



## Historic depot in new landscape

# HERITAGE GALA SET FOR MAY 31



*Garland Landmark Society.*

**Rail car, left, and renovated Santa Fe Depot housing Garland Landmark Society Museum, at new site.**

Landmark's Santa Fe Depot Museum, gleaming in fresh yellow paint and firmly planted on a new foundation in the city's newly-named Heritage Crossing, awaits a May 31 reopening preceded by a week-long program celebrating the city's history.

Heritage Crossing is the pedestrian corridor along Walnut Street from Fifth Street on the east to Glenbrook on the west, a strip of green landscaping on either side of the DART train line. The museum is on the south side of the rail line at Sixth Street, behind Nicholson Memorial Library.

A high point of the celebration, still in planning stages, will be the rededication of the museum's Texas State Historical marker installed on the 1901 depot's front wall near its entrance. The depot had been located in Heritage Park, across Museum Drive from City Hall, since it was moved there in 1972 from its original site just 150 yards away to become a museum maintained by the newly created Landmark Society. An added

marker beneath the original will note the depot's latest relocation.

Additional activities are intended to mark the museum reopening, the Sixth Street extension from Austin to Walnut, and to emphasize Garland's railroad heritage. Events will include a model train exhibit at Nicholson Central Library, entertainment by local musicians, movies shown outdoors or in the Plaza Theater, and guided walking tours of historically significant sites in the downtown area, including the Square.

A multi-storied parking garage is being constructed on the former Heritage Park site for use by city hall employees, nearby apartment and condo residents, and shoppers. It is part of the city's extensive Downtown Redevelopment Program, a 4-phase, multi-million dollar plan, whose current Phase 2 is expected to cost the city about \$27 million, not including private

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# Landmark leaders are re-elected

## Board adds Evelyn Montgomery and John Swanson

President Janice Black and three other officers were re-elected by members of Garland Landmark Society April 7 at the organization's annual meeting. Members of the 40-year-old organization, who volunteer their time to collect and preserve the city's history and operate its Depot Museum, also re-elected five directors and added two more to fill vacancies.

New directors are Evelyn Montgomery, PhD, of Dallas, Director of Collections, Exhibits and Preservation at Dallas Heritage Village, and John L. Swanson, an engineer with General Dynamics in Garland.

Dr. Montgomery in the past has served as a consultant to Landmark on arrangement and display of its exhibits in the Museum Depot. She fills a vacancy left by Joan Nelson, former Landmark president, who had returned to the board last year. Ms. Nelson will become Vice-President, Membership. Mr. Swanson replaces Rick Eads, who resigned from the board last year because of illness in his family.

Dr. Montgomery has worked in the curatorial department at Dallas Heritage Village (Old City Park) for 14 years. A native of Connecticut,



**Evelyn Montgomery**

she came to Texas as a teenager to attend Texas Christian University, graduating with a bachelor of science degree in interior design. She received advanced degrees in architecture and humanities at the University of Texas at Arlington and UT-Dallas, where she also earned a PhD in humanities.

Mr. Swanson came to Garland to join GD in 2005. Bill Dickson, president of Landmark at that time, became a close friend and Mr. Swanson soon afterward became a member of Landmark. A native of Illinois, he is active in his church, and enjoys hunting, fishing, golf and recreational activities. His expertise in computer technology has been



**John Swanson**

a valuable assist in Landmark's record-keeping.

Debbie Goldin, who had served as treasurer since the resignation last year of Mary Dingle, will become secretary-treasurer as the two offices are combined. Ms. Dingle, who had served as treasurer since 2011 until her resignation last year for health reasons, died in December, 2013.

Other officers are Bill Dickson, Vice-President, Development and Museum Affairs, and Michael Hayslip, Curator.

Re-elected to the board were Bob Compton, Claude Doane, Bob Dunn, Jay Jones, and Pete Nelson.

## Wright on!

# He led the city at peak of its boom years

The step is a little slower, and the once-dark hair, still clipped in short, military style, is gray and more sparse. But the big smile is still there, and the eyes glint with the same “can-do” eagerness that has been Ernest Wright’s trademark for all his 92 years.

