

# PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Dedicated to preserving the history and heritage of "Old Pearland"

## President's Message

In the last issue of the **Newsletter**, we were excited to pass on the news about **Society Members Dwight Bittick** and **Tom Hunter** coming up with information proving that **Mark Belt** was actually the name of a real man who had once lived alongside the railroad switch which later became part of the **Pearland "Old Townsite."** Now thanks to more work by **Dwight** and **Tom** we have a picture of **Mark Belt** and a lot of history about who he was and what he did with his life. His picture will be hanging in the **Pearland City Hall** along with our town founder, **Witold von Zychlinski**. While it is great to finally know the answer as to whether **Mark Belt** was a real man or a railroad term and to know his life story, we need to realize that he had no impact on any aspect of the history of **Pearland, Texas** except he was in this area as **Superintendent for the Brazoria Land and Cattle Company of Missouri** when the **Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad** put in a siding and called it "**Mark Belt**". By the time the first post office was opened here in 1893 and was called **Mark Belt**, he had been back in **Missouri** for probably four or five years. He was a very interesting man and it is great to know all the information **Dwight** and **Tom** have turned up; and his finding does close the door on one big question. Was he a man or a railroad term. In contrast to **Witold von Zychlinski**, who founded the town in 1894, made a big impression on the early **Pearland** pioneers and then left and has never been heard of since, we

now know **Mark Belt's** entire life story. We have followed up with a photo and more info on **Mark Belt** further in this **Newsletter**.

I have mentioned before how when I am working on the **April** issue of the **Newsletter** I often think back about how as school kids we loved **April Fool's** day and about the little tricks we all played. Remember telling a girl she had a spider on her back and then laughing and saying "**April Fool**" as she jumped and screamed. **April Fool's** day was always a fun day at school. Now, this **April** as I am writing this **Newsletter** I am hoping that you **Society** members don't think I have been playing "**April Fool**" all through the years when I talked about the day we would be setting up an **Historical Society Museum** in the **Old Depot**. I am beginning to feel that way myself. Further in the **Newsletter** you will read about our **Museum Committee's** latest meeting with **Parks and Recreation Director Michelle Smith** and understand what I am saying. It is getting discouraging. One roadblock after another. We'll keep working on it though.

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## What's Happening

At our **January** meeting, **Kyler Cole** brought us up to date as to what was going on in the "**old townsite.**" Major projects, **Kyler** discussed were street widening of **Walnut** and **Orange Streets** and drain pipes along **North Park Street**

through **Hunter Park**. Decorative lights will be put up on **Walnut** and **Orange**. Since the **January** meeting, the drainage project through **Hunter Park** is complete and the park is now all smoothed over as you can see in the picture below.



**Hunter Park – Looking North from Orange St. as it looks now.**



**HunterPark a couple of months ago with the drain pipes which were put down the middle of the park.**

For you members who do not live in **Pearland**, **Hunter Park** is at the site on **Orange Street** where **Lee and Elmira Hunter Bulls** lived.

**Class of 1961 to be honored at annual Reunion Luncheon.**

Members voted to continue honoring the graduating **PHS** class of 50 years ago at our annual **Reunion Luncheon**. We will be sending personal invitations to members of the graduating class of 1961. We need help in gathering addresses of the 61 grads. According

to the **Silver Anniversary 1962 Pearland Oiler** yearbook those listed below are the graduates in 1961:

**Donna Benedict, Jodie Benes, Teddy Clark, Steve Cogbill, Tim Coppinger, Mitzi Eignus, Betty Ford, Barbara Gorman Lewis, Johnny Griffin, Warren Halik, Rita Sue Hall Del Bello, Mike Hudson, Kathy Kagy, Richard Kasper, Trent Klopp, Dorothy Kremling, Doris Kyser Clements, Claude Meade, Waynell Miller, Curtis Oblinger, Betty Porter McGee, Pat Rowe, Charles Savell, Lucretia Spencer, Raynell Stark, Randell Townsend, Joe Waddle.**

Our Reunion Luncheon this year will be Saturday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>. Mark your calendars and make your plans to attend. It is always a great day of reminiscing and renewing old friendships.

