



The Way We Were: Landmark's Legacy

Created in 1972 to collect and preserve the city's history, Society nears its 40th anniversary

It wasn't an easy delivery.

Garland Landmark Society was born December 19, 1972, during a City Council meeting that turned stormy during debate on another issue that spilled into a discussion about the creation of the society. The *Garland News* reported the next day that, after tempers cooled, the Council voted to establish the society, an action that had long been planned.

Pumping life into the new group, the Council appointed a 9-member board of directors to coordinate local history efforts and to oversee Heritage Park, a sliver of land on North Fourth Street between Austin and State Streets across from City Hall which, at the time, contained -- nothing.

Things moved along in the start-up years, prodded by the initial excitement of having a central depository for city history. After that, there were some good years, and some very bad ones.

But as it nears the end of those first 40 years, the Society can, with some pride, state "We're still here!" as it looks to a future of great change.

That change will be initiated within the next few months by the move of the depot/museum and the vintage rail car that fronts it to a new park site on Sixth Street, behind Nicholson Memorial Library, the city's central book center. Details of the relocation, forced by

downtown redevelopment, have not yet been completed, but it appears certain that Landmark will be operating from its new site early in 2013.

The initial Landmark board included descendants of pioneer families, all genealogists of varying degrees and of varying ages. Their forebears had been early settlers or business leaders and farmers who were among Garland's first elected officials. Later board members would be representative of residents who came later as the city grew, with an interest in learning more about the area's history.

The spur for organization of a semi-official city history group was the city's acquisition of the old Santa Fe

Depot, built in

1901, and facing demolition as the city spurred in growth during World War II and afterward. The old depot sat in right-of-way the railroad had relinquished to join portions of Fifth Street, about 150 yards southeast of where the depot stands now.

The first Landmark directors were Joann Bardin, Wayde Cloud, Cecil Cooper, Curtis Crossman Jr., Michael R. Hayslip, Duane C. Holford, J. Elmer Newman, W.E. Peavy Jr., and Dorothy O. Range. Mr. Hayslip, then 29, was the youngest member. Now the museum's Curator, he is that first board's only survivor.

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The Santa Fe Depot, 1972, before restoration and move.

Garland -- A special place whose history needed telling

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Businessman Cooper was elected first president of Landmark, but died a few months later. Board members chose Mr. Hayslip to take his place, and in the years since then he has been instrumental in keeping the organization alive, refusing to let it slip into permanent sleep.

"In the beginning, everybody agreed that Garland was a special place whose history needed telling," says Mr. Hayslip. "That's the only part of our plan that hasn't changed."

He gives much credit to then-City Manager Charles Duckworth for making the move that led to creation of the historical group. It was Duckworth who convinced Santa Fe to donate the old depot to the city in exchange for Fifth Street right-of-way.

"People of the 'oughta be' persuasion had suggested for years that Garland needed a historical group to present the city's story through artifacts, memorabilia and records," said Mr. Hayslip. "But Charlie convinced the council to formalize that arrangement with the Landmark Society."

The historic old Santa Fe Depot, which would house the museum, was moved to its present site, plunked down on a new foundation, and freshly painted and restored by the city. On Sunday afternoon, September 29, 1974, the "new" old building

was dedicated, with all the hoopla that could be mustered, the ceremony highlighted by the acceptance, by Mayor Don Raines, of a Texas Historical Marker noting the depot's history.

In 1977, Santa Fe donated a 1910 Pullman car to the city, saving it from destruction, and Landmark members aided by other volunteers, cleaned up the the 70-foot, 62-ton day coach after the city moved it to its present location in 1978. No funds have been available to restore the decaying car, which has not been open to the public for many years.

In 1979, the Lyles house, an early Garland home, was donated to the city and moved to Heritage Park, at a site north of the depot. It is now used as a storage facility for the museum. To its east is another historic building, the Pace House, which is maintained by the city and rented out as a site for club meetings, weddings, parties and other private functions.

