

# PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Editor: John D. "Mickey" Mark  
E-mail: [mark325@prodigy.net](mailto:mark325@prodigy.net)

Pearland Historical Society  
P. O. Box 1333  
Pearland, Texas 77588

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

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This will be my last "President's Message" since we will have a new **president and vice-presidents and treasurer**. (More about our new officers further in the Newsletter)

I have been writing the Newsletter since **June, 1994** when **Susan Lenamon** was president of the "Historical Society."

Many of you are aware the **City of Pearland** will be celebrating our **125<sup>th</sup>** anniversary of **Witold Zychlinski** filing the plat of the original **Pearland in September 1894**. Thanks to information provided by a couple of members of our **Society**, we have a lot more information about **Zychlinski and Mark Belt** (original name of railroad station prior to 1894). According to old time **Pearlanders**, **Witold Zychlinski** was a **Polish** nobleman who was here in **Pearland** trying to sell land for the **Brazoria Land and Cattle Company** and after the town was founded, he left **Pearland** and was never heard from since. There were many skeptics about his being a **Polish** nobleman. **Society member Tom Hunter**, who lives in **Denver**, found **Zychlinski's** great grandson, (retired air force general **William Willoughby**) living in **Chicago** who provided us with a photo of **Zychlinski** and who was working on a family history book which confirmed **Witold's** Polish nobility. Interestingly **General Willoughby** never knew

anything about "**Pearland**". He did come down for the **Zychlinski Park Texas Historical** celebration in 2008.

Also there were different stories about why **Pearland** was originally known as "**Mark Belt**". Some said it was because when the railroad first came through **Pearland** in the **1870's**, there was a railroad siding called "**Mark Belt**". Others said **Mark Belt** was the foreman of the cattle company which was raising cattle on thousands of acres in this area. **Society Member Dwight Bittick**, who has done a lot of research for the **Society**, found a quip in an old **Galveston News** saying "**Mark Belt of Mark Belt, Texas** had spent the night in a **Galveston Hotel**." Further research found that **Mark Belt** was foreman for the cattle company out of **St. Louis, Mo.** and produced a picture of him. He later started a railroad in **Missouri**; and the town of **Belton, Mo.** is named for him. Interestingly when we contacted the **Belton Historical Society** to get more information, they informed us that we had more information than they did. Photos of **Zychlinski and Mark Belt** now hang in **City Hall**.

So for our 12th celebration, the citizens of **Pearland** will have a lot more history than we had for the 100<sup>th</sup> thanks to our **Historical Society**.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

As mentioned earlier we will have a new group of officers for our **Historical Society** starting after our meeting coming up **Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>**.

**President will be Jerry Johnston; 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Brenda Riggs and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Donald Hayes; Treasurer Marsha Swensen McDaniel. Karen Kliesing** will continue as **Secretary** where has done an outstanding job.

New **President Jerry Johnston** is from a very longtime **Pearland** family as are **Brenda Martin Riggs, Marsha Swensen McDaniel and Karen Kliesing. Donald Hayes** has been a **Pearland** resident for about 17 years (I believe) and has shown a great interest in **Society** activities and hopefully will encourage other younger members into our **Society**.

Below is a note from new **President Jerry Johnston** to members of our **Society**:

*“Hope 2019 finds everyone well and happy. I am looking forward to a busy year for the Historical Society. Thanks to the previous officers for their dedication these past many years. Mickey will still be our news link and Newsletter editor, so let him know what’s going on. As you may know, 2019 is the quasiquicentennial year for Pearland (sounds like something my Mother made us eat). For all of us tongue tied folks that’s 125 years. Sounds like a long time, but I’ve been here more than half of it and others a lot longer than that. Keep an eye out for some City events during the year. The “Depot Restoration Project” will kick off this year. See separate article about Society involvement. We had a great turnout for the annual luncheon honoring the class of 1968. They presented us with a picture booklet and CD of class memories. This year we honor the class of 1969. I have already contacted those former classmates about same. Come on out to the next meeting and visit. We’re always glad to see you.*