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**Among our Members**

Once again we have lost **Historical Society** members and other long time **Pearlanders** since the last **Newsletter**.

**Society Member Carrie Mae Cogbill** passed away **Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>** after falling and breaking her hip and wrist a week or so earlier. **Carrie Mae** had been in **Colonial Oaks Assisted Living Facility** here in **Pearland**. Our sincerest sympathies go out to husband **Basil**, son and daughter in-law **Steve and Elaine Cogbill** and all the family.

**Society Member** and **1962 PHS** grad, **Judy Rowe Boemio**, passed away **March 22<sup>nd</sup>**. Our sympathies go out to **Judy’s** son, **Mark**, and to all of her family.

Long time **Pearlander**, **John Pitts** passed away **Jan. 21<sup>st</sup>**. **John** was a **1952 PHS** grad and one of the riders on **Bud Griffin’s** “big bus” which picked up all of the **Pearland** students who lived west of town.

**Roddy Ordeneaux**, husband of **Society Member Michalyn Miller Ordeneaux** passed away **March 5<sup>th</sup>**. **Roddy** was retired from the **Pearland School District** where he was the **Agriculture** teacher for many years.

**Karl Collins**, husband of **1959 Pearland** graduate **Sandra McNeil Collins** passed away **March 24<sup>th</sup>**. Many of you will remember **Sandra** was the daughter of the minister of the **Church of Christ** many years ago.

Also please keep **Society Members Mary Helen Miller and Rose Mary Raney** in your prayers. **Mary Helen** has been diagnosed as having lymphoma and **Rose Mary** fell in early March breaking her hip and several ribs.

### More about Grandkids

Now for the good news. As we are now in softball/baseball season our thoughts go to our members who have daughters/sons, or grandchildren involved in softball or baseball. We have mentioned over the last couple of years about **Rhianan Kliesing**, granddaughter of **Society Members Sidney and Reba Kliesing** being an outstanding softball player at **Texas A&M**. Last year **Rhianan** was named to the **All-Big 12** first team and the **Louisville Slugger/NFCA Div. I Central All-Region** first team ...She played in 59 games, each of them as a starter and had a career-high 62 hits and 35 runs on the season and also hit a career best and team-second best 11 home runs and recorded a 6-3 record on 11 starts as a pitcher. **Rhianan** is off to a great start this year and recently was selected as the 19th-overall pick by the **NPF Diamonds** in the **2011 National Pro Fastpitch (NPF) Senior Draft**, the organization announced recently. So we may get to see **Rhianan** playing softball for many more years.



Rhianan Kliesing

In the **January** issue of the **Newsletter** it was mentioned that **Haley Satterwhite**, a junior at **Clear Lake High School** and granddaughter of **Society Members Helen and Luther Cunningham**, was selected on the district 24-A volleyball team. We learned that **Haley** has been offered and has made a verbal commitment for an athletic scholarship to play volleyball at **Texas A & M in Corpus Christi**. Congratulations to **Haley**.

**Society Member Margie Lawrence** celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on **March 27<sup>th</sup>**. Congratulations, **Margie**, you have been an inspiration to those you taught and to those who have known you for many years.

**Pearland's** oldest native born male citizen, **Society Member David Scott** turned 91 on **January 16<sup>th</sup>**.

Our oldest native born citizen, **Emma Jamison Wells**, will turn 98 next **November 1<sup>st</sup>**. **Emma** is in **Windsong Nursing Home** here in **Pearland**.

Our oldest Historical Society Member, **Mary Lee Smith Miller**, will be 101 years old next **August 22<sup>nd</sup>**. **Mary Lee** has been living in **Holley Hall** in **Houston** for quite a number of years.

