Bohls/9E Cabins
Sherri Gilmore
Sandy Kibby
Sarah and David Johnson
Bridge and Main Realty

Hero

Adjust Chiropractic/Dr. Matt Mix
Charles and Jill Barrow
Joe and Nancy Beal
Lonnie and Judy Enis
Kerry and Steve Fossler
Stella Haecker and Willie Pina
Jane and Rob Hunt
Stephanie Jenkins
Doris and James Kershaw
Gloria and Win Perkins
Amy Schumacher and Tim Wilkins
Lucy Todd and Frank Huffman

Champion

Ed and Gloria Adams
Sanday and Ron Barelay
Alicia Benn and Jewell Broussard
Richard and Sondra Black
Kim and Cindy Casper
Sandra Chipley and Chuck Kellogg
Karen Clardy
John Crawford
Andrew and Barbara Coy
Jeff Crouch and Traci Fray
Les deGraffenried and Bonnie Bratton
Betty Dunkerley
Laura Fohn
Ishmael Harris
Alex Hebert Family
Michal Hubbard
Jennifer Leisure
Vicky and Robert Lindsey
Mary Lou Loehr
Jamie and Curtis McDonald
Michele Mulholland
Trenton Nall
Lynn Oualline
Libby Sartain
Nan and DeLea Sayers
Tom and Nancy Scott
Carol and Joe Shull
Dick and Duffy Smith
Ginni and Fred Smith
Jodie Smith and Tom Liebowitz
Charlotte and Glenn Synnott
Nick Textor
Joe Grady Tuck
Barbara and Alex Vana
Melissa Vadlamudi



HOLIDAY EXPRESS MODEL TRAIN EXHIBIT

Jill Barrow

Model trains attract kids of all ages, and this exhibit was no exception. Bruce Looman, a local model train enthusiast and collector, shared a very small part of his train collection with the public through the town layout that featured a bus station, post office, fire department, bank, school, and churches - all that were lighted - not to mention the two trains that ran through the town and the bumper holiday trolley. While children followed the trains around the tracks, the adults read the history of railroads in Bastrop County and admired the many different models of all gauges. It was not only the children who wanted to "drive" the battery-operated trains, as many adults could not resist the urge to be a conductor, too.

One of the artifacts on display during the exhibit was the "Bastrop" sign that hung on the Bastrop train depot. Trains in Bastrop County played an important role in building communities, commerce, and travel through Bastrop County and through the rest of Texas. This exhibit, while entertaining the imagination of younger generations and igniting the whimsy of adults, touched on the importance of the railroads to the growth and development of Bastrop County.

THANKYOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

As we reflect on 2025, we are incredibly grateful for the support of our members, volunteers, sponsors, and community. Because of you, we were able to preserve, share, and celebrate Bastrop County history through exhibits, programs, events, and outreach all year long.

As we look ahead, we invite you to **renew your membership** and continue being part of our mission. We also welcome **volunteers** to join us in the Visitor Center, Research Library, and at special events—there's a role for everyone who loves history and community.



Scan to become a member or volunteer!

Thank you for being such an important part of the Bastrop County Historical Society. We couldn't do this without you!



Significant African Americans of Bastrop County

Each month, the Bastrop County Museum & Visitor Center celebrates revolutionary people, places, and events that helped shape Bastrop County. In February, in honor of Black History Month, we highlight African Americans whose lives and legacies played a vital role in building the community we know today.

Joseph Morgan was brought to Bastrop County as an enslaved person during early Anglo-American settlement and is known as the first African American to settle in the county after emancipation. He founded the Piney Creek Freedom Colony and helped establish the Paul Quinn African Methodist Episcopal Church, creating foundations for faith, education, and community life.

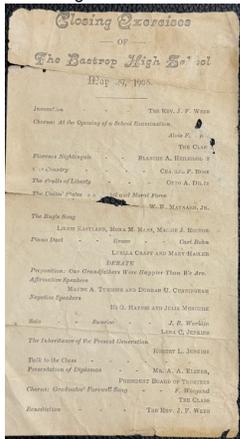
Jennie Brooks, born into slavery on the Augustus Hubbard plantation, gained her freedom at emancipation and later became the first formerly enslaved person to own property in Bastrop County. Through determination and hard work, she provided stability and opportunity for her children, who became active members of the community.

