

## American Heritage

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steam operated locomotive in recent years. A tax on sporting goods, dedicated to TPWD in 1991 was changed in 1993 by the state legislature. Funds were capped at \$32 million to TPWD with the remainder diverted to other state funds.

A letter by TPWD Executive Director Bob Cook in December 2005, launched the message, "find another operator for the Texas State Railroad, or it will be parked and become a static display."

In January 2006, a large delegation from the two counties met with commission board members at TPWD headquarters in Austin. Following this group's presentation, it was suggested that a bi-county committee should be organized to plan an alternative operation.

In subsequent action, the cities of Rusk and Palestine adopted an interlocal agreement to sanction a Task Force Committee for the Preservation of the TSR.

This group's efforts provided a legal vehicle to represent the railroad in future transactions.

Volunteers have focused on working with TPWD for continued support. The possibility of seeing this historic treasure parked became a driving force

to overcome all obstacles in pursuit of some plan to keep the train rolling.

Thursday, the operating agency authorized Mr. Presley "to negotiate a contract for the private operation of the Texas State Railroad subject to authorization by the State of Texas through the creation of the Texas State Railroad Authority."

Members of the operating agency have pursued a twofold objective diligently: keep the train operating either as a fully funded state park or partner with a private operator.

### The next step

Future steps call for negotiations with the elected officials, state Sen. Robert Nichols, state Rep. Chuck Hopson and state Rep. Byron Cook.

The legislature is expected to allocate adequate funding for use of the new operator to bring the historic train, tracks and facilities to an improved state of condition.

The massive proposals from the four interested operators addressed information regarding each company's experience in the operation of tourist trains, length of service and success, financial strength and company philosophy toward

marketing, staff, history, insurance, safety and goodwill.

Jeff Jackson of American Heritage, said, "You have an estimated 60,000 ridership now. We expect to double that within 12 to 15 months."

Representing American Heritage Railways was owner Al Harper with Jeff Jackson, Paul Schrank and Christi Nelson Cohen, homebased in Florida. Sierra Railroad Company, based in California, was represented by Chris Hart, Allen Cleveland, Ed McLaughlin and Dave Wilkinson. Patriot Rail's voices, based in Florida, were John Marino and Gary Marino; Rio Grande Pacific Corp. based in Fort Worth was represented by Chris Bertel, Richard Bertel, Corbin Bedard and Rick Campbell.

Members of the operating agency present were President Presley, Dale Brown, Dan Davis, Charles R. Hassell, Bob Goldsberry and Marie Whitehead. Others present were Bryan Malone and Carroll Boyd of the Palestine Economic Development Corporation, TSR Superintendent Robert Crossman, Ron Stutes, Palestine operating agency attorney and Randy Gustafson of Stone Consulting.

## Nursing school

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time is right to open a nursing school in Rusk for students who can ultimately seek employment at Rusk State Hospital, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, East Texas Medical Center and Trinity Mother Frances.

Preliminary discussions are underway with the School of Nursing at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches to open a satellite campus. The director of SFA's nursing school, Glenda Walker, and Rose Powell, an assistant professor at SFA, met last week with community leaders to look at the city's assets and analyze obstacles.

"The timing is better now," said Dr. Walker, "to consider opening a satellite campus."

Dr. Powell agreed to spearhead a feasibility study, which will examine the community's resources.

Some of the key measures for establishing a satellite campus include: a pool of qualified applicants, classroom space, library support, teaching staff and slots reserved for clinical rotations in specialties including psychology, surgery, intensive care, community health, pediatrics and obstetrics.

Rusk State Hospital, which has a vested interest in seeing

more nurses enter the job force, has agreed to make classroom space available.

SFA hopes to negotiate an arrangement with RSH to use registered nurses and nurse practitioners, who meet state requirements to serve as preceptors, who are needed to supervise nursing students.

"We would beam in classroom instruction so there would not be an on-site instructor," said Dr. Walker. "This is the most cost effective way and still maintain high quality."

Buz Parrish, who has worked for more than two years on behalf of the Rusk Industrial Foundation to secure a nursing school, told the exploratory group last week that the waiting list to get into one of the state's nursing programs is long. "It is not uncommon to have 130 applicants for 60 slots."

Mr. Parrish suggested that if other area nursing programs, including Angelina Junior College, UT-Tyler, Tyler Junior College and Panola Junior College, agreed to share candidates on the waiting list, then a program could be created quickly. Drs. Walker and Powell embraced the concept of centralized information and pooled resources.

They also said that they would like to see a relationship estab-

lished with students in junior high school who may consider nursing as a profession.

"We need to get to them early and tell them to take science and math and math and math in high school," said Dr. Powell.

Dr. Powell hopes to fast track the feasibility study within three-five months.

"A nursing school in Rusk could happen," said Dr. Walker. Stamps of approval will be required from the SFA provost and dean to the president of the university and the board of regents. Ultimately the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will have to okay the expansion.

"Funding is always an issue," continued Dr. Walker. "If everyone gives their blessing, this is worth pursuing."

