

# The Blue Rock Banner

June 2019  
Issue 5

## Jaeger-Witte Heritage Cemetery Association

[www.JWHCA.com](http://www.JWHCA.com)

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1. President's Report
2. Headstone Restoration and How You Can Help
3. Preserving Our Past
4. Storytime!

### 2019 - 2020 OFFICERS

**President**  
Jeff Featherston

**Vice-President**  
Steven Jaeger

**Secretary**  
George Zemanek

**Treasurer**  
Debbie Byrd

**Grounds and Maintenance**  
Kay Kulow

## President's report

Hello Family,

I hope everyone's summer is going well. We have several ongoing projects for everyone to be aware of, those are as follows:

- We are still in the process of drafting an operating manual, which we expect to have completed this year.
- An application has been submitted to the Texas Historical Commission for our historical cemetery designation. Once we have that, we will be eligible to apply for a historical marker.
- We are planning to re-paint the pipe fence at some point this summer and any help we can get would be greatly appreciated. Any help on clean up days would be appreciated as well. We will have these dates posted on the website ([www.jwhca.com](http://www.jwhca.com)).
- If you have been to the cemetery lately, you will notice that some of the headstones have been restored. We have George to thank for that as he took on the project himself. He has been working with Lowell Herzog in getting these headstones looking good again.

Also, Debbie, Steven, George, and I would like to send out a special "THANK YOU" to Kay, she has gone above and beyond in her new position as our Grounds and Maintenance board member. Keeping the area outside of the chain link fence mowed takes quite a bit of time, especially when it rains, and Kay has stayed on top of it from the time she came on board. Since she lives there, she will mow when it needs it, not just on our clean up days. By doing that, we are able to focus on the inside of the cemetery and around the graves and it makes the cleanup days get completed faster. Thank you, Kay!!

As always, we appreciate everyone's concern and support of the Jaeger - Witte Cemetery.

Sincerely,  
Jeff

## Headstone Restoration

Lowell Herzog, a headstone conservationist, met with JWHCA officers on April 27, 2019 to guide them in resetting Elsie Dittrich's headstone. The process took a little over an hour and was a great success. It was great for us to have a hand in this process. Lowell will be repairing a few more headstones that have been damaged over the years. You can view some of his work at <http://www.texasgravestoneconservation.com/>



## How You Can Help!

We meet on the third Saturday of the month between March and October, from 8:00am to about 12 noon to clean the cemetery grounds and work on special projects. In addition to routine maintenance, we need help with repainting the fence surrounding the grounds and removing and replacing the chain-link fence surrounding the cemetery. There is no need to RSVP. Just show up with your hat and gloves, ready to work!

We also rely on financial assistance from family and friends. If you are not able to participate in cleanup, please consider a tax-deductible monetary gift. Your donations are used to cover the cost of maintenance and to fund special projects such as restoration and repair efforts. Donations can be given to any board member or mailed directly to:

JWHCA  
3802 Costa Rica Rd  
Houston, TX 77092  
Please make checks payable to JWHCA.

Thank you for your ongoing support!



## Preserving Our Past

Historic cemeteries are important keys to the past. They contribute to the narrative of the surrounding area and give the landscape character and definition. They reveal much about settlement patterns, historic events, lifestyles, and family history. The names on the headstones serve as a sort of directory of the early residents and reflect the unique population of the area. Historic cemeteries stand as a testament to the love and loss felt by those left behind. Unfortunately, these priceless treasures are increasingly threatened by development, encroachment, and vandalism. As circumstances change, cemeteries that were once well-maintained can quickly become neglected and fall into disrepair.

The Texas Historical Commission offers the Historic Texas Cemetery designation as a way to help protect historic cemeteries. This designation is an official recognition of family and community graveyards. It works by recording the cemetery location and boundaries in the county deed records as a historically dedicated cemetery worthy of preservation. It alerts nearby landowners of the presence of the cemetery and documents the cemetery's current conditions through photographs and maps.

A cemetery is eligible for designation if it is at least 50 years old and is deemed worthy of recognition for its historical associations.

By functioning as a landmark detailing migration and settlement patterns of the Hagedorn, Witte, and Jaeger families, the Jaeger-Witte Cemetery meets the criteria as cemetery worthy of preservation and recognition.

The JWHCA has recently applied to have the Jaeger-Witte Cemetery designated as a Historic Texas Cemetery. Upon receiving this designation, we will be eligible to apply for an Official Texas Historical Marker.

To read more about the fascinating history of the Jaeger Witte Cemetery, visit:

<https://jwhca.com/2018/09/15/history-of-the-jaeger-witte-cemetery/>



*Henry kept detailed records of the cemetery's history.*



*Alvine Jaeger was the first person buried in the Jaeger section (1936).*



*Carl and Marie Louise Hagedorn are buried next to their son Ferdinand. Ferdinand is the first recorded burial, having died sometime between 1850 and 1860.*

## ...and now for storytime!

### The Legend of the Blue Rock

Do you know the legend of the “Blue Rock”? 1955 Henry Jaeger Jr. saw a better future in Houston and decided to sell the Jaeger homestead. When his older sister Ida heard about this, she came to Henry with the news that somewhere on the land, a fortune was buried underneath a blue rock. If he found the rock, he’d be rich! Henry decided not to sell the land; however, it is likely that pressure from his wife Lillie was more influential than Ida’s rock.

Ida never said exactly where the Blue Rock was buried but that did not deter Henry and Lillie’s daughters Jeanette and Edith from looking. Hoping to find money to install indoor plumbing, the two sisters searched for the rock under the remains of an old fireplace. Upon finding them, their mother chased them with a belt. Since then, nobody has tried to find the rock, although Edith admits to having occasionally looked through the cracks near the fireplace, hoping to find it.

Do you know where the Blue Rock is? If you ever come across it, give us a holler!

“Hoping to find money to install indoor plumbing, the two sisters searched for the rock under the remains of an old fireplace.”



Edith Featherston and Jeanette Zemanek

### The Funeral That Never Was

Life on a farm allows one to share completely in the fullness of life. Crops grow, animals are born, and families increase. But along with life comes loss. Crops wither, animals die, and family members pass away. Children, along with their parents, attend funerals and witness the rites and rituals. And as we all know, children imitate what they see. So is there any wonder why a young Henry and Mede Jaeger decided to have a funeral for a dead bird they found on the farm? While Henry sneaked into the house to get his father’s long black Sunday coat, Mede filled a small box with hay and carefully placed the bird on top. Henry preached from a book that was supposed to be a Bible, all the while dragging the long coat in the dirt. He did not like that Mede, the “mourner” was only pretending to cry, so he slapped her hard across the face. When she really did begin to cry, he continued along with his sermon. The funeral was cut short, however, when their mother spotted them and yelled in German, “*Kinder*, what are you doing? What are you doing with Papa’s good coat?” At the sound of her voice, Henry dropped his book and stumbled over the coat tails just as Mede threw up the box. Out tumbled the dead bird as the two children fled in different directions. When questioned about this event 90 years later, Henry said he never knew what became of the bird.



Henry and Mede

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*Special thanks to Jinx Schkade and Jeanette Zemanek for contributing to this story.*

