



No portion of this article may be reproduced without
express written permission of Style Publishing Group, LLC.
©2007 • All rights reserved.



Style Publishing Group
P.O. Box 1676
Frisco, Texas 75034
Phone: 972.335.1181
Toll Free: 877.781.7067
Fax: 214.722.2313

E-mail: info@friscostyle.com
Web: www.friscostyle.com

Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306



Frisco's first jail, The Calaboose.

photo provided by Bob Warren

Our Heritage: Landmarks or Landfill?

By Bob Warren

WILL IT BE A LANDMARK, or will it be reduced to landfill? That question is sometimes asked as development's bulldozer stands face-to-face with our historic landmarks. Fortunately in Frisco, preservation has, more often than not, been the winner in those face-offs.

The mission of our Heritage Association is to "research, preserve and share Frisco's rich heritage in a manner that honors the past, builds a bridge between generations and leaves a legacy for the future." Through the cooperation of the city, property owners and generous developers, we have managed to prevent the destruction of the Lebanon Baptist Church, two historic homes, the old water tower and many other historical objects. All of these landmarks are either safely relocated in Heritage Village, or like the water tower, have been restored in their original locations.

But some things cannot feasibly be moved or rebuilt. Such is the case of Frisco's first jail, "the Calaboose" (old English name for a jail or dungeon). Built in 1912, it was used primarily as a holding tank for the town's one and only peace officer to store Saturday night drunks until they sobered up. The little jail, now

a badly cracked concrete structure, still stands where it was built, in what was the yard of a cotton gin near the corner of First and Main Streets. Last used by the city in the 1950s, it is now on private property.

A tour of the damp, dungeon-like, two-room building would quickly convince you it was not built for comfort. The ceiling is barely six feet from the bare floor, and the place was never equipped with lights, heat or water. Each room had one window with nothing but steel bars to stop the wind and rain.

If those crumbling walls could talk, they might complain of having only horseshoes, wagon rims and scrap metal for reinforcing bars. They would likely tell of hosting short-term lawbreakers, mostly drunks, such as the one who was stuffed in a cell one Friday night only to be forgotten and left without food and water until Mayor Bacchus heard his faint cry on Monday morning. The walls would surely recall an oft told story of how, one Halloween night, City Marshall Jarvis Hayes collared teenagers Sonny McSpedden, Jesse Barnes, Jack Ray Lane and others for turning on the city's fire siren. As they were being marched to

the slammer, Jesse slipped away in the darkness, got on his horse and rode out of town. The others were locked up, but soon managed to slip out the window after dislodging some of the bars. The boys then made their way to Curtsinger's Drug Store where they found Marshall Hays sitting on the curb. They boldly sat down beside him, and after a while Mr. Hays said, "You boys can go on home now, but don't get in any more trouble." Jesse and Sonny were recently seen peeking in the jail, no doubt reliving their juvenile adventure.

Too, the old building might grieve over the indignities suffered when its next owner used it for, of all things, a pig pen, or when some recent vagrants set up housekeeping in the cell by carpeting the floor from wall to wall with carpet scraps and beer cans. I believe these and many other such stories should be kept alive for future generations!

How then do we best save this piece of our heritage? We have the old steel jail door which was hand crafted by blacksmith John Gaby, and the structure's present owner has promised to salvage its barred windows. If the fragile structure cannot feasibly be moved, we are left with the option of building a replica in Heritage Village. But can we persuade its ghosts – those of drunken prisoners, mischievous boys, vagrants and even pigs – to transport themselves to the new building?

What will it be for the calaboose? The answer is up to us. It will involve a great deal of time and money, but how much are memories worth? The Heritage Association believes this landmark should be preserved and invites you to join our "Save the Calaboose" campaign. With your help we can keep alive the ghosts and memories of our proud old jail. And that's how things are in Frisco today.



Frisco native Bob Warren is a humorist, historian and former Frisco Mayor.