Dr. Jim Largent, Rusk ISD superintendent, agreed to survey junior high and high school students to gauge their interest in nursing.

Others attending were Jim Perkins and Charles Hassell, Citizens 1st Bank; Todd Foxworth, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Ed Bruce and Jerry Leviston, Rusk State Hospital; Marie Whitehead and Terrie Gonzalez, Cherokeean Herald and Bob Goldsberry, Rusk Chamber of Commerce.

## Lake Fastrill

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### happen there?

A. I don't know what's going to happen because it is tied up in the courts. I come from the legislative branch of government, not the judicial branch of government. I thought this had all been settled. I have not seen the lawsuit by the State of Texas, so I don't know on what grounds they are suing.

Fourteen or fifteen months ago, I was approached by the Cherokee County Commissioners Court, the Jacksonville City Council and the Jacksonville Independent School District, and they said, "Could you ask Fish and Wildlife to give us time to have input and to get a feasibility study done on a reservoir?" I asked them (USFWS) if they would hold off and allow everybody to have input because people didn't think they had had input.

That time has gone by. I'm satisfied that everybody had an opportunity to have their input. And the Fish and Wildlife declared there would be a refuge. I was satisfied with the process. I was satisfied with the results. I don't know what grounds the lawsuit is being brought. And again, once it hits the courts, it is out of the legislative branch of government into the judicial branch of government and I'll be watching it with interest. But no, I can't tell you what's going

to happen.

*Q. Certainly from a standpoint of the local people, and certainly there are a good number of people who feel they would much rather have the refuge than the lake, and you also have to weigh it against the needs of the people and especially the City of Dallas, whether or not they actually need the additional water.*

A. As I said from the beginning, Robert, my concern was with private property rights. Something as big as this essentially needs to be decided locally. I was decided that the process had worked. Early on I'm not sure everybody had an opportunity to put their two cents worth in. They did. And now, after all this time, you seem to get some people coming in on the tail end of the process. They've had 18 months to weigh in. So I don't quite understand that.

Now, listen, there's a place for wildlife refuges, there's a place for reservoirs. But I thought this process was already done and I don't really know what the lawsuit is about. But it will be taken care of in the course.

*Well, thank you very much. You have to go to another meeting, but we appreciate you taking the time. You have always been very gracious with your time, and we thank you very much. Congressman Jeb Hensarling, District 5.*

## Rep. Hensarling

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elementary and secondary federal expenses, 100.2 percent. There are 10,000 federal projects and 600 different agencies.

"This gap between family and federal spending has to be reconciled," he said.

"After the President's tax relief was enacted in May 2003, we saw federal revenues go up," he said.

The congressman explained after the tax relief legislation was enacted more small businesses were able to expand and others were able to open. This allowed for generating more tax revenue. "In this instance, tax relief was part of the deficit solution in our country," Rep. Hensarling said. "Tax revenue increased from \$1.7 trillion to \$2.5 trillion in 2007. This is the largest tax revenue increase in our country's history."

"When I studied economics at Texas A&M, I was taught that unemployment could not get any lower than five percent. But, since August 2003 7.4 million jobs have been created, resulting in a historically low 4.6 percent unemployment rate," Rep. Hensarling said.

"If something is not done in approximately 30 years all government spending will go to finance Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. There will be no Air Force, no Marines, no veteran health care and other gov-



U.S. Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-Dallas) is welcomed to Rusk by high school student, Lucas Turner. Rep. Hensarling visited with local residents Thursday morning in the county courtroom.

ernment programs, just the three. A family with an annual income of \$66,111 is now paying \$20,000 in taxes.

"That family will pay \$40,000 in taxes in the next generation. This means that many families will not be able to purchase their first home and send the kids to college," Rep. Hensarling said.

"In the real world you do things better and cheaper. There is competi-

tion and people have figured out ways to do things cheaper. In the federal government, you spend more money to do the same things.

"First we need to balance the budget spending. It is immoral to pass on debt to our children. We need to limit the growth in spending to the growth in spending in the family budget.

Approximately 30 persons visited with the congressman.

## Black Texans

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As war approached, most free black Texans joined the army or otherwise supported the independence forces. The stories of some of these people provide a fascinating insight into the tiny, extraordinary community of the free African-Americans of Mexican Texas and the dilemma thrust upon them in the 1830s.

In May 1835, Samuel McCulloch Jr., born free in South Carolina in 1810, came to Texas with his three sisters and their white father. Five months later, McCulloch joined George M. Collinsworth's command in their attack on the Mexican garrison at Goliad. McCulloch suffered a severe shoulder wound. His was the

first blood shed in the cause of Texas independence.

Hendrick Arnold moved to Texas from Mississippi with his white slave-owner father and mixed-race family in 1826. In 1835, Hendrick settled in San Antonio and married Martina Durán, the Mexican step-daughter of the famous Texan scout Erastus "Deaf" Smith. Arnold took part in the Battle of Concepción, guided Ben Milam's division in the assault on San Antonio and fought through the rest of the war, including San Jacinto, with Deaf Smith's scouts.

