

I served time at the Brown County Jail:
performing the past and forming the future
in a small town museum

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the development of historical and non-historical performances inside the old Brown County Jail in Brownwood, Texas. The professional problem being addressed is how to create performance events that stimulate interest in the cultural history of Brown County and in the Brown County Museum of History. The document delves into a definition of historical reenactment in order to orient it as a heuristic tool rather than a teaching tool. The process of creating both historical and non-historical performances is discussed, including the initial planning phases, funding, research, script & character writing, performances, and community responses to the performances.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the very center of the state of Texas lies Brown County, in the very center of which lies the small town of Brownwood, stands an unusual and out-of-place medieval-looking four-story castle made of light brown sandstone. Out-of-towners occasionally glance up in curiosity as hometown folks casually drive by, mostly indifferent to the old building with its high-barred windows and stone parapets staring down agelessly. Those who take a moment to park just off the busy main street in order to regard the old building, find themselves strangely intimidated yet intrigued by its architecture. As the Texas historical marker proudly displayed in the front yard explains, this building was once the Brown County Jail. Completed in 1902, the castle functioned as a jail until 1981, when a new jail was built. After the building was vacated and nearly gutted for salvage steel, it became the home of the Brown County Museum of History. During its eighty-two years as a jail, this concrete, sandstone, and steel structure was literally and figuratively *alive* with the culture and heritage of this hard-scrabble Texas town. The prisoners and law enforcement officials who lived within those walls were charged with upholding and serving the law, protecting and preserving the culture of Brown County through the medium of law and order. As a museum, however, the old castle has been entrusted with the much more elusive task of protecting and preserving the culture of Brown County through a new medium: history.

Professional Problem

In the fall of 2009, I was approached by a member of the board of directors of the Brown County Museum of History (BCMh), Mr. Steve Blake, who asked me to make a video walk-through of the old jail. The video was to be added to the BCMh website to provide a view of the upper floors of the building for people who were not able to climb the dangerous open steel stairs. I was certainly intrigued by this opportunity and took several chances to visit the museum. I walked through the old rooms, sat in the cold steel cells, and admired the unique view of downtown Brownwood through the steel barred windows of the fourth story solitary confinement cell. What struck me as I spent time in the building was that each room seemed to resonate with the stories of the people who had been here. As I tried to imagine how I could capture the essence of this place on video, the idea naturally occurred to me: I didn't want to just video what the old jail *looked* like; I wanted to know what it *was* like.

What was it like to be a prisoner there in the early 1900's? What was it like to look out those windows during the Great Depression, or how did it sound to be confined there during the heyday of Camp Bowie during World War II? What was it like for those rugged lawmen to manage up to 100 prisoners in a space that I could hardly imagine comfortably accommodating more than 25? Although I didn't realize it at the time, this mental act of putting myself into the mindset and the *experience* of the people in Brownwood's past was, according to R.G. Collingwood, the very essence of the process of historical knowledge itself. As Collingwood stated, "Historical knowledge is the knowledge of what mind has done in the past, and at the

same time it is the redoing of this, the perpetuation of past acts in the present”
(Collingwood 218).

When I returned to Steve Blake, the idea I proposed to him was not a video walk-through of the old jail. Instead, I suggested we use the building to stage historical re-enactments, using live performers to create a museum experience that encouraged the community of Brownwood to explore its own past in an interactive and creative way. Mr. Blake was very excited about this proposal, though not without several questions and concerns. Together we decided to explore the possibility of using the old jail as a re-enactment site. This exploration became the core of my professional problem for this dissertation: how to use the old Brown County jail as a performance space to stimulate interest in local Brownwood cultural history and in the Brown County Museum of History.

As a professional problem, this project is valuable and significant not only in its exploration of the creative possibilities, problems, and solutions for performances in a building like the old jail, but also in the investigation of how re-enactments function in the unique crossroads between entertainment and education. It is my hope that anyone interested in pursuing the production of performance events such as those described in this dissertation will find my own trials and discoveries a valuable resource for their own process.

Thesis Statement

By examining the theory and execution of re-enactments and performance events in the Brown County Museum of History, I intend to show how these theatrical entertainments can be used as a heuristic tool in order to reinforce cultural identity and

to reinvigorate cultural interest in local history. Vanessa Agnew hints at the possibilities of this concept in her article *What is Re-enactment?* by stating "...this historical fallacy does not, perhaps, detract from its heuristic usefulness... The object is not a historical account of the past 'as it really was' but an opening to more fruitful interpretations." (Agnew, 334)

My Participation in This Project:

- Cooperating with the board of directors of the Brown County Museum of History, as well as other local organizations, to create re-enactments and other performative experiences at the old jail.
- Researching the history of the construction and use of the old jail, the history of law enforcement in Texas, and the history of Brownwood and Brown County.
- Taking responsibility for the primary creative direction of the performances, including designing the experience, writing the scripts, casting and directing the performers, raising funds, securing costumes & props for performances, and maintaining a budget.
- Researching the practicalities of historical re-enactment, including its value in fields such as entertainment, tourism, historical education, and cultural development.

Methodology

The purpose of using the old Brown County Jail as a performance space is to reinvigorate cultural interest in local history and by extension, revive an interest in the museum itself. In the end, the final determination of the success of this project will be a simple two-fold measure: Is there enough interest in these performances to insure

self-sustainability, increase the average annual museum visitor numbers, and attract new groups who typically have not been visiting the museum?

In order to accomplish these goals, my work at the museum has resulted in several different approaches to performance/interactive experiences at the museum. These can be divided into two main categories: historical re-enactment experiences and non-historical entertainment experiences.

Historical Reenactment Experiences

This category of performances includes two distinct, though related, types of museum experience that will be discussed in this dissertation. These are live historical re-enactments and interactive exhibits.

Historical re-enactments consist of live performance events in which audience members interact with actors depicting actual historical figures and situations from Brown County's past. The research I have conducted into the historical narratives and documents of Brown County has proven to me this important theme: a community (especially a small central Texas town) is defined as much by its criminals as by its honorable citizens and leaders. For the sake of dramatization, anachronism and historical inaccuracies are used in order to "fill in the gaps" and to condense a broad range of interesting historical events into a workable script. The primary re-enactment discussed in this dissertation will be the *I Served Time in the Brown County Jail* experience. In this performance I attempt to gather a collection of characters, including law enforcement heroes and law offenders, in order to depict an over-all view of what Brown County culture was like in the early 1900s. The types of crimes, the motivations behind criminal offenses, and the treatment of criminals is an

extremely vital, yet often under-appreciated, aspect of what defines a culture in any given time period.

In these re-enactments, we bring the audience into the cells of the old jail in order to have face-to-face interactions with the historically based characters of the inmates and officers from the early 1900s. Upon entering the performance, each visitor is “booked” into the jail and has their mug-shot taken by a camera that looks like a turn of the century Brownie camera. They are then given a few simple instructions concerning their safety and that of the other inmates. They each receive a program that acts as a guide, providing the visitors with information about each inmate they will encounter and suggestions about what they could talk about with each of them. The audience members are led up the stairs by the Sheriff or the Deputy and placed in a tiny jail cell with one or more inmates. From there, the performance experience is in the hands of each audience member. Through conversation, story-telling, and sometimes pure intimidation and intense reactions, audience members interact with their cell mates to have unique and personal experiences. Some of these experiences are humorous, while others are very tense and frightening, and in some cases the experience can be heart-breaking. The visitors are occasionally moved from one location to another by the Deputy, giving them the chance to spend time with different characters in different settings. At the end of their visit, the audience members are brought back downstairs and given a souvenir copy of their mug-shot as they leave.

Much like the live historical re-enactment, the purpose of interactive exhibits is to depict an actual historical situation. The difference between the historical re-

enactment and the interactive exhibit is that an exhibit does not necessarily include live performers. The dramatic activity is carried out entirely by the audience member interacting with a staged environment based on a historical event. For this dissertation, the primary interactive exhibit I will describe is *The Murder of Sheriff Bell*. This performative exhibit offers audience members the chance to become the main character in a historical criminal investigation. In order to “solve the crime,” visitors must study time-lines, find and analyze clues, and examine witness testimony. Upon entering the hotel room, they discover several placard signs that direct the action of the experience, drawing the visitors’ attention to specific details and requiring them to draw certain conclusions. Even without the presence of actors portraying characters, the exhibit still creates a re-enactment of sorts within the historical imagination of the visitor. This type of museum experience is important in this dissertation because it represents a compromise between the traditional look-don’t-touch museum format and the big production of a live historical re-enactment; it requires the visitor to *do* something in order to obtain the historical information contained in the exhibit, but does not have all the problems and costs of live re-enactment.

Non-Historical Entertainment Experiences

During the original planning discussions of the possible use of the old jail as a performance space, the concept of using the building for something *other* than strict historically accurate re-enactments was a delicate subject. The fear at that time was that it would be considered disrespectful to the old jail (as a cultural artifact in Brown County) to use the building for something that it was never designed or intended for,

and that people might become confused as to what the building actually *meant* to Brown County. So the question became, was it possible to use the building for entertainment performances while still honoring it as a site of cultural history? To answer this question, I will discuss the development and execution of *The Haunted Jail*.

Without a doubt, *The Haunted Jail* has been the most popular performance event to take place at the museum. Occurring on the last three weekends of October, *The Haunted Jail* is an entertaining performance event in which visitors of the museum get to participate in spooky activities. Over the years, these events have included ghostly storytelling with special effects, zombie hunts (with Nerf guns), menageries of monsters locked in cells, and even fun activities for younger kids. By incorporating the character of the building itself, some local legends, a few special effects, and a little bit of comedy, *The Haunted Jail* has become a bona-fide hit in the community.

As the director of these performances, my methodological approach to *The Haunted Jail* performance is simple: the old jail (one of the most famous/infamous buildings in Brownwood) becomes a focal point to perform local superstitions and popular cultural horror during the final days of October. While *The Haunted Jail* is not an accurate historical re-enactment by any stretch of the imagination, it is still an extremely effective way to reinforce the old Brown County Jail as an epicenter of Brownwood character and mythology and to generate interest in the museum. As Marvin Carlson points out in his book, *The Haunted Stage*,

Theorists of tourism have often noted that physical locations, like individual human beings, can by the operations of fame be so deeply implanted in the consciousness of a culture that individuals inevitably find that experience already haunted by the cultural construction of these persons and places.

(Carlson, 135)

The people of Brown County do not have to be convinced by special effects, costumes, or make-up that their beloved old jail is haunted; they know it already because it is such a famous part of their shared cultural identity. By using the space to perform our entertaining late-October scare-fests and our mid-September shoot-outs, we are simply reinforcing what they already *know* about the building; the past is *alive* here.

Organization

Chapter Two

Chapter two will open the dissertation with a discussion of the concepts of re-enactment within a museum setting. This chapter will introduce and define some of the prevailing performance theories within the genre of historical re-enactment—especially those of Scott Magelssen, Vanessa Agnew, Stephen Gapps—and a few other prominent critics in this subject. This chapter will also establish and describe the methodological process behind this directing project.

Chapter Three

In chapter three I will offer background information on the history of Brown County, the old Brown County Jail, and the history of law-enforcement as a vital source of cultural identity. This chapter will serve as a foundation for the following

chapters by revealing how I put together ideas for performances based on the cultural heritage of this small Texas town.

Chapter Four

In chapter four I will discuss the preparation and performances of the historical re-enactment, *I Served Time in the Brown County Jail*, and the interactive exhibit *The Murder of Sheriff Bell*. All aspects of these events will be discussed, including the writing of the scripts, the design of the experiences, funding the projects, the casting and directing of the actors, and the community response to the experiences.

Chapter Five

In chapter five I will describe the preparation and performances of *The Haunted Jail*. This chapter will contain the details of designing the experiences, writing scripts, working with actors, and all other aspects of using the jail for these entertainment performances as well as examining the community response to these performances.

Chapter Six

Chapter six will conclude the dissertation with a discussion of how these re-enactments have successfully achieved the heuristic goal established in my thesis statement. I intend to show that the use of the old jail as a performance space has led to a period of revived community interest in the history of Brownwood and, by extension, in the Brown County Museum of History.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS REENACTMENT?

This chapter will explore the various possibilities, problems, and critical perspectives on the broad (and ever broadening) subject of historical reenactment. Before describing the actual planning and execution of the performances at the Brown County Museum of History, it is important to first establish exactly what it is that we are doing when we adopt the label of “reenactment.”

In Vanessa Agnew’s article, *Introduction: What is Reenactment?*, she states, “Perhaps because of this winning combination of imaginative play, self-improvement, intellectual enrichment, and sociality, reenactment is booming” (Agnew 327). And booming it is. Even a cursory Google search for historical reenactments will reveal hundreds of opportunities to “experience the past.” But what exactly does it mean to “experience the past?” This has become the catch-all slogan of all sorts of things: from museums to films, television series, community events, and even restaurants and touristic shopping centers. As Agnew points out, “Passion plays and pageants reminds us that in the broadest sense of the term, reenactment is not new” (Agnew 328). What is new, however, is that in the past few decades, more and more historical and performance criticism has been directed towards reenactment. The two primary aims of all this critical exploration are essentially to A) define exactly what reenactment *is*, and B) to describe exactly what reenactment *does*.

What IS Reenactment?

An in-depth study into the current performance theories of reenactment would lead the researcher through an ever unfolding and expanding maze of critical

approaches and applications. For the purposes of this dissertation project, the most helpful definition of reenactment is the simplest and most inclusive. Reenactment (historical or otherwise) is an attempt to re-experience past experiences.

One of the most important 20th century works about the philosophy of history is R.G. Collingwood's *The Idea Of History*. Collingwood's goal in this thought-provoking book is to establish a philosophy of what history actually is. According to him, history is an active and intentional mental process that specifically studies artifacts and texts from the past in order to focus on thinking and *rethinking* the thoughts of humans from the past. History, then, is not an object, it is a specific kind of thinking. History is not the ruins of an ancient temple or even a textbook describing the temple; history is the intentional mental act of thinking about the thoughts and motivations of the humans who designed, built, worshipped in, protected, destroyed, and/or discovered the temple. As he states, "Historical knowledge, then, has for its proper object thought: not things thought about, but the act of thinking itself" (Collingwood 305).

While this idea might make some amateur history buffs and museum curators nervous, it is very well suited to a whole range of modern theories on cultural performance and performativity. Interestingly, the term that Collingwood used to describe the specific kind of thought known as "history" is "re-enactment" (he uses the hyphenated version of the term). Collingwood writes that historical knowledge is "an activity of thought, which can be known only in so far as the knowing mind re-enacts it and knows itself as so doing" (Collingwood 218). The purpose of history (the mental re-enactment of past thought), according to Collingwood, is not just backward-

looking in order to know about *them*. It is also forward-looking to reveal the nature of who we are as human beings, to know *ourselves*.

One of the problems that arises is that history, as a mental activity, is, by definition, always processing information about the past through a filter of our thoughts about the present. This perspective turns history from an objective collection of data (as many museum directors often think) into an incredibly subjective act of *interpretation*. In addition, this means that distortions can (or more precisely, *will*) occur in the re-enactment of past thoughts. For example, it is impossible for a person living today to think historically about the Emancipation Proclamation without thinking of it through the lens of current cultural issues of race, economy, politics, etc., that have occurred in the century and a half since the document was first published. As Adam Kok Wey Leon points out in his article, *A Re-examine of R.G. Collingwood's Historical Re-enactment*, much of the criticism of Collingwood's theory concerns the danger that the historian cannot re-enact past thoughts without distortions of the present. As he states, "...the facts of history never came to us in 'pure' form, but always retracted through the mind of the recorder" and that "...there is also the danger of the historian interpreting the events suitable to some present purpose" (Leong 131). However, Collingwood addresses these concerns by describing the process as an "inside" and "outside" process. Leong summarizes this, stating, "By 'outside,' he meant the physical aspects of the event. The 'inside' means the thoughts behind the event" (Leong 131). This philosophy of history works on a principle of examining objective data, or the "outside" of a past event, then re-enacting the thoughts behind those events – the "inside" As Leong points out, this is the same

principle as inductive reasoning that is used in many fields, including forensic science, to establish crime scene evidence. So, while re-enactment of past thoughts comes with the inherent risk of misinterpretation, this is true of *all* human knowledge acquired about a subject that falls outside of what is directly observable. It is the duty of the historian to make every effort to ensure that the subjective re-enactment of a past thought is supported by as much objective data as possible.

It is also the duty of the historian to not only allow, but to *encourage* further (and possibly contradictory) conclusions based on the same evidence. The artifacts and information kept in museums are the dry bones, in Collingwood's estimation, awaiting the historian who uses them to re-enact the thoughts of the people from the past. Collingwood writes, rather poetically, that a historian who simply records and repeats historical data is not actually performing history.

Instead of writing its history, he will merely repeat the statements that record the external facts of its development: names and dates and ready-made descriptive phrases. Such repetitions may very well be useful, but not because they are history. They are the dry bones, which may some-day become history, when someone is able to clothe them with the flesh and blood of a thought which is both his own and theirs (305).

In terms of the management of a museum of history, is it any wonder why visitor attendance suddenly spikes with the performance of a live reenactment? How much more interesting is a living being who will talk to you than a collection of old things inside of a display case? This is precisely the reason that a display of American Civil War artifacts can hardly hope to draw the large crowds that a live reenactment of a

Civil War battle would attract. Of course, in Collingwood's philosophy of history, re-enactment is a mental process, but it is really only a small step to take this purely philosophical concept and move into the world of physical performance. While the live performance of historical reenactment is not necessarily what Collingwood was discussing, the same principles apply, with the addition of several more layers of interpretation. By converting a purely mental activity into a live performance carried out by actors in costumes in a given setting/location, with or without a script, and witnessed by an audience made up of diverse individuals, there are innumerable ways that the historical event being reenacted will contain discrepancies caused by various interpretations based on experience. However, all of this varied interpretation does not diminish the definition of what reenactment actually is: an attempt to re-experience past experiences. It simply means that re-enactment will, by definition, create not a single, unassailably accurate definition of a past event, it will create a multitude of historical experiences that are each subjective and *useful* to their personal point of view. Theatricality, by its very nature, follows the same rules of "inside"/"outside" inductive reasoning as described in Collingwood's philosophy of history. An audience witnesses the event - the "outside", and then collectively and/or individually re-create the thoughts and emotions being experienced - the "inside".

In his book, *The Haunted Stage*, Marvin Carlson argues that *all* theatrical performance is simply the reenactment of previous experiences. As he states,

The retelling of stories already told, the reenactment of events already enacted, the re-experience of emotions already experienced, these are and have always been central concerns of the theatre in all times and places (3).

It could be argued that the only difference between the performance of a play and the performance of a historical reenactment, then, is that by applying the term “historical,” the performance is making an intentional reference to its previous circumstance and that the performance narrative is based on non-fictional events. This intentional referencing also comes with the specific duty (whether explicit or implied) of authenticity and of legitimacy as an objective means of historical learning. For example, when leaving a performance of William Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, audience members almost never claim that their appreciation of the performance was primarily the result of having learned many facts about the history of Rome or the history of Elizabethan England. However, when audiences attend an event that is specifically described and marketed as a historical reenactment, the responses are almost always directed at the quality and amount of historical information they received. This doesn’t mean, however, that the quality of the performance or the dramatic content of the historical reenactment is irrelevant. On the contrary, the theatrical quality of the production can often mean the success or failure of any historical reenactment, just as the careless lack of attention to historically appropriate costumes and settings could detract from the dramatic effect of *Julius Caesar*.

As stated previously, the greatest single question facing the future of the live performance of historical reenactment today is the question of epistemological efficacy within the realm of historical knowledge and/or historical research. Both theatrical performance and historical reenactment rely on direct audience interaction with pre-experienced events in order to communicate meaning. At the same time, both theatrical performance and historical reenactment are dependent on the ever-

changing attitudes, values, and aesthetic sensibilities of the observer(s). Notice the similarities between Stephen Gapps' argument that, "By virtue of its performative nature, reenactment is open-ended – an ephemeral site of history, always ready to be constituted anew at the next reenactment" (398), and Marvin Carlson's statement that theatrical performance "...is the repository of cultural memory, but like the memory of each individual, it is also subject to continual adjustment and modification as the memory is recalled in new circumstances and contexts" (2). With theatrical performance, generally speaking, there is a lot of leeway for creative interpretation that is unfortunately not usually afforded to historical reenactment. The problem with historical reenactment concerns epistemological efficacy: how can such a subjective mechanism possibly be useful for the transmission of objective knowledge about history? In her article, *History's Affective Turn: Historical Reenactment and its work in the Present*, Vanessa Agnew voices this concern by stating,

While reenactment's conciliatory gestures and expressive aesthetic possibilities may be welcomed, concerns about the genre remain. These extend, first, to the historical distortions that arise when strong claims are made about reenactment's epistemological possibilities, yet the past is reduced to a conceit for dealing with the present (309).

Vanessa Agnew, Stephen Gapps, Jody Enders, Alexander Cook, Heather LaMarre, Kristen Landreville, and Scott Magelssen are a few of the performance theorists who have critically analyzed the use of historical reenactment as a mechanism to transfer historical information. The aspect concerning most of these writers is the same criticism directed towards Collingwood's philosophy of history as

reenactment: no matter how accurately the directors, performers, and audience may be able to depict the historical events being reenacted, there are always discrepancies. These discrepancies occur in many forms: from the basic, such as clothing styles, language anachronisms, etc., to the more academic, such as specific semantic meanings involving economics, race, religion, etc.

While Collingwood's "inside"/"outside" process at least partially answers this question, the focus of this dissertation is to take a slightly different approach. Instead of looking for answers to the question of how (and if) historical reenactment is effective as a tool for conveying objective historical information, I will instead focus on an idea that Vanessa Agnew briefly mentions in another of her articles, *What is Reenactment?* As she states:

However, this historical fallacy does not, perhaps, detract from its heuristic usefulness. It opens up the past as a realm of foreclosed possibilities and interrogates the specific conditions of those foreclosures. The object is not a historical account of the past "as it really was" but an opening to more fruitful interpretations (334).

While Agnew goes on to argue that historical reenactment should be held to the same thorough academic standards and ethics as other (more conventional) forms of historiography, the concept I want to focus on involves two very important words: heuristic usefulness. Instead of asking whether historical reenactment is epistemologically useful, this dissertation will explore whether historical reenactment is heuristically useful - specifically, heuristically useful for the Brown County

Museum of History. While this may seem like a slight change in terminology, it represents an enormous change in mindset.

The term “heuristic” has been applied to many fields, including education, psychology, and even computer programming. A simple definition of the term is anything that encourages further discovery and problem solving. In other words, something that is heuristic is not necessarily an answer to a question or a perfect solution to a problem, it is something that helpfully stimulates thought and attention *towards* an answer or a solution. What this means is that rather than trying to overcome the impossible task of requiring the performance of historical reenactment to be an ideal means of communicating objective historical learning itself, we allow the reenactment to direct thought and attention *towards* objective historical learning. Several of the critics of reenactment already mentioned have made comments in this same direction, coming just shy of actually using the term “heuristic.” In their article, *When is Fiction as Good as Fact? Comparing the Influence of Documentary and Historical Reenactment Films on Engagement, Affect, Issue Interest and Learning*, Heather LaMarre and Kristen Landreville claim that “Engagement theorists posit that narratives, whether fictional or factual, can transport people into the story and lead to higher levels of issue interest and learning” (541). Likewise, in his article, *The Use and Abuse of Historical Reenactment: Thoughts on Recent Trends in Public History*, Alexander Cook writes, “As an intellectual exercise, investigative reenactment can offer no answers. It only raises questions. But the value of that should not be underestimated” (495). I agree whole-heartedly with Cook and take his admonishment to the next level: not only should the value of reenactment leading to further historical

questioning not be underestimated, it is, in fact, the principle defining value of reenactment.

Whereas most of the criticism concerning reenactment is predicated on the assumption that its purpose is to teach or to learn historical information, a more fruitful definition could be altered to reflect this new direction: it is not an attempt to re-experience past events in order to learn history, it is an attempt to re-experience past events in order to direct attention *towards* historical learning.

This brings us to the second major question of this chapter:

What Does Reenactment DO?

Having established a heuristic definition of what reenactment *is*, we must now focus attention on what it does. As stated earlier, reenactments are appearing all over the globe, and one of the most important aspects that cannot be overlooked in this discussion is that the vast majority of historical reenactments being performed today are embedded in the realm of tourism. It is impossible to discuss the applications and possibilities of historical reenactment without discussing how reenactment is currently being used around the world as a boon to local economies through tourist dollars. In his article, *Playing Rebels: Reenactment as Nostalgia and Defense of the Confederacy in the Battle of Aiken*, James Foster discusses many aspects of how Civil War reenactment impacts, and is impacted by, the cultural and economic stresses within a local community. As he points out, “The Battle of Aiken has an estimated impact on the area’s economy that is second only to the venerable Aiken Steeple chase, with an audience of some twenty-five thousand” (67). Most assuredly, local communities all over the world have been motivated (at least in part) to present historical reenactments

as a source of income. It would be easy enough to write an entire dissertation on the issues regarding the economics of cultural tourism. Indeed, much has been written about the historiographical problems inherent in the act of packaging cultural history as a mass consumer product.

The prospect of increased attendance and revenue for the Brown County Museum of History is one of the two primary motivating factors for the creation of live performance events at the museum. Even without having spent time researching this issue, I found that many of members of the board of directors at the museum intuitively expressed reservations about creating these performances for just this reason: is it ethical to make use of cultural history and a cultural heritage site to make money? Like most small town museum boards of directors, this group of primarily retired volunteers understands that their charge as caretakers of the museum is not just about keeping this non-profit business afloat; it must be guided by a noble sense of duty towards the cultural knowledge they are working to preserve. Their concern lies in the problem discussed earlier in this chapter: how can such a subjective experience be used to communicate and/or preserve objective historical information? If we commit to these performances, knowing full well that while audiences will attend in greater numbers, they will also be exposed to historical information that cannot possibly be presented entirely free of inaccuracies, aren't we betraying the very purpose of the museum? The problem with answering this question is that the question itself is based in the assumption that the primary value of historical reenactment should be in communicating objective historical information. The answer to this question may be to readjust this assumption so that the usefulness of these

performances is heuristic, rather than objective. What I hoped to prove to the board of directors (and in this dissertation) is that modern museum-going, post-modern tourists are much more open to experiential, subjective learning situations because they have a different definition of the concept of authenticity. As Jim McKay points out in his article, *A Critique of the Militarisation of Australian History and Culture Thesis: The Case of Anzac Battlefield Tourism*, “This postmodern take on tourism means that authenticity needs to be analysed as a contingent combination of staged, existential, constructive and emergent experiences rather than dismissed as inherently amoral” (17).

In her fascinating article, *History Trouble: Reenactment and Pseudoperformativity at the Witch Festival of Nieuwpoort*, Jody Enders focuses on the annual Witch Festival in Nieuwpoort, Belgium. The heart of this festival is what Enders calls the “pseudo-performative” reenactment of the unjust medieval trial of a witch. What Enders means by pseudo-performative is that instead of simply reenacting the event “as it was,” the audience of the performance actually steps in and changes the outcome of the trial – exonerating the victim rather than executing her in an act of feminist revision of history. This is an excellent example of how reenactment, as a form of communication, is extremely dependent upon the social and economic values of the modern (post-modern) audience. The performance is so dependent, in fact, that the values of the historical persons being portrayed can be wildly inaccurate from a strictly historical perspective. As Enders writes,

Beyond the fairly transparent motivation of creating a profitable spectacle during high-tourist season, the fascinating motive of the Witch

Festival of Nieuwpoort is justice... By presenting what organizers are at pains to call not history per se, but “a *historic evocation*,” the *Heksenfeest* re-theatricalizes the death penalty in order to craft not just pseudohistory, not just revisionist history, but new history that flies in the face of the historical record in favor of a different narrative (236).

