

Wise County Heritage Museum Destroyed by Fire



The Wise County Heritage Museum building after the March 18, 2023 fire. Photograph by Bruce Elsom

This past Saturday North Texans awoke to very sad news. On March 18, the 130-year-old Wise County Heritage Museum building caught fire and the fast-moving blaze quickly overwhelmed firefighter's efforts to contain it. Thankfully, no one was injured, but the building and the history contained inside appear to be a total loss. It was an event that is sure to alarm all of us who work to preserve our history and historic structures.

The Heritage Museum held a special place in the hearts of many who grew up in Wise County, just northwest of Fort Worth. The building was constructed in 1893 and was originally the home of Northwest Baptist College. After the college went bankrupt in three years, it was purchased by the Baptist Convention and became Decatur Baptist College. According to the Decatur Chamber of Commerce, DBC was the world's oldest junior college and a preparatory school for Baylor University. The school operated there until 1965 when it relocated to Dallas to become Dallas Baptist University.

Continue reading about the Wise County Heritage Museum and what it meant to Wise County residents in our [March blog post](#).

THF News

2023 Star of Texas Event a Success!

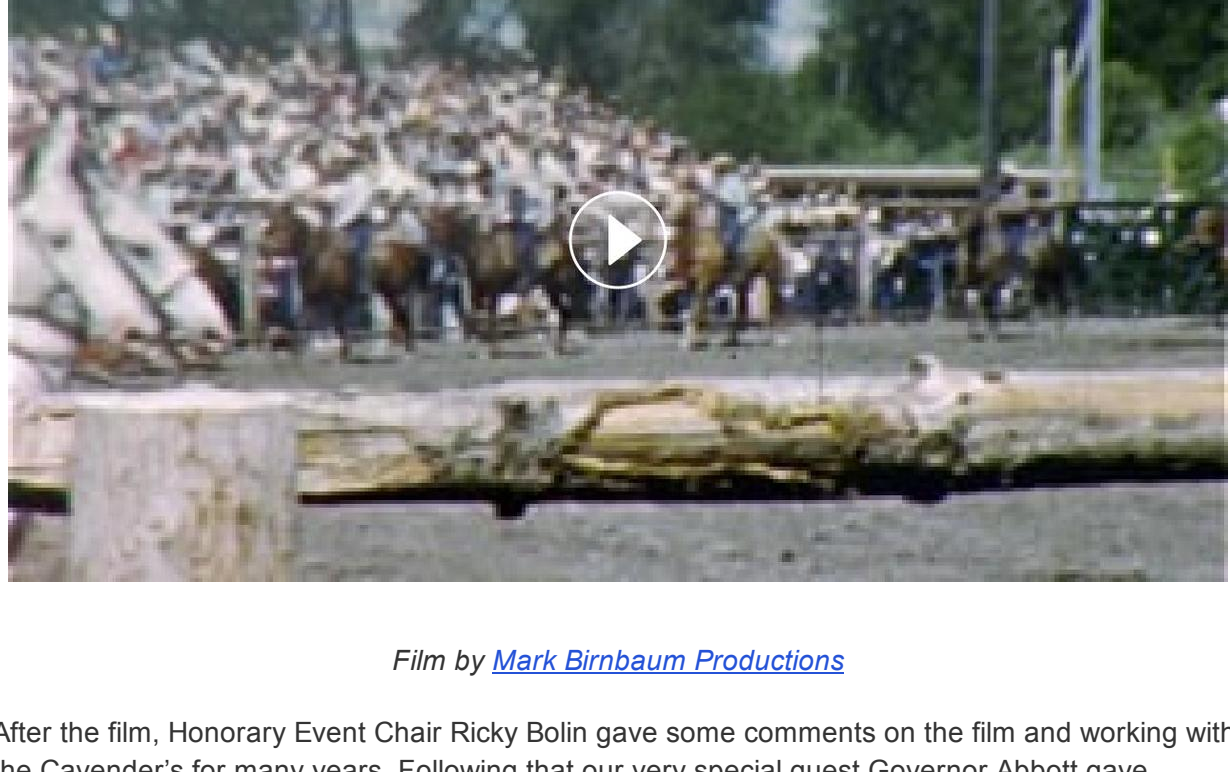


Left to Right: THF Executive Director David Preziosi, Mike Cavender, Clay Cavender, Joe Cavender, THF President Sylvia Tillotson, and Texas Governor Greg Abbott.

On Friday, March 24th the Texas Historical Foundation held its 4th Star of Texas event at the Hotel Drover in the Fort Worth Stockyards. The Star of Texas Award honors individuals, or businesses, for their exceptional contributions toward preserving the Lone Star State's history and culture while inspiring its future. Past recipients have included Frost Bank, J.P. Bryan, and Red McCombs. For 2023, the prestigious award was presented to the Cavender family. They were selected for their work to preserve the culture of Texas through Cavender's Boot City, an iconic Texas company and leader in the western-wear industry.