Martin and Sophia McDonald, both formerly enslaved, built successful farms and used their resources to support others. After Martin's death, Sophia donated land for the Hopewell School and church, which continue to serve Cedar Creek today.

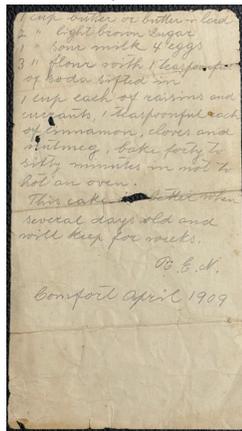
Educator and historian **T.C. Franklin** devoted decades to leading Black schools in Bastrop County and preserving African American history, ensuring these important stories are remembered and shared.

RECENT MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS

High School Graduation Program from 1908



with a recipe on the back Donated by Ken Kesselus!



Tonkawa arrowpoints donated by John and Emily McPhaul found in Tahitian Village



BASTROP COUNTY MUSEUM GIFT STORE

Don't forget the Museum & Visitor Center Store when shopping in our charming downtown!

From unique treasures to Bastrop souvenirs, there is something for everyone at the museum store. Gifts for kids, historic postcards, and books of plenty are just a few of the items to browse on our shelves. Stop by and have a look!



Research Library Volunteers

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Jackie Givens | Eric Parmer |
| Gloria Hoffman | Ron Ramirez |
| Adela Jones | Juan Rangel |
| Kathy Kolhoff | Robin Schneider |
| John Lockwood | Brenda Uptain |
| Mary Lucas | Brad Weber |
| Dianne Mills | Allen Ziegenhals |
| Randy Mikel | |

Visitor Center Volunteers

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Michelle Adams | Docents: |
| Dawn Ellis | Terry Beauchamp |
| Sue Ann Fruge | Judy Enis |
| Bert Godkin | Frank Huffman |
| Adela Jones | Leona Jones |
| Vicki Lackowski | Carrie Martin |
| Bob Malerk | Mark Mowery |
| Leslie Mellenbruch | Ron Ramirez |
| Randy Mikel | Madeline Baird |
| Cissy Soto | |
| Orlanda Valka | |

Junior Volunteers:

- Stephen Ellis Briella Smith

Visitor Center Staff

- Alyson Ache, Visitor Center Manager
Candice McClendon, Events Coordinator
Rachel Hatch, Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Museum Staff

- Chelsea Stewart, Executive Director
Barbara Vana, Office Coordinator
Traci Fray, Archivist



BCHS Officers

- Glenda Dayton, President
Michal Hubbard, Treasurer
Jill Barrow, Secretary

Trustees

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| LeeAnn Calaway | Michal Hubbard |
| Sandra Chipley | Jennifer Leisure |
| Les DeGraffenried | Johnny Sanders |
| Sara Emmert | Joe Grady Tuck |
| Sherri Gilmore | |

UPCOMING EVENTS



Revolutionary Wall
All January

Do you know a revolutionary story from Bastrop County's past? Share it with us and the community

Family Make N Take |
Build-a-Bridge
Jan. 10

Learn about the science and history behind bridges and build your own into the new year!

Music in the Museum
| John & Jenn
Jan. 17

Enjoy eclectic americana and alternative rock by local musicians.

Quarterly Meeting
Jan. 22

A preview of the year to come for the Bastrop County Historical Society.

First Friday
Feb. 6

Enjoy free, family-friendly activities on our porch while exploring downtown vendors.

Family Make N Take |
I ♥ Bastrop
Feb. 14

Share the love of Bastrop with a family-friendly scavenger hunt and Bastrop prizes!

Cowboy Poetry
Feb. 21

Celebrate the art and craft of the cowboy poet with poets, musicians, storytellers, and humorists with venues across the city including the museum!

BE A PART OF BASTROP HISTORY!

Bastrop
MUSEUM & VISITOR CENTER
of the Bastrop County Historical Society

904 Main Street

Bastrop, TX 78602

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Follow us! @bastropmuseumvc

