

The Clarksville Gold Dollar

Special edition

Clarksville Community Development Corp.

Juneteenth, 1979

TODAY IS JUNETEENTH. CELEBRATE!

Today is the 114th anniversary of the emancipation of Blacks in Texas. On June 19, 1865, General Granger of the United States Navy landed in Galveston and issued the proclamation that "all slaves are free".

Clarksville residents have double cause for celebration this year. The reconstruction of the historic Haskell house is completed and the project will be dedicated tonight.

A short program will begin at 7:00 PM. Barbeque plates will be sold starting at 6:00 PM for \$2.50. At the end of the dedication program disco music will be provided by Delmas.

Make plans to attend this years Juneteenth celebration at the Haskell homestead, 1703 Waterston.

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Replica of button found in Haskell House. This appears to be from a military uniform, possibly the one worn by Hezekiah Haskell in the drawing on the back page.



Hezekiah Haskell, Sr.

Former Haskell House Resident

REMEMBERS

Link Thompson
1722 West 11th Street

Husband to Mamie, father of ten, grandfather and great grandfather, Link Thompson has lived all his 79 years in Clarksville and as he says, "I'm with my community, whatever they do I go along with them". He now lives with family in the house built by his great grandmother Mary Smith. Mary Smith had two daughters, Nanny and Kate. Kate married Hezekiah Sr. and had 4 daughters and one son Hezekiah Jr. (see drawing) Link's mother Meg was one of Kate's daughters. Link was born on Essex Street but soon moved into the Haskell house where his grandmother Kate lived. At that time the home had four rooms and a back porch. When the city came in to restore the house they took off the back two rooms and only restored the front part. The property had become so overgrown that it was difficult to see the house from the street. As the land was cleared, persimmon, plum and peach trees were taken out. Some of them were replanted by Clarksville people. Link says he took two of the peach trees that were pulled up, but he still regrets the big plum trees that are gone.

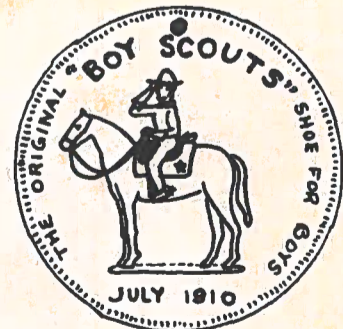
Link Thompson has seen Austin and Clarksville change a lot in his 79 years. As a child he walked to an all Black school on West 5th and West Avenue. Later he went across town to Anderson High on East 12th Street with other neighborhood kids as he puts it "walking and fighting" all the way there. The school on West 5th Street was torn down when land on West 11th was donated by a Clarksville resident and a neighborhood school was built. That school is now gone too, but a playground is still there and it is called "the campus" by neighborhood people.

Asked what he thinks of the new development, Mr. Thompson replied, "I don't have anything against them buying lots, but they haven't built anything for the poor." The poor have lost a lot of homes in West Austin. There used to be Blacks from the golf course down on Lake Austin Blvd all the way through Enfield. The Black Community Wheatsville has disappeared. Only one house over there still houses a black family. The others are gone, three churches are gone. Looking at the changes Link knows that he could have bought lots back when they were cheap. But he didn't think of it and as he says, "What did I need it for?"

Today's celebration of June 19 seems small to Mr. Thompson.

Juneteenth used to be one of the biggest holidays of the year. There would be baseball, dances, parades and picnics. Everyone from all over would get together. In Clarksville people would go to a special church service in the morning and after church they would lay sheets down outside and bring out a basket of food. Everyone would share their food and "celebrate hard".

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Replica of bronze medallion found in Haskell House.

HASKELL HOUSE HISTORY

As is often the case with poor communities, very few records exist to document the history of Clarksville property. This account of the Haskell House is taken from a report prepared by John Henneberger, "The Haskell Homestead: A History of its Past-A Proposal for its Future". Henneberger relied on interviews and city/county records. Neither source was particularly complete but between the two the following story has been pieced together.

