

Conroe puts on one for the history books

By Robin Montgomery, Local History Columnist Published 9:11 pm, Wednesday, March 8, 2017

On Feb. 28, 2017, Conroe set the foundation for an event unique in Texas History. Building on the momentum thus engendered, on March 3 in the historic town of Independence, multiple proclamations were read proclaiming that date as "Sam Houston Day." Not only were the proclamations and the date significant, also noteworthy was the source of the proclamations.

Of the nine proclamations read, six were from cities and counties in Tennessee and Texas, while two stemmed from the offices of the governors of Texas and Tennessee. The remaining proclamation, read by the chief justice of the Cherokee Nation and current executive director of the Trail of Tears Association, came from the headquarters of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma.

Orchestration of the event lay with the nonprofit, Texas Center for Regional Studies, yours truly president and my daughter Joy, executive director. Working with us in Texas was TV producer Denton Florian, joined by the Montgomery and Walker County Historical Commissions, the Montgomery Historical Association and the director of the Independence Trail. The event assumed the name of Sam Houston Cradle of Texas Tour, a journey 32 Tennesseans embraced through Conroe, Huntsville, Montgomery, Richards, Independence, Brenham and Washington on the Brazos. On March 2 at the Sam Houston gravesite in Huntsville, the group thrilled to a performance by the children's choir of Conroe's Sam Houston Elementary School.

It was the beginning that set the tone for the tour with Conroe Mayor Toby Powell's greetings at the Flag Park just after the Montgomery County Library graciously provided the forum for a presentation from one of the prominent Tennesseans. At the Flag Park forum, Marieda Kilgore presided over the scene with primary assistance from Jim Walker, Ron Saikowski and Annette Spikes. A highlight of the program featured Marieda's marvelous rendition of that perennial favorite tune, "Rocky Top Tennessee." Also featured were remarks by George Strake Jr., son of the founder of the Great Conroe Oil Field.

Then it was on to the Spirit of Texas Bank, where Director Dean Bass, his assistant, Hope Robinson, and Denton Florian hosted a most enticing dinner. Here greetings stemmed from County Judge Craig Doyal, and County Attorney J.D. Lambright, while internationally recognized sculptor Craig Campobella expounded on his work depicting Texas History. Also featured were official Conroe Legends Mary McCoy and Roy Harris.

Finally, was the grand nightcap at the Heritage Museum of Montgomery County under the direction of artist Joe Kolb and the very capable board of the organization. An artistic rendition model, by Joe Kolb, depicts the vision of an impending Multi-State Sam Houston Heritage Trail.

There are so many more to thank, but one person central to the whole Conroe operation was Robin Bartholet. Thank you, Robin, and thank you, Conroe, for providing the energy, model and ideal for an event truly unique in the illustrious history of Texas.