That youthful energy propelled Ernie (the informal name he prefers) to election as Garland’s mayor for two terms in the city’s peak 1950s boom years when it was Texas’ fastest growing city and among the nation’s top. In 1940, at the onset of World War II, Garland counted not quite 2,500 people. By 1950, that number had jumped to 10,577. The figure stood at about 18,000 in 1958 when Wright and his fellow councilmen were sworn in. It had grown to more than 38,000 four years later when he left office after two terms. His bid for a third term failed in the elections of 1962.

He retired from city government, but not from business and public life. He continued as an active architect and was involved in other business enterprises until 1984, when heart problems convinced him to seek a more leisurely life. He remains an active member of Garland’s First Baptist Church, which he and his family joined in 1953 on their second week in Garland.

He lives alone now in the house he designed as a student at UT and built in 1960 on a roomy, tree-shaded lot in South Garland. His beloved wife, Vera Jo, the girl he first met in grade

school when they were growing up in Commerce, Hunt County, died in January, a month before he reached his 92nd year. His daughters, who grew up in the house, now have families of their own, children and grandchildren — Linda, his first

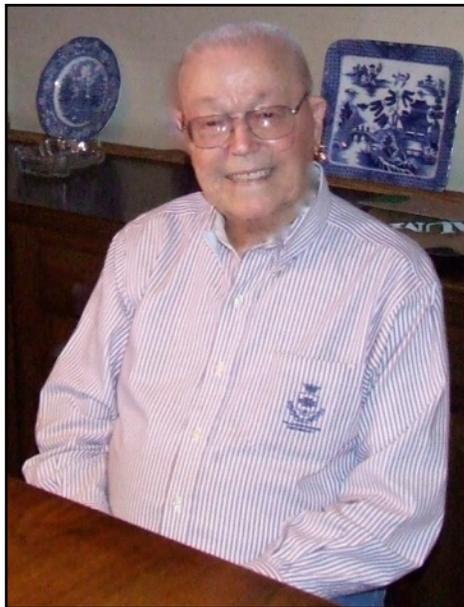
born, and her husband live in Sugar Land, Texas, and Sandra and her family are in Garland.

Most of his contemporaries are no longer around, but Wright has keen memories of them and of the events that filled his life.

He and his council notched a dozen or more notable successes in those two terms. While he was mayor, Garland built a 204-bed hospital, Garland Memorial (today Baylor Garland), and had successfully fought for and helped build a huge new sewage treatment facility in the Trinity lowlands of Kaufman County that would serve the Garland and two other cities for many years and allow room for expansion. It is still in operation. The city had

also developed a master plan for planning and zoning to keep pace with growth, added five fire stations, improved the city’s bond rating, and insured an adequate water supply for years to come.

A World War II veteran Army Air Corps flight engineer on B-17 bombing missions over Europe, Wright arrived in Dallas in 1953, working as a planner in the Dallas office of U.S. Public



**Garland Landmark Society**

Former Mayor Ernie Wright, at home.

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**Garland Landmark Society**

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 Pete Nelson  
 John Swanson

**Chuck Cabaniss (emeritus)**  
**Wylene Taft (emeritus)**

# Mary Dingle, valued member, former officer of Landmark

Mary Dingle, who created and edited Garland Landmark Society's newsletter *On Track*, died on Dec. 17, 2013, after a long battle with cancer. She was 69.

A member of Landmark since 2002, she had served on its board of directors for more than 10 years and as its corresponding secretary before being named treasurer of the organization in 2011. She created *On Track* in 2004 and served as its editor for more than six years.

On her election as treasurer, she was succeeded as editor of *On Track* by Bob Compton.

A native of Florida, Ms. Dingle came to Garland in 1999 with her husband, Jim Dingle, parts manager for a Garland and Dallas auto dealership. An avid reader, she almost immediately became active in Friends of the Garland Public Library organization, and for many years organized and supervised the library's annual book sale.

She also served that organization as vice president and as treasurer.

