

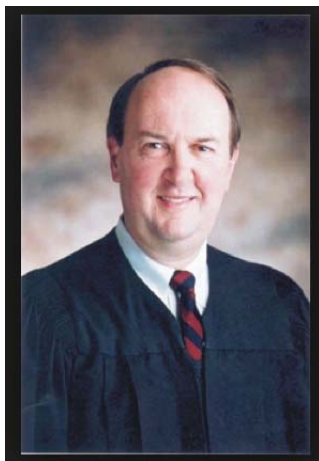
Program Summary (18 April 2013)

At 7:00 p.m., President Wade welcomed the membership. Wade announced that voting on proposed constitutional changes and for other elections would take place latter this evening before the start of the program.

At 8:00 p.m., President Wade reported on the results of the various elections. The constitutional amendments passed; officers were elected, save the TBN office of vice-president; and section officer election results were announced. A list of election results is given at the end of this report.

At 8:10 p.m., visitors were introduced by the members. Pat Hughes introduced the evening's speaker **Judge Mark Davidson**. Judge Davidson served as Judge of the 11th District Court for twenty years before his retirement in 2009. He is now serving as the Multi-District Litigation Judge for all asbestos cases in the State of Texas. In that role, he has judicial duties over the 85,000 asbestos cases pending throughout the state. While serving as a district judge, he tried over 450 jury trials and cut the backlog in the 11th District Court by 70 percent. In 1993, he was named "Trial Judge of the Year" by the Texas Association of Civil Trial and Appellate Specialists. From 2002 through 2007, he served as Administrative Judge of Harris County.

The title of this evening's talk was **Great Characters in Texas History**. The membership warmly welcomed Judge Davidson. This is the 658th meeting of the Houston Philosophical Society.



Judge Davidson began a grand tour of significant individuals in the political fabric of Texas. In 1836, Texas history was in its prime and infancy.

The few individuals who moved to Texas were not motivated by freedom or adventure as per popular perception; no, they were rather motivated by the fact that there was no extradition treaty between the United States and Mexico. So a debtor or an individual with an inconvenient marriage (or two) found Texas an expedient destination. A billboard left on the door of a departing individual often simply read “GTT,” meaning *Gone to Texas*. That would often end a pursuit by the law.

The Texas constitution had written into it many protections for debtors. The original homestead protection lives with us today; the most liberal protection of personal assets in the nation. Judge Davidson related numerous stories resulting from the personal conflict and animosity between the early Texas Presidents Samuel “San” Houston and Mirabeau B. Lamar. For example, Lamar moved the capitol from Houston to Austin after a request to change the name of Houston was rebuffed.

Judge Davidson moved on to introduce another historical figure, Edmund J. Davis, who was the first Republican governor of Texas, serving one term from 1870-1874. Davis had supported Governor Houston’s position against succession, and rose to the rank of Brigadier General in the Union Army. In 1869, voting by former Confederate supporters was banned, which effectively ended the Democratic Party in Texas. Davis’ Republican opponent may well have been elected, but after a two-week delay, Davis was announced the winner by exactly 2,000 votes. Thus the so-called black-and-tan faction bested the lily-white faction candidate. (These terms apparently were accurate but not in common use until perhaps 1888.) President Grant subsequently announced that in future elections, all Texans could vote. However, Davis tried several tricks to win re-election in 1873. He almost succeeded, but after a nine-day standoff, Davis finally conceded that his 29% vote was second to the democrat candidate’s 71% vote. Thus ended Republican influence in Texas politics for a century.

In 1914, James E. Ferguson was elected Governor of Texas. In 1917, Ferguson announced that there were Communists on the faculty of UT, and demanded they be fired. Despite appointing new regents, on a 5-4 vote, the university president survived firing. Ferguson retaliated with a line-item veto of not just the offending faculty in the UT budget, but the entire budget of the University of Texas. Alumni were not amused, and articles of impeachment were brought alleging misappropriation of public funds and receiving a large sum from an unknown source. The Texas Senate convicted Ferguson, who was removed from office. Although banned from seeking office, Ferguson

sought reelection, only to be defeated in the Democratic primary by Lt Gov William P. Hobby.

In 1924, Ferguson's wife, Miriam, ran for governor in a runoff with the grand dragon of the KKK. Rumor had it that purchasing a horse from the Fergusons' horse ranch would suffice to obtain a pardon from the Governor. In a memorable action, Miriam vetoed a bill authorizing Spanish instruction in public schools because English was the language spoken by Jesus. Mariam was turned out after one term, but won reelection for a second during the depression (1933-1935).

W. Lee "Pappy" O'Daniel was perhaps the most interesting character in Texas politics. Employed by flour-milling company Burrus Mills, O'Daniel worked with Ft. Worth musician Bob Wills to produce a half-hour daily radio show selling flour featuring the Light Crust Doughboys. O'Daniel's good radio voice and widespread name recognition led him to run for governor in 1938 in a 13-person race. He won without a runoff by taking 53% of the vote. The band provided a perfect campaign vehicle as he toured the state. Later, O'Daniel is thought to have stolen a special election for Senator from Texas against Lyndon Johnson, following the death of the 93-year-old son of Sam Houston (appointed by O'Daniel) who held office for only a few months. O'Daniel was widely viewed as profoundly incompetent in every office he held.

Judge Davidson concluded with a lamentation of the sorry state of Texas history instruction that tends to end in 1850. He urged the audience to work to rectify this situation. The future of the state is too important to ignore the rich history of the past 150 years.

Judge Davidson wrapped up his remarks at 9:02 and the audience warmly thanked the speaker. A number of questions were entertained.

After another round of applause, and the meeting adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

David W. Scott

Recording Secretary

The officer election results were:

Don Byrnes (President)
TBN (Vice President)
Chuck Dunkin (Treasurer)
Pat Hughes (Membership & Corresponding Secretary)
David Scott (Recording Secretary)

The section election results were:

Jack Agee (Section A - Engineering, Mathematics,
and Natural and Life Sciences)
Wayne Shandera (Section B - Health and Medicine)
George Barnstone (Section C - Government, Law, and Politics)
Wil McCorquodale (Section D - Humanities and Social Sciences)
Will Cannady and Sarah Whiting (co-chairs, Section E - Architecture,
Fine Arts, Music, Theater, and Writing)
Ann MacNaughton (Section F - Business, Communications,
and Community Leaders)