Again, if the purpose of historical reenactments (or “evocations”, in this case) were to communicate objective and accurate information about historical events, the Witch Festival of Nieuwpoort would be considered a total failure. But, if we readjust that assumption to claim that the purpose of this performance is to focus thought and attention *towards* historical learning – then the Witch Festival can be appreciated in a whole new light. As Enders points out,

Theatre’s histories can be reasonably correct or unreasonably incorrect.

But as we have seen from the *Heksenfeest*, they might also be *reasonably incorrect* or *unreasonably correct*. By reasonably incorrect, I mean the possibility that an event falsifies history for a greater social good; by unreasonably correct, I mean the possibility that a more or less accurate representation of history perpetrates social injustice (251).

While there have been no studies or surveys taken of the attendees of the Witch Festival, I think it would be safe to say that the vast majority of them fully understand that the historical facts are different from the outcome of live performance. Yet it is quite possible that audiences would be horrified and offended by the performance if it was portrayed as accurately as possible according to the historical facts. Herein is the paradox of the performance of historical reenactment as a heuristic

tool rather than an objective tool; in order to be heuristically effective, the reenactment must, in some cases, be pseudo-historical or even anti-historical. As stated earlier, the post-modern sense of authenticity is not necessarily violated by historical inaccuracy, while the audience's sense of propriety might be violated by historical accuracy which could actually discourage interest in historical learning. Also, it has been argued by R.G. Collingwood and Stephen Gapps that in many cases, the discrepancies between past and present are precisely the points at which historical learning can take place.

Scott Magelssen's book, *Simmings; Participatory Performance and the Making of Meaning*, is probably the most thorough and encouraging look at the usefulness of the performance of historical reenactments. While he never uses the term "heuristic," and prefers to use the handle "simmings" to refer to reenactments, his revelations from several live reenactment events offer a broad range of support for his thesis. He concludes his book with the following:

My conclusion is that the profundity of the experience and the sustained meaning-making it produces does not necessarily need to be hitched to the element of the real, nor to fidelity, nor to participant sincerity, nor even to her control over the narrative. Success would seem to have more to do with the way a simming engages with participants' values, and the proper degree of flexibility in its frames to allow for participants' values, and the proper degree in the event and the meanings they are co-producing with their bodies and actions (189).

This conclusion, in my opinion, is very much in agreement with the re-definition of reenactment as a heuristic, rather than as an objective tool for historical learning;

replacing the stumbling-block of objective historical accuracy with the stepping stone of heuristic self-exploration. As the directors of the Brown County Museum of History consider supporting these projects in the future, the great opportunity that these performances hope to create is *not* that visitors will simply learn objective historical information in an interesting new format, the opportunity is for visitors to realize that they could actually *be* interested in coming to the museum to learn more about the history of Brown County.

This new methodology immediately relieves the performances of the impossible task of attempting to achieve true historical accuracy and allows for greater creative freedom in planning ways to use the Old Jail as a performance space. Not only can our reenactments take actual historical characters and events and combine them in ways that contradict historical facts, we can also use *non*-historical characters and events to create performances that generate interest and direct attention towards learning about of the Old Jail and the Museum of History. Our *Haunted Jail* and *Old-West Shoot-out* performances do exactly that. This does not mean, however, that there are no guidelines or standards for the performances to follow in order to meet our heuristic goal.

As a function of the Brown County Museum of History, the performances should not be considered a success if they only generate interest in themselves, or if they intentionally lead visitors to genuinely believe that the performance gave them unmediated objective historical information. In other words, if the performances do not produce a noticeable improvement in the regular attendance and community support of the museum, they are not having the heuristic effect I am intending. In

order to make sure that the reenactment performances at the Old Jail have the desired effect, these two sensible guidelines can be established from what we have already read from many critics: to foreground and contextualize the present-ness of the performances, and to support the various subjective experiences of the audience with plenty of objective historical information available. Scott Magelssen also expresses these guidelines clearly, stating, “While not always required, simmings tend to do better when they are supported by rigorous contextualization and pedagogical resources, rather than stand-alone exercises (189).”

Fortunately, in this case, the museum itself provides the pedagogical resources necessary. When visitors attend a reenactment at the Old Jail and become interested in exploring more of the history of Brown County, there are two whole buildings worth of very informative exhibits as well as plenty of books, pamphlets, and other reading materials to facilitate their exploration. Many of the stories that the performances are based on can be found in detail in the materials provided.

Foregrounding and contextualizing the present-ness of these performances happens by at least one of three possible means: through the marketing and management of the performance, through the script and style of the performance, and through the interactions of the audience itself. The next chapter of this dissertation will take a more in-depth look at how these means influenced the development of each of the performances.

To conclude this chapter, let me reiterate what has been established. The performance of historical reenactment is an attempt to re-experience past events in order to direct attention towards historical learning. This means that, instead of trying

to use historical reenactment as the history lesson itself, we are using the performances to *encourage* historical learning - an approach that allows much more creative flexibility without faltering over the impossible task of trying to achieve strict historical accuracy. As long as we follow the guidelines of foregrounding and contextualizing the present-ness of the reenactments, and we support the performances with the resources to encourage historical learning, the performances at the Old Jail can be seen as a positive and successful project.

CHAPTER 3

THE STORY OF THE OLD JAIL

In this chapter I will examine the role of crime and criminal justice in the development of cultural identity, beginning with a broad spectrum of American history and culture, then narrowing my focus to Texas history and culture, and then further down to the history and cultural identity of Brown County. This exploration will help establish the role of the Brown County Museum of History within the cultural identity of this community. As the epicenter of cultural heritage and history, what are the stories we should present at the BCMH that best capture and represent the identity of the people who live here? These are the stories that will best serve the thesis of this professional project: to present live reenactments and theatrical entertainments that can be used as a heuristic tool in order to reinforce cultural identity and to reinvigorate cultural interest in local history.

For three weeks during June of 2015, the entire nation was captivated by news about the escape of two inmates from Clinton Correctional Facility in northern New York State. As the two criminals, both incarcerated for violent crimes, fled from law enforcement officers, the American public devoured coverage about every step of the investigation, the escape plan, and the criminal histories of the convicts. This story is simply one of the thousands of news events that briefly obsess the public consciousness, but it serves as an excellent example of an interesting dichotomy of our cultural interest in the rule of law and order versus the love of individualism and self-preservation. A quick examination of the TV Guide would expose a disturbing fascination with movies, television series, and documentaries about crime and criminal

justice. It is this dichotomy that turns the most disturbing criminals into the fascinating anti-heroes of our society. While much of our cultural identity is built on the history of leaders, innovators, and heroes, we are also equally defined by our villains, delinquents, and crooks. As Thomas Blomberg and Karol Lucken point out in their book, *American Penology*, "...how we govern ourselves is related to how we govern crime" (68).

Of all the states in the Union, it could be argued that Texas has a special fascination with the criminal element as an expression of that most cherished of Texan philosophies: rely on yourself, never retreat, and never surrender. In his book, *Texas Tough*, Robert Perkinson writes, "The more I read and the more people I spoke with... the more I realized that in the realm of (criminal) punishment, all roads lead to Texas" (4). Brown County is geographically situated almost in the dead center of Texas.

Brown County residents consider themselves to be "the heart" of Texas; several businesses and organizations reflect this belief with titles like, "Heart of Texas Dental" or "Heart of Texas Automotive." Whatever characteristics you would use to define the state of Texas, Brown County could be the place where those characteristics are most highly concentrated. In the foreword of *The Nice and Nasty in Brown County*, a collection of Brown County stories, Ruth Griffin Spence writes referring to those characters of questionable repute, "The Nice and Nasty of these stories have, at one time or another, lived in or visited in Brown County, the geographical center of Texas. Because of the location, the people here were undoubtedly more Texan than any other group within the state; its heroes and heroines more heroic; its villains more villainous" (Spence i).

Perhaps the most important theme to establish in this chapter is that the American criminal justice system has changed drastically in the last forty years. This change may have been shocking to some, but for the majority of U.S. citizens, it has occurred with a subtlety that engenders a sense of naturalness; it is as if things have always been this way. The change to which I am referring is the very nature of the relationship between society and the criminal. The most basic statement that can be made about this change is that the United States became a country with an obsessive (and mostly irrational) fear of crime and criminals. Although there is much debate about how and why this shift occurred, most scholars agree that it occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. Blomberg and Lucken state:

The 1970s ended on the dismal notes of crisis and failure. In the wake of the Vietnam War, the Iran hostage affair, Three Mile Island, high unemployment, and crippling inflation, there was little reason left for optimism. For some, the belief that the 1960s had left the nation morally bankrupt only deepened the sense that radical change was needed (179).

The radical change that came about, then, was that Americans began to shift their fears, their energy, and their money inward. Rather than banding together to overcome the foreign enemies we faced during the wars of the early 20th century, we began a war within ourselves. Various themes that are ubiquitous in our culture came from this war; “Tough On Crime,” “Zero Tolerance,” “Just Say No,” and “The War on Drugs,” to name a few. As Blomberg and Lucken write, “Though anxiety over crime had not been a part of the national conscience before, crime quickly became the centerpiece of nearly every political speech, campaign, and policy” (180). According to Jonathan Simon, the purpose of his book, *Governing Through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear*, is to

create an awareness (and a reversal) of America's irrational, obsessive, and self-destructive fear of crime. Simon also points to the events of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s as the formation period of this new doctrine on crime, especially the assassination of President Kennedy in downtown Dallas in broad daylight on national television. As Simon states,

Americans have built a new civil and political order structured around the problem of violent crime. In this new order, values like freedom and equality have been revised in ways that would have been shocking, if obviously imaginable – in the late 1960's and new forms of power institutionalized and embraced – all in the name of repressing seemingly endless waves of violent crime (3).

Echoing these thoughts, Sasha Abramsky warns even more vehemently about the cyclical and destructive nature of the American criminal justice system that evolved in the latter half of the twentieth century. Abramsky points out that America's new approach to criminal justice has created a situation that would have shocked and dismayed pre-1960 American culture: while crime rates remained fairly unchanged, incarceration rates have skyrocketed. As Abramsky states, according to U.S. criminal records, in 1980 there were 1.8 million Americans under some form of criminal supervision (jail, prison, probations, etc.). Today there are more than 7 million: an increase of about 380 per cent. In her book, *American Furies: Crime, Punishment, and Vengeance in the Age of Mass Imprisonment*, Abramsky writes,

Told by a generation of politicians to be ever more afraid, encouraged by a sensationalist media in an era of instant reporting to fear the chaos and blood-lust lurking just beneath society's surface, Americans became progressively more hyped on prisons toward the end of the twentieth century. Electorates obsessed with the next wave of drug addiction, the next random murder, the next gang-related atrocity, the next teenage psychopath, increasingly

voted for politicians preaching a lock-‘em-up-and-throw-away-the-key approach to punishment, and correspondingly tolerated, even welcomed, an extraordinary diversion of public funds into criminal justice. Incarceration, along with the various feeder institutions that channel such a high percentage of American into jail and prison, is today a very big business (xxii).

While it is certain that the age of mass incarceration is being played out in every corner of the United States, it was the great state of Texas that led, and still leads, the way along this dubious path. As Robert Perkinson points out, Texas “...ranks first in prison growth, first in for-profit imprisonment, first in supermax lockdown, first in total number of adults under criminal justice supervision, and a resounding first in executions (4).” Texas’s per capita imprisonment rate is three times higher than the Islamic Republic of Iran’s. It would not be hard to argue that when it comes to being “tough on crime”, no state compares to Texas. This obsession with mass incarceration has also left its mark on state budget funds, siphoning more and more money away from education and into the burgeoning prison system. In his 2010 article, *Education Vs. Incarceration*, Steven Hawkins writes,

In the 2009-2010 academic year, state budget cuts forced the Houston Independent School District to manage a projected \$10 million shortfall. However, in the preceding year, Texas spent over \$175 million to imprison residents from just 10 neighborhoods in Houston (web).

Yet, despite this ‘tough on crime’ persona, Texas is still the state most obsessed with the concept of personal freedom. As stated earlier, Texas’s rich history of rebels and one-man-against-the-world heroes is the beating heart of Texan identity. Drive through any town in Texas and you are sure to see at least one Confederate

Battle Flag, along with bumper stickers declaring “SECEED,” “DON’T TREAD ON ME,” and “COME AND TAKE IT.” As Perkinson states,

Texas stands for the country as a whole. With its mythic history, multiracial population, and immense territory that stretches from the South to the Southwest, Texas brings together vital threads of the American fabric. Its hardscrabble folk and wide-open spaces symbolize individual liberty. Yet this freedom has always traveled with a wrathful twin (5).

The wrathful twin to which Perkinson refers is violence, bigotry, and intolerance. The mixture of these two powerful cultural forces, individual freedom vs. severe criminal punishment, is a large part of what makes up the unique character of state of Texas. Different generations have dealt with these opposing forces in different ways. In this age of mass incarceration, the old Brown County Jail stands out as a relic from a lost age.

Rather than creating a cultural sense of wellness and safety, this colossal criminal justice system just seems to keep expanding like a cancerous tumor that the majority of Americans tolerate simply because we can’t imagine (or won’t accept) the changes necessary to cure it. While many sociologists and criminal justice experts have been researching and writing about this issue and about possible ways to counteract this trend, this is not the focus of this chapter. The main point that needs to be made for our purposes here, is that the changes in the criminal justice system in America play a significant role in the character of a building like the old Brown County Jail. When people see this building, it immediately strikes a chord in the hearts and minds of passersby, and this is precisely what it was *intended* to do.

A century ago, before the beginning of the age of mass incarceration in America, jailhouses were built right in the middle of town. They were constructed to

appear intimidating, foreboding, solid, and immovable. Often, the jailhouses of the early 20th century were architecturally beautiful as resplendent fortresses of civil righteousness. Joan Upton Hall, who is probably the most knowledgeable person in the state of Texas on the subject of historic jail buildings, writes in her book, *Just Visitin': Old Texas Jails*, “Why are so many of these structures beautiful as well as strong? Historians point out that builders took pride in the appearance because these symbols of authority had to excel in strength, meant to stand for generations. And stand many of them have (9).” About the Brown County Jail in particular, Hall writes, “The history of the Brown County jail has a certain flair about it, with some incidents downright theatrical. But then what would one expect on seeing a towering medieval castle in the middle of town? (50)”.

The jails and prisons of our time are not like this; they are non-descript, large, flat, and (very often) hidden. It can hardly be a coincidence that Americans started building jails and prisons differently just at the time in history when American culture began to lose hope in criminal justice and became ever more fearful of criminals.

Perkinson writes,

Even as prisons have extended their reach, however, most people have lost faith in their ability to promote public good. Once erected in grand architectural style and imbued with grand hopes, prisons today are spare concrete boxes with confused missions (370).

This is precisely the story of the old Brown County Jail. Completed in 1903, this imposing four-story castle stands right in the middle of downtown Brownwood directly across the street from the Brown County Courthouse. The building served its

faithful purpose until the year 1981, when the jail population began to outgrow the limits of the building.

Some may relegate this increase in jail population to an increase in residency, but that simply isn't true. The height of Brownwood population occurred during World War II when Camp Bowie housed nearly 35,000 troops in Brown County. These troops came with families, and businesses boomed. Brownwood still has not fully recovered from the economic downturn that happened after Camp Bowie was closed in 1946. The rise in the rate of incarceration in Brown County has less to do with population than it has to do with the dramatic change in the relationship between society and the criminal, as has been demonstrated so far. Ironically, even the new jail building that was completed in 1981 was unable to keep up with growing numbers, and yet another new jail building was completed in 2003. The old Brown County Jail served for a full 78 years, but the city has needed two new jails in just the last 30 years. The non-descript brick building set away off the main road on the far north end of town is situated where many Brownwood residents today couldn't even identify it. Criminal justice in America, and in Brown County, seems to be something that we are no longer so proud to display.

The old jail still stands, and its presence almost universally causes a wave of nostalgia in the hearts of those who visit the site. The building recalls the days before mass incarceration, before the age of our faceless millions locked away and forgotten. The building reminds us of a hopefulness and an optimism about who we are as a society that has been swept away in a tidal wave of "tough on crime" politics; it is from an era when criminals were meant to fear and respect the rule of law and order,

rather than this era where society fears the criminal. In the early years of the 20th century, Americans believed in a criminal justice system built on reforming the offender in order to make him/her a functioning member of society. At this point, the vast majority of Americans have simply given up on this idea, and are much more disposed to more and longer prison sentences. We've traded jails, where jailers and "residents" were encouraged to have a relationship of mutual respect gained through hard work and communication, for masses of "prisoners" who live almost 24 hours a day sealed in pens and only interact through electronic speakers with jailers who are themselves sequestered behind concrete, glass, and steel. Perkinson writes,

In the old days... strong, hardworking convicts could hunt, make spirits, gamble, and have sex with some impunity; the toughest or wiliest could jockey for BT or bookkeeper positions. These days, prisoners are more apt to be treated equally: as bodies to contain and count (361).

Abramsky also laments the bygone days of a criminal justice system based on the idea of rehabilitation. He records the following comments from Denny Harkins, a warden of Perryville Women's Prison west of Phoenix, AZ:

In '81 inmates were called 'residents.'... As a correctional officer, we were almost encouraged to be the buddies of the inmates. For example, I've taken inmates on escorted leave... Totally unheard of today. I've taken an inmate to see his sick mother... We've lost that. The rules began tightening up and things began to change. We got to where the needed security changes had been implemented and then we started becoming more punitive... Tensions rose. We literally divorced our staff from contact with the population. We locked our staff up in the control room. Hostility began to rise. We started depending on concrete and steel for security and not just good old-fashioned, 'What's going on in the yard' (xx)?

Probably one of the most striking things about the old Brown County Jail to those who visit it for the first time, is the fact that the Sheriff, the jailers, and the Sheriff's wife and children actually resided on the first floor of the jail. The Sheriff's wife even made the prisoners' meals! This concept is completely foreign in our culture today. The last Brown County Sheriff to live in the old jail was Danny Joe Neal, who served as Sheriff from 1971 until 1981. Visitors most often reflect on this close, almost familial relationship between law givers and law breakers with a sense of loss. This is the character of the building. Like a Christmas card from a relative who is long since deceased, the building itself is a representative from the past.

During the 1970s and 80s, the changes happening all over the country were also happening in Brownwood. As the new era of law enforcement dawned, the old Brown County Jail changed from being a functional cultural site of law and order to being a historical site of cultural memory. The following is a brief description of Brownwood during Danny Joe Neal's time as Sheriff taken from *The Genealogy & History of Brown County Sheriffs: 1857-2008*:

During the 1970s, Texas was still experiencing a population growth. Businesses were booming. Crime was running rampant. Where there was growth erupting at such a rapid pace, there were rumors of corruption. Word on the street in West Texas, was that if it was illegal, immoral, or sinful, you could get it in Brownwood. Throughout Brown County there was controversy and allegations of County government officials and prominent citizens being engaged in organized crime and corruption milling around. The County Judge James Bunnell died in a car accident, which was thoroughly investigated to assure that it was an accident. Brown County needed all the help it could get. DPS Texas Ranger Norman Autry spent considerable time investigating these allegations and those of an illegal gambling ring and kickbacks. The US DEA and DPS Narcotics spent a considerable time investigating the

trafficking of drugs from Brown County to nationally known celebrities and athletes. The Grand Jurors were kept very busy. But justice prevailed and things finally settled down (71).

This “settling down” came in the form of more criminal convictions, more jail sentences, and an increased need for larger facilities. Following the pattern set all across the state of Texas and the rest of the county, Brown County built a larger and less publicly visible jail facility, leaving the old jail to collect dust. As soon as all of the prisoners were moved out of the building in 1981, however, the Brown County Historical Society asked permission to give a tour of the old jail; they didn’t even have it cleaned first. According to some reports, more than five hundred people attended the tour. In less than one month after it closed, the old Brown County Jail was being recognized as a historical landmark. But what did it mean? What was the old building telling the residents of Brown County about who we are - or who we were?

There is an interesting anecdote told in *The Genealogy & History of Brown County Sheriffs*, and it is one of the most famous stories told by those who run the museum to this day. Apparently, during the first tour of the jail given by the Brown County Historical Society, a woman named Elzina Welch discovered a small potted plant in one of the cells. The plant was clearly dying of neglect, so she decided to take it home – determined to revive it. Mrs. Welch watered the plant and put it in good soil and sunshine. The plant grew beautiful and full, and was soon over four feet tall. Then, one day a friend came by and asked Mrs. Welch why she was growing an illegal marijuana plant! Mrs. Welch had no idea; she simply thought it was a beautiful bush. The plant was subsequently destroyed, but Mrs. Welch had proven that with a little care, she was able to nurse that neglected little plant back to full health.

This story is just the kind of charming tale that guests at the Brown County Museum of History love to hear. When you enter the old building, you cannot help but feel connected to the people who inhabited those walls. The building is literally haunted by the past – if not with actual ghosts, then with the things they left behind: patches of concrete worn smooth by the shoes of guards, big skeleton keys that open creaky metal doors, hundreds and hundreds of names and initials carved into the concrete and steel. The story of the little plant, while it may seem like an amusing and harmless anecdote, actually captures the spirit of the old jail in ways that most casual visitors would have difficulty expressing. It captures the goodness and the optimism of the old days of crime and punishment. The story of this sweet, innocent old lady who takes the time to nurture a little marijuana plant back to health strikes a chord within our cultural fabric that is comfortingly dissonant from this era’s anthem of “tough-on-crime.”

Culturally, we live our day-to-day lives ignoring (for the most part) the hard realities of our massive criminal justice problem. We drive to our jobs and our schools and our homes and lock our doors at night and watch our *True Crime* episodes, hoping that all those bad criminals out there will just go to jail and won’t bother us. To boil all of this down to the one single most troubling aspect of our current criminal justice system, it is de-humanization. All the books and all the articles that I’ve discussed point toward this main thing: that our criminal justice system since the 1980s has been built to handle massive amounts of people through a process that ultimately dehumanizes both the law breakers and the law keepers - but things weren’t always like this.

Once, not that long ago, criminals weren't bused off to mysterious maximum security buildings. They were right in the middle of town, like a showcase claiming, "We are not afraid of our criminals, nor are we ashamed of them." This is the story of the Old Brown County Jail. This is what draws people to the jail, hoping to hear the stories of the crooks from the past: the exciting escape attempts, the rumors of hangings, the valiant lawmen, and the heart-warming or heart-breaking tales of misdeeds and misfortune. People hear these stories and connect with the *humanness* of the people involved – on both sides of the law. Visitors to the Brown County Museum of History come to the Old Jail because they are haunted by the hope our culture once cherished. When considering the possibility of using the Old Jail as a site for reenactments, these are the stories that have a heuristic effect on visitors, stories that tell genuinely *human* stories about the people who either broke the law or who kept the law.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL PERFORMANCES

In this chapter I will discuss the development and the performances of *I Served Time and the Brown County Jail*, and the *Murder of Sheriff Bell* exhibit. The heuristic goal of these events as well as the background of role of the old Brown County Jail as a site cultural memory having already been established, this chapter will primarily focus on the practical basics of the events as a directorial process. I will begin this chapter by describing my personal and professional relationship with the members of the Brown County Museum of History and the genesis of this project. Next, I will move on to describe the funding of this project, including descriptions of how these funds are acquired and how they are used. I will then discuss the creative process of writing and directing the projects, including planning the use of the space, descriptions of the characters I chose to have portrayed, casting and rehearsing the roles, providing informational material for audience members, and the results of the performances. Finally, I will describe the design and implementation of the *Murder of Sheriff Bell* exhibit.

Getting Started

The first contact that I had with the Brown County Museum of History was through Mr. Mr. Steve Blake. Mr. Blake is a very interesting fellow, with his own personal stash of WWII memorabilia inside a warehouse and a healthy interest in fully automatic (and completely legal) historic firearms. Retired from his career as a long-time local business owner, Mr. Blake had plunged his life into bringing new life to the old Brown County Jail. When he became chairman for the board of directors at the

museum, his first project was to install an exhibit called “The Texas Firearms Museum”, an impressive assortment of firearms that he provided from his own personal collection. Mr. Blake was a member of my church and had heard that I was a theatre teacher at Howard Payne University. So in July of 2009, he approached me to ask about getting my help on a project he had in mind for the Old Jail building. His plan was to create a video walk-through of the upper floors of the jail. The problem, as he saw it, was that most of the daily visitors that come to the museum are elderly and simply cannot climb up the narrow metal stairs that lead to the jail cells on the upper floors. Of course, this was a fairly simple project to complete, but it led to my first experience getting to know the building.

The building itself is quite a character. Figure A.1 in Appendix A is a color-coded map of the building showing where each of the areas are situated within the building. The first floor has seven rooms, six of which were the living areas for the Sheriff’s family and a Deputy Jailer. The seventh room is called the Booking Room (fig. A.2). The Booking Room has two access points: a steel door that leads to the rest of the first floor, and another steel door that leads onto a barred porch enclosure (fig.A.3). From the Booking Room there is a narrow steel stair case that leads to the upper floors.

At the top of the stairs on the second floor is a wide landing room with three doors. The first door leads to a small 10’ by 10’ cell with a 15’ ceiling and tall windows. This room is known as the Women’s Cell (fig.A.4). Clearly, Brown County did not have much traffic of women in the Old Jail, as there are only marks on the walls for four bunks. The tall, narrow windows allow a wonderful view of downtown

Brownwood with plenty of sunshine. The second door off of the landing area leads to a large, open enclosure called the Run-Around Room (fig.A.5). This room is 40' by 40' with a 15' ceiling. There are six tall windows surrounding the room, giving a wide view of Brownwood in three directions. The Run-Around Room is completely bare, although marks on the floor indicate that in the early days of the jail there was a large cage in the center of the room with a jailer's walk around it. At some point, the cage had been removed to allow more space for the prisoners to move about. This room is the old jail's equivalent of a yard: an open space for prisoners to move about – hence the title, “Run-Around” Room. The third door off of the landing leads to the only surviving cell block in the building. Set in the ceiling right outside the doorway to the Cell Block room is a fairly innocuous trap door. A sign posted on the wall tells visitors that this is the gallows, originally designed for use in executions, though no executions were ever recorded to have been carried out in this facility (fig.A.6). The Cell Block room is 40' by 40' with a low 7' ceiling. In the center of the room is the actual cell block, made of 1/4" thick steel grate. Along the wall is a jailer's walk all the way around the cage (fig.A.7). In one corner of the room, there is a small single bunk cell with its own toilet and sink. This cell is known as the Youth Cell (fig.A.8). Inside the cell block cage are four separate enclosures leading off of a central hallway (fig.A.9); three cells with four bunks each (fig.A.10) and a cell with a bathtub in it (fig.A.11).

Just outside the Cell Block room, the narrow stairs lead up to the third floor, but visitors to the jail are not normally allowed up past the second level. As on the second floor, you come up the stairs onto a large open landing area. On this floor, there are only two doors; one that leads to a large open room with the exact

dimensions of the Cell Block on level two. This room sits directly above the Cell Block and was, in fact, an exact replica of it with the exception that it did not have a youth cell room attached to it. The cells on this level were all removed after the jail was closed and sold for scrap, leaving an empty space that was mostly used by the museum for storage (fig.A.12).

The trap door of the gallows is directly beneath your feet when you stand just outside of the door to this room. On the wall across the landing is a small, steel cabinet that contains the lever mechanism for dropping the trap door open (fig.A.13). Fortunately, the trap door has been welded shut – but the mechanism is still there and certainly imparts an uneasy feeling to anyone standing on those trap doors. The only other room on this level is a small room with no cell bars. This room has a ladder that can be used to access the attic area.

The final flight of stairs leads to the fourth floor, which only contains an open landing area and a single cell. This cell was the Solitary Confinement cell. From the outside of the building, this is the room that is at the very top of the tower. The cell is small, with low windows at the floor level.