Back in 1976 when our nation was celebrating its bi-centennial year, **Marjorie Lawrence** put together a musical about the early years of **Pearland**. She also put together a book entitled "**Early Days of Pearland**" about the history of

**Pearland** from 1894 to 1976. That book is one of the treasured items in the **Historical Society** collection. It contains a map of early **Pearland** as remembered by **Josie Frankenberger Heflin**, several histories of **Pearland** as remembered by **Emma Coppinger, Josie Heflin, and Julia Hunter**, several family histories of early **Pearland** families and also a lot of history about the **Pearland** schools. Among the school records are quite a number of old school board minutes. Some of the board minutes cause one to wonder. For example in the board meeting of **December 2, 1937** (first year of **Pearland High School**) the board voted that there would be “no dances in the gymnasium.” The minutes were signed by **George Wall, Clyde Oblinger and F. E. Moore**. Isn’t that strange? Any time you talk to a student who attended **PHS** back in the 30’s and 40’s, they always reminisce about the fun they had at dances in the old gymnasium and how thankful they were for **Oleta Hawkins and Hazel Skinner** teaching dance lessons in that same old gymnasium.

Other board minutes which young people of today would find almost unbelievable are the minutes concerning the hiring of teachers and their salaries. For example, in a meeting of **May 22, 1939** the board discussed teachers’ contracts for the school year of **1939 – 1940**. **Steven Prensner** was elected to teach shop work at a salary of one thousand three hundred and eighty dollars per year (\$1380.00). In **August, 1941, J. D. Satterwhite** was hired as sixth grade and physical ed. teacher at a salary of twelve hundred dollars (\$1200.00) per year. At that same meeting, the board voted to build a school cafeteria. **Mr. Steven Prensner** was to draw the plans and to take charge of the building of the cafeteria. He was asked to use shop boys to help at a salary of 25 cents per hour. **Mr. Prensner** was to be paid \$5.00 per day

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## Another Legendary PHS Football Team

Many articles have been written in the last year about the great accomplishments of the **Pearland** athletic teams. The year 2010 will no doubt go down in history as the greatest year in history for **PHS**. The girls softball team won the state championship, the football team won the state **5A** championship and the **Pearland Little League** all-stars made it to the **World Series** finishing second in the **U.S.A.** After the **Oilers** won the **5A** football championship, we also wrote about the six-man team of **1941** winning the mythical state championship beating **Kinkaid**. Much has been written about the great Oiler winning teams. In reading the school board minutes in **Marjorie Lawrence’s** book, one item caught my eye and brought to mind a story about the **Pearland Oiler** football team of **1943** which was probably the most unique in **Oiler** history and one whose actions will probably never be duplicated.

The minutes of the board meeting of **September 27, 1943** show that “it was voted to hire **Roy Green** to coach the football team and to be paid \$10 (ten dollars) per week for this.” Remember now that after the **1942** football season, **Coach Lloyd Hawkins** joined the **Navy**. Whether there were no coaches available to hire or whether the board just decided to hire **Roy Green**, who was the local constable, is unknown. What is known is the team of **1943** coached by **Roy Green** not only didn’t win a game but usually lost by quite a large margin (40 or 50 points); but that is not what made the team of 1943 so different from teams coached by **Coach Hawkins** and those later where the **Oilers** actually had a full time qualified coach.

**Roy Green** had a tough job on his hands. Not only had **Coach Hawkins** departed; but also with the graduation of the class of 1942 he was left with a squad with no lettermen and no experience. Those players of the **42** season who were no longer there for “**Coach**” **Green** were **Lloyd Mahanay, Dan Paulk, Ray Watson, Charles Logan, Roy Mark, Orlen “Pat”**



**O'Day, Bud Oblinger, Gene Johnston and Buck Johnston.** The only returning squad member of the **42** team was sophomore **John Baggett.** Actually **Owen Maynor** had played some in **1942** but before the season started **Owen** was found to have tuberculosis and could not play. So the team of **1943** presented quite a challenge to **Constable** and **Coach Green.** With a squad of no lettermen and no experience the team of **43** did go down in **Pearland Oiler** history in a way which is probably the most unique in all the years of varsity **Oiler** football.

