

MARKER DEDICATIONS FOR 2012

Debra Blacklock-Sloan

Marker Dedication Chair

[*msdebrabsloan@gmail.com*](mailto:msdebrabsloan@gmail.com)

2012 Markers Approved

Harris County Historical Commission Chair Janet K. Wagner and Marker Chair Paul R. Scott are pleased to announce that the Texas Historical Commission has approved eight historical markers for Harris County subjects for 2012. Four are subject markers and four are Registered Texas Historical Landmarks.

Ms. Wagner and Mr. Scott congratulate the sponsors and authors of the narratives for their contributions to preserving and promoting the history and heritage of Harris County and Texas.

THE FOUR SUBJECT MARKERS ARE-

John Thomas Biggers

John Thomas Biggers (April 24, 1924-January 25, 2001) was born in Gastonia, North Carolina to Paul and Cora Biggers, and was a notable black muralist in America by the time of his death in 2001. Over his lifetime, he painted more than 80 murals that now adorn walls in various facilities across America. Art for Dr. Biggers became a "responsibility" to "reflect the spirit and style of the Negro people." Even as a small child, John took his role as an artist seriously. He and his brother completed modeling the entire town of Gastonia in mud and clay under their pier and beam home during summers in Gastonia. As early as 19, John won the first of many artistic contests that he entered over his long career. He was appointed as the first Head of the Art Department of Texas Southern University in 1949. He applied theory, principle and spirituality to his art and offered insight, nurturing and respect for his students' talents. His decision to require students to create murals on the walls of Hannah Hall at Texas Southern University became what may be the only living "art thesis" at any American university or college. The art on the TSU walls offers a perspective of Houston, African-American culture, political and social statements, and eclectic views as seen through the eyes of his student artists. Dr. Biggers' Web of Life mural that now hangs in the Texas Southern University Museum will always be both a breakthrough and a culminating piece of art although it was finished very early in his career. It truly reflects Dr. Biggers' artistic principles as well as his guiding moral compass.

John T. Biggers' marker will be placed on a grassy park in front of the Barbara Jordan/Mickey Leland Public Affairs Building at Texas Southern University.

Cypress, Texas

Located within the Cypress Creek and Little Cypress Creek watersheds, 26 miles northwest of Houston, the community of Cypress, Texas, began as a pre-republic settlement along Cypress Creek, at the crossroads of the Atascocito Trace and the Washington-to-Harrisburg Road. The first documented Anglo settlers in the Cypress area were Matthew Burnett (1796-1842), and his family, sometime between 1831 and 1835. The Burnett homestead in Cypress played a part in Texas history, as the Texas army under the command of Sam Houston, stopped here for the night on April 16, 1836, after turning southeast at the Abe Roberts' crossroads earlier in the day. Four days later, on April 21, they defeated the Mexican army at the Battle of San Jacinto, winning Texas independence from Mexico.

The Cypress area was a Post Office stop as early as 1840, operating through time under the names Big Cypress, Hamblin, Eden, Cypress Top and Cypress. In the late 1840s, German immigrants began to arrive and area grew into a widespread rural community of farmers, dairymen, and ranchers. In 1856, the Houston and Texas Central Railroad completed its first 26-mile segment, ending at the Cypress Top depot, at the location of the present-day Cypress Top Historic Park. This created a business district of hotels, saloons, and stores, and attracted prominent businessmen and speculators to settle in Cypress. In 1897, Edward F. Juergen began buying up much of the property around the railroad depot. The land and his business enterprises remained in the Juergen Family until 2005, when it was donated to Harris County Precinct 3, to be preserved as a Historic Park. The Cypress, Texas marker will be placed at Harris County Precinct 3's Cypress Top Historic Park.

Barbara Charline Jordan

Barbara Charline Jordan (February 21, 1936-January 17, 1996), a native Houstonian, was one of the nation's preeminent black orators and politicians of the 20th century. Her attitudes shaped by a close knit family who instilled religious, moral, and academic attributes helped propel her to success. She excelled in oratory competitions while at Wheatley High School and Texas Southern University. Jordan graduated magna cum laude from Texas Southern University in 1956 and received a law degree from Boston University. She returned to Houston, Texas, and in just a few years became the first black female elected to the Texas Senate.

In 1972 Jordan was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and became only the second black woman to hold that position. While a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, she sponsored legislation to renew and expand the Voting Rights Act, the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977, and other legislation that required banks to lend and make services available to underserved poor and minority communities. Jordan's career took on national prominence when she was appointed to the Congressional Commission to investigate President Richard M. Nixon's participation in the

Watergate burglaries. In 1976 she became the first black keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention. Rumor had it that Jordan's name was on the short list of potential vice presidential candidates for Jimmy Carter. Jordan was elected to three terms as Congresswoman before she retired due to medical complications.