While touring the building and recording the upper floors of the jail, I found that I was constantly aware of how the building made me feel so close to history. I felt I could easily imagine these rooms filled with people: people with stories to tell of their lives in old Brown County and how they came to be here in this jail. Although it was happening almost sub-consciously, this is the historical reenactment described by R.G. Collingwood. As he said, historical knowledge is, “not things thought about, but

the act of thinking itself (305).” After my first few visits, I decided to propose the idea of staging live performances and reenactments in the Old Jail.

While meeting with Mr. Blake, I told him that I thought the Old Jail would be an amazing site to stage some kind of historical reenactment and that it may be an opportunity to get more people in the community to take note of the museum. Mr. Blake enthusiastically agreed that this project would be a great benefit. Interestingly, he did not ever stop and ask me if I thought that these performances would be useful and accurate tools to teach people about the history of Brown County. For better or worse, the functional goal of this project from the beginning was not to teach people about history, it was to increase attendance and support for the museum by generating interest in historical learning. To move forward, our next step was to approach the Brown County Museum of History’s board of directors to propose this idea. To do that, I started researching the history of the Old Jail.

When it comes to the history of the jail and the history of Brown County, there are primarily three sources of information: *The Genealogy & History of Brown County Sheriffs*, edited by Cindy Evans and Pauline Hochhalter, *The Nice and Nasty of Brown County* by Ruth Griffin Spence, and the technical documents and records of the building itself. The published collections draw on much of the same material pulled from the pages of the Brownwood Bulletin and from personal narratives of local old-timers. Both of these books are available for purchase from the Museum gift shop. I bought one of each in order to begin scouring for stories and characters that could be fruitful subjects for reenactment in the Old Jail. It only took a few days to find that there are were many interesting stories of events and people that could be portrayed.

I put together a preliminary proposal that included a possible cast of characters, how the building would be used and what materials would be needed, a time frame for performances, and estimated cost for whole production. This proposal sheet was not a complete script by any means, it was simply meant to help initiate and guide the discussion of planning a possible reenactment. Some of the areas that would need to be discussed were the days and times of performances, and whether or not performances should be held by reservation only or open to walk-ins. The standard museum hours of operation are Thursday – Friday from 10:00am to 2:00pm, and Saturday from 10:00am to 4:00pm. Since the museum is operated by volunteers, I chose performance times that I thought would best suit the existing schedule. With performances held in the evenings after regularly scheduled hours, the performances would not impose on the museum's regular visitation hours, but would not require museum docents to add extra days to their volunteer schedule.

At the next meeting of the board of directors in September of 2009, Mr. Blake introduced me and I briefly outlined my proposal. At that time, the board was mostly in favor of the project, but there were two specific issues that I had not actually considered. The first issue was that my proposal suggested that we hold performances in the jail during July, August, and September. This was a problem because these are the hottest months of the year, and the Old Jail has hardly any ventilation, not to mention the total lack of air conditioning. Instead, it was suggested that the performances be held in either the spring or the fall.

The second issue was the safety of performers and visitors. With only one narrow staircase leading to the upper floors, there was a concern about having too

many people to safely evacuate in the case of an emergency. While this was a valid concern, Mr. Blake contended with this issue with two arguments. First, there was very little need to fear an emergency that would require rapid evacuation of the building. The risk of fire or weather emergency is negligible considering that the building is almost entirely made of concrete, stone, and steel. Secondly, the narrow steel stairs actually prevent elderly or infirm visitors who could have safety issues from going up to the upper floors of the jail. While this might seem somewhat unaccommodating (or discriminatory at the worst), this is the very reason that we created the video walk-through in the first place. The building itself cannot be made handicap accessible, and therefore cannot be accused of discrimination. The stairs are clearly marked with signs encouraging visitors to exercise caution, and any visitors that choose to go upstairs will be aware of the risk and will be physically capable of handling themselves should an emergency occur. The board seemed to be persuaded by these arguments and tentatively agreed to the project, but specifically requested that any reenactment events only be held on the first and second floors of the Old Jail. The third and fourth floors, they argued, were in simply too poor of condition to allow visitors to go up there: there was no railing around the stair-well and certain places of the floor on the third level seemed very weak where steel cell block supports had been removed from the second floor below. Mr. Blake and I conceded that this was reasonable and that the first and second floors really provided the most ideal performance spaces anyway. At this, the board was ready to approve of our proposal with one final point clarification: money.

Getting past the question of *if* the board of directors wanted to move forward with this project turned out to be less of an issue than *how*. The museum itself is run almost entirely on volunteer labor and donations, both of which were meager. The museum was not financially secure in the fall of 2009, and (as Mr. Blake informed me) had even been considering the possibility of disbanding in the near future. Mr. Blake, as the new chairman of the board of directors, was doing everything he could to breathe new life into the museum with projects like his wonderful firearms exhibit, the video walk-through, and this reenactment project. However, no amount of good intention and enthusiasm can make up for a zero dollar budget, and even Mr. Blake knew that asking for more money from their already over-taxed pool of donors was not going to be a good strategy. Fortunately, I had been considering another option.

That year, I had been invited to serve on the Brownwood Arts Council, a group of eight local arts enthusiasts who are given the responsibility of deciding how to disperse funds designated for the arts from the Brownwood City Council. Each year, the Arts Council receives several requests from local artists and art associations for funding. The fiscal year for the Arts Council follows the fiscal year of the City Council, and the awarding of funds takes place in November after presentations are made during September and October. I encouraged the Museum board of directors to consider making a proposal to the Brownwood Arts Council for the funds to carry out this project at the next Arts Council meeting to be held in October. The Museum board was a little hesitant about this because typically, the Museum would not fall into the category of an arts organization. However, I argued, the mission of the Arts Council was to promote local artists and arts events. This reenactment event would certainly

employ local artists and could be considered an arts event. As a member of the Arts Council, I was also aware of the fact that in this particular year – there was a distinct lack of local artists applying for funds and that most of the arts money the City Council had appropriated for local arts was actually going to be funding artists from outside the area. This money, however, would be going to local artists in order to promote a local organization. In my opinion, this was exactly the kind of project that the Arts Council was created to support. Also, I argued, what did they have to lose by simply making the request? The board of directors was convinced to give it a try. While it was not actually possible for me to make the proposal due to the fact that I was a member of the Arts Council, Mr. Blake agreed to present the proposal at the next meeting of the Arts Council in October. The board of directors proposed that Mr. Blake ask the Arts Council for \$5,000 to produce this reenactment.

Three weeks after the meeting with the board of directors, Mr. Blake appeared at the meeting of the Brownwood Arts Council and outlined the proposal and the request for funds. The Arts Council listened with great interest and had only a few questions about the project. Probably the most important question that was asked came from Nick Pike, then serving as chairman of the Council. He asked if the museum directors planned to make this an annually or semi-annually recurring event. Mr. Blake looked over at me, unsure exactly how to respond. I gave him shrug and an encouraging nod, and he responded with, “Sure, hopefully”.

It surprised me that I hadn’t yet considered this idea up until that point, mostly thinking of the reenactment as a one-time special event. The possibility of recurring events was exciting, but also a little overwhelming. As a theatre person I know that

there is a big difference between directing a successful short-run production and directing a successful long-term production. The question was important from the Arts Councils perspective because they need to consider not only if they wanted to give money to get this project started, but also if they were going to continue to nurture this project in future fiscal years with no guarantee on how much money they will have to disperse or how many other requests for funds they will receive. Fortunately, I think that Mr. Blake gave the right answer. After his presentation, the Council thanked Mr. Blake and he departed, leaving the Council to privately discuss the proposal. I was pleasantly surprised to find that the Council was actually very excited about this opportunity. Many of the Council members expressed how pleased they were to hear that the Old Jail was getting some new life breathed into it, and even shared some other ideas of events that could be held there. It was actually at this Arts Council meeting that the idea of a Halloween event was first introduced.

After the meeting, I told Mr. Blake that I thought that Council was very agreeable to the proposal and that I was confident that they would at least partially fund our reenactment project. The Arts Council met again one month later in November to make decisions on all of the funding requests they had received. As soon as the meeting was over, I sent Mr. Blake a very excited email to tell him that the Arts Council had considered the proposal made by the museum and had decided not to give them the \$5,000 they had requested - they decided to give them \$7,000! The Arts Council reasoned that this project was going to be an excellent arts event specifically made by and for the Brownwood community, and that the extra funds would ensure a solid foundation for future events at the Old Jail. Mr. Blake and the board of directors

were thrilled with the news and I immediately began preparing for the performances to start taking place in March of 2010.

Telling the Story

With the approval from the board of directors of the Museum, and the funds provided from the Brownwood Arts Council, I set to work planning how the performances would work and what characters and stories we would present. Mr. Blake and I met a few times at the Old Jail to walk around and brain-storm about how to move visitors through the building and how exactly the reenactment experience would take place. The title of the reenactment that we came up with is *I Served Time At The Brown County Jail*. I created the logo and all of the graphic design for events (Fig.A.14). Figure A.15 is a ground-plan depiction of the first and second floors of the Old Jail and illustrates the basic plan we came up with. The tour would proceed as follows:

Tours of the reenactment will be based on an interval of 30 minutes and will only allow twelve visitors at a time in the reenactment area. Visitors would enter the Old Jail through the main entrance (Step 1). There, they will register and pay for the reenactment tour with one of the Museum volunteer docents, at which point they will receive a program with helpful historical hints and tips about some of the characters they will meet. As visitors register for the tour, the docent will keep track of how many people there are currently registered for each 30 minute time-slot. Depending on how many visitors are present at any given time, the Museum docent will encourage them to look around the first-floor exhibits until they are called into the Booking Room; the first floor includes the Texas Fire-Arms Exhibit, the Texas Telephone

History Exhibit, the Brownwood Firefighter and Police Exhibit, and the Songbird Flea Circus Exhibit. While they are waiting, visitors can also peruse the selection of historical books and the museum gift shop. When it was time for them to take their reenactment tour, visitors would be sent into the Booking Room (Step 2).

In the Booking Room, visitors will meet the first two characters of the reenactment: Sheriff Moses Denman and Deputy Eastman Kitchens. Kitchens will escort the visitors in and line them up in front of the main desk. Denman would then explain that they are being booked for a charge of vagrancy into the Brown County Jail. He will briefly introduce himself and explain the rules of the jail; especially that they are required to obey the orders of Deputy Kitchens and himself or they will be removed from the jail. He will then allow any questions from the new “inmates.” At this point, the Deputy will line each visitor up in front of the mug-shot scale and take their picture. The camera appears to be an old-fashioned Brownie camera from the early 1900’s (fig.A.16). Hidden inside of the old camera is a standard digital camera. During their 30 minute tour, their picture is downloaded onto a computer, edited to appear old-fashioned with the *I Served Time At The Brown County Jail* logo, and printed on a post-card for them to take home as a memento of their experience. The entire booking experience will take about ten to fifteen minutes, depending on how many visitors are in each group. After their introduction in the Booking Room, visitors will be led single-file upstairs to the second floor (Step 3) and placed into one of three locations: 3-4 women are placed in the Women’s cell, 3-4 men are placed in the Cell Block, and the rest are placed in the Run-Around Room. When the visitors are placed into a room, the deputy will introduce them to the characters occupying that room. In

addition, the deputy will remind them to stay in their cells until either he or the sheriff comes to move them. At this point, the visitors will have five minutes to talk with the characters in their room before they are rotated into another area (Step 4). Each visitor will be moved from one area into another every five minutes, which means that after fifteen minutes, they will have met all of the characters and had a chance to hear their stories.

Certain characters are very talkative and like to get conversation started, while other characters are more guarded. Visitors are encouraged to ask questions and are able to use their brief character guides provided in their programs. Visitors can ask about what it is like to be incarcerated at the Old Jail or what life is like in Brown County in the early 1900's. The most interesting interactions occur, however, when visitors pose personal questions about their lives: why they were arrested, what they think about the other inmates, or how they feel about their future. At the end of the third rotation, the visitors will be led back downstairs to the Booking Room and given their "Release Papers"; a little post card with their mug-shot photo and a flyer with information about the Museum and about other historical attractions in Brown County. Then they are released out of the tour onto the barred porch area (Step 5), from where they can either leave or continue to visit the rest of the Museum exhibits if they so choose.

Having outlined the basic structure of how visitors experience the reenactment, I will now describe the characters that the actors would be portraying. While the history of the Old Jail spans from 1902 until 1981, Mr. Blake and I decided that the best time period in which to set the reenactment was in the early 1900's; specifically,

we decided on the year 1905. Choosing this time frame situated our reenactment at the transitional time period between the old west and the modern age. Also, this allowed me to draw on characters from as early as the 1880's until as late as the 1920's. All of the characters are based on persons who are actually named in the histories of Brown County. While some of these characters have extensive information about their background, others needed much more filling in to flesh out their identities. In every instance where I needed to fill in some gaps, I combined stories from other recorded incidents and wrote them into the characters' narrative. For instance, the prisoner Yarborough is known to have shot Sheriff Charles Bell in a hotel room in Brownwood, but little else is known about his background. To fill in the gaps, I merged Yarborough with another story from the area about a young man involved in an oil well accident. Merging stories like this helps get more of the true-life stories from Brown County into the mix. Another instance is with the character of Claude Robinson. Claude is described in a story about a local ruffian and well-known trouble-maker who one day attempted to flee from a work detail under the watch of deputy Kitchens. Claude's character fit very well with another local story about some kids who pulled a nasty prank at a revival service. Merging Claude's character with the revival prank story helps to flesh out Robinson's personality as well as provide a very entertaining historical story that would otherwise not have been included.

The total cast of characters that I have created are two female prisoner characters, six male prisoner characters, and two male law-enforcement characters. Originally, I had planned to also try to include the wife of the sheriff as another female character, but the budget and planning for the reenactment wound up making that role

expendable. The final character description/performance guidelines are contained in Figure A.17.

Casting & Rehearsal

With these brief character descriptions in hand, Mr. Blake and I arranged a few community-wide announcements about auditions for our up-coming reenactments. PSA announcements were made on two local radio stations and in the newspaper for one month before the scheduled audition.

With the knowledge that this performance was going to require much more improvisation than the performance of a regular play, the announcement simply encouraged anyone with a passion for history and an interest in historical reenactment to come to the Howard Payne University Department of Theatre from 6:00 to 8:00p.m. on Thursday, February 4th. I had prepared two monologues for actors and actresses to read in character. This monologue for men was taken from *Mr. Paul Pry* by Douglas William Jerrold:

OLDBUTTON: Why, sir, I'll give you my opinion. Of all failings, that of an idle curiosity is the most abject and contemptible: it is generally found in those whose utter littleness of mind prevents their engaging in any useful or honourable pursuit, and who, thus incapable of action themselves, seek to be distinguished by meddling in the affairs of others. A curious man is, in my opinion, a species of thief. Men are so branded who enter our abodes and abstract our property; and is not the individual who violates every law of decency and social life, and seeks to clandestinely possess himself to the secrets of another, only a robber in a different degree? Such I man I think you,

and I should feel as little compunction in throwing you over the bannisters were I to catch you in my dwelling-place, as I should a swindler or a house-breaker.

This is the monologue for women, taken from *The Thirst* by Eugene O'Neill:

MARTHA: It's easy to say: "Why don't I beat it?" I can't. I never have enough coin to make a good break and git out of town. He takes it all away from me. And if I went to some other part of this burg he'd find me and kill me. Even if he didn't kill me he'd have me pinched and where'd the kid be then? [*grimly*] I've tried that job thing. I've looked fur decent work and I've starved at it. A year after I first hit this town I quit and tried to be on the level. I got a job at housework—workin' twelve hours a day for twenty-five dollars a month. And I worked like a dog, too, and never left the house I was so scared of seein' some one who knew me. But what was the use? One night they have a guy to dinner who's seen me some place when I was on the town. He tells the lady—his duty he said it was—and she fires me right off the reel. I tried the same thing a lot of times. But there was always some one who'd drag me back. And then I quit tryin'. There didn't seem to be no use. They—all the good people—they got me where I am and they're goin' to keep me there. Reform? Take it from me it can't be done. They won't let yuh do it, and that's Gawd's truth.

Instead of having the actors prepare these monologues ahead of time and read them from the stage as a normal audition piece, I set up two chairs in a small room and

would have the actors come in and sit directly across from me and read one of these monologues. After reading the monologue, I would then instruct them to try to stay in character while I asked them questions. Several of my students were interested in auditioning, but I was also hoping that I would get people from the community to come and audition. Unfortunately, that first year, only one non-HPU student came to audition for a role. Lisa Willis had heard about the audition on the radio and stopped by to try it out. She was a working single mom with no previous theatrical experience, but said that she was intrigued by the opportunity and wanted to give it a try. It turned out that she spoke very well and seemed quite genuine. I cast her in the role of Henrietta Clay Bassore Gideon and she turned out to be one of the favorites of the visitors to the jail. The rest of the cast was entirely made up of students from the HPU Theatre Department. I chose actors for characters based on three primary factors: resemblance and ability to portray character, ability to maintain character and improvise conversation, and their ability to fit reenactment performances into their schedules. The performances were going to be held on Fridays and Saturdays during the entire month of March, which meant that they were going to have to commit to being available during both of their Spring Break weekends. The acting stipend helped to make the sacrifice worth it, and I was only required to find an understudy replacement for the actor playing the role of Jeffries.

Now that the cast of the reenactment was in place, I began to hold weekly rehearsals, the first simply being an introduction to the project. Meeting at the Old Jail, we walked through the entire space and described the process that visitors would go through during the reenactment. Not one of our cast members had ever stepped

foot inside the Old Jail before and their enthusiasm for the project was only heightened by the character of the building. For the first time, the building that they had passed by so many times seemed to come alive.

In addition to getting to know the building, the actors were given a hand out with all the character descriptions and a small collection of some of the historical information and anecdotes from *The Nice and Nasty of Brown County* and *The Genealogy and History of Brown County Sheriffs*. Their assignment was to read all the materials and to return the next week with a character persona in mind. They were to write a one-page description of how they would walk and talk in their respective characters, including how they would respond to these different scenarios: A.) A visitor asks you what it is like to live in the old jail, B.) A visitor asks you about world/national/state/or local social situations, C.) A visitor asks you about your personal life history, and D.) A visitor seems bored, disinterested, or intentionally tries to get you to break character, or E.) needs special emergency attention. The responses to these character assignments helped to establish the foundation for how the actors would behave to portray their characters.

At the next several rehearsals, we simply had the actors placed in their respective areas and used Mr. Blake, other volunteer museum docents, and me as test audiences. We would go through the reenactment step by step, letting the actors get used to having to act with one another and with visitors. The trickiest parts were rotating visitors and prisoners from one cell to another without too much confusion, and getting the actors to start up conversations. My biggest concern was that we would have some visitors come in and have no idea how to get a conversation started

with a cell mate. For example; if a visitor who is not talkative gets put into a cell with Yarborough, who is naturally with-drawn, how is the reenactment experience supposed to unfold? I knew that some people would be expecting a “sit-down-and-entertain-me” type of situation, and that we would have to have a way to break them out of that. The main thing I wanted to avoid in the reenactment was lack of communication. The solution to this problem is to always have a character in the room who is willing to get things started.

In the Cell Block room, we decided to have Yarborough, Claude Robinson, and either Joe Hughes or John Pearl. Whoever got put in with Yarborough might not be able to get much out of him, but Claude and Joe are both loud-mouths who will get people talking – both visitors and other inmates. This way, even if the visitors never open their mouths, they will get quite a bit of information just from the conversations between the inmates. We placed J.B. Scruggins, Jeffries, and either Joe Hughes or John Pearl in the Run-Around Room with big bags of mail for them to be going through, admiring and making fun of the letters and pictures of women pouring in from the East Coast. While Pearl is somewhat shy, Scruggins and Jeffries are both out-going enough to get visitors involved. Scruggins would usually receive newcomers as a friend, and Jeffries acted as a barely tolerated foil with the other two.

In the Women’s Cell, the tension between Elizabeth and Henrietta was thick enough to cause immediate drama. While it was not something I had originally planned on, the actresses playing these two characters immediately found that these women were polar opposites. The women played their characters in such a way that when visitors came in, they were instantly accosted by Elizabeth Driscoll, the resident

martyr of the Brown County Jail, while Henrietta (the down-to-earth hard-scrabble survivor woman) would snicker and comment to them under her breath. Through the course of conversation, visitors would wind up being sympathetic to one or the other of the ladies and a social divide would take place in the small cell. In all these scenarios, the occasional presence of the Sheriff or Deputy Kitchens could change the course of a conversation or help a confused or wayward visitor back into the spirit of the reenactment.

It was during the process of rehearsing these test-runs I realized that including a short introduction about each character in the program might give visitors more of a spring-board into being able to interact with the characters within the brief five-minute time frame they would have in each area. Each character description would be brief enough to leave a lot of room to explore, but contain just a few hints about possible conversation topics to either pursue or avoid to get them started. The following are the notes I included in the program for each character:

Sheriff Moses Denman: The quintessential Texas Lawman, Moses Denman was Sheriff of Brown County from 1900 – 1908; 1912 – 1914; and 1928 – 1934. Denman was an imposing figure, with a big black hat, black suit, and usually riding a big black horse. Moses was the first Sheriff of this Brown County Jailhouse, completed in 1902. He's not always the best conversationalist, but when he does speak, you can be sure that you're hearing an honest man's voice. He'll be glad to describe his world-famous extradition of Joe Hughes from under the noses of the law men in Tombstone, Arizona,

but don't embarrass the good Sheriff concerning his very first arrest of the prisoner known only as 'Jeffries'.

Deputy Eastman Kitchens: You're sure to find Deputy Kitchens a friendly, amicable sort – as long as you don't try to cross him. Most of your fellow inmates here in the jail have agreeable interactions with the Deputy. There are, however, those who've felt the blast or the butt of his Colt Peacemaker. Just do as he says, and you'll be fine... and if you find yourself in a touse – he's the man you want on your side. You might find his account of Claude Robinson's latest escape attempt a bit humorous, but Deputy Kitchens has seen the darkest side of crime in Brownwood – he might have some reservations speaking to you about Yarborough.

Prisoner Henrietta Clay Bassore Gideon: All you gentle, well-raised young ladies might find yourselves a bit uncomfortable having to share a cell with Henrietta (her friends call her Clay). She's had a tough life; the widow of two men, one of them the former Sheriff of Brown County – James Gideon, and the mother of three young children. While the law usually overlooks her 'establishment', there's been too much talk about town concerning some of her well known clientele. She never points the finger, but she has mouths to feed at home, and no man is going to help or hinder her in seeing to their well-being. If you ask Henrietta about what it means to be a woman in this world – you may find her down-to-earth attitude surprisingly modern. It would probably be a bad idea, however, to ask her about her first husband.

Prisoner Elizabeth Driscoll: The esteemed Mrs. Driscoll – the first lady of the Brownwood Church of Christ – a lady among ladies... with a hint of violence. Mrs. Driscoll (in her own opinion, anyway) is suffering for the cause. Her husband (Reverend Driscoll) and several other community members know that she had the best of intentions and her arrest is hardly justice. But the fact remains that she caused more than a hundred dollars in damage to the property of the Brownwood Church of Christ. She'll be happy to tell you all about it... just try to avoid hinting that you disagree with her.

Prisoner Claude Robinson: Claude is a local bad guy. Most people in town know to avoid Claude if they're passing him on the street. Being a bit of a loner, however, he managed to stay out of the more organized crime circles in town, such as the bootleggers and gambling establishments. Claude landed his spot in the Brown County Jail based on his severely misguided and exaggerated chivalry – he nearly beat a man to death in Blanket for making eyes at his favorite lass. While Claude ain't all brains, he's not one to trifle with. He nearly executed a daring escape just the other day, but unfortunately, Deputy Kitchens has really long legs. Also... don't ask Claude about the Methodist revival a few years ago when everyone's babies went missing.

Prisoner Joe Hughes: Joe Hughes would like you to believe he's the most important prisoner in Brown County. He was, after all, kidnapped from Tombstone, Arizona by Sheriff Denman and brought back to Brownwood – suffering all manner of physical ails as a result of Denman's irresponsible and dangerous behavior. Hughes might be full of hot air, but he does have a

lawyer attempting to sue the Sheriff. If you get put in a cell with Joe, you'll probably hope for a reprieve from his incessant complaining and bullying - but don't worry, Joe quickly withers in the face of a physical fight. He is, however, the most well-connected prisoner in the jail - so while he can fill you in on some of the darker secrets of the other prisoners, you might worry about what he'll be saying about you when you step out.

Prisoner Yarborough: Don't mistake Yarborough's withdrawn demeanor as a sign of innocence or weakness. This is the one man in jail that Deputy Kitchens actually fears. He may seem shy and malleable, but Yarborough is responsible for one of the most thoughtless murders in Brown County history. Surprisingly strong, Yarborough has been through some traumatic events, has been a severe alcoholic, and suffers from manic depression... who knows when he'll snap again.

Prisoner John Pearl: John Pearl is a bad man. You need to remember this as you interact with him, because he might seem to be a strong, silent fellow when you first meet him. And while he continually feigns insanity in the presence of the guards, he has been convicted by a jury of his peers as a coldblooded murderer. John's case is under appeal, and he doesn't yet know that he's destined to be the last man legally executed in Coleman County. John has made pretty good friends in the Brown County Jail with J.B. Scruggins, and the two of them have gotten caught up in a slightly less than honest mail-order matrimony service scheme concocted by Jeffries.

Prisoner Jeffries: The prisoner known only as ‘Jeffries’ is something of a mystery. His case is pending further investigation, but he is serving time in the Brown County Jail for the ‘crime’ of adultery and suspicion of fraud. Jeffries was the first man that Moses Denman arrested in Brown County – and he gave Denman a bit of trouble. Jeffries claims to be from Bristol, England – but then, he claims a lot of things... Jeffries is a pathological liar, a thief, and is notorious for seducing well-moneyed women – but just to keep things peaceful, don’t insult the King (Edward VII) in his presence. The latest of Jeffries’ scams has had letters from eligible young women in New Jersey pouring in by the bushel – much to Deputy Kitchens’ chagrin.

Prisoner J.B. Scruggins: Prisoner Scruggins is well known and well-liked by nearly all the inmates of the Brown County Jail. Scruggins is approaching the end of a long jail sentence for the crime of fence-cutting. Scruggins had a hard life as a young man, losing both his parents before the age of 10. Years ago, before he was a convicted felon, Scruggins had been part of his uncle’s open-range cattle crew, but barbed wire quickly spread across miles of land that once were free – leaving folks like Scruggins to either give up or get rough. Scruggins, however, always managed to keep a positive outlook – he actually managed to secure a tentative peace by uniting several fence-cutters in order to civilly discuss their grievances before the city. But the night of November 9, 1886 was indeed the darkest, coldest night of Scruggins’ life...

During the month of April, we acquired costumes and props for all of the characters and for the rooms. We installed two bunks with blankets in the Women's Cell, cushions and blankets on the bare metal bunks in the Cell Block, and two long wooden benches in the Run-Around room. All of the prisoners were garbed in loose-fitting striped shirts and pants. Elizabeth and Henrietta required no other props. Yarborough had a real-life white mouse in a tin can, and Joe Hughes had a harmonica that he played badly. In the Run-Around room, we prepared two large bags of mail for Jeffries and Scruggins that Deputy Kitchens was able to rotate so that it seemed that letters were constantly pouring in from their mail scheme. Each letter contained old-fashioned looking pictures of women that the guys would sometimes fight over. Deputy Kitchens and Sheriff Denman were both outfitted with gun belts holding very handsome replica revolvers, shiny badges and authentic turn-of-the-century western outfits. In fact, the largest portion of the operating budget went into the costumes for Kitchens and Denman. Also, the Brownie camera with the digital camera inside it was set up so that Kitchens could snap the pictures and simply hand the camera to the person running the front desk, who would then download the pictures and print them off within a few minutes. By the end of April, everything was ready for performances.

