

## History of East Texas Chapter #57

### A Tale of Two Chapters

The East Texas Chapter 57 was chartered March 30, 1995 at the Oak Forest Country Club in Longview, TX. The driving force behind the Chapter's creation was Talmadge Early Booth, the Chapter's first President. Among the distinguished guests in attendance was Texas State SAR President C.R. Harrington, President-Elect Ross Shipman, State Treasurer Frank Gibson, District VP John Haughton, State Genealogist Tom Green and former State Presidents Joe Hill & Graham Martin. Also present and making congratulatory remarks was Mayor of Longview, I.J. Patterson. Mayor Patterson had previously declared March 30, 1995 as SAR Day in Longview, Texas.

Charter member officers were: President – Talmadge Booth; 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President – Wesley Whatley; 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President – W.D. Northcutt III; Secretary/Treasurer – Kenneth Kimbrough; and Chaplain – Rev. John Whitsell.

Understanding our beginning would be incomplete without a discussion of another Chapter located in nearby Jefferson, TX. That would be the Lt. Mordecai Baldwin Chapter #20 created May 4, 1963 by future SAR State President Benjamin D. "Ben" Baldwin. Among those founding Chapter 20 were future founders of the Longview Chapter Talmadge Booth and W.D. Northcutt III.

The Baldwin Chapter continued to grow and prosper for many years while serving the East Texas community. During the early years Chapter #20 and members received many honors, including founder Ben Baldwin being elected State SAR President. By the early 1990s the Baldwin Chapter's growth had slowed and membership dwindled. On October 13, 1993 fate dealt another blow with the death of Chapter stalwart and founder Ben Baldwin. By this time, the Baldwin Chapter was only meeting once a year and then only to elect officers for the coming term. At the December meeting in 1994 former Chapter # 20 President Talmadge Booth asked the group assembled to consider meeting in Longview where most of the remaining members lived. Booth felt the larger community would make recruitment of new members easier and would provide additional opportunities for service. While not rejected, no action was taken on his proposal. Booth immediately began the steps of forming a new Chapter in Longview. In a short few weeks he had lined up the required candidates (some new, some transferring from the Baldwin Chapter). In early 1995 with all requirements satisfied, the creation of the East Texas Chapter #57 was approved by the State Society and a charter ceremony was set for March 30, 1995 – a truly remarkable

accomplishment by the former Baldwin Chapter 20 President and Charter President of East Texas Chapter 57.

The results for that first year of activity far surpassed all expectations. By early 1996 the East Tx Chapter had over 70 individuals who had their applications approved or had transferred in from other Chapters. Few, if any chapters in small communities, have ever matched this growth.

Within the coming year most of the remaining Mordecai Baldwin members transferred to the East Texas Chapter. In February/early 1996 David Robertson, President of the Baldwin Chapter and Talmadge Booth, President of the East Texas Chapter began written communication with Delbert Taylor, District 10 Vice President discussing a merger between Chapter 20 & Chapter 57. Various agreements & procedures were immediately agreed to. Finally, on March 2, 1996 the two Presidents met and transferred all records and bank accounts to East Texas Chapter #57 thereby ending the several decades' existence of the Mordecai Baldwin Chapter located in Jefferson, Texas.

The East Texas Chapter has continued to thrive since its creation in March 1995. Among the many State SAR awards Chapter #57 has received over the years include – Karl Wallace Award for greatest increase in membership, Adrien Drouihet Award for most members under 50 years of age, E. A. Limmer Award for most supplemental applications, Wilbur S. Strong Award for the outstanding new Chapter, and Marshall Hunter Award for highest % of members attending meetings.

All organizations can learn from the experience of these two Chapters. We should never doubt that one dedicated individual CAN make a difference and the impossible is possible if we work hard enough. It should also be noted that regardless of how vibrant we are today, we must maintain growth through new, younger members or even the strongest of organizations will fail.