The Jefferson Restoration & Arts Project

“The goal is to attract visitors through the installation of significant art projects, the restoration of the “old” railroad bridge, and create a vibrant outdoor “living room” in the Park for everyone to enjoy.” – Richard H. Collins

Art on the River is a component of The Jefferson Restoration and Arts Project, a multi-year reinvestment to bring art to Jefferson and restore historical features. Through revitalizing the charms of yesterday, The Jefferson Restoration and Arts Project will draw tourists, create a renewed sense of community, instill the values of lifelong learning, and foster a creative partnership with renowned artists. The project is underwritten by and directed under the leadership of Richard H. Collins with the help of Lucy Buchanan, a national art consultant.

Mrs. Buchanan will orchestrate a multi-stepped process of creating the new community living room by:

1) Inviting two internationally-known artists, a husband-and-wife team, to create a major sculpture to be placed in the grand circle in the Park with unveiling in June 2019 as part of an on-going Artists-in-Residence program;

2) Promoting arts and education for adults and students by engaging the public in the Artists in Residence Program building on the mission of the Collins Academy;

3) Adding additional sculptures including a large bronze stag, a stagecoach with horses, and a pterodactyl;

4) Restoration and development of Union Missionary Baptist Church as a Living Heritage Center; and

5) Renovation and lighting of the historic railroad trestle and sculptures in the Park.
Lucy Buchanan describes various components of The Jefferson Restoration and Arts Project to those assembled at Collins Academy on March 24, 2018.

Surrounded by these new art projects, restaurants, antique shops, and a rich history, the revitalized parts of Jefferson will serve as an inviting “living room” for East Texas, and it will become a magnet for tourists, new residents, and businesses.

JISD Students Take to the Water

Members of the Honors Chemistry Class of Jefferson High School gathered with chemistry instructor Alma Rivera and staff members of Collins Academy to spend a day in the great outdoors in the woods and on the water at Caddo Lake.
These students make up the Jefferson Conservation Leadership Team and started their day performing water quality monitoring at the City of Jefferson’s public boat launch. After documentation of their water quality findings, the journey to Goose Prairie at the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge was made. Collins Academy Director, Gary Endsley and wildlife biologist Robert Haynes directed the students on a two-mile trek through the woods searching for plant, animal and bird species.

The students were able to locate many young tree and cricket frogs, which indicate a healthy lake environment; many Northern Parula Warblers, sensitive Scarlet Buckeyes, Black Swallowtail butterflies, and several fern species including the Resurrection Fern. They were also able to see the flooded areas, from recent rains. Upon their return from the nature hike, students were fitted for personal flotation devices as they teamed up in canoes and kayaks to discover the beauty of the lake and Cypress trees.

After their boating excursion, students gathered at the newly constructed Starr Ranch Pavilion for sack lunches and grilled hotdogs. After one last paddle around the lake, the students boarded their bus for the trip back to school. The students expressed excitement about their “outdoor classroom” trip, and enjoyment of the hands-on lessons. Tenth grader James Roraback said he really likes Mrs. Rivera’s class, “she always plans unique activities for us along with Collins Academy.” Students attending were Mathew Perez, Sir Charles Johnson, James Roraback, Mason McNeely, Mariah Williams, Robert Sachtleben, Sharday Turner, Caleb Wallace and Valkyrie Neel.

For information on Collins Academy science programs, call (903) 665-2900 or go to www.collinsacademy.com.
Pollinator Pals Initiative Gets Underway

Utilizing funding from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Collins Academy is expanding its conservation offerings to schools, private and public properties by improving existing and creating new pollinator habitat. Just as wildlife has suffered from increased fragmentation of land through urbanization, so have bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds.

Not long ago beekeepers would ask farmers to set beehives near croplands in exchange for some honey. Now farmers are paying beekeepers to bring in hives for their crops. A third of the U.S. food supply depends on pollinators. According to a Cornell study published in the May 22, 2012 issue of the journal Public Library of Science ONE, crops pollinated by honeybees and other insects contributed $29 billion to farm income in 2010. The value of directly pollinated crops was $16.35 billion, while the value of indirectly dependent crops was $12.65 billion.

Currently, Collins Academy is working with its Conservation Leadership Teams at schools to pull aggressive exotics that outcompete historic natives and replant with species once common to the area focusing on host plants that must be present for pollinators to complete their life cycles. Milkweeds in general are host plants for the Monarch Butterfly. While butterfly weed, *Asclepias tuberosa* (pictured above), is most favored by Monarchs passing through Northeast Texas. Academy staff is busy recruiting private and public landowners to partner for habitat remediation including the improvement of acreage through installation and maintenance of expansive pollinator gardens. The idea is to enlarge the resource base for threatened bees, butterflies, other pollinating insects, and hummingbirds and to create an ever growing seed bank for larger increases in improved habitat over the coming years.
Conservation Leadership Teams are working with public and private landowners to establish larger plots to support honeybees and specifically Monarch Butterflies. They are now planting seedling plugs germinated and grown off at school green houses and by over seeding native wildflowers including milkweed.