Performances

When our first reenactment performances began in March, we were pleased with the results. On Friday and Saturday evenings we would have between twenty and thirty visitors each night – which more than tripled the normal amount of traffic the Old Jail received.

There were a few issues and situations that developed during the course of production that we had not necessarily foreseen.

First of all, we had not foreseen the number of issues we would have with visitors (usually children) needing to use the restrooms during the thirty-minutes of the reenactment tour. There is only one working restroom in the entire building, located on the first floor. This requires the Deputy to personally escort a visitor down and out – an activity that cuts off at least five minutes of their tour time and holds up the process of moving the visitors from one area to another. We had to make it clear that visitors should use the restroom *before* going into the tour – which still didn't work 100% of the time.

Secondly, we had two or three visitors who were literally too uncomfortable with the experience to last through the whole tour. Despite the fact that the title of the reenactment was *I Served Time At The Brown County Jail*, there is little that can prepare you for getting placed in a tiny metal cage with a glaring criminal as the heavy metal doors slam shut behind you. While we did not have anyone demand a refund, they simply said, "That's enough of that", and asked to be released.

Lastly, despite the rehearsals to prepare, we just could not foresee certain ways that visitors would test the experience. For example, one particularly trying young man knew that while the heavy metal doors of his cell were closed – they were not *actually* locked. After much prodding and a heated discussion with Claude Robinson, the young man opened the door and challenged Claude to escape. He did. While the deputy was in the Run-Around Room, Claude hopped over a locked gate slipped up-stairs. The whole time, the visitor was just laughing to himself, clearly hoping to

derail the whole reenactment. Joe Hughes started hollering from the Cell Block that Claude was loose, and Kitchens stormed into the Cell Block. Hughes spilled the beans and Kitchens chewed out the visitor with what seemed like genuine disgust. Kitchens slammed the doors closed and took off upstairs to find Claude while the Sheriff checked the other cells to make sure that Claude was not just hiding under a bunk somewhere. On the third floor, Kitchens looked up the ladder into the attic space and saw that a hatch door leading to the roof was hanging wide open, sunlight spilling in. He scrambled up and out the hatch, hoping to capture Claude on the three story-high rooftop. As soon as he was out the hatch, however, Claude popped out of a hiding spot in the attic, slammed the hatch closed and locked it from the inside – trapping the deputy on the roof. Then Claude made his escape, shouting and laughing all the way down to the first floor, through the Booking Room, down the central hallway and out the back door. Still on the second floor in the Run-Around Room with Jeffries, Scruggins, Pearl, and about five other visitors, Sheriff Denman looked out the window to see Claude Robinson on an old tractor in the back yard of the museum. Hollering and whooping like a wild maniac, Claude was pretending to be driving madly away across the countryside. Denman rushed outside, gun drawn. He pulled Claude off of the tractor and dragged him inside. Finally depositing Claude back in his cell with a shove, Denman then began to wonder where his deputy had gone. About that time, a museum docent approached the Sheriff and told him that Kitchens was on the roof shouting for help. Denman managed to retrieve Kitchens and the reenactment continued without further incident.

While this incident was probably one of the favorite moments for the actors and the visitors – the board of directors for the museum were very upset. I received a very thorough and sincere reprimand from the board of directors, who were concerned with the safety of the building and the actors. They had made it very clear that no one was allowed above the second floor – especially not onto the roof! They expressed embarrassment that several museum guests were actually on the street outside, waiting for their tour time, when they saw Deputy Kitchens on the roof shouting for help. Apparently this was very confusing and the guests were unsure if they should call the police or the fire-department. There was some talk of cancelling further reenactments, but Mr. Blake and I assured them that the incident would not be repeated and that other than this one exception, all the tours had been very safe and enjoyable for our guests. Personally, while I knew that the board was right to be upset, I thought that the entire episode was a very interesting experiment in historical reenactment improvisation and problem solving. Claude, Hughes, Kitchens, Denman, and all the prisoners remained in their characters extremely well despite the fact that they broke the structure of the tour experience (along with a couple of museum rules).

Another unforeseeable incident turned out to be a visitor who was actually related to one of our characters. During the regular operating hours of the museum on a Saturday morning, the docent on duty received a phone call from a woman who was wanting to bring her family to the live reenactment tour. She explained that they were bringing with them their 80-year-old grandfather, Mr. Bernard Eastmond Caffey, who was the grandson of Deputy Eastman Kitchens. That afternoon, while the reenactment was underway, the family arrived. The event very was exciting and great publicity for

the Museum. There were a couple of news reporters from the area to capture the story. When the 80-year-old grandson of Eastman Kitchens was introduced to his “grandfather”, he seemed overcome with emotion. Later, he explained that he was unsure about how the experience would make him feel, but that when he met Brandon Thomasy (the actor portraying Kitchens) he seemed to immediately recognize and identify the tall youth as his great-grandfather, whom he only remembered glimpses of as a small boy. Seeing the towering deputy, strong and very alive, brought a flood of memories back. He told us that we had picked the right actor, because his grandfather was a very tall man – six feet five inches, and Brandon was six feet, six inches. I actually didn’t even know that about the real deputy Kitchens – there is nothing in the history books about his actual height; it was pure serendipity that I felt Brandon Thomasy was the right fit for that role. There were many pictures and news articles about the happy “reunion” of grandfather and grandson, and despite the fact that he was too old to actually climb the stairs and experience the entire reenactment, he said that he had learned so much about his grandfather just by coming to the building and seeing where he had served as a deputy more than a hundred years before. The publicity was great for the museum and the reenactments continued to draw visitors for the rest of the month.

When the first month of performances concluded, the costumes and props were stored, and the museum went back to its regular schedule. However, something had changed at the museum. There seemed to be a new sense of cultural ownership of the Old Jail. Before the end of the summer, Mr. Blake and I were planning for the *Haunted Jail* and the *Jail-Break Shoot-out* performances (which I discuss in the next

chapter), as well as reprise performances of the *I Served Time At The Brown County Jail* reenactment.

Within two years of the first *I Served Time At The Brown County Jail* reenactment, there were big changes coming to the museum. Several board members had rotated off and new board members had replaced them. Some of these new members had been to the reenactment and were interested in updating the exhibits on the first floor of the Old Jail. At the time, the rooms on the first floor were dedicated to interesting; but out-of-character exhibits, such as the Birdsong Flea Circus. With more and more people from the community becoming interested in the history of criminal justice in Brown County following the success of the reenactments, the board decided to install a permanent exhibit with a reenactment flair about it: *The Murder of Sheriff Bell* exhibit.

The Murder of Sheriff Bell Exhibit

There are two reasons that I have chosen to conclude this chapter by discussing *The Murder of Sheriff Bell* exhibit. The first reason is that it is really a continuation of the reenactment that Mr. Blake and I developed; an epilogue, if you will. The event that the exhibit depicts is definitely one of the most dramatic moments in the history of Brown County, and it was certainly a frequent talking point during the reenactments. The fact that so many early Brown County Law Enforcement officials had been killed was, and still is, one of the things that draws people into history of the Old Jail. Hardly anything is more familiar to modern audiences than the dramatic setting of the crime scene investigation. The opportunity to step into history and re-enact an actual murder scene offers exactly the kind of heuristic opportunity that we were hoping to

create with the *I Served Time At The Brown County Jail* reenactment. While *The Murder of Sheriff Bell* does not require performers in costumes, the re-enactors are the visitors themselves.

The second reason I am concluding this chapter with the *The Murder of Sheriff Bell* exhibit is that the exhibit was not my idea, nor was it my responsibility to make or maintain it. To me, this means that the new direction that I started at the museum is not dependent upon me to continue. One of my greatest worries as Mr. Blake and I put the work into creating the reenactment was that the reenactment would end and the museum would just slip back into business as usual. Eventually, when Mr. Blake and I were either too busy or too burned out to continue putting in the effort to revive the museum, it would eventually fade back into obscurity and close for good. Unless the new direction was successful and interesting enough to maintain itself, I worried that all the effort would be in vain. *The Murder of Sheriff Bell*, then, was something of a turning point. The idea for the exhibit came from one of the new members of the board, Nick Seybert (who became interested in the museum after attending a *Haunted Jail* event). In my opinion, this exhibit itself is evidence that the live reenactments did indeed have the heuristic effect we desired, and its permanent installation is a clear indication that the museum board is going to continue pursuing heuristically effective exhibits with or without my direct involvement.

The Murder of Sheriff Bell exhibit is contained in a single room on the first floor of the Old Jail. The room was re-decorated to look like a hotel room during the late 1800's (Fig.A.18). The room is furnished with a heavy Victorian couch, a marble-topped side table, and an antique dresser. At one end of the room, a free-

standing door has been set up to delineate the hotel room area from the hallway area. There are beer bottles spread on the floor and couch and blood splatter on the wall behind the free-standing door. Red lines of yarn extend from what looks like a bullet hole in the door to the blood splatters on the wall. Placed around the room are four white information plaques. As visitors come into the room, the first plaque tells them to look about the room and notice any and all details about the scene. The next plaques present witness accounts and physical evidence, which the visitors try to either corroborate or discredit based on the crime scene. There are materials provided to do a couple of hands-on evidence challenges. The first evidence challenge is a fingerprint match. The visitors look at a copy of a partial fingerprint taken off the gun and try to find a match in a selection of suspect fingerprints. The second evidence challenge is a footprint match. Visitors have several sets of shoes in a glass cabinet which they can compare with the footprints in the crime scene. The last plaque presents the case against the man arrested from the room, Yarborough. Accused of murdering Sheriff Bell in cold-blood, the visitors are encouraged to decide for themselves how to prosecute Yarborough. Should he face a charge of pre-meditated murder and almost certainly face an execution? Or should he be charged with manslaughter and face a lesser sentence of life in prison?

As I stated in the first chapter of this dissertation, *The Murder of Sheriff Bell* exhibit is something of a hybrid between the full live reenactment (such as *I Served Time At The Brown County Jail*) and the standard look-and-don't-touch museum exhibit. Giving visitors the opportunity to imagine themselves in the shoes of the investigators of this real-life tragedy, while knowing the whole time that they are

intentionally thinking about these things involves the exact mental process described by R.G. Collingwood when he writes that all historical knowledge is “an activity of thought, which can be known only in so far as the knowing mind re-enacts it and knows itself as so doing” (Collingwood,218). Whether or not the crime scene is actually exactly historically accurate or whether or not the actors are accurately portraying historical persons, as it turns out, is irrelevant in light of the fact that historical thinking about the people and events in question are still being encouraged to take place.

Ultimately, the *I Served Time At The Brown County Jail* performances and the *Murder of Sheriff Bell* exhibit have successfully achieved the same heuristic goal, and the Brown County Museum of History continues to benefit from renewed cultural interest and support. Each year, during the annual “Brownwood Reunion” celebration that takes place during the second weekend in September, the museum has staged small revivals of the *I Served Time at the Brown County Jail* reenactment – usually kicking it off with a fun performance called the *Old West Shoot-out*, where Sheriff Denman and Deputy Kitchens face off with Claude Robinson and Jeffries who are trying to stage a jail-break. Of course, the shoot-out is entirely fictional – but the action, held on the street in front of the Old Jail, always draws a crowd and gets people interested in spending some time at the Museum during their time in the downtown area during Reunion weekend. As stated in the previous chapter, the actual historical accuracy of these performances is less important than the opportunity to encourage people to engage in historical learning about this beloved local landmark. Certainly,

these performances have succeeded, and will hopefully continue to succeed in that endeavor.

CHAPTER 5

NON-HISTORICAL PERFORMANCES

At the end of October, the Brown County Museum of History is the site of one of the most beloved community events in Brown County: *The Haunted Jail*. Without fail, every year there are several visitors who ask these very interesting questions: “Is this a true story?”, and “Is this place really haunted?” Truth, as it turns out, is as tricky a concept within the realm of theatrical performance as it is in historical reenactment. One might easily assume that the main difference between the historical reenactment performances and the entertainment performances taking place at the Old Jail would be truth; historical reenactment events are true while the *Haunted Jail* events are not true. However, this assumption is flawed for one critical reason: although the *Haunted Jail* performances might not be based on historical facts, this does not mean that they cannot express significant truths about the cultural character of Brown County or of the cultural relevance and meaning of a building like the Old Brown County Jail.

Modern American culture is largely ruled by science and empirical knowledge, and most people today tend to conflate the terms “factual” and “true”; if something is not factual, then it must not be true. Previous cultures did not necessarily think this way – certainly the Athenians of the fifth century BCE did not require factual evidence of the Trojan War and its heroes to believe that it was a true story, nor did the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth demand factual evidence to accept the parable of the Good Samaritan as inherently true. Truth is recognized in patterns of behavior, motivations, values, and cultural acceptability. Even in our own time period, despite

the fact that we are so overtly ruled by scientific empiricism, cultural behavior is still governed by truths rather than facts.

Here is an example: despite the fact that crime rates have remained stagnant for the last twenty years, incarceration rates have sky-rocketed. A purely empirical culture would assume that crime-rate stagnancy would result in incarceration stagnancy, but this is not the case. Incarceration rates have increased so dramatically because (as described in Chapter 3) American culture has shifted its idea of what is true when it comes to the nature of crime and the proper way to deal with criminals regardless of what the empirical factual data suggests.

Here is another example: The Brown County Museum of History's goal is to preserve and present the history of Brown County, yet the best-attended event at the Museum is a non-historical performance. The reason for this is that despite all the actual historical documents and artifacts contained in the museum, the cultural significance of the building is based on how we *feel* about it. While no single document or artifact or event can empirically demonstrate that the building is haunted, it is the people of Brownwood who are haunted by the building.

The other side of this issue, however, is that we are living in an era where cultural ideas can (and are) very easily shaped by information that has been given the dubious title "alternative facts." This development is not just a pressing concern for journalists and politicians, it permeates every level of our society – especially academia, arts, and history. It is very easy to recognize the connection between the "alternative facts" phenomenon and the idea of presenting non-historical entertainments at a museum: a building specifically designated as a place to learn

about history. So far in this dissertation, I have proposed the notion that historical accuracy is not possible and that it is not necessary to generate interest in historical learning. Is it not then, just a small leap of reasoning to also accept that a non-historical *inaccuracy* that sells tickets, is preferable to a historical accuracy that does not? And upon accepting that notion, are we not saying that inaccuracy is *preferable* to accuracy? My response to this troubling line of reasoning is to refer the reader back to the two guidelines that I established in Chapter 2: to foreground and contextualize the present-ness of the performances, and to support the various subjective experiences of the audience with the objective historical information available. First of all, no one who has created performances at the Brown County Museum (either historical or non-historical) will claim that they are factual; they are all presented as historical evocations meant to stimulate interest in the history of Brown County and in the Museum. Secondly, visitors to all performances are encouraged to attend regular Museum hours and events and to explore the Museum's historical information (exhibits, artifacts, reading materials, etc.) as the appropriate means to pursue true historical learning.

Ultimately, the difference between "alternative facts," as news reporting has been labeled by the current administration, and non-historical performances at the Museum, comes down to a matter of purpose. The purpose of "alternative facts" is to bend cultural awareness and preference in a direction that socially or economically improves the position of the teller. Alternatively, the purpose of the non-historical performances at the Museum is to bend cultural awareness and preference in a direction that stimulates interest in historical learning. "Alternative facts" are

fabrications of truth meant to confuse the audience, and they only achieve this purpose when the audience believes in them. The non-historical performances at the Museum are fabrications of truth meant to edify the audience, and they only achieve this purpose when the audience believes in their *non*-factuality, that more is to be learned through research and study. Being aware of this distinction is not only helpful, it is a necessity in in our current society. As performances continue in the Old Jail, whether historical or non-historical, we should never lose this perspective because the site itself, as a historical artifact, is a cultural touch-stone; it is a ghost of Brownwood itself.

A building like the Old Jail evokes our ideas about what our shared past means, and like the character and culture of Brown County, that meaning is ever-changing. This ever-changing quality is not just a useful excuse for the development of new and interesting museum events and exhibits, it is actually the most essential key to the survival of the museum; how many historical sites have been completely forgotten and abandoned simply because they lost meaning within the current culture? In order for the Brown County Museum of History (or any museum for that matter) to continue attracting visitors, it must respond to the nature of cultural history by acknowledging and even encouraging the cultural impression of the site. In her article *History Trouble: Reenactment and Pseudoperformativity at the Witch Festival of Nieuwpoort*, Jody Enders describes how the reenactment of a medieval witch trial has been changed to reflect modern cultural “truth” at the expense of historical fact. She writes that

...it is a pageant play for modern times that stages a “true story” as both revisionist history and legal redress. By presenting what organizers are at pains to call not history per se, but “a *historic evocation*”, the *Heksenfeest* re-theatricalizes the death penalty in order to craft not just pseudohistory, not just revisionist history, but a new history that flies in the face of the historical record in favor of a different narrative (236).

Likewise, people flock to the *Haunted Jail* event because the event plays on a cultural truth, without regard or need for historical facts. Does this mean that the *Haunted Jail* is violating the goal of the museum – to preserve and present the history of Brown County? Are we failing to present the history of Brown County? As has already been stated in the previous chapters of this dissertation, the goal of both the historical reenactment performances and the entertainment performances is not historical learning; the goal is to encourage historical learning. As I intend to show in this chapter, the entertaining performances of the *Haunted Jail* have just as much heuristic potential (and possibly even more) as the performances of the historical reenactments.

Haunting an Old Jail

In his book *The Haunted Stage*, Marvin Carlson states, “Theorists of tourism have often noted that physical locations, like individual human beings, can by the operations of fame be so deeply implanted in the consciousness of a culture that individuals inevitably find that experience already haunted by the cultural construction of these persons and places (135)”. Simply stated, this means that our cultural knowledge and ideas define how we understand certain people and things, particularly those that draw a lot of cultural attention. In the case of the Old Jail in downtown Brownwood, the building has its own kind of fame; it cannot be ignored, yet it remains

a mysterious icon from a bygone era that was once the actual site of many tales and legends of Texas-style villains and heroes. Carlson continues his discussion of how site-specific cultural memories tend to develop their own kind of theatrical expression.

He writes,

The narratives of cultural memory often have specific spatial associations, and many theorists, speculating about the origins of theatre, have suggested that it began with the reenactment of mythic, religious, or significant quasi-historical events in locations that were the actual or presumed site of these events and thus already haunted by the memories of these events (136).

As one of the most distinctive historical sites in all of Brown County, the Old Jail building certainly belongs to this type of haunted location. It is interesting to note that while Carlson does not specifically refer to the theories of R.G. Collingwood and the practice of reenactment as the act of historical thinking itself, he uses the term “reenactment” in a way that strongly ties the theatrical with the historical. Carlson continues by stating that “...the desire to visit locations haunted by cultural memory of past events has encouraged the development of dramatic or quasi-dramatic activities in these locations (137).” Throughout the course of human history, Carlson’s point has been proven all over the world; everything from religious events to military victories have been (and still are being) reenacted on the very sites where these things are believed to have happened. Indeed, the entire concept of pilgrimage is based on the cultural compulsion to connect with some culturally significant truth in the very place where that truth is believed to have come into existence. The tourist industry has honed in on this desire, and the economies of entire nations are dependent on the cultural haunting of specific places. While admittedly on a much smaller scale, the Old Jail in Brownwood has its own kind of pilgrimage during the Halloween season.

As I stated in the previous chapter, the initial idea of using the building for some kind of Halloween event was introduced by a member of the board of directors at the first meeting in which I pitched the idea for the *I Served Time At The Brown County Jail* event. From the moment that the idea had been expressed, nearly everyone in attendance had an excitement about the possibility; something about it just seemed right. In September of 2009, even as we began preparations for the reenactment performances, we also started brainstorming and planning for a Halloween event. From the very beginning, the *Haunted Jail* event presented a different set of problems than the reenactments. Probably the most distinctive difference is that the board of directors of the museum viewed the two events so differently. While the reenactment was considered primarily an historical exhibit, the *Haunted Jail* was considered primarily a fund-raiser event. This caused a certain amount of friction and creative problem solving in two areas; the actual execution of the event, and the use (or abuse) of the building itself.

The most obvious difference between the execution of the reenactments and the *Haunted Jail* is that the actual man-power is provided by Alpha Psi Omega (the dramatic fraternity at Howard Payne University) rather than by community volunteers or museum docents. One of the first things we realized when we started preparing for the first *Haunted Jail* was that there was a lot of work that needed to be done in the Old Jail before we would be able to accommodate a large number of visitors during the evening hours. There were simply too many areas in the museum cluttered with dusty and outdated remains of old exhibits. The Booking room, the Run-Around room on the second floor, and the former deputy's apartment were packed and stacked with

old poster-board pictures, shelves, mannequins and other bric-a-brac. The third floor was simply unusable, coated in a thick layer of dust and choked with everything from stacks of old roofing tiles to fifty huge boxes of manuscript print copies of *There's Something About Brown*, a collection of stories and anecdotes taken from the pages of *The Brownwood Bulletin* over the course of a century. Not only that, but the upper floors of the jail had also become roosting grounds for hundreds of pigeons that managed to find their way into the old building through cracks around the weathered roofline. There was simply too much dirty work and manual labor that needed to be done in the building for the museum docents to handle.

In addition to the clean-up that needed to be done, the event itself was going to need performers and facilitators. As the faculty sponsor for Alpha Psi Omega, I realized that this could be a mutually beneficial opportunity. As a dramatic fraternity, Alpha Psi Omega's mission is to serve the university theater department and to provide and participate in dramatic entertainments for the community. Meeting with Mr. Blake, I entertained the possibility of inviting Alpha Psi Omega to provide the man-power for the *Haunted Jail* event in exchange for half the funds raised during the event. The museum would obviously benefit from this in that the fraternity would be able to complete some clean-up work that had been needed for years, as well as provide the performers and facilitators needed to actually accomplish a successful *Haunted Jail* event. The fraternity would benefit from this collaboration not only by receiving half the funds raised, but also by providing many hours of community service, which is a big part of maintaining their position as one of the best fraternities on campus. In addition to these benefits, it gives students who are interested in drama

a chance to work on a type of project that broadens their understanding of what drama can be, and how a person with theatre experience can put their skills to use in new and interesting ways for the benefit of the community.

With the agreement of Mr. Blake, the museum board of directors, and the members of Alpha Psi Omega, the fall of 2009 was the beginning of a long and prosperous relationship between the Brown County Museum of History and Alpha Psi Omega. After four weeks of vigorous clean-up, preparation, and posting flyers all over town (Fig.B.1), Alpha Psi Omega took over the Old Jail for two nights. The performance, described in detail in the next section of this chapter, was a simple ghost story about one of the single most commonly asked questions concerning the Old Jail: was anyone ever actually executed there? The story was staged entirely on the second floor of the jail from 7:30pm to 11:30pm on Friday and Saturday, the 30th and 31st of October. Due to the fact that the *Haunted Jail* performances were held at night and involved large groups of people (both participants and visitors), we soon encountered the second source of friction: the use of the building itself.

Having functioned as a museum for a quarter of a century, the use of the Old Jail for the *Haunted Jail* posed some immediate issues. First of all, there is only one restroom in the entire building. This simply had not been an issue as the museum typically received about fifteen to twenty visitors a week, and only a few at a time. With the *Haunted Jail* we had more than three hundred visitors in just two days. In addition to the needs of the visitors, the participants also needed some kind of dressing-room area for their comfort during and in between performances. While creating a second restroom was not an option, we did our best to accommodate

everyone's needs by turning the former cell-block room on the third floor into a dressing room with water and refreshments available to the actors, and leaving the restrooms area available for guests only. The actors were simply instructed to make sure that they had used the restroom before they arrived and we created a bathroom rotation sign-up list to allow two actors to use the restroom every thirty minutes.

The second issue was that the building was never used during the evening hours when it is dark outside. Naturally, the *Haunted Jail* was a night-time event, and the natural light that usually helps people navigate the interior and exterior of the building was non-existent. This was especially a problem on the second and third floors, where there is no electricity. We solved this problem temporarily by running extension cords upstairs from the first floor to provide electricity for a few lamps. The third problem we encountered was that we simply did not expect so many people to attend this event. Within an hour of opening, there were many people standing around waiting, bored and quickly losing interest in the event. The first year of the *Haunted Jail* was very much a learning experience in this regard. We did not actually come up with a solution to this problem until the next year, which I will explain in the next section of this chapter.

Lastly, the trickiest issue that arose was that some of the members of the board of directors and museum docents actually became very uncomfortable with the use of the building. Some of the concerns expressed were that the college students who were running the event were not mature enough to treat the building with care, and that some of the visitors who came to the *Haunted Jail* event were rowdy Halloween pranksters who would either damage museum property or get someone hurt. These

fears are not altogether unfounded; there were indeed some problems with this sort of thing during the first year of the *Haunted Jail*. One of our student performers accidentally put his rear end through a window, and we had more than one inebriated guest who had to be asked to leave the premises. This problem has been the most recurrent issue that has accompanied the performances of the *Haunted Jail*, and as will be described and demonstrated in the next section, our response to this problem has shaped the interesting changes that this annual event has gone through since its inception.

Evolution of the *Haunted Jail*

As stated previously, the initial *Haunted Jail* that was presented in October of 2009 was a simple ghost story that played on people's fascination with the gallows on the third floor of the Old Jail. Nearly everyone, from ages eight to eighty, imagines standing on that little trap door with a noose around their neck and wonders if anyone ever died there and what that person must have been thinking and feeling just before the floor gave way. The gallows itself is a historically significant artifact that causes an almost instinctive historical reenactment to take place in the minds of visitors. You could say that the gallows is essentially the heart of the whole building. Official records clearly indicate that no-one was ever executed in the jail, yet rumors have persisted in Brownwood that someone had indeed lost their life there. Museum docents are often the best source of information about these rumors, and during tours they seem to almost encourage visitors to accept the rumor rather than the record. There is one legend that, in my opinion, seems the most plausible: during WWII there was a German POW executed in the jail because there were no execution facilities at

Camp Bowie. I have never seen a shred of actual evidence for this, or any other rumor about an execution, but still – the stories have a way of sticking in your mind as you stand underneath the drop. So, despite the fact that it was pure fiction, the story that I came up with for the *Haunted Jail* was intended to satisfy this natural curiosity about the gallows, and to this day, I think there are many people who believe that this story was real. While I am not entirely sure how I feel about that issue as an academically-minded person, I can say that for those who believe it, this little fiction was true before I ever came up with it: they already believed that the building was haunted and that is exactly what drew them there in the first place. The following is a synopsis of the story:

In 1903, a young man named Donald Alltree was arrested for burglary and imprisoned in the Brown County Jail, which was just a few months away from completion. He was, for a few weeks, the first and only prisoner in the building, as the only cell completed and ready for an inmate was the Youth cell room. During his time at the jail, Donald wrote one letter to his beloved wife, Linda (Fig.B.2) and he also developed a close, yet troubled relationship with his only guard. Then, for reasons unexplained, Donald Alltree suddenly disappeared. While some believed he had escaped, there was a death certificate issued for him on October 31st of 1903 and many came to suspect a cover-up of some kind of wrong doing (Fig. B.3). Three years later, Donald Alltree's wife Lindsay received a mysterious and troubling letter in what appeared to be Donald's hand-writing (Fig. B.4). The letter contained three riddles that seemed to indicate that clues about Donald's fate were waiting in the rooms of the jail. Yet, the truth has been covered up for more than a century, mostly because that

by the time Lindsay Alltree received the letter, the jail was completed and there was no chance that she would be allowed to go into the rooms and explore. Also, as it turns out, Lindsay Alltree had gotten remarried within a year of her husband's disappearance; she married a man who had worked as a night-watch guard at the jail.