After retirement Jordan became an adjunct professor at University of Texas at Austin where her classes were so popular that students could only enter through a lottery system.

She received more than twenty-five honorary degrees from universities across the including Harvard, Princeton, Notre Dame, Texas Southern University and Boston University. She was awarded membership in the Texas (1984) and National Women's Hall of Fame (1990), received the Elizabeth Blackwell Award (1993), Presidential Medal of Freedom (1994), and was the first black and second female awardee of the U. S. Military Academy's Sylvanus Thayer Award (1995). Texas schools in Austin, Cibolo, Houston and Odessa are named for her. The main terminal at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport is also named in her honor.

Barbara Charline Jordan died on January 17, 1996. Her body lay in state at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library on the University of Texas campus at Austin. She is the first black woman interred in the Texas State Cemetery, an honor reserved for Texas heroes. Her papers are housed at the Barbara Jordan Archives at Texas Southern University.

Barbara Jordan's marker will be placed on a grass park in front of the Barbara Jordan/Mickey Leland Public Affairs Building at Texas Southern University.

KUHT-TV, Channel 8

Following the vision and leadership of University of Houston President W. W. Kemmerer (1903-1993), and UH Board of Regents Chair Hugh Roy Cullen (1881-1957), and the guidance of Station Manager John C. Schwarzwald (1918 -1992), KUHT-TV, Houston's Channel 8, sent out its first broadcast on May 25, 1953. In so doing, KUHT-TV became the first non-commercial educational television station in the United States -- and only the second television station in the City of Houston. The event was acknowledged across the nation as a trailblazing moment in both the television and educational fields. Television icon Dave Garroway, from the set of NBC's Today Show, stated, "...you are pioneering a brand new and complex side of the television picture...no one knows what educational television can do,..."

The goal of educational television was to provide instructional and informative programming for the community. That idea was the heart of the vision for KUHT's service -- to extend the classroom to individuals across the viewing area. This concept is now more commonly known as "distance education" and is incorporated into the framework of higher education on an international scale. Here again, KUHT-TV was at the forefront in the use of technology in the educational environment.

KUHT-TV helped pioneer instructional television with nationally distributed film presentations on biology and psychology. In the early years, Channel 8 also brought an understanding of space travel to audiences with its Doctors in Space series; it expanded cultural understanding with People Are Taught To Be Different, a partnership with Texas Southern University in 1957; it provided insight into the local educational issues with its broadcasts of the HISD School Board meetings; and it showcased local cultural organizations and artists with live television broadcasts of The Arts in Houston.

Channel 8 has also pioneered technical advancements in our region, including the city's first high fidelity stereo broadcast in 1985 and services for the blind and hard-of-hearing viewers in the area. Now housed in The Melcher Center for Public Broadcasting, a facility for the twenty-first century, KUHT-TV and KUHF-FM continue to provide educational, informative, and enlightening services for the people of the Southeast coast of Texas.

The KUHT Marker will be located In front of the LeRoy & Lucile Melcher Center for Public Broadcasting, University of Houston Campus.

The four structures designated as Registered Texas Historical Commission Landmarks are

Gov. John B. Connally, Jr. Home

NOTE: Governor Connally and his home were the subject of two applications with two distinct narratives which the Texas Historical Commission and the sponsor agreed could be combined into a single marker. Hence, we have two versions, the first telling Connally's life story and the other the significance of his home at 2411 River Oaks Blvd.

John Bowden Connally, Jr., thirty-ninth governor of the state of Texas, rose from humble farm boy roots to become a major figure in business, politics and government for half a century, during which time he served four U. S. Presidents. He had served aboard aircraft carriers in the U.S. Navy as a Lieutenant Commander during World War II and was Secretary of the Navy during the administration of President John F. Kennedy.

Connally was a close friend of President Lyndon B. Johnson from the summer of 1939, when he was hired to be Johnson's congressional secretary, until Johnson's death in 1973, managing Johnson's political campaigns during his election to the U.S. Senate in 1948 and later for U.S. Vice President and President in 1960 and 1964.

During his three terms as Governor, 1963-1969, Connally emphasized education because he believed that the most enduring way to address social problems was through education. He effectively used his political skills to increase taxes substantially in order to finance higher teachers' salaries, better libraries, research, and new doctoral programs. He considered this the crowning achievement of his administration. During his first term as governor, he was a passenger in the car and seriously injured when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963 in Dallas.

John Connally was a graduate of the University of Texas School of Law and was elected University of Texas Student Assembly President in 1938. He served as General Counsel and Co-Executor of the estate of oilman Sid Richardson during the 1950s. Returning to the practice of law in 1969, he was named as a partner in the law firm, Vinson & Elkins, and moved to 2411 River Oaks Boulevard in Houston, Texas, where he lived for the next twenty years.