She was especially interested in vintage books on travel, and her husband collected books on

automobiles and cookbooks, which led to frequent road trips around North Texas to visit museums and searching for book sales.

In addition to her duties as treasurer of Landmark, Ms. Dingle was active in organizing its archives and its exhibits in the Depot Museum.

"Mary was an invaluable member," said Janice Black, president of Landmark. "She worked on so many projects, including exhibits, labeling museum items, filing -- so many essential jobs that we depend on volunteers to help us with."

Survivors, besides her husband, are a son, a daughter, and three grandchildren, all in Florida. Memorial services were private..



**Mary Dingle**

## The plunge into civic activities came early

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Housing Administration, his first job after getting his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Texas. He and his wife purposely chose Garland that year as the place to start a new life with their two young daughters.

In college, he and fellow student Joe Rich, had planned to form an architectural partnership, and that dream was realized in 1954 when he and Rich, newly returned from recall service as a U.S. Navy reservist, established Wright-Rich Associates, which became one of Dallas' most successful architectural firms.

Rich matched Wright in energy and they went on to success in other enterprises, including real estate, while still leading their prospering architectural firm. In 1971, they established a branch of a European travel business in the U.S. and Rich took over its management while Wright headed the architectural firm. The travel agency, with offices in Dallas, handled travel arrangements for some of the nation's largest corporations and some federal government offices.

In 1984, Wright retired from from the architectural firm, though he remained as a consultant for four years. Rich later sold the business before his death in 1988. During firm's more than 30 years, Wright-Rich designed buildings all over the state, including several Garland schools, its city hall, and Baylor/Garland Hospital, and Garland's Bank of America.

Wright plunged into civic activity quickly upon moving to Garland. At the invitation of old friend Earl Luna, he joined the Kiwanis Club. Concerned with the developing city he began attending City Council meetings.

"I remember those times pretty well," he says, with a laugh. "They met in a small room in old Nicholson Hall on the Square, and sometimes there weren't enough chairs for everyone, so they'd drag out old nail kegs as extra seats."

Wright was appointed to the City Plan Commission in 1955, and later served as its chairman. In 1956, some city businessmen



*Garland Landmark Society.*  
**Mayor Ernest E. Wright Jr. in 1958.**

persuaded him to be a city council candidate, and he narrowly lost.

The same group urged him to run for mayor in 1958, and he won that election, defeating incumbent W.H. Bradfield.. The focus of the election was about expansion of the city-owned power plant. The rivalry between Garland Power & Light and Texas Power & Light had been a contentious issue for many years. Wright and his slate of council candidates were for the expansion, the Bradfield group opposed it. Wright and all his

**(Please see WRIGHT on Page 7)**

# DEPOT MUSEUM READY AT NEW SITE

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sector investments.

The May 31 event also will signal the start of exterior refurbishment of the 1910, 70-foot rail coach that has been a companion piece to the museum since 1974, when Landmark arranged for it to be given to the city by Santa Fe Railroad.

Since 1972, the non-profit Landmark Society, which depends upon contributions to carry on its work of gathering and preserving city history, has been the city's unofficial history keeper, its volunteer workers assembling historic documents, photos and other items dealing with the city's beginnings and progress. Many items are in museum exhibits, which are being installed in new and refurbished cases before the reopening. Much of its extensive collection of documents, photos and historic writings may be read and viewed on its website: [garlandhistorical.org](http://garlandhistorical.org).

City planners are continuing to study a possible move to Heritage Crossing of the decaying Tinsley-Lyles house, part of which allegedly was constructed in the early 1870s. That house was given to the city, which failed to provide adequate funding for maintenance when it placed the house in Heritage Park, and Landmark was

unable to finance its upkeep. The companion Pace home also occupied the old Heritage Park site with the Santa Fe Depot Museum and rail car. It was maintained by the city and rented to residents for special occasions. Last summer, the city had proposed moving the Pace house to a site in Central Park, but the high cost and impracticality of the move cancelled that plan, and both houses were scheduled for destruction.