The presentation of the story began in the Booking Room where two guides would introduce the story to a group of 5-10 visitors at a time. Visitors could look at the letters and death certificate as the story was told. The letters and the death certificate were printed on paper that was tea-stained, folded repeatedly, and slightly ripped and torn around the edges to make them appear authentically old. After the introduction, visitors were led by their guides upstairs to the Run-Around Room where there was a table set up with a dark table cloth and some historical artifacts on display. One of the artifacts was an antique letter knife. After the first riddle was read aloud in the Run-Around Room, the door would suddenly slam shut, which always elicited screams of surprise from visitors. Then, very slowly, the letter knife on the table would begin spinning by itself. After the slamming door, this effect was very spooky, yet was accomplished by simply having a person under the table with a large magnet. Some people guessed this was the cause and would try to peer under the table, only to find bare floor; we had built a false bottom to the table that concealed the person operating the magnet. Finding the floor under the table empty was always another great surprise for the visitors. When the knife stopped spinning, it would point at one of the visitors, who was then required to pick it up and take it with them (the knife was actually quite dull for safety).

From the Run-Around Room, visitors would then be led into the 2nd floor Cell Block for the next scene. Once all the visitors were crammed into the inner hall of the cage, the second riddle would be read aloud and the cage door would slam shut loudly. Then the door to the Youth Cell would creak open on its own and heavy boot-laden footsteps would walk their way around the cage. This effect was creepy because the lamp light made the walkway around the cage visible, and though you could clearly hear someone walking heavily on the other side of the steel cage, you could clearly see that no one was actually there. This effect, again, was carried out by simply having a person crawling low along the floor where the shadows from the light created an impenetrable darkness. This person had shoes on their hands and soft knee-pads so that as they circled the cage, they could make the sound of footsteps. Once the footsteps stopped at the cage door, it would swing open allowing the visitors to exit into the 2nd Floor Landing area, directly underneath the gallows.

There, the last riddle would be read aloud and after a loud, gut-wrenching wail, the ghost of Donald Alltree would appear. This was an actor wearing a ragged old jail-bird costume, with his face, hair, and hands all painted white, with his eyes black, and wearing solid black contact lenses. Around his neck was a rope noose that he held up above his head with one hand while reaching out imploringly with his other hand. His sudden appearance from the dark entrance to the Run-Around Room out of which they had just exited caused the visitors to jump back in fright. At that point, whomever was in possession of the letter knife would hand it over to Donald, who would use it to “cut” the rope of his noose and then appear to find peace at last. The ghost of Donald would retreat back into the shadows of the Cell Block and the guides

would congratulate the visitors for their bravery as they led them back downstairs and out of the tour. Each tour would take about 15 minutes, and the actors had five minutes in between each tour to reset all of the props and effects.

When the dust settled after two days of the first *Haunted Jail* event, and the proceeds were counted and divided between Alpha Psi Omega and the Brown County Museum of History, we realized immediately the value and importance of what we had created. Although I was busy with preparations for the *I Served Time At The Brown County Jail* reenactment that would take place in March the following year, Alpha Psi Omega and the museum began to brainstorm about how to improve upon the foundation we had established. By the following May, just before the end of the college school year, there were several ideas floating around about possibilities for the 2010 *Haunted Jail* event. While we were expecting to have an even larger turn-out than the year before, we needed a way to keep visitors interested and engaged rather than standing around waiting for their turn in a 15-minute tour. The conclusion was that the *Haunted Jail* event was going to be more than just a single ghost story tour; it would become a collection of different activities and experiences that would all take place during the end of October. The collection of activities that have been included since 2010 are “Zombie Lockdown”, “Victor Greenleaf’s Hall of Nightmares”, “A Victorian Haunting”, “Ghosts by Candlelight”, “Ghost Hunt”, “Kidz Korner”, and the “Haunted Museum”.

In the fall of 2010, the museum excitedly began preparations for the second *Haunted Jail* event, and the new activities being introduced that year were the “Zombie Lockdown” and “Kidz Korner”. “Zombie Lockdown” came from an idea

concocted by Josh Helms, who was then president of Alpha Psi Omega and had portrayed Sheriff Moses Denman during the *I Served Time at the Brown County Jail* reenactment in March of that year. The concept is fairly simple: visitors enter through the Porch Cage where they are introduced to a story about how a bunch of the former inmates of the Brown County Jail from a century ago have risen from their graves and infested their old cells upstairs. The visitors are given Nerf guns with flashlights and sent into the Old Jail with a guide who leads them through a tense ten minutes of zombie-shooting fun. The zombies are the slow, shuffling type and we do not use any blood or gore, just some old torn-up clothes with white face make-up with dark eye shadow. The visitors have 10 minutes to try to find the mysterious “artifact” that is causing the zombies to come back to life; if they find it, they get to have another round for free. In addition to the “Zombie Lockdown”, the other new activity was “Kidz Korner” which is a collection of fun activities for children who are too young to enjoy “Zombie Lockdown”. The activities all have a fall theme, such as tossing little pumpkins into baskets various distances away, bobbing for apples, pick-up-sticks, a tombstone matching game, and face painting. Prizes and candy are given to kids who participate.

To help advertise for the beefed-up *Haunted Jail* event, we made flyers and handouts that were distributed during the Brownwood Reunion Celebration event which takes place in the middle of September (Fig. B.5). This was a prime opportunity to generate interest in the museum and in the *Haunted Jail* event because the Reunion Celebration takes place entirely in the down-town Brownwood area and is meant to draw people into the heart of their town for a weekend of fun, shopping, and

entertainment. To make an impression, Alpha Psi Omega members participated in the parade by dressing up in jail-bird costumes with zombie make-up. Josh Helms and Brandon Thomasy dressed in their costumes from the reenactment and herded the mindless zombies along, brandishing Nerf guns and handing out flyers (Fig.B.6, B.7, & B.8).

With the addition of “Zombie Lockdown” and “Kidz Korner”, the *Haunted Jail* attracted nearly twice as many visitors as the first year. Not only were there more visitors, but the entire operation was carried out more smoothly. We did not have masses of bored visitors standing around waiting for their turn without anything to do, and after a very successful weekend, we began planning for the next year.

In 2011, we kept the “Kidz Korner”, but replaced the “Zombie Lockdown” activity with “Victor Greenleaf’s Hall of Nightmares”. Like the “Zombie Lockdown”, this event was imagined by Josh Helms and me. With this event, visitors would enter the jail areas of the building and be introduced to the story of Victor Greenleaf (Fig. B.9 & B.10), a fictional character that I invented whose name has a strong association for Brownwood residents; Greenleaf Cemetery is the largest and oldest cemetery in Brown County and lies a mile and a half south of down-town Brownwood.

The Hall of Nightmares was set up like a menagerie of classic monsters who have all been incarcerated in the cells of the old jail. Whereas the “Zombie Lockdown” event was very active and participatory, the Hall of Nightmares was more like an actual museum display – with the exception that you could talk and interact with the exhibits (Fig. B.11). As visitors made their way through the rooms of the jail, they would stop and read informational placards about what kind of monster was

contained in each cell and a snippet of exactly how Victor Greenleaf managed to capture each one (Fig. B.12- B.19). Alpha Psi Omega invested money and time into the design and characteristics of each monster interaction that visitors could have during the tour. For example, when approaching the cell with the Reanimated Man (a.k.a. Frankenstein), the visitor would pull the lever of a very complicated-looking electrical device out of which a bundle of wires ran into the cell where the monster lay on a bunk. When the lever was pulled, a metal contraption attached to the monster's skull would light up with a flicker blueish-white light and the Reanimated Man would rise and stumble painfully up to the bars of his cell where he would regale the visitor with horrors from his past and pleas for help. After a few minutes, the lever would reset itself and the monster would lie back down on the bunk.

The Swamp Creature was contained (naturally) in the cell with a bathtub. Because of the dark shadows, it was difficult to see anything except the white tub with what looked like a layer of mossy vines covering it. As visitors would peer through the bars trying to see the creature, a hideous webbed hand with long claws would reach out and grasp the edge of the tub. That was usually all that anyone wanted to see of the Swamp Creature.

Probably the most popular and effective room was the Restless Spirit. Set up in the Women's Cell, this exhibit was simply an empty room with a bunk, a metal cup sitting on the window sill, and a rocking chair. As visitors would look through the bars of the cell into the room, they would see the covers of the bed slowly pull themselves back from the bed and the rocking chair begin and stop rocking by itself, and then the cup would fly off of the window sill and crash into the bars of the cell

door – as if an invisible hand had tossed it directly at the faces of the visitors looking into the room. All of this was accomplished by a concealed person manipulating a series of hidden fishing lines attached to the objects. The effect of the rocking chair was usually enough to send visitors away frightened, but even those who were braver and more suspicious were almost always shocked into screams (followed by laughter) by the sudden clang and clatter of the cup hitting the metal bars right in front of their faces.

While several of the exhibits for the Hall of Nightmares were very effective, others were not, and at the end of the third annual *Haunted Jail* it was clear that the Hall of Nightmares simply didn't live up to the amount of time and money it took to prepare it. In addition to the less-than-enthusiastic reception of the Hall of Nightmares, there were so many visitors who had come to the museum hoping for another chance to experience "Zombie Lockdown", it was decided that from that point on, the shooting of zombies with Nerf guns would be a permanent fixture of the *Haunted Jail* event.

In 2012, "Zombie Lockdown" was back and bigger than ever. We expanded the event to include two weekends instead of just one. Also, Alpha Psi Omega began recruiting on the Howard Payne University campus for extra volunteers to be zombies. During the first year of "Zombie Lockdown", we only had about ten zombies in the jail. With the addition of new volunteers, we usually had between twenty-five and thirty zombies, which made the experience exponentially more exciting for our visitors. As visitors would first enter the jail through the Booking Room, they would encounter the first zombie, who was lying prone on the floor as they all came inside.

Once the door closed, the entire building would be deathly quiet; then the first zombie would slowly rise to his feet and shuffle towards the visitors menacingly. After bringing this first zombie down with a barrage of Nerf bullets, visitors would then be carefully and slowly guided up the metal stairs to the second floor. Once they were upstairs, they would start out facing three or four zombies at a time as they started searching the rooms for the artifact. Gradually as their time diminished, more and more zombies would begin appearing from hiding places until the number of zombies was nearly overwhelming. At the last minute, the guide would yell for them all to escape back down the stairs, and when they descended back to the first floor they would find the Booking Room literally packed with zombies that they had to fight their way past to get to the door.

Another element that we added was to occasionally insert a plant into a group of visitors. At the end of their tour, as the group is trying to fight their way out of the Booking Room, this person would be grabbed and dragged off by the zombie horde as the others escaped. This made the “Zombie Lockdown” experience much more climactic and exciting, leaving many visitors out of breath and laughing with exhilaration. Occasionally we had guests who were simply too frightened to complete the entire ten minutes and would ask to leave before even going up the stairs. For the most part, however, guests were eager to sign up for another round.

In 2012, the *Haunted Jail* attracted a total of 608 visitors. The proceeds from this one event allowed the board of directors of the museum to put a down payment on a new roof for the building and to install much-needed railing and floor joists so that visitors could now safely go up to the third floor – which until that time was strictly

closed to anyone except museum staff and the performers. Also, the funds were sufficient to pay for ten members of Alpha Psi Omega to attend the Texas Educational Theatre Association's annual conference.

The 2013 *Haunted Jail* saw the introduction of three new activities, as well as the continuation of the "Zombie Lockdown" and "Kidz Korner" events. The growing success of the *Haunted Jail* and the reenactment performances also allowed for the creation of a new job position at the museum. In the spring of 2013, Nick Seybert was hired as a building manager for the Old Jail and for the Museum Annex. While the museum docents were still an essential volunteer labor force for the museum, Nick was able to work towards updating some of the old exhibits as well as introducing new exhibits. It was actually Nick Seybert who helped imagine and create the *Murder of Sheriff Bell* exhibit. The first time I sat down with Nick to begin planning for the upcoming *Haunted Jail* and another reenactment performance, he seemed particularly excited and enthusiastic about the *Haunted Jail*. Interestingly, he informed me that the reason he came to work at the museum was because he had come to the *Haunted Jail* the last two years and he just knew that great things were happening at the museum. Nick had several ideas that he was excited to try out for the *Haunted Jail*, including "Ghost Hunt", "Ghosts by Candlelight", and "A Victorian Haunting". The "Ghost Hunt" is an activity that takes place from midnight to 1:00am on the night of Halloween. It is a \$5 event in which visitors are allowed to go into the Old Jail with only flashlights and are required to find a place to sit or stand and commence being as quiet as possible. The idea was that while sitting on a bunk in one of the dark old cells, you may (depending on your level of faith or superstition) hear or see hints of

ghostly activity. I admit that when I heard this idea, I thought that no one could possibly be interested in such a sedate activity. However, on the evening of October 31st, 2013, there were about twenty people who participated in the “Ghost Hunt”. Indeed, several of them were adamant that after listening to the silent building, they were certain that they could sense the presence of spirits from the past. As it turns out, although it requires the least amount of preparation, the “Ghost Hunt” is actually one of the purest examples of what Carlson wrote about cultural haunting of certain locations.

Like the “Ghost Hunt”, the “Ghosts by Candlelight” activity was very simple to accomplish, yet has remained one of the most effective elements of the *Haunted Jail* experience. This is a free activity that visitors can experience while they are waiting for their turn at “Zombie Lockdown”. Visitors would make their way to the basement of Old Jail where Nick Seybert would tell ghost stories about mysterious and spooky things that had happened in and around Brown County. The basement itself is perhaps the spookiest place in the entire building. It is accessed by descending an old stone staircase and through a stone doorway that leads into room with concrete and brick walls with a natural earth floor. The room is just over six feet tall, giving the cool, dank, earth-smelling room a distinctly grave-like feel. There is no electricity in the basement, so it is lit with candles whose flickering light give great ambience to the telling of ghost stories. Again, with very little cost in time or money for preparation, this event has demonstrated that the Old Jail was certainly a site imbued with and haunted by Brownwood’s cultural past.

While “Ghost Hunt” and “Ghosts by Candlelight” were simple enough to be effective without too much effort and have been carried over into subsequent years, “A Victorian Haunting” was a failure almost even before it even began. This activity involved several performers and special effects that were simply not well suited to the nature of the *Haunted Jail* experience. Basically, Nick Seybert was wanting to re-create the concept of the very first *Haunted Jail* – the story of Donald Alltree, but included much more gore and special effects. Rather than staging the story in the Old Jail, he decided to stage it in the Annex building, which is directly across the street from the Old Jail. “A Victorian Haunting” failed primarily because it relied too much on actors in scary plastic masks jumping out at visitors and creepy sound effects and images created by television screens. Ultimately, the audiences were simply not impressed with this standard kind of haunted house shtick. Those who were interested in a blood-and-guts-gore-fest were much more pleased by the work of the local Brownwood Fire Department, whose annual haunted house was sure to satisfy your desire to be shocked. The visitors who came to the *Haunted Jail* event simply were not interested in a knock-off version of that kind of haunted house. All-in-all, the 2013 *Haunted Jail* was a success, though it was clear that what audience wanted was more of the natural haunted-ness of the museum itself. The building provided what no other haunted house in town could offer – a location that was already haunted.

Almost as if in response to the more “natural” direction that we endeavored to pursue after the *Haunted Jail* 2013, on February 15th, 2014 the History Channel aired an episode of *America Unearthed* entitled “Lincoln’s Secret Assassins” (Season 2, episode 12). As it turns out, back in September of 2013, Scott Wolter, the host of the

show, and his crew arrived in Brownwood to film portions of this episode which followed a string of clues surrounding the assassination of President Lincoln and a mysterious organization known as the Knights of the Golden Compass. Towards the conclusion of the episode, clues about the KGC and their connection with the famous outlaw Jesse James lead to a man named Henry Ford who lived in Brownwood in the early 1900's. Jay Longley, a resident of Brownwood and a local history buff, was interviewed about possible connections between Henry Ford and the James Gang. The show claimed that Longley believed that Henry Ford was actually Jesse James himself; however, Longley has adamantly denied making this claim, stating that he actually believed that another Brownwood resident, J. Frank Dalton, was Jesse James; and despite repeated letters and calls to the producers of the show, the episode aired as it was. In any case, the climax of the episode actually occurs in the basement of the Old Brown County Jail. Nick Seybert assisted with the filming by indicating a section of wall that appears to have possibly been a doorway that has long since been sealed shut. Longley's theory is that there is a system of tunnels underneath downtown Brownwood that connected the Old Jail with other buildings and that these secret tunnels are one of the hiding places for the fortunes of the KGC and the James Gang. To add scientific legitimacy to the theory, a ground-penetrating radar and technician were hired from the Dallas area to conduct scans of the ground underneath downtown Brownwood to see if there were any hidden tunnels buried there. Sure enough, the scans revealed that there does actually seem to be a series of tunnels.

After the episode aired in February, there was a renewed flood of interest in the Old Jail, with visitors coming from far and wide. The *Haunted Jail* 2014 benefited

from the publicity, and we continued to have a very large turn-out for the “Zombie Lockdown”, especially after Alpha Psi Omega created an exciting little movie about “Zombie Lockdown” which received hundreds of views and shares on Facebook – even from people who did not live in Brown County. In addition to “Zombie Lockdown”, we also continued “Ghosts by Candlelight”, “Ghost Watch”, and we added a new activity simply called the “Haunted Museum”. The “Haunted Museum” was an addition in-line with our new concept of simply allowing the museum itself to do the work of “haunting”.

As the museum began to realize new and expanded interest from the community, the Annex building (across the street from the Old Jail) was over-hauled and re-organized into a legitimate museum space rather than a sort of storage-on-display room. Nick Seybert and Alpha Psi Omega had worked hard to remove, replace, and reorganize exhibits that were incomplete or incoherent so that as you come into the large open space, there is a sense of order that guides the visitor through the stages of Brown County History. The room begins with some Native American and wildlife information and displays, then moves to early settlers, the foundation of the city of Brownwood, and finally into a large section devoted to the history of Camp Bowie. The Annex actually functioned so well that the board decided to re-name it as the Main building and refer to the Old Jail as the Annex.

This switch, while a bit confusing for some, is a reflection of the growth of the museum and a shift away from thinking of the Old Jail as a place to cram all of the historical exhibits of the museum. As described in the previous chapter, it was at this point that the museum realized that the Old Jail is more interesting to visitors when it

reflects more of its original purpose. Removing the Flea Circus exhibit and the mannequins displaying early 1900's fashion in favor of exhibits about the history of law enforcement in Brownwood and the *Murder of Sheriff Bell* room are a part of this transition. The "Haunted Museum" is held in the Main building while "Zombie Lockdown" is taking place in the Old Jail (now called the Annex).

Visitors to the "Haunted Museum" enter the museum and are given a flashlight and a quiz sheet that has twelve photographs with blanks underneath them (Fig. B.20). They simply go through the museum in the dark and try to look at all the pictures and find the names of the people in the photographs. The room is creepy in itself because it is a large open area with a bunch of old things and mannequins. Also, as they go through, a single facilitator will be hidden in the room – usually dressed like one of the many mannequins. This facilitator is there to make sure that visitors do not behave inappropriately and will occasionally make a slight noise, such as a spoon falling on the floor. This is all that it takes to make people feel spooked. Probably the most effective "haunting" is when visitors will be standing right next to the facilitator, having assumed it is just another mannequin (people generally do not seem to enjoy looking at mannequins directly in the face), when suddenly the mannequin just walks away into the darkness. The "haunting" is so simple, yet so effective that it is quite common for visitors – even grown adults – to refuse to stay in the museum for more than a few minutes.

The "Haunted Museum" requires no special effects, no blood, no gore, and not even a shred of a story-line to back it up; visitors already feel that the building is haunted. This activity is also a great heuristic tool because it requires the visitors to

look at and read the captions. Children, teenagers, and adults who usually are too busy letting their eyes wander from one exhibit to the next during the day, are crouched over every single display trying to find the faces and names on the page. Having spent my fair share of time as the facilitator in this activity (it is my favorite role at the *Haunted Jail*) I cannot count how many times visitors have exclaimed, “I never knew that was a real person!” or “We should come back here during the day!”. Along this same vein, “Ghosts by Candlelight” was even more of a draw in 2014 because there was so much interest generated by the episode of *America Unearthed* and the fact that you could actually stand in the very room that was possibly an entrance to the secret tunnels of the KGC and the James Gang. These visitors, who perhaps only came to have a good time on a Halloween night, often leave the “Haunted Museum” and “Ghosts by Candlelight” with renewed appreciation and interest in learning more about the history of Brown County.

The *Haunted Jail* continued in 2015 with “Zombie Lockdown”, “Ghosts by Candlelight”, and “The Haunted Jail”. The fact that younger children were enjoying the ghost stories in the basement and searching for hidden faces in the dark museum, the “Kidz Korner” was no longer necessary or desirable to keep up with – especially with five solid days of rainfall. Also, 2015 saw a boost in attendance due to the fact that (for reasons unknown to me) the haunted house presented by the Brownwood Fire Department was no longer competing for visitors. Despite the fact that most of the visitors at the museum enjoy the *Haunted Jail* experience, there are always a few who simply aren’t creeped out by anything less than the kind of gory, blood-and-guts, scream-fest that the Fire Department offered. In my experience, however, those

visitors who have a healthy amount of inner imagination are those that seem to enjoy the museum experience the most. And this remains true whether they are visiting during broad daylight on a Thursday afternoon or if they are visiting at 11:00 at night on Halloween. Perhaps this is because there is such a strong connection, as I stated in the beginning of this chapter, between history and haunting.

Most recently, Alpha Psi Omega and the museum volunteers completed *Haunted Jail* 2016, and again received a large turnout despite the fact that Halloween fell on a Monday. What we have learned through the evolution of the *Haunted Jail* is that the closer we remain to the simple truth of the cultural significance of the building haunted by the past, the easier it is for the event to succeed. In the end, it is not the spooky stories or the actors dressed like zombies shuffling through the cells upstairs - it is the historical imagination of the people of Brownwood that brings the dead back to life in the Old Jail.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Reflections on the process

When I first began to work with the Brown County of Museum of History, I was primarily attracted to the novelty of the concept: creating interesting performances in a very unique and interesting Old Jail. However, as this project transformed from a one-time event into a long-term relationship, I developed a new appreciation of what it means to have an active role in the historical process within the cultural fabric of a small town. While this dissertation project has certainly been a longer process than most, it would not have been written without the insight of the years it has taken to prove that these events have been an integral part of the re-invention and re-invigoration of the Brown County Museum of History. When we began performing in the Old Jail in the fall of 2009, I could not have foreseen how the project and museum would both grow and change together. Seven years of collaboration with BCMH has provided a rich body of information about which ideas were effective, which were ineffective, and how increased exposure has changed the museum.

The Brown County Museum of History now receives more visitors per year and more financial support from the community. They have completely remodeled their warehouse into what is now referred to as the Main building, and have in the last few months secured another grant to update that facility even further. Also, they have begun to remodel the first floor of the Old Jail to return it to its original format. They are also partnering with the Brown County Historical Society and the Greenleaf

Cemetery for two completely new re-enactment experiences; *Talking Tombstones Tour* (Fig.C.1) and *The Battle of Salerno* (Fig.C.2). The *Talking Tombstones Tour* is a re-enactment event at Greenleaf Cemetery in Brownwood, one of the oldest in central Texas. As visitors make their way around the cemetery, they are greeted and regaled with stories from the past by actors dressed as the famous people interred there. *The Battle of Salerno* was a re-enactment held on Krueger Hill, which is named for General Walter Krueger, who was the original commanding officer of the sprawling Camp Bowie complex. To celebrate Veterans Day, re-enactors dressed in authentic WWII era gear to ‘storm’ the hilltop; this was followed by a photograph opportunity for veterans. While I have been only tangentially involved with these re-enactments (providing advice, costumes, and actors), I mention them here because they are a clear indication that the BCMH is continuing to benefit from re-enactment and performance-type events, and there has been a broader re-awakening of historical learning and discovery since I began my work at the Old Jail. In addition to these signs of growth, the BCMH has also opened the Lehnis Railroad Museum, a state-of-the-art facility housing a large collection of model train landscapes, exhibits about central Texas railroad history, two actual train cars (a caboose and a business carriage), and a miniature railroad ride for children.

The larger backdrop of all of this expansion has been an economic renaissance for downtown Brownwood. At about the same time that the Old Jail ceased to function as the Brown County Jail in the early 1980s, the businesses and organizations downtown began to relocate, leaving the streets around the courthouse empty. About five years ago, however, several businesses and community leaders began to devote

their time, money, and energy to restoring downtown Brownwood and encouraging businesses to return.

One of the greatest triumphs of this effort has been the opening of the Brownwood Lyric Theatre. Restored from the shell of a 1920s vaudeville-style theatre, the Lyric Theatre re-opened in 2014 with a full year-round season of concerts, plays, musicals, and drama camps (Fig. C.3). While the Lyric Theatre and the BCMH are separate entities, they are both iconic historical locations just a few blocks apart in the downtown area. The re-opening of the Lyric Theatre and the revival of the BCMH are not coincidental—many of the same people were involved in both. Brownwood is, after all, a small town and several key people serve (or have served) on the board of directors for both organizations.

The connection and mutually beneficial traffic between these two organizations will continue to grow in interesting ways. For example, I am currently working with team of people writing an original musical that will highlight both sites in a play that is unique to Brownwood history. The story will involve the well-known escape of Ray Bourbon from the Brown County Jail in December of 1970. Bourbon was a world-famous vaudevillian drag performer who wound up in the Brown County Jail convicted of hiring two hit men to kill a Brownwood citizen. In December of 2017, the Museum will introduce the event with a reenactment of the escape, and two weeks later, the play will open at the Lyric Theatre.

As I reflect on what I have learned in the process of my work with the BCMH, the most important aspect is the discovery of what success actually looks like for these performances. Large attendance and money raised are very simple measures of

success to be sure, but the more significant measure is that the work continues to flourish in ways that are beyond my own creativity. While I will continue to plan and direct some of the re-enactments and the *Haunted Jail* each year, I am encouraged and satisfied to watch as the Museum outgrows its need for me.

Summary of the Professional Problem

Recently, as I was combing the internet for news and reviews about the events at the Brown County Museum, I came across a headline that read, “Brown County’s Old Jail Going Up For Auction.” My heart jumped a bit, but I soon realized that this was a *different* old Brown County Jail; it was located in Hiawatha, Kansas. I briefly read a description of how this beloved old building, built in 1932, had been vacant since 2010. I was saddened by the story of how this iconic landmark, full of the stories of the culture of Brown County, Kansas, was being auctioned off. Obviously the connection was purely imaginary, but I could not help thinking about our own old Brown County Jail.

Just a few years ago, when I first considered what to do with the Old Jail, the museum was on the verge of the very same fate, but the last seven years have made a drastic change in its fortunes. In the first and second chapters of this dissertation, I stated that my goal in this project was to prove that re-enactment and theatrical performances in the Old Jail are valuable as a heuristic tool. Heuristics enable us to discover and learn through experience. Instead of focusing on the actual efficacy *teaching* historical information, my goal was to show that these performances would generate interest in personal historical learning and discovery. The professional problem was simply that: was it possible to use re-enactment and theatrical

performance events to renew cultural interest in the history of Brown County and (specifically) in the Brown County Museum of History? In other words, could we use theatre to save a small-town museum?

The progress made over the last seven years has, in my opinion, has proven that re-enactment and theatrical performance *are* useful heuristic tools. The Brown County Museum of History has gone from abandonment to remodeling and expansion in a short period of time. Is it possible that this dramatic turn-around is due to other factors besides my work? Certainly. But, in my opinion, the attention generated at our performance events has been translated into a boost in community awareness and interest in the museum. As new members have moved in and out of positions on the board of directors at the museum, we have faced a continual re-evaluation of whether or not these events are appropriate and useful, yet even the most cautious members have been convinced by the hundreds of people who regularly visit the museum, the strange old building downtown.