**Pearland** has had athletic teams which were really hot. The team of **1943** didn't win a game and certainly was not very hot; but you could say they were "smoking" - - - smoking cigarettes that is. Several members of the squad were smokers and would bring their packs of cigarettes to practice and when the team would take a water break, for that group it would become a "smoke break." **Roy Green** did get tough on the smokers, invoking a rule which was if a player wanted to smoke a cigarette he had to take a lap around the field. Apparently the smokers considered it a good trade-off. While about half the team was sitting and enjoying the water break, the other half would be jogging around the field puffing on their cigarettes.

My brother **Roy** and I were recently discussing the **43** team and remembering their first game up at **New Waverly** and laughing about some of the players sitting on the bench smoking while the game was going on. Apparently, **Superintendent Ainsworth** put out the word "no smoking during the game" after that but the smoking during practice continued throughout the season; and there were still those who fired up during the halftime. With the country being at war in **1943** and with **Coach Hawkins** being away in the **Navy**, the **Pearland** fans had thoughts other than football on their minds. With gasoline being rationed, the players were taken to out of town games by volunteers who offered to drive them in their cars. Attendance was really small and got smaller as the season

developed and the "smoking Oilers" continued losing by lopsided scores.

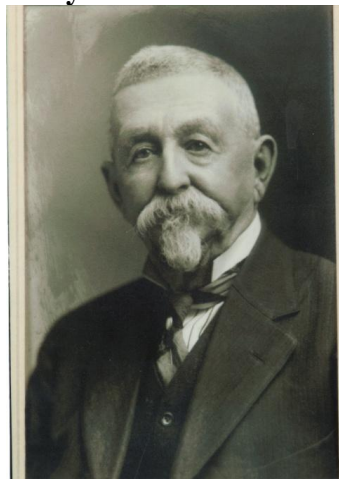
In **1944** **Mr. H. L. McAninch** came in as high school principal and coach. **Mr. McAninch's** tough practices (which certainly didn't allow any smoking) soon eliminated the smokers who were back from **1943.** The **44** team also didn't win a game and will never be remembered as are the smokers of **1943.**

In today's world it is hard to imagine a football team with the subs sitting on the bench puffing on cigarettes. However, if you ever see an old movie from the 30's and 40's usually every character, male or female would be puffing on a cigarette; and star athletes such as **Joe DiMaggio** were featured in ads in magazines smoking and endorsing "**Camel**" cigarettes. Still in all, the **43** team was a little different.

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### Who Was Mark Belt

**Captain Marcus Lindsey Belt, better known as Mark Belt, the first name given to the switch at what later became Pearland. He was a captain in the Confederate Army, a bushwacker, superintendent of operations in Texas for Brazoria Land and Cattle Company of Missouri, a merchant, railroad owner, general entrepreneur, Mayor of Higginsville, Mo. and the man for who the city of Belton, Mo. was named. No, he was not the founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken.**



In the last issue of the **Newsletter**, **Society Member Dwight Bittick** wrote about the information he had found regarding **Mark Belt** the man. **Dwight's** research did prove that **Mark Belt** was a real person and not a railroad term and also provided us a lot of information about the man whose full name was **Marcus Lindsey Belt**. With help from **Society Member Tom Hunter**, we now have a lot more information about **Mark Belt** and now have the above picture which was provided to **Tom Hunter** from the city of **Higginsville, Missouri**. A press release with **Belt's** photo and the story of his stay in this area and his life after leaving in 1888 was given to both the **Pearland** papers and to the **Houston Chronicle**. The same story appears on our **Historical Society** website. I am sure most of you have read the story but if you have not you find it at our website [www.pearlandhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.pearlandhistoricalsociety.org)

