

...Fishing Hall of Fame

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The honoree will be announced in spring 2024 and be officially inducted during a special ceremony and banquet in the fall.

“We are excited to review all of this year’s nominations and welcome the newest inductee into this prestigious group of individuals and organizations that have contributed so much to the world class fishing that Texas offers,” Kessler added.

“Mr. Crappie” Wally Marshall of Anna – the 2023 inductee – will officially be inducted at the annual Hall of Fame banquet this October at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center. Marshall revolutionized crappie fishing through innovative products, tournaments and promotion of the sport.

Following his induction, a video highlighting Mr. Crappie

will be available at TPWD’s YouTube Channel on the Texas Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame playlist. The video will also air on the Texas Parks and Wildlife PBS television show.

The recently remodeled Texas Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame is housed at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center (TFFC) in Athens. Its mission is to “recognize and honor those who have made a lasting contribution to freshwater fishing in Texas, and to foster a sense of appreciation, awareness and participation in the sport of fishing.” TFFC will close temporarily for major renovations August 28 until the spring of 2025. This closure will also necessitate the temporary closure of the Hall of Fame exhibit.

Nomination forms and instructions are available online or by calling (903) 676-2277.

New memorial honors Buffalo Soldiers history in San Angelo

By Becca Nelson Sankey
Named for the strong, burly buffalo that roamed the land, the U.S. Army’s first Black enlisted soldiers left a legacy of perseverance and valor in the swath of territory they served, from Alaska, Hawaii, and the Philippines to almost every state and territory west of the Mississippi River. Between 1868 and 1885, many of the soldiers were stationed in Fort Concho, located in the West Texas town of San Angelo. Nearly 140 years after the Buffalo Soldiers departed Fort Concho, the city has a dedicated place that tells their story.

On July 28, National Buffalo Soldiers Day, 10 8-foot-tall stone monuments that make up the San Angelo NAACP Buffalo Soldier Memorial were unveiled at El Paseo de Santa Angela Park, across the street from Fort Concho National Historic Landmark. Placards on the

towering monoliths detail with photos, stories, and QR codes the soldiers’ various roles during the late 19th and mid-20th centuries, including protecting settlers moving West, working as the first park rangers, and serving alongside Theodore Roosevelt’s Rough Riders during the Spanish-American War in Cuba.

“Their most significant contribution from a West Texas, Fort Concho standpoint is they were a critical part of the building and operation of this fort, which was in turn a critical part of the settlement of this part of West Texas,” says Fort Concho director Bob Bluthardt. “Fifty percent of the soldiers who served at Fort Concho were Black at one time, and it’s often forgotten that there were years that all the enlisted soldiers here were Black. They are part and parcel of what Fort Concho was and is.”

Along with providing history about the Buffalo Soldiers, the memorial highlights the achievements of Medal of Honor recipients Sgt. Henry Johnson of Company D, 9th U.S. Cavalry, and Sgt. Thomas Shaw of Company K, 9th Cavalry, who were recognized for their heroic acts during conflicts with Native American tribes. Another monument is dedicated to the postage stamp issued by the U.S. Postal Service in 1994.

The visionary force behind the memorial’s inception and development is Sherley L. Spears, a San Angelo business owner, community activist, and former president of the San Angelo NAACP. Around 2021, she says she received a “vision from God” for the memorial, which is the only one in Texas that honors all Buffalo Soldier regiments. “The fort has always done something for the Buffalo Soldiers through various programming, but there was not a permanent place outside the fort to honor them,” she says. “I talked to Bob and asked, ‘Is this something you think we can do in [San Angelo]?’ He agreed we could.”

Bluthardt, who is also a member of Spears’ committee, says Fort Concho has offered educational programs, talks, and events centering on the Buffalo Soldiers for the past half-century, but in more recent years has taken a more “forward-thinking, aggressive approach” regarding their local legacy. “Memorials are hard, they’re expensive, and I think that it is a tribute to Sherley Spears that she took a concept that others had tried and failed and ramrodded it through in 18 months,” he said. “That’s impressive.”

Included in the name of the Buffalo Soldiers memorial is the San Angelo NAACP, chartered in 1946 and for which Spears

served as president starting in 2019 until this year. She began fundraising for the memorial in 2021. An anonymous donation for \$300,000 made up the bulk of the more than \$500,000 raised by individual contributions, including \$100,000 from the Bob and Doris Johnston Foundation, and grants from Humanities Texas, the San Angelo Health Foundation, and the San Angelo Area Foundation. Female- or minority-owned local businesses handled the memorial’s landscaping and electrical work, per Spears’ specifications. As for the design, Spears collaborated with KFW Architects to create the memorial’s rendering.

“The committee planning this really got it right in trying to create a place of education and contemplation,” Bluthardt says, adding that each monument has a QR code that provides more information, which the committee will continue supplementing over time.

Along with shade and benches, the memorial’s location is conveniently right off a major roadway, Oakes Street. “And then the Paseo, with parking centrally located in the cultural district, has dozens if not hundreds of events annually, so thousands of people will be wandering through this area” he says. “It couldn’t have been placed in a better spot.”

Finding it very gratifying to see her idea come to fruition, Spears credits others for their assistance. She also is hopeful visitors will appreciate the men whose stories are told through the memorial. “You can’t move forward if you don’t tell your truth,” she says. “And that’s what books and movies and stories [about Black history] and now this memorial are trying to do, to get the truth out there that has not been told.”

A Page of the Past

By W.F. Strong

Millions of copies of Larry McMurtry’s Lonesome Dove have sold since the novel was published in 1985. The miniseries that followed in 1989 was likewise immensely popular. McMurtry himself called it the Gone With the Wind of the West, but he never loved the book as much as his fans. “You know most writers come to dislike their most popular books,” he once told journalist John Spong. “Henry James hated Daisy Miller, which is what he is known by. He’s probably written 35 other books. I feel a little that way about Lonesome Dove.”

McMurtry said he never saw the miniseries. Maybe if he had, he would have better understood how endearingly Robert Duvall, Tommy Lee Jones and Diane Lane brought their characters to life. I can’t help but wonder if those characters were modeled after real-life Texans.

But McMurtry said that that wasn’t his aim. Though Woodrow Call has some attributes of Charles Goodnight, and Gus McCrae has some attributes of Oliver Loving, the novel’s main characters were not modeled after actual historical figures. McMurtry said the book is not meant to be a faithful history of the era but rather one that has echoes of those times.

In fact, he sought to authentically demythologize the life of the cowboy and show how brutally difficult their lives were. “The whole book is permeated with criticism of the Old West from start to finish,” he said.

Nonetheless, McMurtry acknowledged that somehow Call and McCrae became celebrated heroes. He said a lot of people “were nostalgic for the culture of the Old West, though it was a terrible culture.”


Bits of history did however



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