



An ETHA Pine Cone Profile

March 2024

Paul Sturdevant

Greenville, TX



There are few, if any, who have not seen a tall, imposing figure standing at the door of the Banita Room or near the Rusk Room during conference breaks inviting us into another session. This is Paul E. Sturdevant, a stalwart of ETHA and as much a devotee of this region as he is of the past. Paul's love for history extends far beyond conference walls—he has collected it, he has taught it, and he has written about it. His essay, “Black and White and Shades of Grey: the Greenville Sign,” was not only a significant contribution to the spring 2004 issue of East Texas Historical Journal but it also served as the basis of a later Spring symposium event. His attendance at conference breakfasts has also been distinctive—he shares research and memories that bring depth to Black History and Women’s History that is invaluable. A valued member of the ETHA, Paul E. Sturdevant is this month’s Pine Cone Profile. | Mary Jo O’Rear

Where do you live?

Greenville, Texas

How long have you been part of the East Texas Historical Association?

Since 2003

What convinced you to join?

One of my professors recommended it and I have an interest in the section of the state live in.

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

Good conferences and opportunity to learn new information about East Texas. Also the excellent networking opportunities to be with others with like interests

What is there about Texas and East Texas that attracts you?

Its history and diversity and the opportunity to expand my knowledge of all aspects.

What is there about history that attracts you?

It is about who we are and where we have come from and where we can go. There is so much to learn and discover.

How do you usually pursue history?

I love to read, but also attend conferences occasionally contributing papers. I do enjoy research, especially on subjects with little work done on them. I teach at the community college level and work to add new material to my lectures. I use my own life experiences to help my students know how I have been impacted by history and events. As I tell my students at my age (77) many events weren't history to me, they were current events

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

History is one long continuing story that changes as we learn more about the events that we study. As I've mentioned above, the events I have observed, sometimes mundane, sometimes significant, have stayed with me and I look for connections. They weren't history, they were current events. My family made some of that history and I enjoy the story.

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

Growing up it was the Western movement. Yeah, cowboys and Indians, gunfighters, cattle drives, etc. As I matured I grew to like minority studies and twentieth century history. Still I enjoy all periods and the inter-connection they have with one another.

Who is your favorite historical person? Why?

One of my favorite figures is Randolph B. Marcy, an early military officer and explorer here in Texas.

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

That is hard, because to be there is to participate and maybe to change history in some way that might be bad. If I could observe in some way without affecting events, I would like to see the Alamo battle and see what really happened.

What else would you like others to know about you?

I enjoy people and interacting with them, having long conversations on many different subjects. Some of it philosophical, some of it whimsical, but always with the idea of learning something new.