Though the houses had generated little interest from citizens during their 30 or so years at Heritage Park, news of their proposed destruction aroused a small group of residents whose protests last September prodded the city to set aside that plan and store the houses on trailers while negotiating with the protesters.

In February, the City Council approved a plan that would keep the Pace House in the city and offer it to someone who would remove the house to a private lot and maintain it. A preservation group promised to raise funds to maintain the Tinsley-Lyles House. The city is committed to spending up to \$179,000 preparing a site in Heritage Crossing and

moving the house there, hoping that the group can raise necessary funds for renovation and maintenance. It would be at a location west of the Depot Museum at the other end of Heritage Crossing. That plan is still being developed.



—Garland Landmark Society

**Historical marker on wall of Museum Depot.**

## Dallas Heritage Village: Structures lost and found

Tracking down and saving historical structures is no easy task, Dr. Evelyn Montgomery told members of Landmark Society at the organization's annual meeting April 7.

Dr. Montgomery, director of Collections, Exhibits and Preservation at Dallas Heritage Village in Old City Park, and a new Landmark board member, outlined aspects of her work in a slide show presentation in Nicholson Library. The library substituted for the Society's usual meeting place, the Depot Museum, which is being readied for a May 31 grand re-opening on its new Heritage Crossing site just behind the library.

The 12-acre Heritage Village at Harwood Street on the perimeter of downtown Dallas occupies a portion of a tract that was Dallas first city park. On its grounds are more than three dozen vintage structures depicting life in North Texas from about 1840-1910.

Dr. Montgomery explained how the late Joanne Wynne, wife of a Dallas civic leader Angus Wynne Jr., had traveled over North Texas in 1974 photographing and cataloguing almost 200 historic structures, a few of which later were moved and preserved at Heritage Village. In 2011, Dr. Montgomery retraced the Wynne travels and found many of those buildings still standing and in use. Many other had disappeared or were past repair.

Dr. Montgomery said that in scrapbooks of her exploratory journey that Ms. Wynne left behind, there is a page from which two photos have been removed, though descriptions remain.

The missing images are of two vintage Garland houses that have been the center of controversy in recent months — the Pace House, and the Tinsley-Lyles House, which were given to the City of Garland in the 1970s.

## Wright: “. . . with God's help, I did it my way”

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ticket won resoundingly.

Now, Garland Power & Light is the Texas' fourth largest municipally-owned utility and the 41st largest in the nation.

His position as Garland's leader led to Wright's appointment to a number of other offices: president of the Dallas County League of Municipalities, first president of the Region 13 (North Texas) of the Texas Municipal League, board member of the Southern Association of Cities, and vice-president of the Texas Municipal League.

Wright had sought the third the at the urging of the Texas Municipal League, which he was serving as president-elect in 1962, and was scheduled to become its president in 1963. The

loss prevented his taking that post.

Today, Wright still rises early, and stays busy. Physically, except for the slowdown that 92 years has forced, he does limited workouts and is in good shape, though several decades removed from his high school days as a Golden Gloves boxer, and letterman in football, track and basketball.

He penned his memoirs three years ago at the suggestion of his wife and daughters, beginning with his birth as the first of four sons of a Commerce sharecropper/carpenter. It's been pretty eventful — and fulfilling. As Ernie Wright states at the end his story:

“I did the best I could with what I had and I am so thankful to say, that with God's help, I did it my way.”



## Garland Landmark Society Depot Museum

393 North Sixth Street, Downtown Garland

The Depot Museum and the Rail Car are operated by the Garland Landmark Society, a non-profit and volunteer organization.

Now being prepared for operation at its new site, the Museum plans to reopen May 31. At that time, the traditional hours of operation will resume: First and third Saturdays of each month, 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Admission is free. Donations encouraged. Special tours by appointment.

Museum Phone: 972-205-2996

### Membership

Memberships, renewable each January, are Individual, \$15; Couple, \$20; Corporate, \$100

To join or renew, enclose payment with this information and mail to:

Garland Landmark Society, P.O. Box 462232, Garland TX 75046-2232

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: [www.garlandhistorical.org](http://www.garlandhistorical.org)



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