As a conclusion to this dissertation, I would encourage others who are considering similar events to try them; the risks have, in my experience outweighed the costs, especially through commitment to a long-term project. While criticism has been directed towards reenactment as an unreliable source of historical learning, the focus is on encouraging visitors to discover (or re-discover) their own history. By understanding and playing into the cultural conception of the historical location itself, theatrical performances can appeal to the curiosity of the community in ways that static museum displays cannot. The old Brown County Jail is not unique as an epicenter of community history; literally hundreds of sites exist in the state of Texas

alone that are haunted by cultural memory. Many of these locations are in danger of becoming irrelevant, of closing down, or disappearing altogether. My hope is that my work at the Brown County Museum of History will further inspire creative ways to bring these locations back to life and assure that future generations will continue to learn and discovery their history.

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APPENDIX A

CHAPTER 4 FIGURES

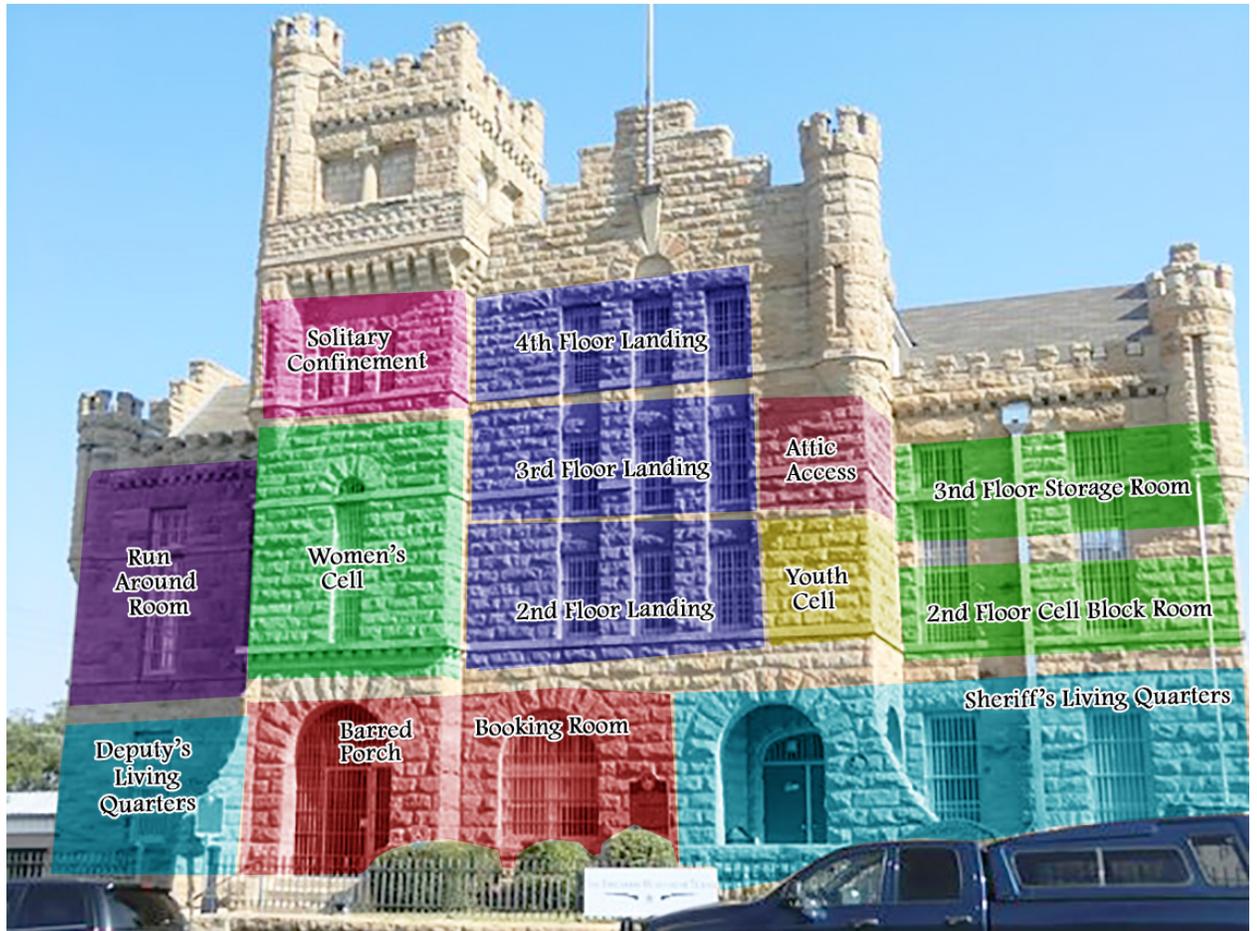


Figure A.1 Map of the Old Jail building



Figure A.2 Booking Room



Figure A.3 Barred Porch



Figure A.4 Women's Cell



Figure A.5 Run Around Room



Figure A.6 Gallows Trap-Door



Figure A.7 Cell Block Walk-way



Figure A.8 Youth Cell



Figure A.9 Cell Block Cage



Figure A.10 Cell



Figure A.11 Bathtub

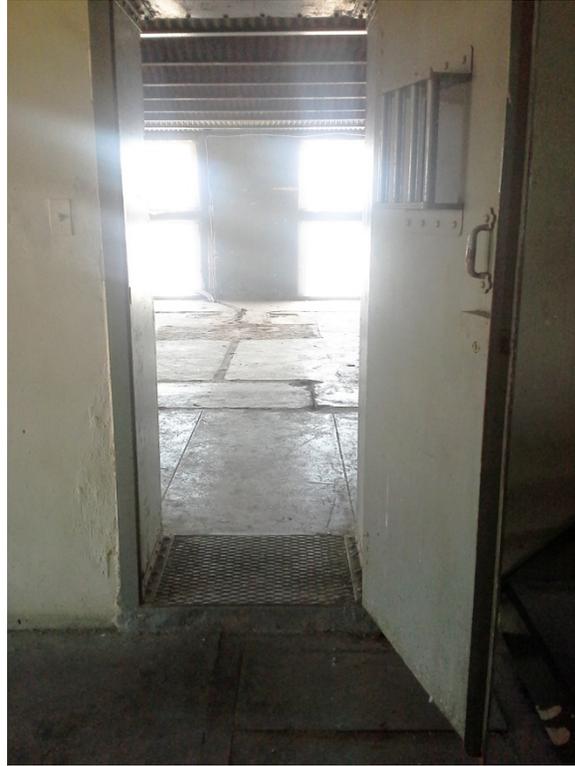
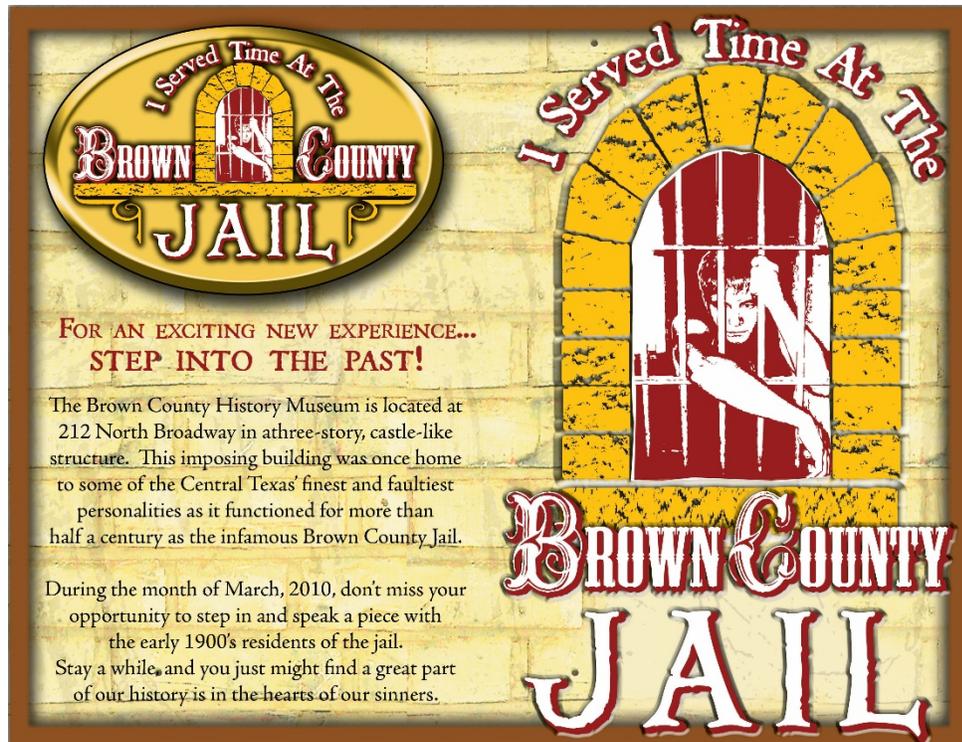


Figure A.12 3rd Floor Cell Block/Storage Room



Figure A.13 Trap Door Lever Cabinet



I Served Time At The
BROWN COUNTY
JAIL

**FOR AN EXCITING NEW EXPERIENCE...
STEP INTO THE PAST!**

The Brown County History Museum is located at 212 North Broadway in a three-story, castle-like structure. This imposing building was once home to some of the Central Texas' finest and faultiest personalities as it functioned for more than half a century as the infamous Brown County Jail.

During the month of March, 2010, don't miss your opportunity to step in and speak a piece with the early 1900's residents of the jail. Stay a while, and you just might find a great part of our history is in the hearts of our sinners.

I Served Time At The
BROWN COUNTY
JAIL

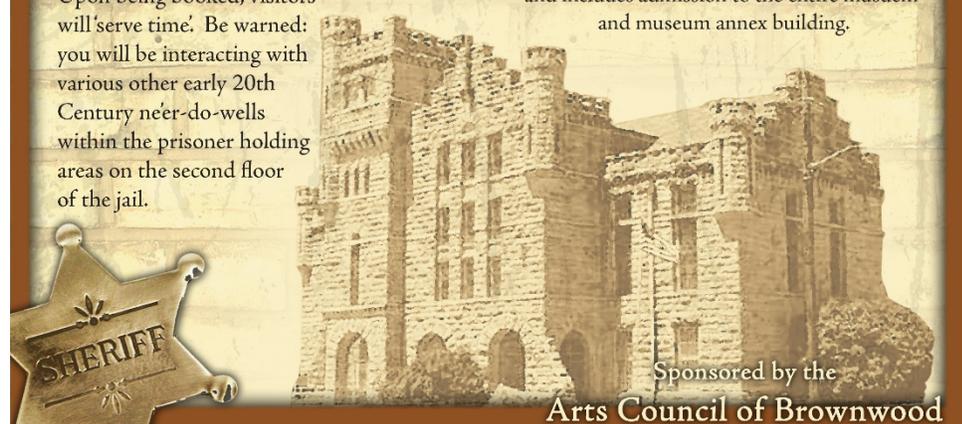
-WANTED-

Any and all residents or visitors of the Brownwood area interested in the unique and vibrant history of the infamous Brown County Jail are hereby summoned to turn themselves over to Sheriff Mose Denman at the jail.

Upon being booked, visitors will 'serve time'. Be warned: you will be interacting with various other early 20th Century ne'er-do-wells within the prisoner holding areas on the second floor of the jail.

Bookings will take place every
Friday during March
from 6p.m. - 9p.m.
and every
Saturday in March
from 1p.m. - 4p.m.

Admission price for the tour is \$7 per person and includes admission to the entire museum and museum annex building.



Sponsored by the
Arts Council of Brownwood

Figure A.14 Logo & Artwork

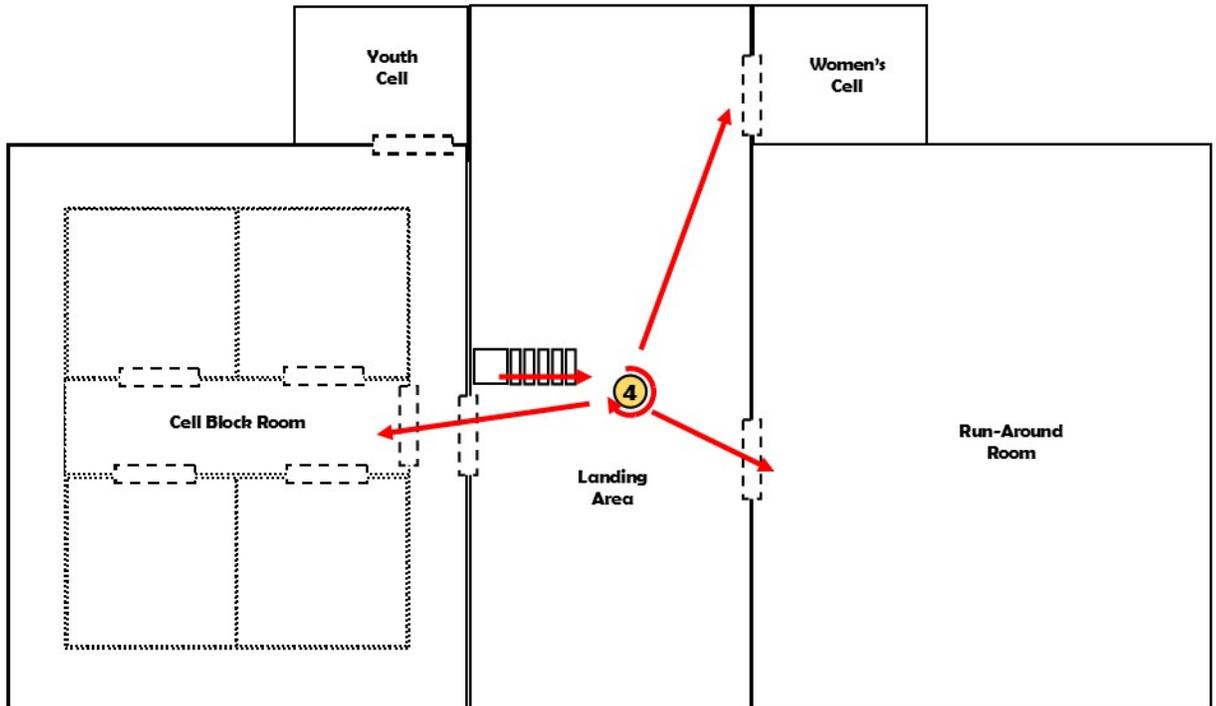
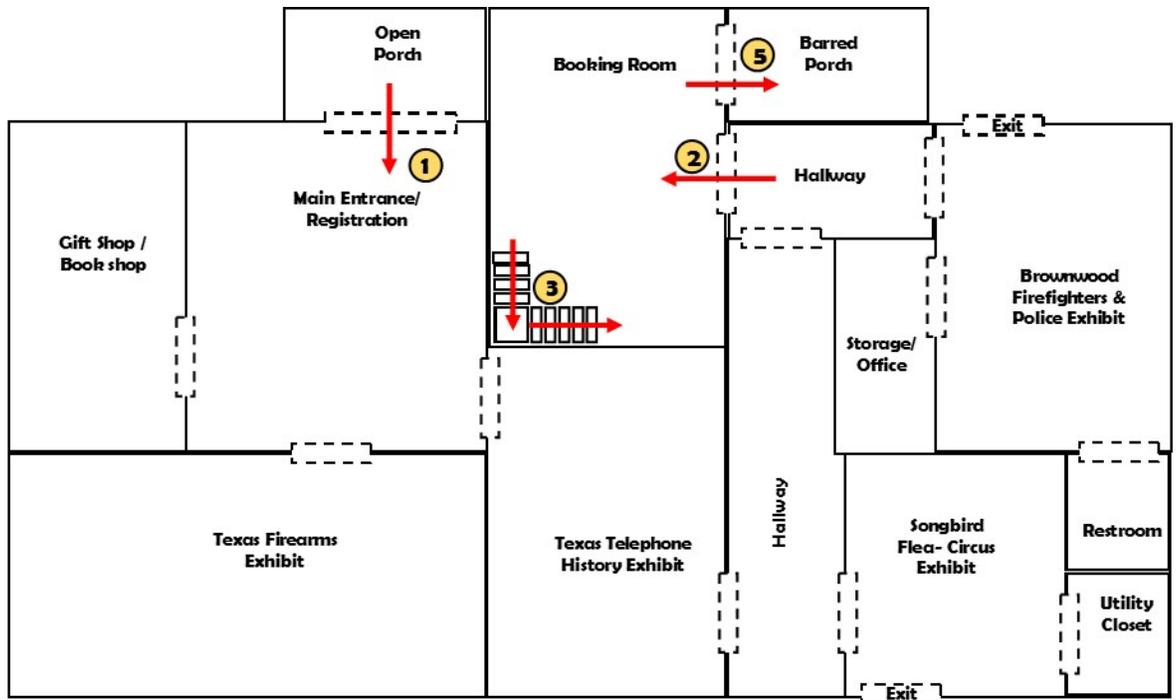


Figure A.15 Ground Plan of Reenactment Tour



Figure A.16 Brownie Camera

Figure A.17 Character Notes

Sheriff Moses Denman

Moses Denman was born on May 1st, 1859 in Houston, Texas. He was elected as Brown County Sheriff on November 6, 1900 and served two-year terms from 1900, 1902, 1904, 1906, 1910, 1912, 1928, 1930 for a total of 16 years in 8 terms.

Moses Denman came to Brown County in 1883 from Houston County at the age of twenty-four and soon began the career which made him, briefly, the county's most famous sheriff. Denman is everyone's idea of a typical sheriff. He has a big black mustache, a wide brimmed hat, a pistol at his side, and he always rides a large black horse.

Denman became a deputy sheriff soon after arriving in Brown County. He made his first arrest on the same day he was sworn in to serve under Sheriff W.Y. Pearce. The young deputy was given a warrant for the arrest of a man named Jefferies who was accused of adultery. Denman was determined to prove his worth, so he went out with another deputy to the man's home. There he found his man, but in his haste, he had forgotten to bring the proper papers with him. Back he went to the courthouse, leaving the other deputy in charge of Jeffries. Unfortunately, Jeffries went out the back door and escaped before Denman returned.

Embarrassed, Denman searched for his man all afternoon. Finally, someone told him that Jeffries was in one of the local saloons. On the way to the saloon, Denman met W.A. 'Billy' Butler, the city marshal. Moses asked Billy to go with him to the saloon. When he arrested Jeffries, Butler was standing close by to back him up. Jeffries let loose with a stream of profanity that shocked Denman. Billy Butler, however, knew all

the same words and replied with blistering language. When the prisoner saw that he was both out-manned and out-cussed, he went docilely to jail for the 'crime' of adultery.

Moses had been brought up to believe that cussing was a sin, but realized that he either needed to learn to cuss or resign. He asked Billy Butler to be his instructor and vowed to use his knowledge only when it was necessary.

In September, 1903, Denman created a nation-wide sensation by taking a prisoner from under the noses of Tombstone, Arizona's officers and territorial rangers. He went to Tombstone to bring back a man named Joe Hughes who had been charged in Brown County with cattle rustling.

Denman took with him extradition papers from the governor of Texas to Governor Brodie of Arizona; however, the Governor had gone on vacation. Hughes had been arrested and was in jail in Tombstone, but his lawyer refused to allow him to be brought back to Brownwood. Denman wired Governor Brodie asking him to honor the extradition papers but Hughes' lawyer, Tom Flannigan, wired the governor requesting that he refused permission for extradition. The Governor honored Denman's request but Denman knew that efforts would be made in Tombstone by officers to prevent the removal of the prisoner. Therefore, he made careful plans for escape. Denman hired a guide with three horses and rented a hack (a small carriage) with which to transport the prisoner and hid them a short distance from Tombstone. Since Denman now had the Arizona governor's permission to extradite Hughes, the District Attorney, D.A. Cunningham, ordered the Tombstone sheriff to release the prisoner to Sheriff Denman. (Cunningham's political enemies claimed that Denman

paid him fifty dollars. This was enough to defeat Cunningham for district attorney in the next election) The D.A. and the Tombstone sheriff did not notify Tom Flannigan, nor did they allow Hughes to communicate with his attorney. As soon as Flannigan learned of the release, he immediately swore out a writ of habeas corpus against Denman demanding that he produce Hughes before a Tombstone judge.

In the meantime, the intrepid Denman had his man in the hack heading for his hidden horses. As he left the town, Hughes kept yelling, "They're kidnapping me! They're kidnapping me!"

Denman, his guide and his prisoner switched from hack to horses and headed out over 175 miles of arid desert to the town of Sansamon with Hughes handcuffed to the saddle. All three of them nearly died of thirst before they reached their destination.

The Cochise County officers and the territorial rangers searched every train and scoured the country, carrying with them warrants for Denman's arrest. Every law enforcement officer between Tombstone and the New Mexican border was alerted by wire to help in the search. All anyone knew was that the Texas sheriff, his guide and his prisoner were somewhere out in the desert. Finally, Denman and the two men reached Sansamon where they boarded a train and crossed the state line, out of the jurisdiction of the Arizona authorities. Denman was safely across the state line none too soon because news was out that Governor Brodie had changed his mind and had wired to arrest Sheriff Denman. He claimed that the case had been misrepresented to him. All of Arizona was angry at Denman for outwitting the whole territory's law enforcement. Several years later, however, one of the Arizona law officers who had been chasing him wrote to Denman, complementing him on his job. He said that

Arizona lawmen had been close behind Denman all the way, but that he had just plain outsmarted them.

Thomas Flannigan filed suit against Denman for \$15,000, claiming that his client had been ‘damaged by the unwarranted action of the Texas Sheriff, and were proposed he shall suffer the consequences’. The charges were later dropped. When Hughes was tried in Brown County on the charge of cattle theft, two jurors held out acquittal while ten were convinced he was guilty. The trial resulted in a ‘hung jury’ and Hughes was released. Nevertheless, Moses Denman still got his man.

Between 1914 and 1928 Moses Denman was a life-insurance businessman, but after serving two more terms as Sheriff from 1928 – 1932, he retired at the age of seventy-three – he was believed to be the oldest sheriff in the state at that time.

Moses Denman is an imposing figure. Even if he isn’t the largest man in the room, his presence is the largest in the room. He is open and honest, but certainly couldn’t be considered talkative. Moses is strict with his inmates, though he is never bullies them for his own pleasure. He is fairly well educated and speaks with authority about local law enforcement issues, especially on these issues: prohibition (he is in favor of it), politics (he is a firm supporter of President Teddy Roosevelt), and agriculture and economics (he is strongly opposed to fence cutting, in favor of private land ownership, and excited about the new prospects with the discovery of the Spindle Top Oil fields).

Deputy Eastman Kitchens

Eastman Kitchens was born in June of 1878 and raised in a Mennonite community outside of Shallowater, TX (west of Lubbock). A gentle-natured man for

the most part, Eastman is well-liked by most of the inmates of the Brown County Jail, where he serves as Deputy Sheriff from 1896 – 1909. Eastman arrived in Brown County in the spring of 1893 after three seasons of drought on the caprock devastated his family's farm. Eastman's elder brother, Wallace, had moved to Brownwood in 1880 hoping to find oil. Wallace never struck oil, but he did, however, manage to establish a successful tack store.

Eastman, a bachelor, moved to Brownwood with his mother, Margaret Wellis Kitchens. She lived with Eastman in a small house on the north side of town, just at the foot of 'Bangs Hill', until she died of tuberculosis in the winter of 1904. Eastman worked for his brother for a brief period, but after assisting Sheriff Charles Bell with the detainment of three of the four men who had previously robbed a bank in Bangs, the Sheriff invited Eastman (an imposingly tall and strong-looking man) to serve as a Deputy Sheriff.

As a Deputy Sheriff, Eastman very soon learned the dangers of law enforcement in Brown County. The following is an account of the murder of Sheriff Charlie Bell:

Sheriff Bell and his deputy, Eastman Kitchens, went to an old hotel to arrest a man named Yarborough. Yarborough saw the men approaching from his upstairs window, ran into his room and barricaded the door. When the Sheriff knocked and asked Yarborough to open the door in the name of the law, Yarborough, who was drunk at the time, fired through the door. Several of the bullets struck Sheriff Bell and he fell, fatally wounded. Deputy Sheriff Kitchens threw himself against the door and crashed into the room. Yarborough was ready for him with his Winchester raised. He

pressed the trigger but the rifle jammed. Kitchens aimed his Colt at Yarborough and fired, wounding Yarborough in the left shoulder.

This incident, involving an attempted escape, took place 1905:

Monday morning, Nov.7 1905, was probably just another day for the population of the Brown County Jail. The first order of business was to dispatch Deputy Eastman Kitchens, with a group of county prisoners to work on the public road near the Pecan Bayou Bridge. Deputy Kitchens' prisoners had worked all morning, eaten lunch and had again been positioned up and down the right of way. Claude Robinson, a local 'bad guy', was chained to Kitchens' leg.

Robinson obviously was not fond of his situation and was alert for an opportunity to escape. About 2:30p.m., he maneuvered himself into a position in which he could not be easily observed by the guard. He succeeded in getting his chain loose and, when he thought the time was right, charged off down beside the Pecan Bayou, dodging in and out of the undergrowth.

When Kitchens realized what had happened, he crashed through the bushes after the prisoner as he shouted back to a guard to go for the sheriff and the blood hounds. Undoubtedly inspired by the potential wrath of the sheriff, he overtook the fugitive after a chase of about one mile downstream. Just as the sheriff arrived on the scene, Kitchens returned with Robinson, who had a long, gaping scalp wound on the side of his head. The wound looked as if it could have been caused by a blow from a revolver in the hand of the deputy, but reports differed as to how the wound was actually inflicted.

Deputy Kitchens is amiable and calm, yet is capable of speaking with a sharp edge to his voice when confronted or challenged. Kitchens walks with an easy gait that belies his ever ready watchfulness. Some of the lesser informed inmates think of Kitchens as a befuddled push-over due to the fact that often endures scathing ridicule without so much as a wink of acknowledgement. However, those who have attempted to test Kitchens' resolve in preserving peace and order have found the lanky deputy more than a match for even the roughest offender in the jail.

Elizabeth Driscoll

J. Alex Driscoll is a Church of Christ minister in Brownwood from 1898 – 1907. During this time, the membership of the church became involved in a controversy over the use of instrumental music in the worship service. Driscoll and his wife, Elizabeth, voted against the purchase of an organ for the church but were been outnumbered by a majority of the congregation.

The pump organ was installed, but Elizabeth continued to brood over what she considered to be an ungodly purchase. She remarked to her husband that she had no intentions of listening to this “bellowing calf” in her church. On the night of April 1st 1905, she got a hatchet, chopped up the organ, damaging it beyond repair, hoping that the incident could be blamed on youthful pranksters. Elizabeth was ratted out by an unknown source from the church and arrested. However, she was a heroine of traditional virtue to those who agreed with her anti-instrumental sentiments. Alex Driscoll continued to lead the worship of the church on Austin Avenue to the faithful who remained after the rest of the congregation left to form the First Christian Church in Brownwood.

Alex and Elizabeth moved to Brownwood from San Marcos, TX. They had three children: Noah (born 1899); Susan (born 1903); Joshua (born 1904). Elizabeth is an outspoken and devout Christian woman. She is unrepentant about her actions and seems to be feeding on the attention her act of vandalism has brought her, using her new fame as a soap box to express her ideas about true Christian behavior. Elizabeth does not get along well with the other inmates of the jail, considering herself to be a superior stock of person than them; a martyr among morons. She talks a lot and like to share gossip. She is a staunch supporter of prohibition, an opponent of women's rights, and she despises the Roosevelt family (especially Franklin Delano Roosevelt who recently married his cousin Eleanor Roosevelt). She worries incessantly about her children and how her husband is managing the church and the household without her.

