

2011 Collin County Historical Commission Awards

Collin McKinney Achievement Award

Melissa Cemetery and Association: The Melissa Cemetery and the Melissa Cemetery Association was established in 1889 when the grandson of Lewis Sherley, a land owner and community founder sold 11 acres of his family homestead. The Melissa Cemetery and Association has completed numerous projects. A large monument restoration project was recently completed which involved 125 of the most revered monuments within the cemetery being straightened, re-seated and re-leveled. Another large monument restoration project will be taking place within the upcoming months. Approximately 85 markers and monuments will be leveled, re-seated and restored. The Melissa Cemetery is pleased and honored to have received the historical Texas Cemetery Marker from the State of Texas in April 2011. This historic marker has been added to the already existing State of Texas Historical Marker. Melissa Cemetery has recently completed a large project by erecting a new 4 foot high rod iron fence around the entire perimeter of the Cemetery. The 3,210 feet of black rod iron fence includes strategically placed walk gates and arched front gates. Melissa Cemetery.com web site project has been one of the most well received projects to date. Positive feedback from many historical organizations has given encouragement to continue this important and user friendly project. A new section located on the southeast side of Melissa Cemetery has recently been professionally surveyed and opened and allows for an additional 840 graves.

Excellence in Historical Education Award

Page Thomas: In spite of Page Thomas's 47 years of distinguished service to SMU's Birdwell Library at the Perkins School of Theology and his summers of archeological digs in Israel, his greatest contribution is the preserving of Collin County History. According to Kelly Kring, a former Heritage Farmstead Museum blacksmith, "Page is a living-breathing legacy in the museum community of Collin County. Through skills he...learned from his childhood as a real blacksmith, Page teaches blacksmithing to anyone who wants to learn which helps keep that historical craft and trade alive in our area. Through the years, Page has donated tools to three museums: Heritage Farmstead Museum, Frisco's historic museum and McKinney's Farm Museum. Page gave enough tools to crate a working blacksmith shop at the Heritage Farmstead Museum. By this act, Page's donation has created the ability for Plano 3rd grade students to have a hands-on learning opportunity with the children picking up a hammer, tongs and a piece of copper. Page still comes out and still fires up the forge at the Heritage Farmstead Museum. This past March he and a fellow blacksmith spent half a day demonstrating blacksmith skills to 8 groups of 40-45 students for 20 minutes each and their teacher put it, "to teach blacksmithing." Page also demonstrated his craft at Allen's Sam Bass Day this year.

He often helps at the Collin County Farm Museum and demonstrates his skills at Chestnut Square's blacksmith shop on weekends.

Page is presently involved with an archaeological dig at the site of the Charles H. Wysong blacksmith north of Melissa at the old Highland community. He has devoted three days a week to digging for artifacts and recently started to catalogue and photograph and put together similar pieces. Page's enthusiasm for the project is as contagious as his interest in blacksmithing. According to an article about Page at his retirement from SMU, Page Thomas contributions have not gone unappreciated. In 1991, his 30th anniversary year, Birdwell Library established "Page A. Thomas Collection for the History of the Book," in which each book contains a special 2 by 3 book plate with Thomas' logo for one of his hobbies, blacksmithing.

Leadership in Preservation Award

Richard Oldham: Richard has contributed much to Frisco and Collin County in his work with the public in Frisco. He is a trained professional artist and stained glass creator. In 2006 when the city of Frisco moved the historic Lebanon Baptist Church to the Frisco Heritage Center in preparation for renovation, some stained glass was found in the attic. Richard Oldham volunteered his time to use the 1930's glass and replicate the windows by using the found glass to cover two windows in the pulpit area. Richard volunteered to make matching stained glass windows for the 4 west facing clear windows if the cost of materials could be covered. A grant from the Collin County Historical Commission made this possible. He created the matching patterns, cut the glass, made the windows and installed the completed 4 windows. An article was written about Richard Oldham in the *Frisco Style Magazine* in January 2011. When interviewed about the making of the church windows, Richard said, "... the idea that things can get done through volunteerism made him want to help more than anything. ... Great things really happen in the community when you have a spirit of volunteerism.

Living Legacy of Collin County Award

G. C. Murray: Mr. Murray is walking encyclopedia of Collin County. He has served as an oral historian, storyteller and keeper of the lore of Southeast Collin County for over nine decades. Through his commitment to gathering, guarding and gifting the stories, lives and legends of the corner of Collin County where he grew up, he has been an invaluable resource to generations of researchers, historians and civic organizations. He has also entertained and educated just about anyone who ever had the pleasure to spend some time with him. G. C. Murray has been invaluable to local historians and instrumental in the preparation of many historical marker applications in Southeastern Collin County. He has been contacted numerous times for his extensive memory of the history of the county. As a primary source for historical research, G. C. Murray's knowledge has helped in documenting the history of the county. He recently spent a day being interviewed and sharing the history of the area; a video was made of his oral account, which will make his storehouse of historical knowledge available for generations yet to come.

Other Nominees for the Awards

Allen Heritage Guild

Ed and Marge Bryan

Chambersville United Methodist Church
and Friends of Chambersville

Genealogy, Local History, Texana and Archives Division
of the W.O. Haggard Library of the Plano Library System

Judy Harlow

Pansy Hundley

Hillary Kidd

Judy Rucker