

The 1935 Taylor City Hall Time Capsule



Written & compiled by Karen Ellis
Library Director of the Taylor Public Library
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Contents of the 1935 Taylor City Hall Time Capsule

Introduction.....	1
Taylor City Hall History.....	2
Time Capsule Opening.....	5
Autographs.....	8
<i>Franklin D. Roosevelt, John Garner, James Allred, Miriam Ferguson, J.P. Buchanan, Jack Dempsey, Will Rogers, & others.</i>	
Brochures, Booklets and Schedules.....	18
<i>Chamber of Commerce, Texas game laws, Missouri Pacific Train schedule, cards from railroad staff.</i>	
Cards, Clippings and Stationary.....	23
<i>Traffic ticket, business cards, ticket for barbecue fundraiser, stationary, letter from H.W. Kemp of the Taylor Daily Press, envelope from Louis Lowe.</i>	
Money.....	32
<i>Texas Centennial Half Dollars, Confederate money, novelty coins, mixed coins from individuals & families, coins from the 1905 time capsule.</i>	
Newspapers.....	45
<i>List of full newspapers in capsule, articles on 1905 time capsule, articles on the 1935 time capsule & cornerstone ceremony.</i>	
Objects.....	51
<i>Keys to 1905 City Hall, cigar, weapons, French key, German airplane level.</i>	
Photographs and Postcards.....	57
<i>Pictures from OW Davis, American Café, Pet Brown, burning oil well, Marvin Bugg, Reno twins, 1893 firefighters, postcards of Taylor.</i>	
Programs and Invitations.....	73
<i>Church programs & special events, plays, SWU football program, dance invitations.</i>	
Records.....	87
<i>Water well, Taylor city limits, city attorney oath, Williamson County Relief Board contract for construction.</i>	
Rosters and Directories.....	92
<i>County directory, Taylor city staff, organizations' rosters, T.H.S seniors, Taylor Fire Department rosters of 1935 & 1905.</i>	

Introduction

These contents have been cataloged and digitally scanned (when feasible) by Karen Ellis, the Director of the Taylor Public Library after the opening of the time capsule on October 25, 2014 at Heritage Square.

There existed a preliminary listing of the time capsule contents, but much more discovered upon its opening. Deceivingly, the copper box seemed lightweight. It held many more paper items than previously was estimated.

The time capsule was known to have been bricked into the 1935 Taylor City Hall at the installation of the cornerstone. During the summer of 2014, that building was demolished. After years of structural issues and lack of funds to fix the problems, the Taylor City Council ordered it torn down. Like the 1905 City Hall before it, the 1935 building had foundation issues. These issues made the City Hall dangerous. The local historical society attempted to raise funds to pay for mitigation of the problems, but were unable to secure the amount necessary. Information follows about the history of city halls in Taylor, why time capsules seem to be popular and a summary of events on the opening of the 1935 City Hall Time Capsule.

The organization of this catalog is very general and this grouping of items discovered in the capsule made sense to the compiler of these artifacts. Most of the items held up very well to their 79 years of internment; others were less fortunate. The vast majority of the time capsule contents was paper—letters, newsprint, photographs, lists, postcards, etc. The three dimensional items were relatively few, including coins and objects. When possible, additional history contained in the files of the Taylor Public Library Archives have been referenced to better provide context and understanding.

What cannot be quantified here was the delightful discovery of history, of perceptions and views of that era. That was truly a pleasure, one that readers here are invited to enjoy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Karen Ellis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Taylor City Hall History

The first recorded Taylor City Hall was a simple wooden structure. This building combined the fire station (ground level with the bays) and the city offices on the upper floor. The population of Taylor in 1890's was 2,584.

This structure was in use from approximately the 1880's to 1905.



Taylor's first City Hall and Fire Station. City Hall upstairs.

Photo courtesy of Taylor Public Library

To much fanfare, the 1905 Taylor City Hall was built on the square lot contained by Main Street on the west, Porter Street on the east, Fourth on the south and Fifth to the north. This is known now as Heritage Square. A beautiful white structure, this new City Hall was a building to be proud of. It contained a large theater or auditorium and was the venue for many performances. City offices were on the upper stories, as well as the City Commissioners' room. To the rear of the City Hall was the Fire Department, with the bays built into the east end of the building.



City Hall, Taylor, Tex.

Photo courtesy of Taylor Public Library

The 1905 Taylor City Hall began to shift and occasional movement was actually felt by occupants. Throughout 1933 to 1934 there were reports of these problems published, up to the point where the building was deemed unsafe. On December 7, 1934 the

building was abandoned. It was torn down in January of 1935 with plans for construction of the next City Hall on the same site.