Henrietta Clay Bassore Gideon:

In 1885, at the age of 16, Henrietta Clay Bassore, daughter of Lemuel Gustin Bassore and Martha Henrietta Pleasants, married Joseph Hall in Benton, CO and had a son named Herbert. Joseph Hall disappeared under mysterious circumstances and by 1888, Henrietta was married to James Harvey Gideon. Gideon was 31 years her senior and had children of his own that were older than her. James and Henrietta had two daughters together; they lived in Brownwood, TX where he served, briefly, as the Sheriff of Brown County. James died in 1895 leaving Henrietta with the young girls and her son Herbert.

Henrietta Clay Bassore Gideon was left as a widow with two small daughters and a young son when she entered the World's Oldest Profession to financially support her family. She inherited her husband's estate in Brownwood, Texas;

including all of his debts. Henrietta's family history says that she was a madam in a brothel and that because her late husband was a deceased Brown County Sheriff; she was often overlooked by law enforcement officials, and possibly provided services for several of Brownwood's Finest.

Henrietta lives a hard life, but she loves her children and sees to it that they receive a proper up-bringing. Her son, Herbert, is an apprentice at a local general store, Weakly Watson's, and her two daughters are at the Lydia Ann McHenry School for Girls in Brenham, TX. Henrietta is quiet, but not shy. She generally keeps her mouth shut and behaves respectfully towards the other inmates. Henrietta is open and honest about her lifestyle and does not look down on others. She is ambivalent about most political and social issues except as they relate to her ability to survive and provide for her family.

J.B. Scruggins:

James Bartlett Scruggins was born sometime in 1868. His father was a veteran of the Civil War and was missing both his legs from the knee from cannon-fire at the battle of Chancellorsville, Virginia. Young J.B. was only 3 years old when his father left, never to be heard from again. His mother did her best to raise J.B. on her own, working as a maid for a wealthy land owner in Missouri. At the age of eight, however, J.B.'s mother was accidentally run over and killed by a run-away fire wagon and J.B. was left in the care of his great uncle, Herbert Mince, who was a free-range cattle driver in Oklahoma territory.

J.B. spent most of his life running cattle from Mexico to Kansas City – he received no education, but was known to be a bright, well-spoken and well-mannered

young man. As a teenager, J.B. had become acquainted, and become very fond of a young woman in Brady, TX named Alma Leta Hews – he visited her frequently whenever his uncle’s cattle crew passed through Central Texas. Alma Leta, however, eventually married a wealthy young man from Shreveport, LA and left the area.

During the latter 1880’s as the free-range cattle business became threatened by the ever increasing use of barbed wire, Herbert Mince bequeathed his cattle crew to J.B. and retired himself to a small piece of land near Laredo, TX. J.B. and his crew faced increasing trouble with the closing of the range and soon found themselves in an increasingly violent fence-cutting war.

A youthful, and generally gracious individual, J.B. sought to establish the first “Fence Cutter’s convention” in order to properly express the concerns of the disaffected free-range (and land-less) cattle-men. In 1885, the first Fence-Cutter’s convention in Brown County proved helpful and a tentative agreement of land use had been met. With only a narrow corridor of free-range available, however, by 1886, the problems arose again. To add further turmoil to the situation, the State of Texas passed a bill that made fence-cutting a felony.

On the night of November 9, 1886, a group of fence-cutters, including J.B. Scruggins planned to cut several miles of fence belonging to a man named W.M. Baugh. Word had leaked to Baugh and he and several Texas Rangers waited to catch the cutters in the act. When the trap was sprung several of the fence-cutters attempted to flee, but were shot and killed by some of Baugh’s men. J.B. Scruggins managed to escape the scrap, but not without being identified. He was later arrested at the funeral of one of his fellows from the incident.

Scruggins is lean and weathered, but not old. He is a friendly man with an amicable disposition. Scruggins is one of the jail favorites; everyone from the inmates to the officers gets along with him just fine. Scruggins is always open to conversation and likes to make newcomers feel welcome, often introducing them to the other less-than-friendly inmates. Often during disputes between inmates, Scruggins will mediate to help keep peace before open violence breaks out. However, Scruggins is not above certain shenanigans. It is well known that he is a participant of the mail-order matrimony scheme concocted by Jeffries.

Jeffries:

The “criminal” known as Jeffries was the first prisoner ever arrested by Moses Denman. The following is an account of his arrest:

The young deputy (Denman) was given a warrant for the arrest of a man named Jefferies who was accused of adultery. Denman was determined to prove his worth, so he went out with another deputy to the man’s home. There he found his man, but in his haste, he had forgotten to bring the proper papers with him. Back he went to the courthouse, leaving the other deputy in charge of Jeffries. Unfortunately, Jeffries went out the back door and escaped before Denman returned.

Embarrassed, Denman searched for his man all afternoon. Finally, someone told him that Jeffries was in one of the local saloons. On the way to the saloon, Denman met W.A. “Billy” Butler, the city marshal. Moses asked Billy to go with him to the saloon. When he arrested Jeffries, Butler was standing close by to back him up. Jeffries let loose with a stream of profanity that shocked Denman. Billy Butler, however, knew all the same words and replied with blistering language. When the

prisoner saw that he was both out-manned and out-cussed, he went docilely to jail for the “crime” of adultery.

Little is known of Jeffries’ background other than that he is thought to have immigrated to the United States from the town of Bristol, England. He claims to be English, and speaks with a thick English accent, though several inmates of the Jail claim that it is a ruse.

Jeffries arrived in Brown County after being run out of town by an irate church mob in Magnolia, Arkansas, where he had been caught attempting to seduce the wife an Anglican minister and pilfer their valuables. He has been in and out of the Brown County Jail several times for misdemeanor offenses.

While Jeffries is very friendly and sociable, he is also a pathological liar and thief. Jeffries often speaks with contempt about anyone wealthy or in power. He definitely has a problem with authority, but always submits meekly in the presence of superior strength and will. Jeffries likes to prod the other inmates with constant jests about personal hygiene, parental lineage, and romantic proclivities. During his current internment, however, his most successful prank has been a mail-order matrimony gag. To pass some time, Jeffries and some other prisoners started a matrimonial agency through a letter to the Chief of Police at Camden, New Jersey. In their letter they said that they were wealthy bachelors who lived in a castle by the side of wide and beautiful river. They enclosed their pictures and wanted to correspond with young ladies who were interested in matrimony and desired to live in their chalet. The local postmaster was swamped with mail and it is all Deputy Kitchens can do to keep up with the large sacks of mail that are delivered daily to the men in the jail.

Yarborough:

There is very little information on the man known simply as “Yarborough” in the historical records. He was responsible for the death of the previously elected Sheriff before Moses Denman became Sheriff of Brown County in 1900.

Yarborough came to Brown County from Comanche, TX as an oil-man in 1890. He was just a young man of 15 years old, working with Martin Meichinger. As a scrawny young man, Yarborough was hired to climb down the well to set explosive charges and fill buckets of the black sludge. While there was never an oil boom in Brown County, Meichinger sold four-ounce bottles of the oil for 25 cents apiece. He called it “Meichinger’s Natural Rock Oil” and advertised it as a sure cure for all wounds, sores, cuts, burns, and blood boils of either man or beast. Meichinger went out of business in 1897 when the following incident occurred:

It was necessary to blast at the bottom of the hole and young Gomer Thomas was the one assigned to go down and arrange the blast. One morning, as usual, he went into the well and another young man (we are assuming it was Yarborough) attempted to send a lantern down the well to him on a rope. Unfortunately the line either slipped or broke and the lamp fell into the well and shattered at the bottom. Once the flame was exposed to the thick natural gas atmosphere at the bottom of the well, Gomer Thomas was immediately enveloped in a sheet of flames. The crew immediately pulled Gomer to the surface and he held onto the rope for 160 feet despite being on fire. Although he suffered severe burns on his face and arms, he soon recovered.

While Gomer survived, Yarborough, however, was traumatized by the accident, feeling responsible for the horrific disfigurement of his friend. Yarborough sank into depression and alcoholism was soon acting as an eye-man for local booze runners. He had been put up in a second story hotel room with a view of Center Ave., and ideal location to spot law enforcement officers on the prowl for illicit alcohol deliveries. On the night of March 25th, 1898, however, after a binge of fitful drinking and causing a terrible raucous in his hotel room, the hotel manager contacted Sheriff Charles Bell about Yarborough's behavior. The following is recorded about the incident that unfolded:

Yarborough saw the men approaching from his upstairs window, ran into his room and barricaded the door. When the sheriff knocked and asked Yarborough to open the door in the name of the law, Yarborough, who was drunk at the time, fired through the door. Several of the bullets struck Sheriff Bell and he fell, fatally wounded. Deputy Sheriff Eastman Kitchens threw himself against the door and crashed into the room. Yarborough was ready for him with his Winchester raised. He pressed the trigger but the rifle jammed. Kitchens aimed his Colt at Yarborough and fired – Yarborough was injured in the left shoulder, arrested and taken to the Brown County Jail.

Yarborough is the most withdrawn person residing at the Brown County Jail. He is shy and speaks with a slight stutter. He is friendly with only two people at the jail – J.B. Scruggins and John Pearl. Yarborough likes to sketch in a small note pad and feed crumbs to a tiny mouse he keeps in an old bean can. In certain occasions, Yarborough is susceptible to panic attacks – especially during particularly tense

moments of conflict inside the Cell Block (he is probably claustrophobic). When he does speak about his life and his terrible crime, he barely speaks above a whisper and is clearly deeply troubled by his remorse. Yarborough is a favorite target for Claude Robinson, who bullies him constantly.

Claude Robinson:

Claude was born in Brown County in 1885 and lived most his life here. Although he was never associated with any of the major criminal gangs known to run through the area, Claude was a well-known trouble-maker. Claude seems to have been born with a chip on his shoulder, perhaps because of the bad name he inherited from his father, Chester Robinson. Chester had been running with a band of small time crooks who came up with a sinister little plot. One night, they attacked a couple of ranches, stealing cattle and horses. The next day, as the ranchers were discovering their losses, Chester and his boys rode up and told them that they were pursuing an Indian raiding party that had passed through this area. The ranchers joined the pursuit and, as fortune would have it, actually found a small Indian encampment just east of Abilene. Chester and his mates tried to talk the ranchers into murdering the whole camp, but there was clearly no sign of the stolen cattle or horses, and the ranchers put together what was going on. The rouse was up and the guns came out. When the smoke cleared, Chester was shot dead off his horse and his mates were high-tailing for Mexico. The ranchers recovered their stolen cattle from a make-shift corral set up in a thicket along Pecan Bayou – not half a mile from where they had been stolen by the gang. Claude was born four months after that incident, to his mother – a single Mexican woman who couldn't speak a word of English. Claude grew up in a back-

woods shack on the bayou, surviving on whatever meat and mischief he could conceive of.

Late one evening during the summer of 1895, a visiting Methodist preacher was delivering the last few lines of particularly rousing fire-and-brimstone sermon at a makeshift tabernacle set up along the banks of the Pecan Bayou when two little boys decided to add a touch of their own. They moved silently through the dark from one wagon to another, carefully picking up babies and small children who had already gone to sleep and transporting them to other wagons.

Since the wagons were already loaded in preparation for the trip home, and the exhilaration from the sermon was being replaced by fatigue, the tired adults and older children piled into their wagons and headed for home immediately after the sermon ended. The consternation of the parents is easy to imagine when at home they unloaded the sleeping babies and discovered that some of them were not their own.

There were no telephones. It was too late at night for exhausted parents to go in search for their displaced children all over the county. It was several days before all of the babies were back in the arms of their own parents. The wrath of the adults was awful to behold as they threatened dire punishment on the culprits.

The two little boys never told – not until forty years later when Claude Robinson confessed to his own children the dastardly deed. His daughter remembered that even forty years later (1935), her father was still fearful of the consequences and swore her to secrecy.

As Claude reached adult-hood, he worked various odd-jobs, primarily irrigation/farming work, though he never owned his own land. Claude had a reputation in the area as a mean spirited, solitary man.

Claude was arrested in June of 1904 for beating a young man nearly to death in a rage of jealousy and several hundred dollars' worth of damage at a residence in Blanket. Apparently the man had behaved a little too friendly towards Claude's love interest, Lelia Pearce. Claude was sentenced to four years, six months. He was held at the Brown County Jail awaiting transfer to the state penitentiary when the following events were recorded:

Monday morning, Nov.7 1904, was probably just another day for the population of the Brown County Jail. The first order of business was to dispatch Deputy Eastman Kitchens, with a group of county prisoners to work on the public road near the Pecan Bayou Bridge.

Deputy Kitchens' prisoners had worked all morning, eaten lunch and had again been positioned up and down the right of way. Claude Robinson, a local 'bad guy', was chained to Kitchens' leg.

Robinson obviously was not fond of his situation and was alert for an opportunity to escape. About 2:30p.m., he maneuvered himself into a position in which he could not be easily observed by the guard. He succeeded in getting his chain loose and, when he thought the time was right, charged off down beside the Pecan Bayou, dodging in and out of the undergrowth.

When Kitchens realized what had happened, he crashed through the bushes after the prisoner as he shouted back to a guard to go for the sheriff and the blood

hounds. Undoubtedly inspired by the potential wrath of the sheriff, he overtook the fugitive after a chase of about one mile downstream. Just as the sheriff arrived on the scene, Kitchens returned with Robinson, who had a long, gaping scalp wound on the side of his head. The wound looked as if it could have been caused by a blow from a revolver in the hand of the deputy, but reports differed as to how the wound was actually inflicted.

Claude Robinson is the bully of the Brown County Jail. Big, mean, and loud, Claude loves to laugh at others' misfortune. Claude has a short temper and a fiery disposition. Claude is very strong and likes to talk about himself. He gets along well with anyone who strokes his ego and laughs at his ridiculous jokes. Claude and Deputy Kitchens have a very tense relationship, but Claude shows a modicum of respect to the withering gaze of Sheriff Denman.

John Pearl

John Pearl moved to Brown County from Missouri in 1898. Pearl had hired as an assistant by a man named Ed Tusker, who owned a cotton farm in north eastern Brown County. Pearl was a hard worker, quiet and trustworthy. Despite being a lowly farm hand, John Pearl seemed fairly well connected in the community and regularly made trips to Brownwood to meet with William C. Anderson. Bill Anderson himself was something of a mystery, having moved to Brown County immediately following the death of the notorious William Clarke, a.k.a. Quantrill. It is commonly believed that William Anderson is none other than "Bloody Bill Anderson", who rode with the infamous Quantrill gang for years. Bill apparently decided to retire from his life of crime and settle down after Quantrill's death. Bill married and had 10 children, living

until 1925 to become one of Brownwood's most cherished citizens (there is even a street named after him). Many people suspected that John Pearl was somehow related to the Quantrill gang as well, but were never able (or desirous) to find him out. John Pearl worked peacefully for Ed Tusker until 1901.

In December of 1901, Ed Tusker disappeared. When his friends and neighbors began to wonder where he had gone, his hired hand said that Tusker had decided to move back to Germany. Pearl sold a large quantity of Tusker's cotton and cotton seed and told people that Tusker had left him his wagon and team, along with other equipment and a bill of sale for some property. However, Tusker's friends had heard nothing of any plans to return to his native country. Within a week of his disappearance, people began searching for the farmer. Someone thought to check the tank on Tusker's place, and Tusker's body was found – weighted down with a large rock. Pearl was immediately tried and convicted, with the jury handing down their sentence: Death by hanging.

While John Pearl waiting in jail, his lawyer is planning to appeal the verdict with a plea of insanity on the part of John Pearl. Eventually the trial will be moved to Coleman. His plea of insanity ultimately fails and John Pearl would go on to earn the distinction of being the first and last man ever legally hanged in Coleman County.

John Pearl is doing his best to lay low. While his lawyer on the outside has talked him into playing for an insanity plea – John's attempts are half-hearted at best. When the deputy or the sheriff are present, John's eyes will glaze over and he will drool on himself; only responding to questions with grunts and moans. As soon as they leave, however, John is fairly normal. Pearl mostly acts the strong, silent type. He

is pals with Yarborough and Scruggins, but totally disdains Joe Hughes and Claude Robinson. While Claude is a loud-mouthed bully and a small-time crook, Pearl has the ice-cold blood of a professional seasoned killer. Most of the inmates – even Robinson – tend to steer clear of John Pearl. If you can get past his icy stare, however, John Pearl is secretly glad that it will all soon be over.

Joe Hughes

Joe Hughes is the wayward son of Martha and Ezra Hughes of Chickasha, OK. The Hughes were an upstanding family in Chickasha, his father owned a successful farm and ranch supply store and was a city alderman. At the age of sixteen, young Joe Hughes was already showing signs of his rebellious nature when he was arrested for shooting a man's horse in broad daylight in downtown Chickasha. Standing before a judge, he simply said that the horse had tried to kick him, so he shot it in self-defense. Ezra Hughes managed to get his son off with a few days in jail and small fine, but Joe seemed even more set in his ways. Not long after this incident, Joe and two of his friends stole four horses from the Hughes stables and left the area for good. The run-aways wound up in Texas and likely took part in several gang-related bank robberies throughout central Texas in the late 1890's. Joe managed to stay out of jail for several offenses, constantly staying on the move. Joe's parents would occasionally receive a letter from him in which Joe would lament his mistakes and blame his misdeeds on being led astray by false friends, begging for money to return home. Joe's poor mother couldn't stand the guilt and would wire him money. As soon as the money arrived, however, Joe would disappear again. Joe was 19 years old when he and some other hoodlums were issued a warrant for rustling cattle in Brown County. Joe wasn't about

to stick around and wait to get picked up, and he headed out west to Arizona.

However, Joe had never met the likes of Moses Denman.

In Tombstone, Hughes was nabbed by a burly constable after trying to slip out on an extensive bar tab. Sitting in jail in Tombstone, his parents arranged for a high priced lawyer, Tom Flannigan, to assist him. But before Hughes had the chance to slip through the cracks again, Sheriff Moses Denman of Brown County had kidnapped him from the jail! A forced ride through hundreds of miles of desert nearly killed the hapless Hughes, who complained the whole way. Arriving back in Brown County, Joe Hughes is facing serious charges, but has his parents' money and a crack-shot lawyer to keep his spirit of defiance well-fed.

Joe Hughes is really just a nineteen year old spoiled brat. Raised without any form of parental discipline from his parents, he grew up accustomed to the indulgences of his narcissistic tyranny over them. Joe complains loudly about everything. He seems to believe that he is the most important person in the jail and he is well aware of the fact that his parents have hired a high priced lawyer to harass Sheriff Denman. Joe is not above crying, throwing food, name calling, tantrum throwing or any other immature behavior to get what he wants. He is generally disliked by nearly everyone in the jail, though he seems to believe that the other inmates like him. Joe is the first to rat out any other inmate who violates a rule and the last to stick up for anyone who is being bullied. Despite his irritating nature, however, Joe is actually fairly observant. He knows the scoop on just about everyone in the jail, and loves to gossip about them. Joe will spill the beans on anyone and everyone if he gets the chance.



Figure A.18 Murder of Sheriff Bell Room

APPENDIX B

CHAPTER 5 FIGURES

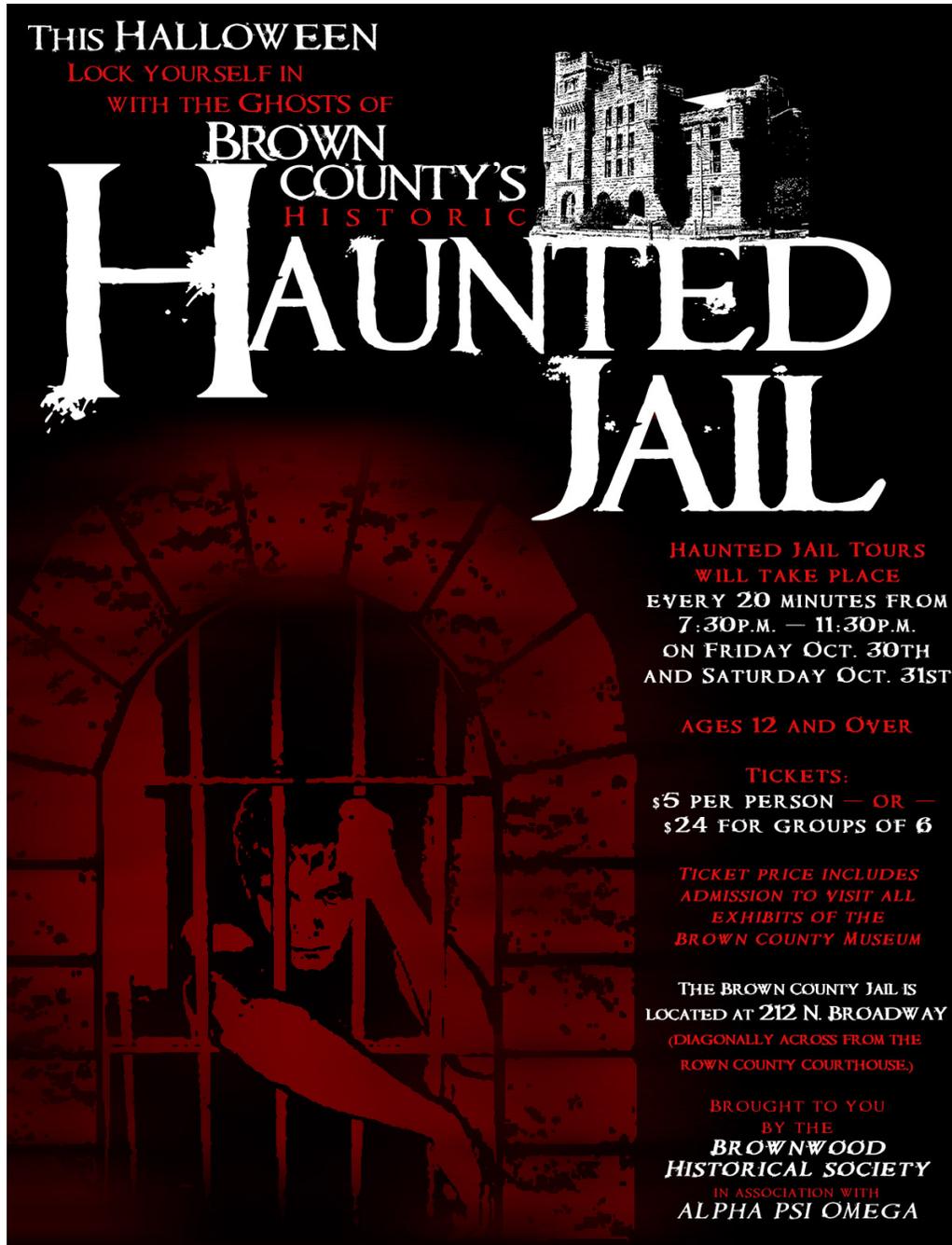


Fig. B.1 2009 Haunted Jail Flyer

My dearest Lindsay,

I fear that this note will be finding you long after you hope to find me again. I'm so deeply sorry that I've lied to you for all these years. God wills that my punishment may fit my crimes, and I shall bide my time in these walls thinking only on His grace and your beauty, both of which I never deserved and will forever long to see again.

I do hope that you will take comfort in the fact that I've found a steadfast and honorable companion in this place. As I have been the first and only resident for these three weeks in this new facility, the guard that brings the mail has seen fit to speak with me on any number of subjects when I am in run-around. I find his company encouraging although his demeanor sometimes reveals some dark pain he tries to keep hidden. The situation of our first conversation was more than tense, however, as he discovered the small letters knife that I had misplaced in run-around. I explained to him that my mother had given me the knife upon my first day of incarceration along with several other items of less contraband nature, including my father's watch and Bible. He seemed to understand that these items were of familial importance to her, and she wanted to leave them in my care upon her return to Wales. Still, all the items were confiscated, and I fear that is the last I will see of my mother.

I spend my hours here mostly sitting in my cell, reading the letters my mother sends. When I am set to clean the floors of the third floor cells, I have a brief opportunity to look out at the streets and the people passing by. I wonder sometimes if I might see you passing by on the way to the courthouse to see your father. Maybe you will look up and see me there.

All my love and regret,

Donald R. Alltree

Fig. B.2 Letter from Donald Alltree

Certified Copy of Record of Death

county of Brown, state of Texas

No. 2334

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Date of Death <u>31 OCTOBER, 1903</u> | 8. Birthplace <u>NOT AVAILABLE</u> |
| 2. Full Name of Deceased <u>DONALD ALLTREE</u> | 9. Occupation <u>MERCHANT</u> |
| 3. Male or Female <u>MALE</u> | 10. Name of Husband or Wife <u>LINDSAY ALLTREE</u> |
| 4. Color <u>WHITE</u> | 11. Name of Father <u>NOT AVAILABLE</u> |
| 5. Marital Status <u>MARRIED</u> | 12. Birthplace <u>NOT AVAILABLE</u> |
| 6. Age <u>24</u> Years <u>---</u> Months <u>---</u> and days <u>---</u> | 13. Name of Mother <u>NOT AVAILABLE</u> |
| 7. Place of Death <u>UNKNOWN</u> | 14. Birthplace <u>NOT AVAILABLE</u> |
| 15. Disease or Cause of Death <u>UNKNOWN ---- BODY NOT RECOVERED</u> | |

STATE OF TEXAS } ss.
COUNTY OF BROWN }

I, G. William Caddell, County Clerk-Register of Deeds for the County of Brown and Clerk of the Circuit Court thereof, the same being a Court of Record, and having a Seal, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a copy of the record now remaining in my office.

Recorded 12 MARCH, 1904

Libr. 2 PG 321

In Testimony, Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of said Court this 31ST day of MARCH, A.D. ~~19~~ 1904

G. WILLIAM CADDELL, County Clerk-Register of Deeds

By: [Signature]
Deputy Clerk

Fig. B.3 Death Certificate of Donald Alltree

Alone encased by walls of stone, a madness waking is,
justice staineth not the hands, yet stained with blood are his.
Turn around in run-around, to open the door which shut,
Misplaced is here the very thing to help the swinging out.

Three o'clock the hammer strikes, booom, booom, booom
From my cell I start to tell another in the room.
Friend or foe, I did not know, 'til time was gone away
All is well, my friend from hell entreats to come his way,

The voluntary solitary walk 'neath Flade's drop,
The devil leads the fool to his agonising stop
The blade was lost and hope is drowned,
May final rest come when lost is found.

Fig. B.4 Riddles of Donald Alltree

- HAUNTED JAIL 2010 -

**THIS HALLOWEEN,
A 100 YEAR OLD CURSE
COMES BACK FROM THE GRAVE...**

ZOMBIE

LOCKDOWN

...THE HUNT IS ON.

Ages 12 and Over

Tickets:
\$5 per person

Ticket price includes admission to visit all exhibits of the Brown County Museum

The Brown County Jail is
Located at 212 N. Broadway
(Diagonally across from the
Brown County Courthouse)

Brought to you by the
BROWNWOOD MUSEUM OF HISTORY
in association with
ALPHA PSI OMEGA

Tours will take place every 15 minutes from
7:30p.m. - 12:00a.m.
on Friday, October 29th
Saturday, October 30th and
Sunday, October 31st.



Fig. B.5 2010 *Haunted Jail* and “Zombie Lockdown” Flyer



Fig. B.6, B.7, B.8 Zombies On Parade

OCTOBER 28TH, 29TH, & 30TH
7:30 P.M. - 12:00 A.M.

Victor Greenleaf's
**HALL OF
NIGHTMARES**

WITNESS MONSTERS
CAPTURED FROM
EVERY CORNER
OF THE GLOBE
FOR YOUR WONDER
AND AMUSEMENT!

AT THE OLD
BROWN COUNTY JAIL

WOLFMAN
VAMPIRE
SWAMP
CREATURE
AND MANY MORE,
INCLUDING
GAMES AND PRIZES FOR KIDS!

