

Pine Cone Profile, October 2021

Doug Kubicek

Every history-lover driving towards Hallettsville in mid-October is invariably heading to the same destination: the Alton C. Allen Historical Conference. Now housed in a building as distinguished as the town itself, this conference has showcased Texas for nearly twenty-five years—its battles, its seaports, its institutions, its weather, its catastrophes, and its triumphs. Our own East Texas Association members have appeared there: Scott Sosebee speaking on the Texas City disaster, Heather Wooster talking about the Spanish Flu, Debbie Liles describing cattle drives and gold trails, and Donaly Brice re-creating the Battle of Plum Creek.

This conference has become a historical gem of Texas, an annual one-day symposium specifically devoted to a unique aspect of the state, and the man behind it, Doug Kubicek, is just as unique. Reared in a Czech community not far from Hallettsville, Doug got his degree and certification in history and then—except for a brief stint as newspaper photographer and columnist—set out to bring his subject to life for young people. Soon his lesson plans included field trips in cemeteries, photo shoots around town, and family tree homework assignments. At the same time he edited and published his own newspaper, trained as an archeological steward of the THC, chaired the Lavaca County Historical Commission, and wrote a history of the Lavaca County Courthouse.

It is this love of the past and ability to share it that persuaded the Dickson-Allan Foundation to ask Doug to organize the annual Alton C. Allan Historical Conference under the auspices of the Lavaca County Historical Commission, and it is that which makes him our Pine Cone Profile for October. Here, in his own words, is Doug Kubicek.

Where do you live?

I am a resident of Hallettsville, Lavaca County, but I was born and raised in Shiner, Texas.

How long have you been in East Texas Historical Association?

I have been a member of ETHA for approximately 20 plus years.

What convinced you to join?

Charles Spurlin, Bill Stein, Henry Wolff, and James Smallwood convinced me I needed to get involved and meet fellow historians who had different concepts and areas of expertise. I believe the word was I needed to network with fellow historians.

What is there within ETHA that has kept you a member?

I have remained a member at ETHA because of the diversity—the diversity of topics and those of the speakers as well as the camaraderie among members and guests.

What is there about Texas that attracts you?

Texas' attraction to me would be the makeup of its citizens—the vast variety of cultures and histories that came together to make it the unique state that it is.

What is there about history that attracts you?

In studying history, it is the uncovering the past, solving the mystery, or so you think. Then some event, some document is uncovered and against what you thought was correct, another aspect is presented—and you start all over again.

How do you usually pursue history: reading books/articles? writing columns? attending conferences? watching documentaries? doing research? exploring graveyards? teaching classes? developing exhibits? organizing programs? pursuing genealogies? administering courses? writing books? what else?

In pursuing history, I have used all the mentioned areas. Teaching for 30 plus years, I tried to bring history alive in my classroom with pictures and participations in conferences as well as local history projects, such as cemetery workshops. I love a good mystery and will research archives and explore family stories to prove what is the truth and not just a myth. I find it satisfying when I can bring that story and its history to life.

I have used research to write and publish area histories. I help organize historical conferences in our area (Alton C. Allen Historical Conference - 23rd Annual) once a year, and, of course, by attending conferences like ETHA I enrich my knowledge of Texas history that helps me expand my fields of study.

Why do you love history? Has there been anything in your personal life that led to this? What was it?

I have had a love of Texas history from an early age. I enjoyed listening to the stories of the local old timers in Shiner. I was lucky I had parents who encouraged my curiosity about local history. My seventh-grade history teacher was an influence in my quest and encouraged me to be a participant by joining the Lavaca County Historical Commission as well as Texas State Historical Commission (rumor has it I have one of the oldest and longest memberships, since I joined when I was 15 years old). Charles Spurlin as my first history professor who helped to direct my love of history into a profession.

What is your favorite historical period or historical movement? Why?

My favorite time of Texas history would be from 1835 until 1846. I was asked to assist with documentation of the Come and Take it Cannon with Dr. Pat Wagner. It was my *aha!* moment when all my research and studies became real and alive. I knew this was a time-period where I wanted to expand.

I am now currently (the last 3 ½ years) researching and interviewing descendants of the “Runaway Scrape or the Flight to Sabine” and finding more to the “rest of the story.” History never gets old; it just gets more fascinating.

Who is your favorite historical person? Why?

My favorite historical person is someone I feel a strong connection with. His knowledge inspired me, but his vision of what a historian is guides me to this day. Charles Spurlin was my first history professor and later became my mentor and friend. I am sure he would laugh at me for choosing him over all the typical historical figures, but to me he is that historical figure.

If there is one event in history at which you could be present, what would it be? Why?

It is not an event but a place—the site of so many of the episodes in Texas History, complete with people. It is the locale on the upper Lavaca River, Southeast of Moulton (Lavaca County) that was the crossroads of the Gonzales-San Felipe and La Bahia Roads. Considering what happened in that neighborhood, from the Spanish Expeditions thru the 1870’s, a great deal of Texas history passed at this junction.

I would love to pull out a lawn chair at this intersection just to watch the parade of Texas history go by