*Jerry Johnston*

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## What's Happening

**Society member Don Hayes** who heads up the **Depot Project** reports the project is moving ahead. The logo for the **Depot** was finalized and is attached here. It will be used during our public fundraising period and ongoing, after the project is completed. The **Pearland Historical Society** has entered into a **Memorandum of Understanding** with the **City of Pearland** to act as the non-profit to receive project donations. **Kim Sinistore** is providing periodic status updates to **City of Pearland** administration. Finishing touches are being put on the project’s first fundraising effort - the sale of commemorative brick pavers. The website for the project - [www.pearlanddepot.com](http://www.pearlanddepot.com) - will soon go officially live in support of the project. The subcommittees have all met and are working on their respective goals. We are exploring a number of public event ideas to promote the project.



New **President Jerry Johnston** added the following comments re the **Depot Project**.

**Wanting to see the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe depot restored, preserved and renovated** has been a topic around Pearland for several years. The **Pearland Convention and Visitors Bureau** has taken on the project and has pledged \$500,000 towards this goal. Several

committees have formed, including the “Citizens Depot Committee, the fundraising committee, the Education and Programming Committee. If you have interest in serving on one of these committees or have ideas or suggestions, contact Donald Hayes or the Visitors Bureau office. An additional \$400,000 will need to be raised to fund the project. The Historical Society, being a 501C3 charitable organization, will be responsible for receiving donated funds and accounting for them as well as sending out acknowledgements and annual statements. These funds will be held in a project account and will not be dispersed of without approval of proper City officials.

**Jerry Johnston**

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The ArtWalk Open House, in conjunction with the Pearland Alliance for Arts & Culture, was held on Thursday, December 13. The Pearland Historical Society hosted more than a dozen visitors over the two-hour event, including Mayor Tom Reid, artist Vicky Gooch, PAAC Executive Director Heidi Weiss, Pearland Convention & Visitors Bureau Executive Director Kim Sinistore, and Pearland Arts League board member Naomi Stevens. (See picture below) One new membership was received from arts patron Sam Kanappan. A special exhibit, celebrating the work and art of local cartoonist and news reporter William “Bill” Odell, was featured during the open house.



As reported in the last edition of the Newsletter, **Brenda Martin Riggs** continues to work on her pictorial book about early Pearland. If you have any pictures to share, please email to **Brenda Riggs** at [pearland.brendariggs@gmail.com](mailto:pearland.brendariggs@gmail.com)

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The sad part of writing the Newsletter is writing about our members and old time Pearlanders who have passed away recently

**Society Member Dann Wheelock** passed away **November 8<sup>th</sup>** after a long battle with heart problems. Our sympathies go out to his wife, **Karan**.

**Society Member Winnie Borden Weaver** passed away **December 19<sup>th</sup>**. Winnie was a member of the long time **Borden/Long** family.

In **2018** we lit candles at our luncheon for **Society Members** who had passed away since our **2017** luncheon. Candles were lit for **Patsy Talbot Burkett, Gerrie Cook, John “Bootsie” Yost and Reba Eddings Kliesing**

We have lost a number of long time Pearlanders since the last Newsletter.

Long time Pearlander, **Herman Raney**, passed away **January 7<sup>th</sup>** after a rather lengthy illness. **Herman** had been in **Windsong Nursing Home**. **Herman** established his insurance business, “**Raney Farmers Insurance Agency** many years ago. It is currently run by **Herman’s** son, **Lee Raney**. He is survived by **Lee** and wife **Brenda**, and daughter and son-in-law **Lynette**

and Jimmy Wilson and daughter Liz and son-in-law Everett Alley. Herman had been an active member of the Pearland business community for many years and will be greatly missed.

We were all saddened to hear about Claude Lilley's son, Kyle, passing away recently at the age of 59. Claude lost his wife, Anna Barbara, in 2017 and now his son. Our sympathies go out to Claude. We wish that he and recent wife Martha have a long and happy marriage.

