

Collection flourishes thanks to Dickenson

I hope everyone was able to read the Friends' column on Tuesday since I made a mistake in getting it to The Item for last Sunday's paper. Bricks are being laid on the east wing of the library as I sit down to write this week's column. The names for the "forever bricks" have been sent to the company for engraving so it is clear that things are moving forward in the expansion and renovation of our public library.

This week I asked Johnnie Jo Dickenson to provide me with some information about herself and the enhancements which will be made to the Genealogy Room as a result of donations being made. Johnnie Jo Sowell Dickenson, born in Walker County, is a seventh generation Texan. She graduated from Huntsville High School and Sam Houston State College with a degree in music education. She taught music in the public schools for three years and private piano, organ and voice for 30 years. Johnnie Jo and husband, J.D., have been married for 49 years.

Johnnie Jo first became interested in genealogy after joining the Daughters of the American Revolution and tracing her family and her husband's family back to the Magna Carta. She continues to improve her knowledge by attending genealogical classes, conferences and seminars throughout the U.S. She taught genealogy at SHSU Continuing Education for 10 years and continues to hold workshops for our public library. She is regularly appointed by Probate Court Judges throughout Texas to identify and locate missing heirs in estate cases. As president of the Walker County Genealogy Society for 10 years, she began the Pioneer Registry

Program, the Texas Genealogy Fair, First Polish Families (Waverly Emigration Society Families), and published several books including *Black Cemeteries of Walker County, Texas*; *1870 Census of Walker County, Texas*; *Walker County North Cemeteries and Walker County South Cemeteries*.



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McCulloch and most recently a collection from Frances Sprott Goforth and a collection of pictures from the African American community. The greatly expanded Genealogy Room will continue to bear the name given to it in 2004, the Johnnie Jo Sowell Dickenson Genealogy Room, and will be enhanced by a gift from Johnnie Jo and J.D. for an Archives Room.

Presently, Johnnie Jo is overseeing the purchase of new materials which will fill in gaps in county histories, histories of Masonic Lodges in Texas, and Italian, Polish and Confederate information. Donations for specific materials as well as undesignated gifts made for the genealogy area of the library will be used to enhance collections. She would like to see more

The Genealogical Society grew to a membership of more than 140 and many valuable collections were donated during her tenure as president, including those of Virginia Ivy Humphrey, Lucy Alice Bruce Stewart, Elizabeth Bright, Mary Virginia Smither, Veta Blackburn, Frances Punchard

family collections, especially those of African American families. Hopefully, many of the vertical files can be scanned and placed on computers along with the CDROM collection for easier access for patrons. The map collection is being expanded and it is hoped that there may be money to purchase some early Texas newspapers. The genealogy collection is valuable and contains many "one of a kind" books. The family history collection is unique and the entire collection draws people to Huntsville for research. The expansion of the genealogy collection is one of the most significant parts of our public library expansion and something which will be enjoyed by many.

The Friends welcome Dr. Scott and Janet Logan, Dorothy McGarry Cole and the J.B. Gordon UDC Chapter #23 as members and Wall Plaques will be ordered for each of these donors. Ms. Cole and UDC Chapter #23 have requested that their donations be used in the genealogy collection for materials related to the Confederacy. The Friends thank each of these donors and look forward to receiving gifts in any amount from those who have not yet become Friends of the public library. Checks should be made payable to the Huntsville Public Library Friends, Inc. and mailed or delivered to 1216 14th Street, Huntsville, TX 77340. All donations are fully tax deductible and are gratefully received by the Friends for the furnishing and equipping of our expanded and renovated public library.

Nancy Franklin is media coordinator for the Huntsville Public Library Friends, Inc.