The property on which the Haskell House was built was probably part of the land Governor E. M. Pease gave to his former slaves for "good and faithful service". In 1875 Peter Tucker bought the lot from two real estate speculators, Clara and Max Maas. How they had acquired the land is not clear. Although this is the first recorded transaction involving the land which was to become the Haskell Homestead, residents of Clarksville say that Tucker was not the first to live on the site.

Tucker lost the land two years later because of delinquent taxes amounting to \$8.54. A clause in the tax laws allowed his wife Bettie Tucker to reclaim the land by paying the new owner \$29.24, twice what it had brought at the court house auction. It seems likely that the Tuckers built the Haskell House around 1879.

At some time between 1879 and 1887 the house came into the possession of Mary and Edwin Smith. Kye Haskell is recorded as a boarder at the Smith residence in the City Directory of 1887.

According to Hezekiah Haskell, Jr. who was interviewed a short time before his death in February, 1976, Hezekiah Sr. ("Kye") came from Baltimore, Maryland. He joined the Union Army and came to Texas where he married the former slave, Catherine Smith, in 1881. Catherine Smith was half sister to Aaron and Charles Clark. Charles Clark is considered the founder of Clarksville.

In a deed dated 1892 Edwin and Mary Smith gave "the north half of our Homestead" to their daughter Catherine "Kate" Smith Haskell. At this time they moved into a new home across the street from the recently completed Sweethome Missionary Baptist Church. The church congregation had been meeting at the Haskell Homestead under the guidance of Rev. Jacob Fontaine.

The house has remained in the hands of Haskell family ever since. Hezekiah Haskell, Jr., who claimed to be 93 years old, was born in the house. Several current Clarksville residents were raised for part of their childhood in the old house.

The house has been vacant since Hezekiah's death in 1976. At that time Haskell heirs sold the property to the city for the proposed reconstruction and asked that the homestead be dedicated to the memory of Hezekiah Haskell, Jr.

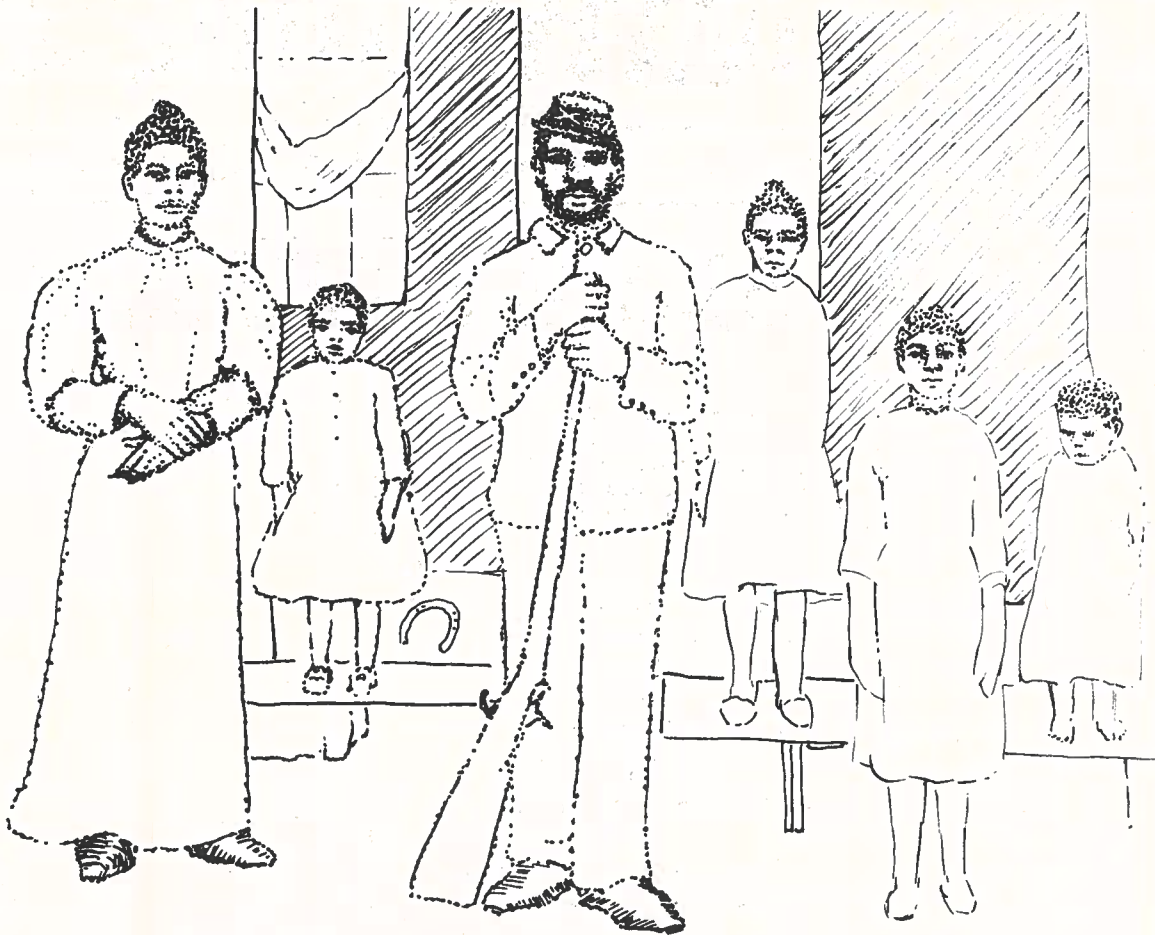
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REMINDER