One of Arnold's comrades at San Antonio was Greenberry Logan. Born a slave in Kentucky in 1799, he was freed by his white

father. He came to Texas in 1831 and took a land grant in present Brazoria County as part of Austin's Third Colony, one of three free African-American colonists accepted by Austin. In 1832, Logan bought a slave woman named Caroline, manumitted, and then married her. He fought at Velasco in 1832 and joined the Texan army besieging San Antonio in 1835. He was severely wounded, suffering permanent damage to his right arm.

Others helped the cause of independence without taking up arms. Wealthy land-owner William Goyens of Nacogdoches assisted Sam Houston in the negotiations that kept the Cherokee neutral. William and

Aaron Ashworth, free brothers of mixed race, came to Texas as colonists for empresario Lorenzo de Zavala, settling in what is now Jefferson County. Like William Goyens, the Ashworths became prosperous land owners and slave holders in the Beaumont area, collecting around them a large clan of relatives and friends. Also like Goyens, the Ashworths avoided military service in the Revolution, but provided funds and supplies to the Texans.

Whatever hopes the free black community may have entertained about their service and loyalty to Texas being rewarded by a continuation of Mexican egalitarianism in independent Texas were very soon dashed.

In November 1835, Texas proclaimed itself a separate state of the Mexican union. On Jan. 5, 1836, the new state legislature prohibited free black people from entering the state, though it granted residency rights to those already here.

With the Declaration of Independence, all restraint was removed. Stripping free black residents of their civil rights and prohibiting intermarriage was only the beginning.

The Constitution of the Republic of Texas proclaimed: "No free person of African descent, either in whole or in part, shall be permitted to reside permanently in the republic, without the consent of congress." This consent proved

hard to win, but eventually the Republic allowed people who had immigrated before independence to remain, but under very circumscribed conditions. Disabled veteran Greenberry Logan complained that the Republic Constitution deprived him of "every privilege dear to a free man . . . no vote or say in any way."

Greenberry Logan would have to endure for 30 years and survive a great Civil War before he would again be as free as he had been in Texas under the Mexican flag.

*Dr. Ross is academic dean at Lon Morris College. He earned his PhD at Texas Tech University specializing in Southern and Black History.*

## Scene in Passing

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was meant to be fulfilled; the railway was destined to be resuscitated and allowed to live under the umbrella of the state. So now, as in our past history, the state has dropped us off its radar, saying they can't afford us.

Should the state alter its position? We would have their help for how long? Another two years when they decide enough is enough and they want the funds used somewhere else? This scenario happens all the time. History repeats itself, and we can only expect more of the same. Here's another thing about the state operation of TSR, just one or two really, that has bugged so many. Proceeds from the film industry to do a movie here were not deposited to a TSR account but went into the general fund. Proceeds from the TSR's highly successful gift shop

also go into the general fund. This is not playing fair and square.

To digress a moment, it was our late friend V. J. Long who first expressed this wisdom: "If life hands you a lemon, make lemonade." When the state moved the prison in about 1912, they left a fine, big facility first called a prison. That era's leaders jumped on the opportunity to find a new use for it. And it became the present Rusk State Hospital. It opened in July 1919. Maybe everything happens for a reason. Maybe the state's position of "no more money" today is going to force us to make a glass of lemonade through the acceptance of new ideas, new money, new blood and an admission to a mission of "preserve all things historical."

This has been a very serious task which has not been the typi-

cal "win, win" goal. It has been a "save, save" goal. It seems dumb to throw out the baby when it's time to dump the bath water. The leader of American Heritage, Al Harper, said this Thursday in Palestine, "This is a mission I'm on. It involves history, community, ownership. History is important to our nation. It forms our character, makes us who we are, and it is the road map to our future." In so many words, Mr. Harper gave us his assurance for total commitment to saving the train. It will not be developed, promoted and sold for profit-making to another company. And if you missed the earlier fine print, when and if we bring together a contract for the private operation of TSR, it will function under a lease agreement for a specified number of years before any kind of ownership can be

considered.

Much to my frustration, I will not live forever. The world will have to go on without me. But while I am here, it is my God given privilege to serve to the best of my ability and help light the way for all those who are yet to come. And I hope that all people everywhere will pause to look to the past to help them understand the present and plan for the future. If you know what happened before, you should be able to recognize it when you see it coming.

Here again, it's "if and when." To give you a small amount of hard news in this space, you will be glad to learn that among the licensed feature rides are "The Little Engine That Could," "A Day Out with Thomas, the Tank Engine" and "The Polar Express." These are properties that are expected to bring huge

publicity for TSR. American Heritage marketing consultant, Christi Cohen, is putting the plans in place already. The targeted market will be within a Texas sized triangle: from Dallas to Shreveport to Houston. That's a few million people. And we don't have to get all of them here, just some of them.

I am willing to say what was once a dirty word in my vocabulary, "privatization," is now a welcome word. Static display sticks in my craw, as we say in East Texas. How many folks today are willing to take a firm stand for free enterprise? Capitalism? It is time to say down with fear and up with courage. And to remember that the only thing that's constant is change. Credit that as first heard by me from the late S.L.R. Cartlidge. And yes, do keep smiling?