Other long time Pearlanders who have passed away since the last Newsletter were Gene Dair Guy Griffin (1945 PHS grad); Debbie Guidry Green; Louis Triplett; Mike Carbone; Sam Paris (who lived in a home on San Antonio street which was built from scrap lumber from the old Suburban Garden Hotel); and recently former Pearland Justice of Peace Bill Todd.

An update of members going through health problems.

Society member Jennie Talbot is in Evening Star Nursing Home in Alvin. Carl visits Jennie almost every day and reports Jennie is going through a lot of problems.



Carl & Jennie at one of our Reunion Luncheons

Carleen Mark spent 3 days in Clear Lake Hospital recently with a urinary tract infection.

Carleen continues to have home health therapy for help with her congestive heart condition.

As most of you are aware Society Member David Smith has been in Trinity Oaks Assisted Living Center for quite sometime. I received the following e-mail update from his daughter, Susan.,



David Smith

*"In the early part of December, Daddy began telling us his eyesight was failing. Immediately made ophthalmologist appointment but he couldn't get an appointment for 4 days. When we did see the doctor, Daddy could not see anything out of the right eye and the vision in the left eye was beginning to deteriorate. The ophthalmologist recommended a retinologist and an appointment was made. Before we even saw this doctor Daddy was scheduled for an out-patient biopsy of the temporal artery. He did well through the procedure and the results of the biopsy were very grim. With no sight in either eye his lifestyle has changed again—no dominoes, cards, bingo and no reading of any printed material. This situation has hit him hard as well as us. We see another specialist Monday and we hope he has some good news for some sight at least. PLEASE PRAY FOR HIM AND LEAH, MARTHA AND ME".*

Most of our members will remember the many contributions which David has made for the City of Pearland. For many years he and wife,

**Frankie**, made almost every run made by the **EMS**. **David** will be **93** next summer. Keep him in your prayers.

Now for some good news. Many of you are aware that **Society Member Dwight Bittick** has been undergoing chemo therapy for bone marrow cancer. Recently the doctors declared that his cancer is in remission. As mentioned earlier in the **Newsletter**, **Dwight** is the one who found information about **Mark Belt** which answered the question if the name **Mark Belt** was the name of the railroad siding or the name of a person residing in **Pearland** when the railroad first came through. **Dwight's** research has turned up a lot of interesting information about old **Pearland** and **old Pearland families**

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**Society Member Tom Hunter** sent the following story. On a personal note, thanks for the comments, **Tom**; and also, thanks for bringing back memories of our first **Little League** teams in **Pearland**.

#### **Mickey Mark**

*In the spring of 1957, a group of us sat in the elementary school Auditorium on Grand Boulevard and waited to see which of four teams we would be assigned to in the first little league in Pearland: Braves, Dodgers, Tigers or Yankees. A year before, I read my first "real" book, which I checked out of the Brazoria County Bookmobile: "Lou Gehrig: A Quiet Hero," by Frank Graham. I knew it was inappropriate to pray about trivial personal matters, but was hoping real hard I would get to play for the Yankees. Then I heard my name and team called out, "Tommy Hunter, Braves." My disappointment was sharp but short-lived.*

*Several days later, we gathered at the baseball field now known as Zychlinski Park and waited for the coach to show up for our first practice. This was the first time I met Mickey Mark, who pulled up in his car and stopped on*

*the Park Avenue side of the field near the huge sycamore tree. He greeted us and handed out our uniforms, which consisted of white T-shirts with "BRAVES" stenciled in red letters across the front, and red caps with a white "B." No fancy jerseys, pants or stirrups.*

*On that day and in subsequent practices, Mickey worked with us on the fundamentals of hitting and fielding and introduced us to the ritual of Infield. My friend Donald King was on the team as well as left-handed first baseman Louis Villanueva and catcher Mike Castillo, who was probably our best player. When Mike broke a finger in a game, Mickey pressed me into catching duties, which I wasn't too happy about at first. I preferred pitching and playing shortstop and had no interest in donning the so-called "tools of ignorance."*