This was during the Great Depression and funding was very tight. Taylor leaders were able to take advantage of President Roosevelt's New Deal and use federal funds in



combination with bond money towards construction. This new building was considerably plainer and boxy. The Fire Department was again installed to the rear of City Hall, and the city jail was housed in the basement. The cornerstone of the new building was installed with much ceremony on May 22, 1935.

As mentioned previously, the 1935 Taylor City Hall was starting to fail after 50 years of service. Part of the south wall began to separate from the main structure. Cracks ran between the bricks. There was no way to save the building and no funding available. The structure remained standing until demolition in the summer of 2014.

In 1983 the city offices were moved into the old grocery store building to the east of Heritage Square, at 400 Porter Street. This became the official Taylor City Hall. The building has a large auditorium space, a City Council Chamber, and offices in the back. While all city departments transitioned out of the 1935 City Hall, it still stood for years, sometimes serving as storage for files and equipment.



Time Capsules

It is exciting to contemplate the history, that snapshot of life, of time captured in a bottle. Time capsules were and continue to be popular, especially in conjunction with a momentous occasion. Thousands of communities have interred time capsules in cornerstones of important buildings, schools have time capsules to commemorate a class of graduates, or at the launching of some important endeavor. There is a time capsule of sorts aboard the U.S. Voyager spacecraft probes, with data on human history recorded on a golden disc.

Maybe too, the excitement of a time capsule is tied to the rediscovery of unknown history. The opening of King Tut's tomb, the unearthing of a Mayan temple, or the discovery of buried terracotta soldiers in China all hold our attention with amazement. But what is the importance of the contents of this cache of history? Who decides what is worthy of future contemplation? Obviously what is important today may not be important many tomorrows in the future. But who can tell? While futurists and science fiction writers have made many predictions of advanced technology, our reality isn't as exciting as our predecessors may have imagined. So the contents of a time capsule best reflects what is exciting at that time, what is important just prior to its interment.

Opening of the 1935 Time Capsule

The 1935 City Hall Time Capsule was opened October 25, 2014, under the pavillion at Heritage Square in downtown Taylor. That beautiful Saturday morning was balmy, with a bit of a breeze. The audience waited in anticipation for great moment, the opening of the battered copper box that had rested for 79 years behind brick and motar. The crowd included city officials and staff, local families and visitors, members of the press & media, those arrayed in delightful 1930's period garb, volunteers from the Boy Scouts, representatives of local organizations and more. After a grand entrance, members of the Taylor Fire Department snipped open the copper box. The time capsule was jammed full with paper and items. The contents were carefully removed and announced to the audience. Most of these papers and artifacts were displayed for folks to file by and get a closer look, with white gloved volunteers moving the contents around for better viewing.

During the ceremony Taylor Mayor Jessie Ancira Jr. asked the audience to consider what they might add to a time capsule today. An excellent question---what would you add to the container? What best represents today? What would be important enough to preserve for future consideration?

*THE GREAT REVEAL
HERITAGE PARK
TAYLOR, TEXAS
11:00 am
OCTOBER 25, 2014*



Welcome by Mayor Jesse Ancira, Jr.

Invocation by Rev. Anthony Watson

Honor Guard

Flag Raising with National Anthem sung by Kenny Orts

Bi-Plane flyover

Introduction by Mayor Jesse Ancira, Jr. of City Councilman and
Texas Conservation and Heritage Society Board Member Brandt

Rydell

Time Capsule Arrival announced by Mayor Jesse Ancira, Jr.

Capsule Opening - Taylor Fire Department with Karen Ellis, City

Librarian and Deby Lannen, Main Street Manager

Closing Remarks by Mayor Jesse Ancira, Jr.

Cake & Punch

The Taylor Daily Press

ONLY DAILY NEWSPAPER IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY SERVING 59,000

VOL. 3 No. 3

OCTOBER 25TH 2014 11 AM

FREE

TAYLOR TIME CAPSULE

THE BOX THAT HOLDS SO MUCH HISTORY



Taylorite Ray Jones pictured here with the 1931 Time Capsule.

OPEN IT

SAYS THE MAYOR !

* SEE IT LIVE OCTOBER 25TH HERITAGE SQUARE *

WHAT IS INSIDE?

- American Cafe Menu
- Autograph of President Franklin Roosevelt
- Autograph of Boxing Champion Jack Dempsey
- Autograph of Actor / Humorist Will Rogers
- Autograph of Texas Governor James Allred
- Centennial Coins & Confederate Currency
- Countless Historical Articles
- French door key taken from the 96th Aero
- Squadron barracks at Petite Maulin, France

And Much More!!!