TICKETS: \$5 PER PERSON
TICKET PRICE INCLUDES ADMISSION TO VISIT
ALL EXHIBITS OF THE BROWN COUNTY MUSEUM

The Brown County Jail is located at 212 N. Broadway
(Diagonally across from the Brown County Courthouse)

Brought to you by the Brown County Museum of History
in association with Alpha Psi Omega

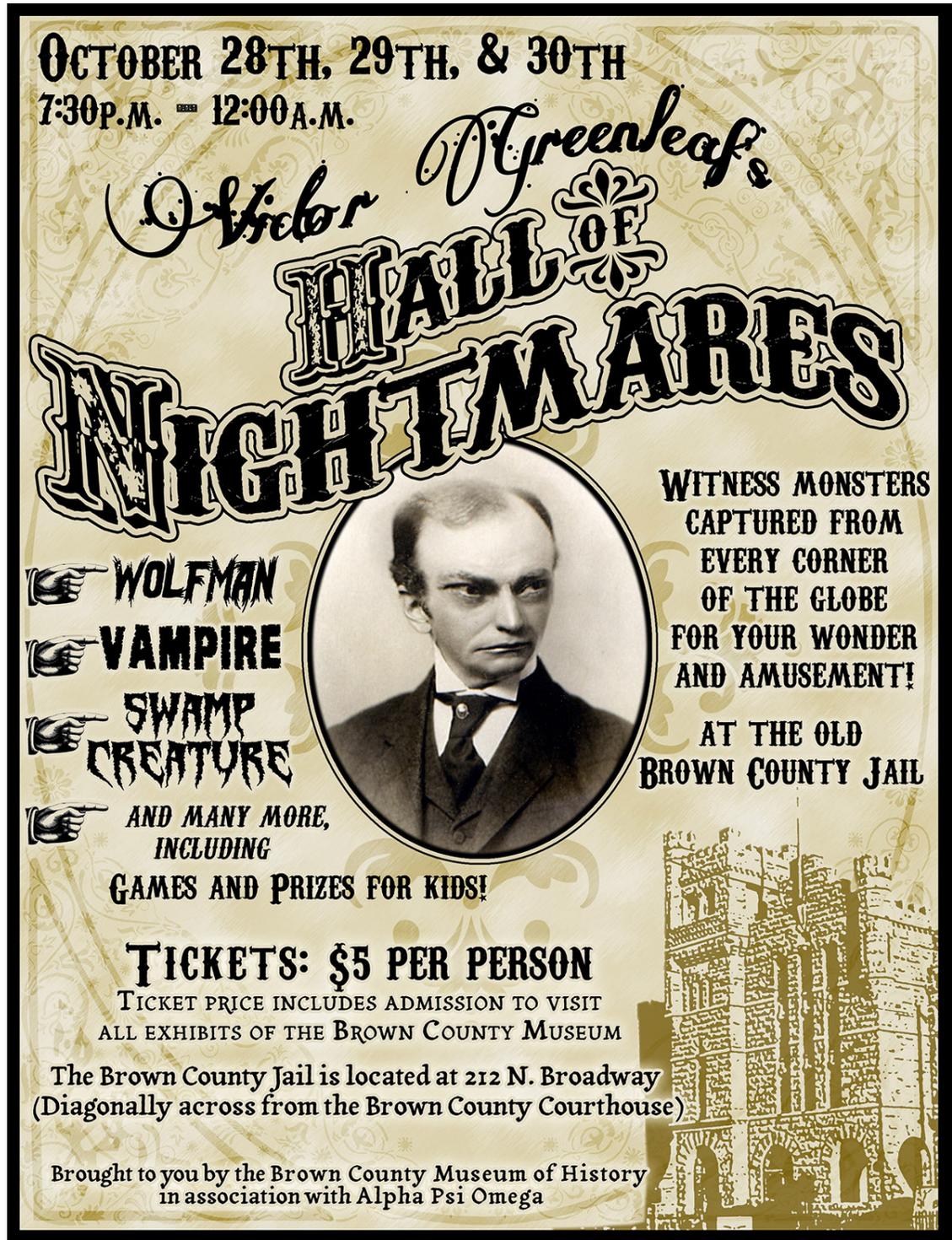
The flyer is a vintage-style advertisement with a yellowish, aged background. At the top, it lists the dates 'OCTOBER 28TH, 29TH, & 30TH' and the time '7:30 P.M. - 12:00 A.M.' in a bold, black, serif font. Below this, the name 'Victor Greenleaf's' is written in a large, elegant, cursive script. The main title 'HALL OF NIGHTMARES' is rendered in a large, bold, black, outlined font with a decorative flourish above the word 'HALL'. To the right of the title, a vertical column of text reads 'WITNESS MONSTERS CAPTURED FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE GLOBE FOR YOUR WONDER AND AMUSEMENT!' followed by 'AT THE OLD BROWN COUNTY JAIL'. On the left side, a list of 'monsters' is presented with small hand icons pointing to the text: 'WOLFMAN', 'VAMPIRE', 'SWAMP CREATURE', and 'AND MANY MORE, INCLUDING GAMES AND PRIZES FOR KIDS!'. In the center, there is a circular portrait of a man with a serious expression, wearing a dark suit and a white shirt with a dark tie. In the bottom right corner, there is a detailed line drawing of a large, multi-story stone building, identified as the Brown County Jail. At the bottom of the flyer, ticket information is provided: 'TICKETS: \$5 PER PERSON' in bold, followed by 'TICKET PRICE INCLUDES ADMISSION TO VISIT ALL EXHIBITS OF THE BROWN COUNTY MUSEUM'. Below that, the location is given: 'The Brown County Jail is located at 212 N. Broadway (Diagonally across from the Brown County Courthouse)'. The final line of text at the bottom reads 'Brought to you by the Brown County Museum of History in association with Alpha Psi Omega'.

Fig. B.9 Victor Greenleaf's Hall of Nightmares Flyer

VICTOR GREENLEAF



On the evening of October 31st, 1911 as Mr. Gordon Holcroft was preparing to lock the the gates of Greenleaf Cemetary, he was surprised to notice a small boy with unusually large eyes watching him from behind a large gravestone.

Assuming the child to be a prankster he began approaching him, only to find the child behaved like a wild animal and spoke in a strange unintelligible high pitched voice. Mr. Holcroft, frightened by the wild boy's frantic gesticulating and squawking, informed the police of the situation. Apparently, he was so disturbed by his encounter with the child, he left Brown County the very next day and never returned.

The child was placed in the protective custody of the Sheriff of Brown County. Determined to be approximately 10 years of age, they were unable to identify any family for the boy, he was given the name Victor Greenleaf (because he was found in Greenleaf Cemetary).

As the child grew, he exhibited an extremely high degree of intelligence with an insatiable appetite for reading. Despite this, however, city officials were unable to find a suitable home for Victor. From 1912 - 1919 Victor briefly lived with as many as 32 different foster homes. In each situation, Victor would either disappear for weeks at a time or the foster parents would request for him to be transferred due to various aspects of his strange personality.

On October 31st, 1919, Victor was officially released from Brown County custody (he was nowhere to be found at the time) and was not heard from for more than 20 years. In 1940, newly elected sheriff Earl Stewart (who had been one of Victor's many foster parents) recieved a note of congratulations postmarked from Paris, France and simply signed 'V'.

Throughout his travels, Victor Greenleaf pursued knowledge of the occult and the capture of numerous mysterious creatures. The details of his education, his vast wealth, and his abilities have been shrouded in mystery thanks in no small part to his zealously loyal servants.

Though he has not been seen by the public for nearly a half-century, Victor Greenleaf is still rumored to be alive and well, despite being approximately 110 years old. While his exploits have largely been considered apocryphal, this year, the Brown County Museum of History is proud to present this small portion of Victor Greenleaf's collection of monsters and artifacts.

Fig. B10 Victor Greenleaf information sign



Fig. B.11 Welcome and instructions

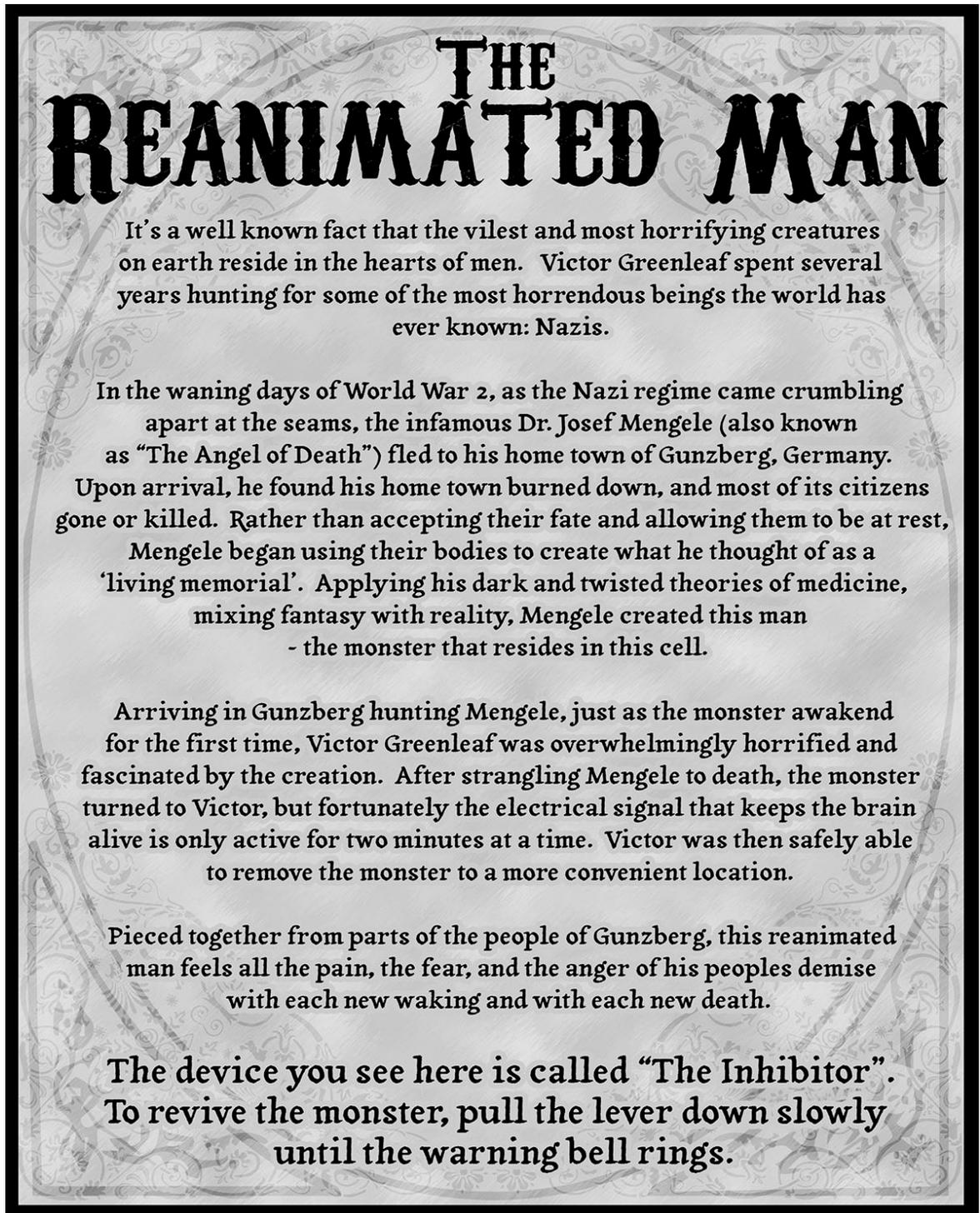


Fig. B.12 Reanimated Man information sign

THE VAMPIRE

Victor Greenleaf had a surprising amount of difficulty apprehending this vampire specimen. Vampires are widely known to be incredibly reclusive and easily overlooked. It was here in America where he discovered his first clue. In 1945, he noticed a small article about a string of mysterious deaths in a Pennsylvania newspaper. Upon investigation he determined that it was the work of a vampire. For more than a year, Victor tracked the monster from Pennsylvania to Nebraska and finally to Houston, TX.

On April 16, 1947, as the vampire attempted to flee the country aboard a French vessel harbored in the Texas City port, Victor's opportunity to apprehend it occurred when a massive explosion leveled many buildings in the surrounding areas. Though the explosion and fire killed more than 570 people and destroyed more than 1000 buildings, the vampire was sufficiently weakened so that Victor was able to further subdue it using a crucifix and iron shackles inscribed with holy scriptures.

While many of the myths surrounding vampires have been disproven, this specimen is contained by the fact that a vampire cannot enter a structure while the owner is still alive unless it is formally invited. Victor Greenleaf cleverly sold and deeded the vampire's cell to an individual who shall remain nameless, therefore to leave its cell, the vampire would have to enter another's domicile, and has not been invited to do so. While it could easily dismantle the steel bars as though they were twigs, the vampire is bound to remain in this cage, lest it should exit and be destroyed.



Feel free to converse with it, but do not give it anything, do not take anything from it, do not get too close to its cell, do not believe its lies or fall prey to its tricks. It is a predator, a monster and it will say anything you want to hear if it serves its means.

Pictured here is Victor Greenleaf with shackled vampire in the aftermath of the horrific Texas City explosion. April 16, 1947

Fig. B.13 Vampire information sign

THE SASQUATCH BEAST

The mighty savage beast of the forest, the Sasquatch is possibly the most widely recognized and feared cryptozoological creature on Earth.

Victor Greenleaf encountered this specimen in the wilds of northern Russia. This young sasquatch had been separated from her family unit after being driven from their habitat by deforestation. Victor initiated the deforestation initiative in 1953 in order to expedite his search for the elusive sasquatch.

Despite her small size, she managed to incapacitate three hunters and eleven beagles.

In time, Victor managed to tame and domesticate the young sasquatch through a display of grunting, urinating on things, and offering beef jerky.

However, Victor grew increasingly annoyed with the beast as she matured and developed her irrepressible need to shred his silk suits and devour his beloved cats. She has been incarcerated since 1987.



Photo of Victor Greenleaf riding bicycle with infant sasquatch circa 1957

Fig. B.14 Sasquatch Beast information sign

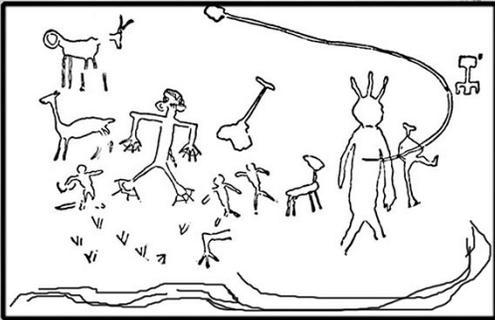
THE SWAMP CREATURE

This swamp creature, of unknown age, was captured by Victor Greenleaf right here in Brown County somewhere along Pecan Bayou. In the late 1800s and early 1900's local legends told of a horrible fish-man who would kill livestock and grab children if they strayed too far along the bayou.

In the summer of 1913, a small boy (who was one of Victor's many foster brothers) followed Victor when he ran away from the foster home. The boy was found the next day, hiding in the boughs of a live oak, screaming in terror at the approach of anyone. Finally, the boy was coaxed out of the tree and bedridden with terror fever for two weeks. Years later, as an old man, he was at last able to relate the following story:

"Victor stood in the mud on the edge of the water, his head twitching back and forth as he screeched and clicked with his tongue. His voice was so high pitched, almost like a squirrel or a ... well I'm not sure. He crouched suddenly, and I feared he had seen me. But the water rippled as though a submarine were passing across the bayou towards him. He held his palm open just above the surface of the water. I saw two great red eyes rise from the murky water. I was frozen. At first I thought it must be a gator, but as I saw the teeth and it's face, it was just... I can't tell you. I didn't hear myself screaming, but I remember seeing Victor turning to look at me, smiling like a demon, and... the .. the thing ... in the water stood up... like a man. That's all I remember."

The monicker "swamp creature" is actually somewhat misleading because of the fact that this creature, known as an ichthoid, is actually more commonly found in murky lakes and slow moving rivers. The ichthoid has been seen by humans so rarely that their intelligence and temperament are almost purely speculative. However, the terrifyingly hideous teeth and claws hint that extreme caution should be taken when approaching ichthoids. Though it cannot leave the water, this particular ichthoid demonstrated its incredible strength when it easily broke the solid steel hinges of the door to its current cell.



This Native American cave drawing from central Texas is thought to be an early depiction of an ichthoid coming out of the river and attacking livestock and children. Notice severed limbs and curious webbed hands and feet of the creature.

Fig. B.15 Swamp Creature information sign

THE DRAGON

This dragon, though it is fearsome and probably more than 80 years old, is merely an infant as dragons go. Thought to be the last Silver-Crested Dragon in existence, this beautiful and deadly creature was captured when, by pure happenstance, Victor Greenleaf's personal aircraft collided with it while flying across the Bering Strait from northern Asia to northern America in the spring of 1974.

As you can see from the mangled propellar blades - the dragon caused severe damage to the aircraft and it was forced to ditch in the icy Bering Sea just off the coast of St. Lawrence Island. From their life raft, Victor and his loyal personal gaurd - the only survivors of the crash - spotted the injured body of the small dragon struggling in the waves. Upon towing the dragon to the shore, it was too exhausted to fight, but turned out to be quite handy at getting a roaring fire blazing.

Nursing the dragon back to health has been one of Victor Greenleaf's most incredible accomplishments. Though still unable to achieve flight, the dragon has spent several years as the main attraction of Victor Greenleaf's Hall of Nightmares.



Snapshot of dragon taken from the porthole of the aircraft only moments before the terrifying collision that killed most of the crew, including the person who took this photograph.

Fig. B.16 Dragon information sign

THE RESTLESS SPIRIT

The restless spirit, in popular vernacular - the ghost, is an aphysical entity that many people believe exists, though few have had the experience of locating and capturing one.

After years of research and fruitless searching, Victor Greenleaf finally managed the capture of his very own restless spirit through the entirely coincidental* event of his being in the adjoining hotel room of a murder.

Victor immediately offered to purchase all the furniture from the room where the murder took place. Upon confining these artifacts in a creepy dark room and repeatedly whispering, "Hello?", Victor was able to illicit a repsonse from the restless spirit of the deceased.



Clipping from the Seattle Daily Times, November 11, 1962

*Any allegations that Mr. Greenleaf himself was involved in the murder have been thoroughly denied by a large team of very scared and very well paid lawyers.

Fig. B.17 Restless Spirit information sign

THE LYCANTHROPE (WEREWOLF)



Photo of Victor Greenleaf
with captured lycanthrope.
(Injured guard in background)

The werewolf is an exceedingly rare creature and has become even more elusive still since the early twentieth century. Despite their incredible speed, strength, and sheer ferocity the creatures have proven vulnerable to modern technology. There once was a time, especially in Europe, when the country folk lived in constant fear of the creatures, now they are popularly dismissed as mere legend and superstition. However, they are far from extinct, and it is known by certain parties with certain privileges that there are quite a few of the creatures living amongst us.

This particular specimen was captured by Victor Greenleaf and his personal guard on a hunting range in Northern Europe in 1986 after a series of grizzly deaths in the area, including some very well armed hunters. Baiting the beast with an ingenious plan that involved leaving his loyal guard tied to a tree and drenched in barbeque sauce, Victor was able to apprehend the werewolf with tranquilizer darts laced with silver-chloride.

He, if he is indeed still a human, was around 10 years old at the time of his capture. Aside from being so young he is also of an inferior breed which makes him much smaller and less capable than his superior cousins. He is always under sedation to keep him more placid than usual and is by artificial means kept in his true form for your amusement.

Fig. B.18 Lycanthrope information sign

THE DIVIDED MAN

While celebrating a major victory in his search for mythical creatures, Victor Greenleaf happened to strike up a conversation with a soft spoken man at a pub in Amsterdam (1986). The man turned out be a leading research scientist in the field of experimental psychophysiology. As Victor drunkenly ranted and bragged about his exploits, he related much of his recent experience hunting and capturing a young werewolf. The scientist, though skeptical at first, was so amazed by the evidence that Victor showed him he left the bar in search of the “dual vision.”

Intrigued by how something could be so innocent and yet so deadly, he began experimenting on animals; cats, dogs, mice, etc. Sadly after 10 years of failed experiments, he was unable to gain any results from animals being that they are trapped in a primal vision since they have no conscience. After producing no results his investors threatened to pull out, leaving him no other choice but to experiment on himself. It was a success. He was now the dual vision of man, one man to have the power, and the other man to crave it. Not necessarily how he planned, but it worked. He ended up killing all of his investors and was able to continue working in the “abandoned” facility for 3 more years before using up all their money. With no money, and no one but himself to talk to, he began to search for the one man who started it all and set him on his journey.

Victor Greenleaf, whom he finally tracked down in 2002. Victor convinced the scientist that he was a danger to himself and tricked him into entering the cell, until he was able to be in control of this dual vision, instead of it controlling him.



Police photo of the research laboratory. Seven bodies were found folded in half and crammed into a deep freeze.

Fig. B.19 Divided Man information card

BROWN COUNTY MUSEUM OF HISTORY

-- QUIZ --

Who is Who from Brown county?



1.) _____



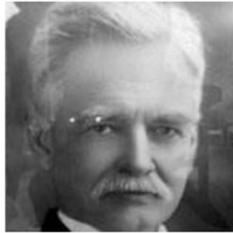
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3.) _____



4.) _____



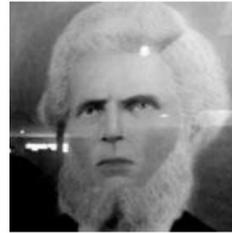
5.) _____



6.) _____



7.) _____



8.) _____



9.) _____



10.) _____



11.) _____



12.) _____

Fig. B.20 Haunted Museum photograph quiz

APPENDIX C

CHAPTER 6 FIGURES

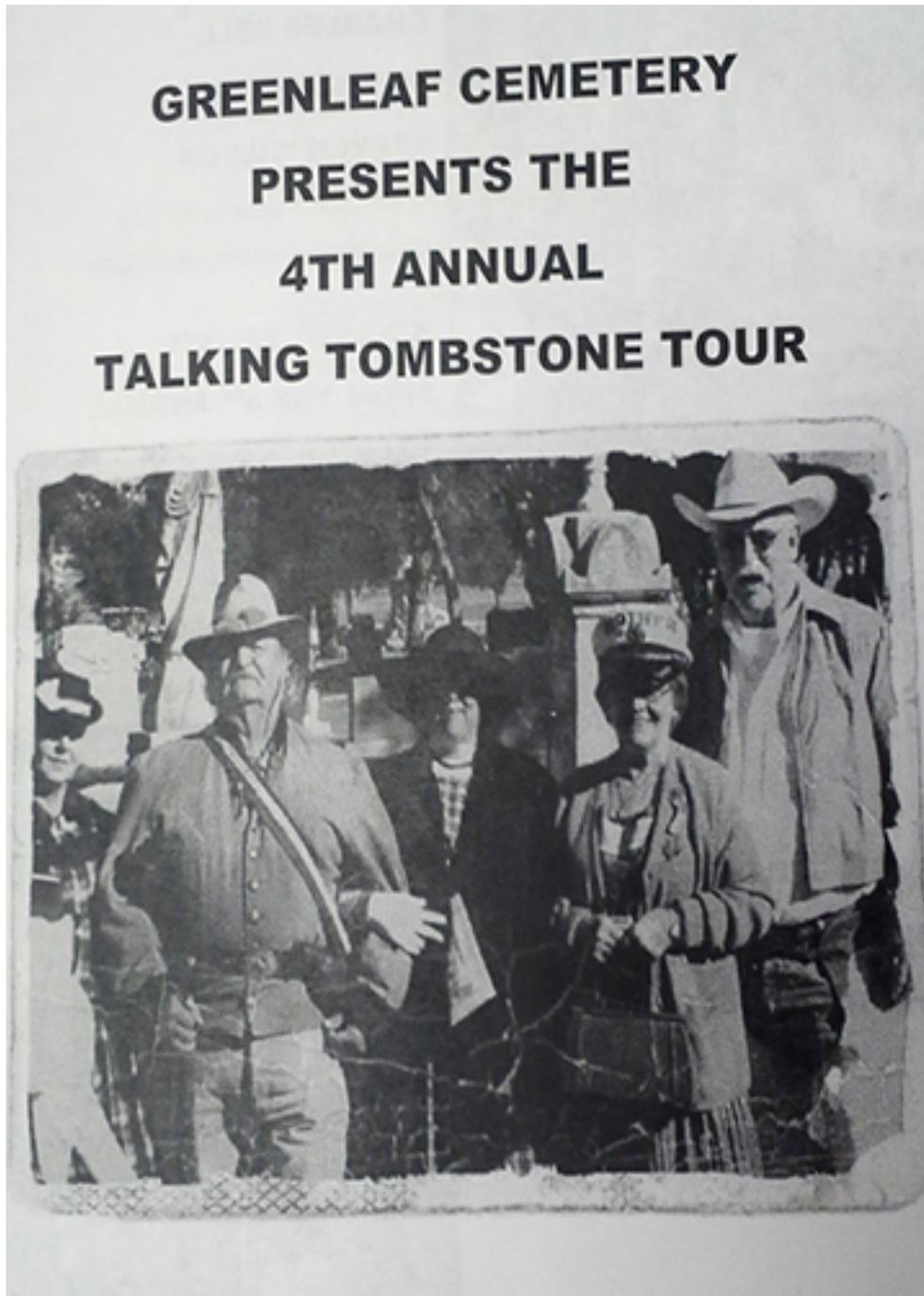


Figure C.1 *Talking Tombstone Tour*

World War II Reenactment at
-KRUEGER HILL-
September 10, 2016 at 1:30pm
Come celebrate the 76th Anniversary of the opening of
CAMP BOWIE!
Krueger Hill, Brownwood, TX 76801

Come see a European WW2 battle...
...AND some great displays!

"The Battle of Salerno, Italy 1943"

SPECIAL NEW EVENT!
-MEET THE REENACTORS-
see and learn about the equipment of the WWII soldier
Museum of History
209 N. Broadway, Brownwood TX
10:00 A.M. Saturday, September 10th 2016
Only \$5 each, includes admission to Museum of History & Camp Bowie exhibit

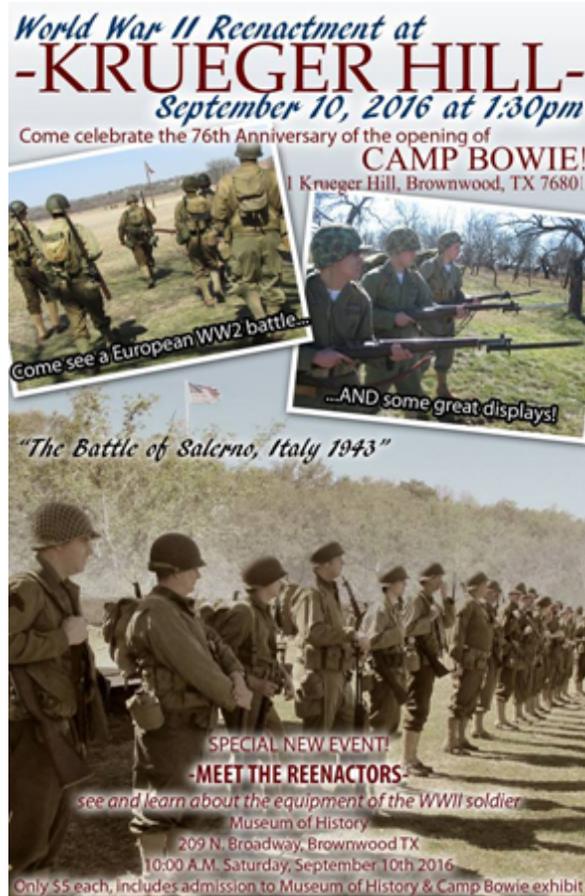


Figure C.2 *The Battle of Salerno* Reenactment



Figure C.3: The Brownwood Lyric Theatre