*The first problem I had behind the plate was losing sight of a pitched ball when the batter swung and missed, Mickey showed me how to hold the catcher's mitt steady in the same position and wait for the pitch. This and other valuable tips from Mickey made me a more versatile player. Later that year, I was happy when "my" Milwaukee Braves beat the New York Yankees in the 1957 World Series.*

*I lost touch with Mickey Mark for several decades. In 2003, I bought a book by Chris Epting entitled, "Roadside Baseball: Uncovering Hidden Treasures from our National Pastime." Along with obvious references to Yankee Stadium, Fenway Park, and Wrigley Field was a page on Zychlinski Park in Pearland. I was astonished that the little baseball field where I played for Mickey Mark was mentioned in the same book as the "House That Ruth Built." I sent the book to Mickey and touched base with him for the first time in years and joined the Pearland Historical Society.*

*In 2005 while doing research, I found William Willoughby, the great-grandson of Witold Zychlinski, the man who filed the plat in*

*Angleton on September 26, 1894, officially changing the name of Mark Belt, Texas to Pear Land. Mr. Willoughby sent me a photograph of his great-grandfather, which I forwarded to Mickey Mark, who published it in the Pearland Historical Society Newsletter along with my story about finding Zychlinski.*

*Finally, it was Mickey Mark who persuaded me to write a story about my grandparents, Robert L. and Julia Martin Hunter, which he considered a "slam dunk" for historical recognition. He submitted my narrative to the Texas Historical Commission where it was approved in 2013 and resulted in the placement of a state historical marker at Hunter Park on Orange Street in Pearland.*

*While recognizing the important contributions to the Pearland Historical Society by members Peggy Farthing Long, Brenda Martin Riggs, Luther Cunningham, Ray Kliesing, Dwight Bittick and others, I wanted to pay special tribute to Mickey Mark who has now stepped down as president. Thanks, Mickey, for being an encouraging coach, an accommodating editor, and a good friend.*

*Tom Hunter, PHS '65*



**Tom Hunter (right) with Donald King at one of our Reunion Luncheons**

*Editor's Note: Tom's story brings back a lot of old memories (good ones) about the start of our first summer baseball program. I believe we had 48 boys age 9 through 12 sign up and the*

*future managers drew names out of a hat with each team having an equal number of 9, 10, 11 and 12 year olds. Pearland High School had dropped baseball a couple of years earlier because they didn't have enough boys come out for baseball to make up a team. Coach Jug Backhaus and I decided to start the summer youth program to build up interest again.*

*I remember very well that first practice Tom writes about. I felt we had some pretty good talent. I was especially pleased that we had a catcher prospect, Mike Castillo, who was a big, strong 12 year old and a good catcher. I always felt catcher was a vital part of the line-up. When Mike got hurt, I felt Tommy would be the best prospect; and it did turn out he did a good job. I can't remember who won the league that summer; but it was a fun summer.*

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### **October Luncheon**

As usual we will need help from members of the **PHS** graduating class of fifty years ago (1969) in getting addresses and contacting members of the class. Usually the members will be planning a separate celebration at about the same time as our luncheon and one of their members works at getting notifications to all class members. We normally send out invitations to our luncheon in the spring. We would certainly appreciate any volunteers from the **class of 69** in providing us with names and addresses of class members. Our luncheon is scheduled for **Saturday, Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>**. Any help in contacting 1969 grads would be appreciated

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### **PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY FACEBOOK**

If you have never visited the **Pearland Historical Society Facebook** page, you really should and look at all the photos **Society Member David DeHoyas** has posted there.