The next Gold Dollar will be delivered Friday, July 6. Any news or letters must be in to me by July 4.

Melinda

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This drawing is taken from an old photograph that was found in the Haskell house. Pictured are Kate Smith Haskell and Hezekiah Haskell Sr. The four children are probably their daughters Sally, Meg, Annie and Roberta.

FREEDOM 1865

GENERAL GRANGER PROCLAMATION

ISSUED JUNE 19, 1865

General Orders No. 3

The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer. The freed men advised to remain at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts, and that they will not supported in idleness, either there or elsewhere.

By order of:

F. W. Emery
Major and A. A. General.

General Granger's announcement in Galveston came a year and a half after President Lincoln's historic Emancipation Proclamation was signed into law. Of course at that time United States laws did not apply in Texas which was a member of the Confederate States.

Governor Sam Houston had been opposed to Texas secession from the Union, but secessionist leaders were able to gain enough power to override the governor's power. In March of 1861 Texas joined the Confederacy and Governor Houston stepped down from office. He retired from public life and died two years later. Other Texas unionists had it even rougher than the Governor. Many were murdered and all suffered from the intolerance of confederate supporters.

Texas was part of the Trans-Mississippi Department which included Louisiana and Arkansas. This part of the Confederacy furnished an estimated 50,000-60,000 men for military service.

As the confederacy began to fall in early 1865, the Trans-Mississippi Department also showed signs of collapse. Texas had never been hit by the war as hard as the rest of the Confederacy. It had never been occupied by Union soldiers (except for Galveston and Brownsville which were held briefly), and there had been enough food produced so that the people had not gone hungry as in other southern states. Nonetheless the people of Texas were growing tired of the war. Soldiers often weren't paid, taxes were heavy,

Headquarters District of Texas
Galveston, June 19, 1865

G. Granger,
Major General Commanding.

confederate money was depreciating and young boys and old men were forced into the ranks.

Soldiers began deserting. The generals tried to hold things together. Even when it was heard that Lee had surrendered in April, 1865, it was considered a "Yankee rumor". Texas troops fought the last battle of the war May 13, 1865. From their prisoners the "rumor" was confirmed. Desertion increased and by the time General Smith surrendered the Trans-Mississippi Department on June 2, his army had disappeared.

Even with the defeat of the Confederacy many still believed that slavery might continue. The plantations in the southern and southeastern counties had many more slaves than the frontier areas of Texas and their planting interest depended on slaves labor. As in the older Southern States plantation owners believed that Northern people would eventually understand that slavery produced more crops and they even claimed that Blacks were happier as slaves than as freedmen. Many southerners believed that paid compulsory labor would replace unpaid slavery. With General Granger's proclamation of freedom the first blow was dealt to a system of prejudice and injustice that had been brought to Texas with its earliest settlers. The struggles for "absolute equality of rights" was just to begin and continues to this day, but never again in Texas was one race to oppress another so totally as in slavery.

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