The Academy has two grant proposals out for review at the moment. If either one is awarded, additional funding will become available to further expand pollinator habitat restorations to additional public and private lands in Northeast Texas. If you or a friend would like to participate in pollinator conservation by utilizing a portion of your property for the benefit of wildlife, especially honeybees and other pollinators, please let us know at info@collinsacademy.com or dial (903) 665-2900 and confess that you, too, want to be a Pollinator Pal.

Highlight in History

Jefferson, TX, Spring 1869

One-hundred and fifty years ago in March and April of 1869, as arrests of the George W. Smith murder suspects approached 30 or more, Union General George P. Buell constructed the Jefferson stockade as part of the Union military post that stretched south of Common Street to the bayou between Houston and Texas Streets - just across the street from the site of the Mother Church, which had been burned in October of 1868.

General Buell
An area in “Sandtown” where the federal military post and its stockade were located after the murder of George W. Smith and the burning of the “African Church” in October, 1868. The stockade was constructed just south of Cypress Street between Texas Street and Houston Street on the road leading into town.

By July 8, the stockade would be enlarged to 7,535 square feet and contain two buildings and a guardhouse (Hawthorne, 2012). To pay for these new facilities, a new tax was levied on the citizens of Marion County amounting to 17 ½ cents per $100 dollars of taxable property. Later, the commissioners court found it necessary to increase the tax to 32 ½ cents per hundred dollars of assessment (Tarpley, 1983).

A 3D rendering of the Jefferson stockade by Craig Hawthorne based on military records. This drawing was taken from page 49 of Murder in Jefferson: the 1868 Stockade Case by Hawthorne and Andrew Spencer

Reports differ as to the conditions in the stockade. As it is today, opposing sides played to their own political positions. For instance, the Tyler Index, a Radical Republican newspaper, reported the kindness of General Buell as he allowed prisoners to receive food, clothing, and conversation from family and friends. Whereas, R.W. Loughery, the publisher of the Marshall Republic and the Jefferson Times, justified Smith’s death as “demanded by public safety” (Tarpley, 1983) and sensationalized the imprisonment of Jefferson citizens by reporting their on-going struggles with health and hygiene issues.

Works Cited


Archaeology Informs Restoration

Restoration of the 1883 UMBC structure involves a lot of discovery and adaptation. With a primary goal of protecting and maintaining existing materials, our very careful crew is doing a lot of repair and replacement using traditional or substitute materials. In some cases, archaeology on the site or in the walls is informing our restoration decisions. For example, electricity was not available until after the first quarter of the 20th Century. Kerosene lamps lit homes, businesses, and churches prior to the arrival of the Edison bulb. For those more able, decorative cast iron mountings with swing arms and reflectors were popular.

Kari Dickson, project anthropologist and archaeologist, posed this question early in the discovery work, "would the church have access to the decorative cast iron mountings and chimneys of the more stylish lamps of the period?"

Physical evidence of “hurricane” type kerosene lamps with decorative cast iron in use at UMBC

During the excavations, artifacts uncovered answered this question. To support this, the decorative beaded rim of the glass chimney was also found. "With these finds, we are able to conclude that these more basic lamps would have been present in this space prior to the introduction of electricity,” stated Ms. Dickson.

Responding to findings, Ms. Dickson recommended the inclusion of the sconce lighting shown at right, which comes very close to the style actually found. These, outfitted with Edison LED “flicker" bulbs, will adorn the walls and provide a special effect for services or events at night.

In addition, while removing bead board for reuse, an old structural arch was discovered over the entrance to the sanctuary. After scrutiny with the known chronology of the structure, it has been determined by our General Contractor that the archway was original and was “matched” with an arch between and above the pulpit and choir loft.
This matching may have been completed when the 10 ft. extension was added to the sanctuary.

The arch between the pulpit and the choir loft

Framing for hidden arch inside the front entrance

Both arches were rounded using plywood over 2 X 4 studs behind. The framing was all that was visible inside the front entrance. Again, what was found using architectural archaeology was incorporated into our renovation plan.

“We believe our efforts will make Jefferson, Texas a leader in ecological & historic preservation, and community involvement.”

– Richard H. Collins, Collins Academy President