

County Marker Gets A New Home On Courthouse Lawn

On Tuesday, July 2, 2024, History was literally on the move in Cameron, Texas! A large Texas pink granite stone monument was hoisted by crane onto a truck belonging to the Rockdale Monument Company and driven from Highway 77 north to downtown Cameron in a matter of minutes. It was quick, but important for the continued preservation of Milam County's historic past.

An almost forgotten and often obscured Texas Historical Marker was moved by volunteer efforts to the northwest corner of the Milam County Courthouse lawn. For many years the marker had been sitting at 3400 N. Travis, or Highway 77, in the northern part of Cameron. Its previous home was in the highway right-of-way directly across from the Cameron Airport and just outside the gates of the Cameron Oaks Apartment complex. The approximately 3-foot tall and 2.5-foot wide cube-like monument can now be observed in a quieter location by locals and visitors alike at its new address; the corner of First and Central Streets in downtown Cameron.

On one side of the recently relocated historical marker, there is an encircled bronze star that reads: "State of Texas 1936." This star commemorates the 100th Anniversary of Texas Independence 1836 to 1936, or the Centennial of Texas. Many, if not all, of the 254 counties in Texas were given state historical markers to honor the Texas Centennial, and Milam County was no different. These "1936 Markers" were designed to tell the individual story of each Texas County. Their epitaphs usually contained the history of that county and information for whom or what the county was named. However, this particular marker in our county is a restoration or rededicated version from 1966. The metal plaque on top of the monument is inscribed with the following:

"Milam County"

"A part of Robertson's Colony in 1834 and a part of the Municipality of Viesca, 1835. Created in 1836 and named for Benjamin Rush Milam killed December 5, 1835, in San Antonio. When created it contained one-sixth of the original land area of Texas. 54 Texas Counties or parts thereof now occupy that territory. Until 1840, settlers spent much time battling hostile Indians. On April 4, 1846, Cameron was authorized as County Seat by Legislature. Milam County as it now exists was established in 1856. Balanced Livestock – Crop Farming Economy."

The proposal to relocate the Texas historical marker came from Milam County Historical Commission members Kyle Barrett and Holly Jentsch. The MCHC obtained permission from County Judge Bill Whitmire's office to have the marker moved. When asked to comment on the marker being relocated, Milam County Judge Bill Whitmire said, "Having this marker moved to the courthouse square has been my pleasure." He added, "it's historical markers like this one that make a small town square unique." The official "County Marker" joins many other state designated historical markers that surround the Milam County Courthouse. Other markers made of metal or stone found around the downtown square, tell the stories of the present and former courthouses, Ben Milam, local heroic Veteran's from all conflicts, Civil War soldiers, Mrs. Edna Westbrook Trigg, the Girls Tomato Club and 4H, Sheriffs in Milam County, the Old Milam County Jail, and much more.

Excited to be a part of this project, Historical Commission President Holly Jentsch said, “The Milam County Historical Commission extends its appreciation to Judge Bill Whitmire for allowing the 1936 Milam County marker to be moved to a more prominent location.” Jentsch also added, “moving the marker from the shoulder of Highway 77 (a dangerous location) to the courthouse square seems safer and more practical.” The members of the Milam County Historical Commission would like to sincerely thank Paul Luckey and the Rockdale Monument Company for generously donating their time and equipment to move the stone marker. Their volunteer hours are very much appreciated by the MCHC.

Speaking on the importance of moving the marker, Milam County Museum Director, Kyle Barrett stated, “We are in a position to educate the public on the unique and important history of Milam County.” He continued by saying, “Few people realize the marker was even out there on Highway 77, so bringing it down to the courthouse square for more people to read just seemed like the right move.” Throughout its rich history, the contributions of the small towns and rural communities in Milam County have influenced the state of Texas and its history. Historical markers are just one way to bridge the gap between the past and the future of Milam County.