The Cavender family has had a long-standing commitment to the safeguarding of Lone Star traditions, and heritage, ever since James Cavender opened his first clothing store in 1965, in the small, East Texas, town of Pittsburg. Since then, James' sons, Joe, Mike, and Clay, have carried on the family business. The entrepreneurial spirit of the Cavender family, and love of all things Texan, has helped the business grow to 95 stores, in 14 states. Each store promotes the company motto of, "It's not just what we wear.... it's how we live!" This successful business model has included support for statewide causes and advancement of Texas goods, and products, that reflect the Lone Star lifestyle and spirit. What has guided the family, and the company, for almost 60 years, are high standards, hard work, and integrity. These are the hallmarks of the "Texas way" of conducting business.

The sold-out gala of 300 people enjoyed the evening's festivities in honor of the Cavender's. As part of the event, the Tarrant County Sheriff's Department had a mounted patrol greeting guests and an honor guard to present the colors. Entertainment during the reception was provided by musician Monty Dawson and trick roper Ketch Weaver. During the dinner a presentation was given on THF, the Star of Texas history, and the selection of Cavender's for the 2023 award. A film produced by THF by Mark Birnbaum Productions was shown telling the Cavender story. Click below for the film.



Film by [Mark Birnbaum Productions](#)

After the film, Honorary Event Chair Ricky Bolin gave some comments on the film and working with the Cavender's for many years. Following that our very special guest Governor Abbott gave remarks on the importance of history in Texas and presented Mike and Clay Cavender with the Star of Texas Award. After receiving the award, all three gave comments about what it meant to be selected for the award before the event concluded.

Presenting sponsors for the Star of Texas event included: Ariat International, Cinch, Hibbs Hallmark Insurance, The Lewis and Dilworth Family Fund, RESISTOL, Sylvia and John Tillotson, TexasMonthly, Twisted X, and Wrangler. Additional sponsors can be found [on our website](#). Thanks so much to all our wonderful sponsors, without whom we would not have been able to put on such an incredible event.

The Texas Historical Foundation was extremely pleased to recognize the Cavender family, and their family-run business, with the 2023 Star of Texas Award, exemplifying the best that Texas has to offer.

THF Directors Hold Spring Board Meeting in Fort Worth



THF Directors in front of the McFarland House at Historic Fort Worth

Texas Historical Foundation Directors held their Spring 2023 Board Meeting in Fort Worth from March 23 - 25th. The Directors visited a number of historic sites and local businesses. Historic Fort Worth hosted our Meet and Greet on Thursday March 23rd at their headquarters in the McFarland House. THF Meet and Greets are excellent opportunities to get to know local preservation professionals and advocates in the towns we visit, and we were joined by members of the Historic Fort Worth board as well as members of the larger preservation community in Fort Worth. On Friday morning, THF Directors were thrilled to tour the Fort Worth Stockyards historic district, Livestock Exchange Building, and the Cowtown Coliseum with guides from the Stockyards Heritage Development Company. Afterwards, we watched the drovers do their thing as they moved a herd of longhorns down East Exchange Avenue. Later in the afternoon we visited the Amon Carter Museum to view a

special collection of photographs that THF granted funds in 1985 to help the museum acquire. Directors also visited the Charles Truett William exhibit and the museum's headline exhibition *Emancipation: The Unfinished Project of Liberation*. The Spring Board Meeting took place at Historic Fort Worth on Saturday, March 25, and we can't wait to tell you about some of the great projects that the Directors approved for grant funding in this cycle. Please stay tuned!

THF directors are individuals from across the state who are interested in the preservation of Texas history. Board members make annual financial contributions that fund THF operations, support fundraising activities, volunteer on committees, and attend quarterly meetings. Directors and their guests also are invited to quarterly meetings that include behind-the-scenes tours throughout Texas. If you are interested in becoming a director, please [contact our office](#).

Directors from the Panhandle and West Texas are especially needed!

Texas HERITAGE

A New Beginning: Dallas' Freedmantown

Formerly enslaved African Americans in Texas learned of their emancipation on June 19, 1865, and afterwards, they began settling in communities known as freedmen's towns. Eight years later, nearly 500 freedmen were living in the area known as Freedman's Town North Dallas, located just two miles from the city's downtown.



Allen Street Taxi Company in Freedmantown/North Dallas, ca. 1929. DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University

There, the inhabitants established churches, schools, and businesses. Important transportation infrastructure, including roads and railroad lines, helped the community prosper. By the 1940s, the city's explosive growth and freeway expansion had sliced Freedman's Town North Dallas in two, and sadly, few vestiges of the neighborhood remain today.

In the next issue of Texas HERITAGE magazine, cultural anthropologist Dr. Marsha Prior will tell the story of Freeman's Town North Dallas, highlighting the culture, people, and accomplishments of those who called the place home.

To learn about this important piece of local history and other Lone Star preservation topics, [join THF today](#) and receive a copy of the publication in your mailbox.

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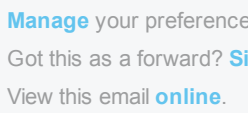
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