Connally's influence and great service to Texas and our nation while living in this residence included serving as U.S. Secretary of the Treasury in 1971-72 during the Nixon administration. He became a Republican in 1973 and promoted conservative causes and candidates. In 1980, Connally conducted an aggressive campaign for President of the United States during the party primaries, and was the front-runner in the race for the Republican nomination for several months before withdrawing to support Ronald Reagan.

John B. Connally, Jr. was a graduate of the University of Texas School of Law and was elected University of Texas Student Assembly President in 1938. He served as General Counsel and Co-Executor of the estate of oilman Sid Richardson during the 1950s. It was in the capacity of attorney that he moved to 2411 River Oaks Boulevard to join the law firm, Vinson & Elkins, in which he was named as a partner when he became a private citizen.

He was a close friend of President Lyndon B. Johnson from the summer of 1939, when he was hired to be Johnson's congressional secretary. Connally managed the political campaigns of President Lyndon Johnson during his election to the US Senate in 1948 and his campaigns as U.S. Vice President and U.S. President.

John B. Connally, Jr., moved to 2411 River Oaks Blvd. in Houston, Texas, in January 1969, after serving three terms as Governor of the state of Texas. As Governor, Connally was a passenger in the car and seriously injured when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963 in Dallas, Texas. Prior to being Governor, Connally had served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and as Secretary of the Navy during the administration of President John F. Kennedy. Connally's influence and great service to Texas and our nation as a private citizen, while living in this residence included serving as U.S. Secretary of the Treasury during the administration of President Richard Nixon. During the 1976 and 1980 primary seasons before the general U.S. election in November of those years, Connally conducted very aggressive campaigns for the Presidency of the

United States and was very nearly selected as the Republican nominee for United States President. John and Nellie Connally sold 2411 River Oaks Boulevard in 1984, and moved into the Huntingdon high-rise in 1989.

Besides its historical association, 2411 River Oaks Blvd. is architecturally significant as it is representative of the Contemporary style popular after World War II for architect designed houses. The first resident, and presumed designer, was Ernest L. Shult, an important Houston architect who is better known as an associate of Alfred C. Finn. The home includes several features characteristic of the Contemporary style, among them being an asymmetrical façade, multiple roof sections, and a large expanse of windowless walls.

Such a home as 2411 River Oaks was well suited to be the private residence of Former Governor and Mrs. John B. Connally, a man well suited to be President of the United States.

The Gov. John B. Connally, Jr. marker will be placed at 2411 River Oaks Blvd.

Dr. John H. Foster House

The home at 320 Branard Street, located in the Bute Addition is a significant contribution to the First Montrose Commons Historic District, and exemplifies the type of building that is both historically and architecturally significant as part of Houston's past. It reflects the upwardly-mobile development of the city's South End that occurred in the first two decades of the 20th Century. It lends further historical credence to the city's growth as a hub for the medical industry and for its role as the home of one of the foremost doctors in the city at the time, Dr. John H. Foster. The home is the most unique example of the Prairie Style that became popular in the early 20th Century and is an early example of the work of one of Houston's foremost architects, Birsdall Briscoe. The architectural features which make the house type exceptionally significant in Houston are the substantial covered porches with arched openings; handcrafted carpentry and stucco siding of the Arts and Crafts Style as well as the broad, overhanging eaves and pronounced horizontal lines of the Prairie Style.

The marker for the John H. Foster House will be placed on the northeast corner of Branard and Bute.

Underwood Nazro House

The Nazro Underwood house at #25 Courtlandt Place is significant architecturally as an example of the early twentieth century residential work of Sanguinet and Staats. The house is a good example of the Georgian style and is the only example of this style on the street of popular revival style houses. It is also significant for its association with the Nazro Underwood family, business and

social leaders in early twentieth century Houston.

The Nazro Underwood house marker will be placed at #25 Courtlandt Place.

I. P. Walker House

The Isaiah Poole Walker was built in 1932 along the Galveston Bay in the City of Shoreacres that was developed as a coastal community in 1925. It stands as the oldest, extant residential home in Shoreacres. Done in a Tudor Revival style, this two-story house was utilized by the Walker family of Houston, Texas as an excursion residence more commonly known as a Fish Camp in its day. Referred to as the "Little Castle," the exterior walls are made of thick stone cut in rough form. A turret rises above the roof to encase the spiral staircase. Also known as the "Treehouse," the south side of the house has four columns done in the Trabajo Rustico (Rustic Work) style. The Walker house is the only known residential structure in Harris County to prominently utilize this rare unique style of molded cement in the form of tree trunks and branches in its structure. The interior of the house contains unique wood craftsmanship practiced by maritime carpenters.

The Walker house was built by Preston Plumb, Jr. who was the son-in-law of Isaiah Poole Walker. The Preston Plumb family of Plumb, Sr. and Plumb, Jr. would be some of the first real estate developers and home builders for the City of West University Place in Harris County.

The I. P. Walker House marker will be placed at 3534 Miramar in Shoreacres.