

TO THE CITIZENS OF TEXAS

We share the greatest history of any State in the Union. Shortly we will celebrate the 175th year of our victory on the plains of San Jacinto and the birth of a nation, the Republic of Texas.

In this same year our history is under siege. The leader of this assault on our historical heritage is not a foreign military commander. It is our own political leadership. With the pen, not the sword, they suggest dissolving or emasculating the Texas Historical Commission (THC), the guardian organization for all the components of the structural history of Texas.

This attack should get the same greeting we gave at San Jacinto to the last individual who sought to end our history, San Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna—Defeat!

The THC commission protects the historical structures of Texas, the visible symbols of the incredible history we all share and in doing so through at least three important programs, makes money for this State. Few agencies can make that claim.

1. Courthouse renovation, which has restored 55 courthouses to date and importantly restored the soul of those towns in which they reside by bringing economical revival to the center of these rural and urban communities. To date,

the State has invested \$227 million in courthouses, matched by counties with \$150 million and having returned so far more than \$240 million in revenue while providing 8,671 jobs.

2. The Main Street Program, started 30 years ago, has inspired the restoration of blighted downtown areas in 160 cities across our diverse landscape bringing more than \$2.5 billion of investment to these communities and creating 29,207 jobs. Without the THC leadership many downtowns would be ghost towns.
3. The Heritage Trails Program delineates and promotes visitation to significant historical sites across every county of Texas. This has proven a Godsend to thousands of small towns as it has permitted them to benefit from the fastest growing element of the tourist business—heritage tourism. Texas is selling its greatest asset, our History and still keeping it. For every \$1 invested in the Trails program, the return to the State is \$6.

Aside from this, the THC has overseen the preservation of countless Native American sites and the restoration of vast numbers of historical structures frequently with money from private sources. Recent in our memory is the salvage of La Salle's ship, the *LaBelle*, which brought worldwide acclaim to Texas.

The most effective promoter of this history and best protector of all its representative iconic structures is the THC. If it did not generate a dime in revenue, its cause would be

more than worthy of the less than one-tenth of one percent of the State budget it presently receives. But, in truth, it gives back far more in revenues than it receives.

It is in upholding this historical heritage that Texans have demonstrated their unique entrepreneurial spirit to the nation and the world. What better answer to the question, “Who are you?” than “I am a Texan.”

The modern components of this history was forged over 483 years beginning with Spanish exploration in 1528 and extending to the exploration of space at NASA.

Between those bookend events, we distinguished ourselves in three revolutions—the American under Bernado de Galvez; the Mexican Revolution; and our own, the Texas revolution led by Sam Houston, ending at the Battle of San Jacinto, called one of the 16th most decisive battles in world history.

The great trail drives, the most romantic chapter in Western history was a Texas creation.

The last of the Indians Wars against the Apache were fought on Texas soil, home to the Comanche Indians, Lords of the Plains and the greatest light cavalry in world history.

At Ft. Davis, Texas, the 9th and 10th Cavalry, all Black soldiers and their Seminole Indians scouts were the winners of 4 Medals of Honor. The most decorated fighting unit in U.S. history.

The beginnings of both the modern cattle and petroleum industries were rooted in Texas soil.

From the Alamo and San Jacinto, to Gettysburg or the beaches of Normandy and the outskirts of Baghdad, Texans have distinguished themselves with a continuing tradition of uncommon courage in battle. Adding to this Texas tradition of service in time of need, A&M University graduated more officers in World War II than West Point.

It is a history made by all races and faiths and it is a great and wondrous as the land upon which it was shaped by heroes, both visible and invisible.

I say who is going to cast the first vote for the destruction of this history? May their name and any who choose to join them go down in infamy.

The stakes are clear. It is either VICTORY for the cause of our history or DEATH to this worthy institution, the Texas Historical Commission.

J. P. Bryan of Texas
Former, THC Commissioner
Nephew of Stephen F. Austin