One of the bits of information **Tom** and **Dwight** found was that the city of **Belton, Missouri** was named for **Mark Belt**. It seems a friend of **Belt's** founded the town and **Mark Belt** did the surveying for laying out the town leading the friend to give it the name **Belton**. Prior to our receiving a photo of **Mark Belt** from the city of **Higginsville, Missouri**, we tried to contact the **Belton, Missouri Historical Society and Museum** to see if they could provide a photo and more information about the man. Our phone calls were never returned until a few days ago when we got a call from a gentleman with the **Belton Historical Society** saying he had a packet of information about **Mark Belt** he could send us. We told him we had quite a bit of information including a photo and pretty much his life story and had a story posted on our website. He said he would check our website and get back with us. When he called back, he said it appeared we had much more information than they had in **Belton**, the town named for **Mark Belt**. He then asked permission to use the information on our website in their museum. Of course we said that was o.k. This story certainly illustrates the great research job **Dwight** and **Tom** have done. Wouldn't it be great if we could

also find the rest of the story of **Witold von Zychlinski** after he left **Pearland**. Someday, maybe. **Witold's** great grandson, **General William Willoughby**, certainly did a lot of research and couldn't come up with any further information. Who knows, maybe one of our **Historical Society** members may be doing some ancestry search and inadvertently come across the name **Zychlinski**; and it will be our **Witold**. There's always hope.

Speaking about our website, a lot of credit goes to **Society Member Ray Kliensing** for setting up and maintaining the site. He really did a good job setting it up; and as evidenced by the number of inquiries about **Pearland** history we get from people who have visited the website indicates it does attract attention. Another example of a timely visit is a message on the website from a lady named **Diane Coleman** who lives in **Georgia**. Here is a copy of her message:

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*"My husband's family tree includes Echolean C. (Zollman) Ackerly who was the first person buried in The Old Settler's Cemetery in Pearland on Aug. 11, 1894. We were delighted to read the Texas Historical Markers and information on this site about Pearland. Echolean and her husband David first left Rockbridge Co., Va. in the mid 1880's for Colfax, Nebraska. Sometime between 1891 and 1894 they came to Pearland. David spent his last days at the Old Confederate's Home in Higginsville, Missouri and is buried there. Amazing how the couple moved around!"*

Isn't it amazing that just after **Dwight** and **Tom** did all the research on **Mark Belt** and found he wound up as **Mayor of Higginsville, Mo.** and was instrumental in establishing the **Old Confederate's Home**, we get a hit on the website from a lady whose ancestor, **David Ackerly**, was in **Pearland** in the 1890's and then moved to **Higginsville, Mo.** and died at the **Old Confederate Home** in the same town as **Mark Belt**. Thanks to **Ray** for the website and thanks to **Dwight** and **Tom** for all their work. For some of you older members who no longer live in

**Pearland, Ray Kliesing** is the son of **Sidney and Reba Kliesing** and the grandson of **Raymond Kliesing**. The **Kliesing** family has played a major role in the history of Pearland.

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### Looking Back

Our **Historical Society** has quite a few old **Pearland Progress** newspapers from past years. Recently we found a story in the **July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1964** which really makes one realize how much **Pearland** has grown in the past 47 years. According to the **Texas Almanac** **Pearland** had a population of 1497 citizens in 1960 and 6449 in 1970; so in 1964 the population was probably around 2500 to 3000. The story we found interesting was the preliminary **Pearland City Budget** for 1964 – 65. Total budget was \$140,000 with \$123,000 for expenditures and \$17,000 for reserve

Tax revenue figures were \$72,000. Revenue from water and sewer service was expected to be \$46,630.

Expenses were estimated to be \$32,305 for administrative costs which includes *“all salaries of hired personnel, supplies, maintenance, and other costs of business.”*

For legal expenses \$3100 was budgeted.  
Operation of the police department: \$35,225.  
Operation of the water and sewer systems: \$26,850.

City employees hospital costs were budgeted to be \$360.

Editor’s Note: Does anyone remember back in 1964 thinking about how our City was throwing our money away?