Some bring back a lot of old memories. There are numerous pictures from reunion lunches in the past, old **Pearland** pictures and lots of pictures of members of our **Society**. One group of pictures just posted are pictures of members of the **Pearland High School** travel clubs from years past. Many of us who took a trip with the travel club have some great memories. For those who don't know about the travel clubs, when **Pearland** first opened the new high school in 1937, they started a boys travel club and a girls travel club where each group would take a 2 week trip on the school bus. I don't know what the cost was in 1937, but the trip in 1948 cost \$15 per person. The boys travel club that year went to **Colorado** usually spending the nights sleeping in parks but a few times sleeping in school gymnasiums. **David** has put up a lot of pictures from the girls travel club. One I can identify from persons I recognize in the picture as being either a 1948 or 1949 trip. The picture as taken in **Washington D.C.**



The picture is not very clear but the tall, blonde girl in the center of the first row is **Reba Eddings Kliesing (1949)**; 2<sup>nd</sup> person on her right is **Carleen Nichols Mark**. I believe 1<sup>st</sup> person to her right is **Maureen Mahanay**. I believe the tall dark haired girl on her left is **Nordema Arbuckle** and on **Nordema's** left is **Betty Jane Cook Knappe**.

Thanks, **David** for posting a lot of interesting old **Pearland** pictures

## New Officers

At our next meeting **Thursday night, Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>** a new group of officers will take their positions in our **Historical Society**.

**President will be Jerry Johnston. Jerry is a longtime resident of Pearland and his family is one of the Pearland pioneer families. Grandparents were Harold "Tud" and Thelma Johnston. Their home was at the intersection of Highway 518 (west) and Walnut, which was out in the country years ago. The Johnstons farmed hundreds of acres west of Pearland (rice, hay, cattle, etc.) Tud Johnston was also supervisor of the old Pearland fig plant and chairman of the first Pearland water board.**

**Treasurer will be Marsha Swensen McDaniel whose family also has a long history here in Pearland. Both her father and grandfather were home builders in Pearland. Many of the older homes in Pearland were built by a Swensen, who were known for the quality work they did.**

**First Vice-President is Brenda Martin Riggs, whose family also was one of the Pearland pioneer families. Her great grandfather, Samuel Pleasant Martin won a contest as the most handsome man in Pearland back when land developers were using unique ideas for promoting the sale of land. Samuel Pleasant Martin won a city lot on the corner of Park Street. Brenda is retired from the Pearland School District, and is currently working on a pictorial history book of old Pearland.**

**Second Vice-President will be Donald Hayes. Donald Hayes. Donald is not an old time Pearlander; but he has certainly taken a great interest in our Society and working on projects. Donald heads the Save the Depot project. He also lives in the new part of Pearland out west and we certainly need to attract younger members and west side residents to our Society.**

**Karen Kliesing will continue to do the fine job as Secretary. The Kliesing family also has a long history in Pearland. Karen and brother Ray have certainly contributed greatly to our Society.**

I became **President of the Pearland Historical Society in April, 1995**. I will continue to do the **Newsletter**. I have thoroughly enjoyed working as **President** of our **Society** and want to sincerely thank the officers who have worked diligently to help in any way asked.

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Luther Cunningham** has been there to do whatever was asked of him; and has offered many, many good ideas for our progress. **Thanks, Luther.**



**Luther Cunningham at my side ready to do whatever was asked of him.**

**Peggy Farthing Long** has done a great job as **Treasurer**. **Peggy** has kept financial records, filed our tax reports, paid bills and kept books in a really competent manner through the years. **Thanks, Peggy**



**Peggy & Brenda**

I also want to thank all of our members who have been very supportive in making our Society grow and increasing our influence in the **City**.

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**Historical Society membership**

**dues for the year 2019 became due**

**Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>. Dues paid in the last**

**quarter of 2018 cover your**

**membership through 2019**  
.....

**Don't forget our regular quarterly**

**Historical Society meeting**

**Thursday night Jan. 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00**

**at our Historical Society home on**

**Galveston Ave. Cookies, Coffee,**

**Cold Drinks and visitation will**

**follow the meeting. See you there.**

PEARLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY Membership Application

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is my check in the amount of

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ covering membership dues of \$15 per person for the following

persons for the year 2019 Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

More Names:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Note: Dues paid in the last quarter of the year cover the following year. Mail to: Pearland Historical Society, P.O. Bo 1333, Pearland, Texas 77588

