Voices from Small Places

Purpose of the Project
The purpose of this project is to document and preserve the history of small places (population under 100) found throughout East Texas.

Project Rationale
These small places are part of the regional fabric of East Texas. By documenting their history, and making it available to researchers and the public, we not only keep these communities alive for future generations but contribute to the larger understanding of our own heritage.
Methodology

This project uses a combination of methods, including:

- Photovoice
- Oral History Interviews
- Historic Site Survey
- Community Digital Collection
Photovoice

- Pioneered by Wang and Burris (1997) for use in public health community studies

As originally conceived, photovoice is:

- A form of participatory needs assessment useful for the identification of problems at the grassroots level and promoting community action.
- Volunteers are given cameras and asked to take pictures of their community in response to guiding questions.
As used in this project, photovoice is a means of collecting individual memories and stories directly tied to, and within the context of, a specific place.
Photovoice
Project Pilot, Arcadia, Texas

The following video demonstrates how photovoice can be used in community historical research and the types of results to be expected.

Photovoice Video
Oral History Interviews

• Attend community events
  • Cemetery homecomings
  • Family reunions

• One on one interviews
  • Multiple interviewers

• Video and audio recording

• Use of Photovoice in interview process

• Forms

• Provides access to unknown first hand account stories
Historic Site Survey

• Provides a physical context for the community’s stories and artifacts

• All structures, objects, and sites within a five-mile radius viewable from the public right-of-way

• Uses standard Section 106 historic resource survey terminology as well as customized categories

• Links any previous local, state, or national designations to the field survey

• Digitizes all materials and makes them available through the Center’s Historic Resources Survey website ([crhr-hrs.org](http://crhr-hrs.org))
Community Digital Collection

- Donor workflow
  - On site digitization or temporary custody
  - Forms and interviewing
  - Returning material, as is or archival enclosures

- Community donor retains physical ownership
- ETRC retains the right to exhibit the digital images
- Digitizing community collections preserves the past as well as broadening access for future generations.
Sequence of Events

- Exploratory trip to community with community liaison
- Match data collection to community events calendar
- Photovoice training (participants return cameras and journals within 30 days, ideally)
- Conduct oral history interviews at community events & scan loaned materials for developing the community digital collection
- Conduct historic site survey (this involves multiple trips to the community)
- Develop webpage and community digital collection

Project completion timeline, 12 – 15 months
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Beyond the Pilot: Issues, Expansion, and Future Goals

Issues
• Making contact
• Scheduling
• Community support
• Funding

Expansion
• The project is currently expanding to include a cluster of historically related communities in Rusk and Panola counties in East Texas.

Future Goals
• We are currently seeking funding for the development of a documentary on the project that will highlight the process as well as the history of rural communities.
Voices from Small Places

For more information about this project, please visit the project webpage.

http://www.sfasu.edu/heritagecenter/8694.asp

Texas Historical Commission. *Historic Resources Survey Form*. Austin, TX: THC, n.d.