

Fort Bend's *Daughters*



Karen, Molly, Virginia, and Betty are members of the Fort Settlement chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas



The DRT helps keep Texas history alive and archives newspaper articles of their past work



Marilyn Garretson, a librarian at Beck Junior High in Fort Bend County, receives the Historical Atlas of Texas from Molly Smith of the Fort Settlement DRT

of the Republic of Texas

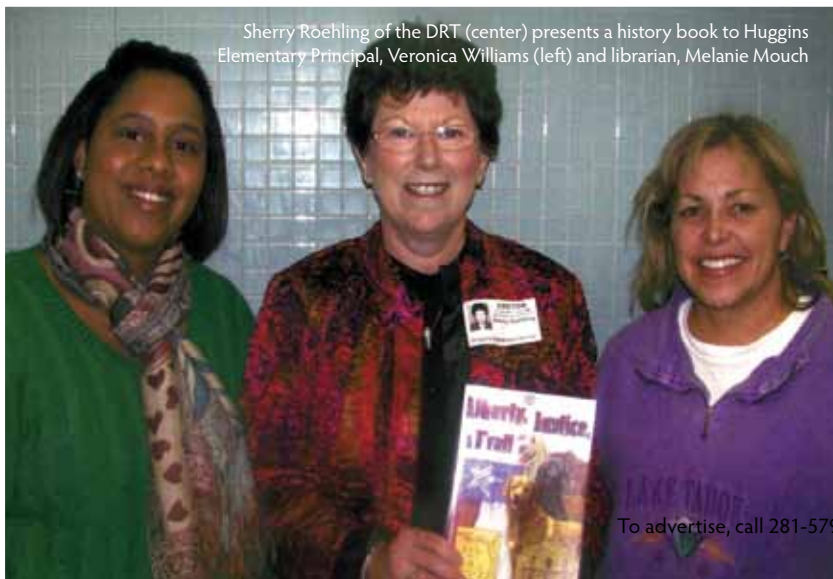
Fort Settlement Chapter Proudly Helps Preserve the Past

Written by Katherine Goldberg
Select Photography by Suzi Issa

Did you know that the first settlers in Stephen F. Austin's "Old 300" colony built an icehouse at a bend in the Brazos River, which later became known as Fort Bend? As Texans, we are all proud of our heritage, but the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) take their love of Texas history to another level. The DRT is an organization of women connected by their important ancestry and their love of preserving and sharing Texas history.



Sherry Røehling of the DRT (center) presents a history book to Huggins Elementary Principal, Veronica Williams (left) and librarian, Melanie Mouch



Fort Settlement Chapter members visit the gravestone of Mirabeau B. Lamar, a former Republic of Texas president

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Celebrating Their Lone Star Roots

The group traces its lineage back to 1891 when Betty Ballinger and her cousin, Hally Bryan founded the Daughters of the Republic of Texas in Houston in order to carry on the memory and legacy of the pioneer families of Texas and the soldiers who fought for the Republic. The women of the DRT trace their own ancestry back to the Texas Republic, or in many cases, even earlier. The women of the Fort Settlement chapter in Sugar Land can proudly trace their roots and the history of the local area to the birth of Texas. They share a personal connection with the state's past. Chapter president, Molly Mayes Smith shares, "It is protecting, preserving, and promoting Texas history with women of common ancestry."

Keeping Texas History Alive

Across Texas, the DRT works to conserve and safeguard many historical sites and artifacts. You may have seen the ladies in action through their stewardship role in maintaining important sites like the Alamo in San Antonio and the French Legation in Austin. They also secure historical markers for important sites in history, that allows all Texans to learn about the state's great past in every corner of Texas. But it isn't just places that interest the ladies of the DRT. Each historical location is intertwined with an important event that occurred there. During Texas Honor Days and celebratory events throughout the year, the daughters breathe new life into old stories. "Their primary mission is to preserve these sites and celebrate these events for all Texans now and for the generations to come," says Smith.

Locally, the Fort Settlement chapter keeps Texas history alive by donating flags and history books to local schools, granting a yearly scholarship, and sponsoring essay contests for fourth and seventh grade students. Smith will tell you that the ladies of the Fort Settlement chapter are eager to share their love of Texas history with the community. In Fort Bend, that love of history naturally extends into the classroom. Smith shares, "Our goal is to perpetuate the love of Texas history in schools."

This coming year, DRT members will help the Lone Star State celebrate 175 years of independence from Mexico. The women of the Fort Settlement chapter will mark the occasion by participating in many special celebrations, including a trip to the San Jacinto Monument's festivities in April on San Jacinto Day.

Becoming a Fort Settlement Daughter and Friend

Full membership in the DRT is only open to ladies who can trace their direct Texan ancestry back to the days of the Texas Republic or earlier. However, the organization loves sharing its passion with others who are equally passionate about maintaining the strong legacy of Texas. "Joining and working with DRT is one way for me to express my appreciation for what my ancestors did before me," Smith shares. There is an associate membership available to women who do not have the ancestry, but who have the appreciation and love to show their proud Texas spirit. Meetings are open to visitors who are interested in the work of the DRT, as well.

A Proud Heritage

Too often we get caught up in our daily routines. We are quick to forget that we should pause to remember the amazing people and traditions that made our state the great place it is today. The Daughters of the Republic of Texas are here to make sure that even if we sometimes lose sight of our heritage, the proud story of the Republic of Texas will live on forever. **SLM**

KATHERINE GOLDBERG is a Texas native who can trace her Texan ancestry back to 1818. She is proud to call Fort Bend County home.

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DRT members browse through historical scrapbooks at the George Memorial Library in Richmond

Daughters of the Revolution Texas Honor Days

January 26 - Mirabeau B. Lamar Day

February 19 - Texas Statehood Day

March 2 - Texas Independence
and Flag Day

March 6 - Alamo Heroes Day

March 27 - Goliad Heroes Day

April 21 - San Jacinto Day

October 2 - Gonzales Day

November 3 - Stephen F. Austin's Birthday



DRT members, Karen, Molly, Virginia, and Betty pay their respects at the historic Morris Cemetery



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