



## THE HERITAGE SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

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### A Brief History

The Heritage Society of Austin, a non-profit organization chartered by the State of Texas, was founded in 1953 to assist in the preservation of buildings, markets, historical sites, works of art, documents, papers and pictures of historical, traditional or cultural value; to discover and work toward development of areas of natural beauty and charm as well as those places of special historical interest within the City of Austin and its environs; and to disseminate knowledge, promote interest, encourage study and research and to act in an advisory capacity to interested groups of persons and organizations regarding those things already enumerated.

Funds for HSA projects have come from several sources. A major contributor was the Heritage Guild. Organized in 1963, the Guild successfully operated a coffee shop and tourist center in the Old Lundberg Bakery for seven years. Purchased and preserved by HSA, the Old Bakery was sold to the State of Texas in 1970 then deeded to the City of Austin in 1979. The Old Bakery and Emporium continues to serve the City as part of the Parks and Recreation Department's Senior Program.

Fundraising events have greatly contributed to HSA's assets. The reopening of the Driskill Hotel in 1973 featured a spectacular ball honoring Texas governors and their descendants. For twelve years HSA sponsored an Antiques Show and Festival featuring antique dealers from across the country. To foster interest in the revitalization of downtown Austin, HSA has held fundraising events at Scarbroughs, Bank One, Spaghetti Warehouse, Walter Tips Building, Norwood Tower, Sampson-Henricks Building, Hannig Row and the Temple-Inland Building. HSA spearheaded restoration efforts of the Paramount Theatre with an "On With the Show" benefit in 1976. In November 1980, HSA sponsored "To Austin With Love," a benefit to assist The Friends of the Governor's Mansion Committee in their fundraising efforts for the renovation and furnishing of the Mansion. HSA and the Austin Steam Train Association sponsored two "Heritage Train Balls" (1992 and 1993) to jointly benefit each organization. To mark the celebration of its 40th birthday in 1993, HSA debuted the Heritage Homes Tours. Presented annually, these tours showcase the rich heritage of our community through its varied historic architecture.

HSA has provided financial assistance to preservation projects in a number of ways. By becoming one of the four major stockholders in the Driskill Hotel Corporation, HSA assured the survival of the historic Driskill Hotel in 1971. Over \$2.8 million in grants and loans have been made to assist in preservation efforts. HSA even purchased a demolition contract to save and move the Jacob Larmour House and funded removal of utility lines enabling the Walter Tips House to move from Seventh Street across the Congress Avenue Bridge to its present site. Purchase of historic properties by HSA and resale to preservationists has enabled restoration of the Hirshfeld Mansion and Cottage, the Eugene Bremond House and Walter Tips Building. In celebration of its Silver Anniversary in 1978, HSA made \$100,000 in matching or supplemental grants available to owners of commercial properties for restoration, protection, preservation and beautification of historic building facades. Completed in 1981, this program stimulated hundreds of thousands of dollars of private investment on the 7 projects involved.

HSA owns the Jourdan-Bachman Pioneer Farms. Pioneer Farms, situated on over eighty acres on scenic Walnut Creek in northeast Austin, was given to HSA by the late Eugene Giles and his sister, Laura. In 1974, HSA leased the land for 50 years to the Austin Natural Science Association. ANSA in cooperation with the Parks and Recreation Department, the Natural Science Guild and the Heritage Society, developed an outdoor living history museum depicting life in rural Central Texas of the 1880s. Through hands-on activities, adults and children can experience a place where history really repeats itself every day. The City of Austin withdrew its funding for Pioneer Farms in 2004. At that time, the all volunteer Pioneer Farms Board of Governors undertook responsibility for the operations of the Farms, under an operating agreement with the Heritage Society of Austin.

To express appreciation to those preservationists who have actively contributed to Austin's heritage, HSA sponsors an annual awards presentation. In 1996 the Heritage Society of Austin established the Frank and Sue McBee Visionary Award. The most recent Visionary Award was granted to former HSA President John Donisi in 2007 for his advocacy to preserve the Capitol View Corridors.