Membership in Landmark diminished after its early years, and activities of the organization waned somewhat during the 1980s and 1990s. But there was a revival of interest in the early years of the new millennium beginning with the election of Bill Dickson as president, that has continued. Largely through the efforts of immediate past president Joann Nelson, membership has grown
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Landmark Society Garland

P.O. Box 462232 (Mail)
Garland TX 75046-2232
200 Museum Plaza Dr. (location)
Garland TX 75040

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Janice Black

jfblack@yahoo.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Development/Museum Affairs

Bill Dickson

edickson@sbcglobal.net

VICE PRESIDENT

Membership

Debbie Goldin

debago22@hotmail.com

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Mary Dingle

madingle@earthlink.net

CURATOR

Michael Hayslip

hayslip@onlinetoday.com

DIRECTORS

Bob Compton

Editor, ON TRACK

Claude Doane

Bob Dunn

Jay Jones

Joann Nelson

Pete Nelson

Wylene Taft

Chuck Cabaniss (emeritus)

A revived Landmark Society scores more improvements

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to about 130, and Janice Black, her successor, hopes to maintain that number and see it grow.

"Members -- active members -- are vital to the museum and its projects," said Ms. Black, "and we need to bring in a new generation of citizens interested in building and extending the museum's collections, and taking part in projects that bring attention to the museum."

Landmark has been a private, non-profit Texas corporation since 1985 when its board was dissolved by a "sunset" process as an official, council-appointed city board.

Its activities have been markedly successful, with such notable programs as the annual publication of a Historic Calendar, beginning in 2000, the dedication of historical markers at important sites around the city, and a variety of publications: a map of historic Garland, the *On Track* quarterly newsletter for members and friends, and books of Garland history, most recently *Sketches of Kate James*, a memoir of early Garland, edited by Mr. Hayslip.

Most importantly, its recently redesigned website (www.garlandhistorical.org), makes an abundance of the city's history -- documents, photos, historical essays -- easily accessible to all, especially to researchers into Garland history.

Fulfilling the ongoing program of collecting and preserving Garland history depends on active members.

"We've always been beggars," said Mr. Hayslip, "but space limitations soon reduced the scale of individual quests, so that now we beg more for good vintage photographs than large items. Very little falls into the door without repeated solicitation, which some might call hounding.

"We've consistently begged for hands-on volunteers, as there never seem to be enough to do everything we'd like to.

"At first, we thought mostly in physical terms of the depot and its displays. Eventually we published and recorded some materials, but in the 21st Century we've promoted the digital dimension.

"Everything in our collection, dimensional or flat, requires cataloging, and it was Former Mayor Bob Day, during his Landmark presidency, who first tickled a keyboard to computerize our collection. And now our website transcends those physical boundaries to provide a 24-7 archive of Garland's progress.

"These changes lay beyond our comprehension 40 years ago, but history is a great teacher, so that the only thing I'm sure of for our future is change."

The Museum

200 Museum Plaza
Downtown Garland

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

Hours of Operation: First and third Saturdays of each month, 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

Off-hour tours available on request.

Museum Phone: 972-205-2996

(or) Joann Nelson, 972-564-1054

Admission: Free

Donations are encouraged



Membership

Memberships are available at these rates:

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

In Memoriam: Mary Ann Wooldridge

Whatever activity she engaged in, Mary Ann Keeley Wooldridge gave it her best -- as a teacher, which was her profession; the Good Shepherd Catholic Church, of which she was a charter member; to a variety of educational and civic clubs, including the Landmark Society; to the Garland High School Alumni Group, and to the Democratic Party. She was a devoted Democrat, and had served as a precinct chairman and as president of the Garland Democratic Women's Club. "Politics," she said in a 2004 interview, "is my first love."

Her ancestors settled in the Pleasant Valley area north of present-day Garland in the 1880s. She graduated from Garland High School in 1946, and from North Texas State University (now University of North Texas) in 1949 with a BA in education. She added a MA from Stephen F. Austin State University in 1976. A teacher in the Garland ISD

for 34 years, she retired in 1989, and threw herself full time into civic activities.

A longtime member of Landmark, she served as vice-president/membership for two terms before stepping down in 2004, serving as a board member until she resigned in 2009 because of health problems. The long illness gradually forced her to give up all her activities, and she died at home on August 30, leaving behind two children, grandchildren, other relatives and a host of friends.

One of those close friends, Joann Nelson, former president of Landmark, remembers Mary Ann as a tireless worker, always anxious to participate in the historical society's programs. "Whatever was needed, Mary Ann was there to make it happen," said Ms. Nelson.

"She was loved by everyone, and one could never ask for a more devoted friend, or a more involved worker."