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*A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.*

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**Old Depot – Will it ever be a museum?**

A question that keeps being asked not only by **Historical Society** members but also by quite a number of other **Pearland** citizens is when is the Historical Society going to set up their historical museum in the **Old Depot**? The answer has always been preceded by “as soon as”. When the **Chamber of Commerce** occupied the building the answer was “as soon as” the **Chamber** moves out. This answer went on for years until hurricane **Ike** damaged the building and the **Chamber** had to find other quarters. Then the answer became “as soon as” the **City** repairs the damage to the building. Finally the sub structure to the building was fixed last year and our **Museum Committee, Karen Corron, Luther Cunningham, Dwight Bittick** and I finally got to go in and check out the building. **Karen**, who helped set up a museum in **Isle, Minnesota**, pointed out that the building needed to made handicap accessible before we could open a museum to the public. So it was back to the **City** and it became “as soon as” the **City** gets a budget to make the depot handicap accessible (which by the way they estimated the cost to be \$60,000). A couple of weeks ago our **Museum Committee** again met with **Michelle Smith, Pearland Parks and Recreation Director** and we were informed that the estimate is now \$200,000; and it would be restructured to use the big meeting room as a room to be rented to the public for wedding receptions, etc.

Our **Committee** took the position that the **Museum** which would be run by **Historical Society** volunteers would be an asset to the **City**

and in our opinion the major operating expenses (utilities, building maintenance, etc.) should be paid by the **City**. **Michelle** is working on her budget at this time and advises that the old depot (museum) will be a separate item and when she presents it, we will be asked to attend the meeting to present our position.

So that is where we stand. When **Margery Johnston** passed away, **Jerry Johnston** sent us an e-mail saying **Margery** had several boxes of historical items and we needed the museum to store them. We hear this over and over from not only our members but from other citizens as well. So you might want to let your councilman know that the museum would be an asset to the **City** and we need to get with it.

In the meantime, we will be exploring other options trying to find a place to start work on identifying, marking and storing all the historical documents and memorabilia we have now.

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### **A Little More History**

*Throughout this Newsletter we have referred several times to items which were in the History of Pearland which Marjorie Lawrence put together back in 1976. Another interesting section of the book contained several short family histories. We previously wrote about the impact the Kliesing family has had on the history of Pearland. Marjorie's book has a brief "Kliesing Family" history. The following is a very brief Kliesing family history taken both from Marjorie's book and also from Rosalie Ferguson's great book about Pearland families.*

*Fred Kliesing, born in Germany, moved to Pearland in 1909 from Missouri to pick oranges and pears. When Fred Kliesing came to Pearland, he and wife Effie Riley Kliesing had five children: Jess, Dan, Elsie, Esther and Raymond. Three additional children were born in Pearland: Mable, Ruby, and Clifford. At that time the Allison-Richey Land Company had an experimental farm on Garden Road where they*

*grew unusually large vegetables from special imported seeds. Fred's job was to drive prospective land buyers to the farm in a two-wheel buggy.*

*In 1923 a two week blizzard that killed thousands of cattle hit this area. Frozen cattle were everywhere. Raymond Kliesing collected the bones from the dead cattle and hauled them to a mill in Houston to be ground into fertilizer. With this money in 1924 Raymond bought a service station on Broadway; and then he obtained a Chevrolet franchise in 1929. With a lot of hard work through the years, Raymond's Chevy Agency became one of the largest in Texas, he built an airport in Pearland, built homes and had the Wander Tavern we write so much about. This is just a brief bit of the Kliesing story. The family is a big part of Pearland's history. Thanks to all the Kliesings who now work in our Historical Society and who continue to contribute to Pearland History.*

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**Don't forget our regular quarterly Historical Society meeting Tuesday night, April 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M. at the Knapp Senior Center on Park St. This will be a joint "Old Pearland" and Historical Society Meeting. As usual cookies, soft drinks and coffee and visitation follow the meeting. Hope to see you there.**

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### **Take A Moment To Thank A Veteran**

**When you see someone in a uniform,  
Someone who serves us all,  
Doing military duty,  
Answering their country's call,  
Take a moment to thank them  
For protecting what you hold dear;  
Tell them you are proud of them;  
Make it very clear.  
Just tap them on the shoulder,  
Give a smile, and say,  
"Thanks for what you're doing  
To keep us safe in the USA!"**

**By Joanna Fuchs**



