



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, TEXAS**

May 5, 2022

**Re: SELECTION OF FRANK AND MERLYNN HERSOM FOR COMMISSION'S
WILLIAM HARLEY GANDY DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD**

To: MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S COURT

I am pleased to announce that **Frank Hersom and his wife Merlynn Hersom** have been selected by the Montgomery County Historical Commission for the WILLIAM HARLEY GANDY DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD. This prestigious award is presented at the discretion of the Montgomery County Historical Commission to those special individuals, corporations or organizations who have exhibited distinguished leadership, initiative, and dedication in the preservation of the history of Montgomery County. The winner of the award must have shown significant accomplishments in the field of historical preservation and research. Such achievements must be notable and have made an important contribution to the preservation and/or advancement of the history of Montgomery County.

This remarkable Montgomery County couple — **Frank Hersom and Merlynn Hersom** — have stepped forward and enthusiastically volunteered an enormous amount of their time to research and record the history of significant commercial and residential structures in Montgomery County. Beginning in Conroe in about November 2020 and continuing monthly thereafter, they have methodically identified, researched, photographed and chronicled over 80 structures in Conroe alone. Along with Perry Gotcher and other devoted volunteers at their Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, this couple has tirelessly toiled in the research of and historical archiving of many previously forgotten or ignored structures in Conroe that have historical significance because of the people and events associated with them.

Before they finish in the coming years, Frank and Merlynn Hersom and their team are expected to have prepared hundreds of these historical resource surveys spanning the entire county.

Their work, along with the support of their team of dedicated volunteers from their church, will assist our County Historical Commission and the Texas Historical Commission with future state and county historical marker designations.

As historical surveys of these buildings are being published on our website and on other community websites, they will be indispensable in raising the awareness of our County's citizens to our cultural heritage in communities across Montgomery County. Their work will elevate the appreciation for our heritage and improve the quality of life for everyone who works and lives in Montgomery County.

I am attaching additional information about this couple which was considered by our Historical Commission at our May 2, 2022 meeting. Commission members voted unanimously for the Hersom's selection for this award.

Our Montgomery County Historical Commission believes **Frank and Merlynn Hersom** have contributed significantly to the preservation and advancement of the History of Montgomery County. It is for these reasons that we have enthusiastically selected both for the William Harley Gandy Distinguished Service Award.

Respectfully,

Larry L. Foerster, Chairman
Montgomery County Historical Commission

Enclosure: Distinguished Service Award nomination of Frank and Merlynn Hersom

**NOMINATION OF FRANK AND MERLYNN HERSOM FOR
WILLIAM HARLEY GANDY DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD**

To quote the Texas Historical Commission:

To preserve historic and cultural resources, we must first know they exist. Architectural and archeological surveys identify significant properties in neighborhoods, communities and entire counties. Published inventories of such sites can be indispensable in raising a community's awareness of its cultural heritage and in its planning efforts. The most important resources identified through surveys have potential for state and national landmark designation. Moreover, the information and photographs generated by a survey create an irreplaceable record of the present state of that heritage.

The Texas Historical Commission has directed each county historical commission to implement its Historical Resource Survey Program. The last such program by the Montgomery County Historical Commission was completed over 40 years ago in 1980. It was inadequate then and is beyond outdated now, as we have sadly discovered many historic structures over 50 years in age that have been demolished over the past 40 years. Many others since 1980 have qualified for this recognition and need to be included in our new county-wide inventory. Until recently, our County Historical Commission has been frustrated that we could not find any individuals or any group of individuals who were willing to undertake what is a monumental task. But I am pleased that our Commission found the right couple in 2020.

Two remarkable Montgomery County citizens— **Frank Hersom and wife Merlynn Hersom** — have stepped forward and enthusiastically volunteered their time to research and record the history of significant commercial and residential structures in Montgomery County. Beginning in about November 2020 and continuing monthly thereafter, this energetic couple has methodically identified, researched, photographed and chronicled over 80 structures in Conroe alone. Along with Perry Gotcher and other devoted volunteers at their Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, this couple has tirelessly toiled in the research of and historical archiving of many previously forgotten or ignored structures in Conroe that have historical significance because of the people and events associated with them.



Frank and Merlynn Hersom

Along the way, Frank and Merlynn are rapidly becoming two of our most knowledgeable local historians in Conroe and Montgomery County. But they are not historians by training. Frank is a retired engineering department manager and Merlynn is a homemaker. They moved to Conroe from Houston in 1975. At the time, he was a manager of a small engineering discipline at CRS Architects on the West Loop. By 1985 he had been promoted to engineering department manager with an increased work load, plus a family that eventually grew to 8 children. Frank and Merlynn have always been very active in their church, with Frank serving as an ordained bishop across Montgomery County and beyond on more than one occasion. Hence, neither of them had the time to learn more about the community in which they raised their children. But with their children now grown and in their retirement years, Frank and Merlynn Hersom have enthusiastically accepted this challenge of inventorying our County's historic structures.

From what Frank has told me, he has some personal disappointments today that so much has happened and changed in Conroe and Montgomery County that he and Merlynn have not been a part of. But now they wish they had been. To quote him: "It is kind of like doing personal family history and then realizing that particular relatives died and had you been aware of the importance you could have met with them while you were young and they were alive and gathered that information." I think many of us who have lived here for decades share that same regret.

The painstaking research that they and their team of volunteers have conducted for many of these structures is amazing. They have often uncovered family histories of the residents of these homes and owners of commercial buildings that would have otherwise been lost to us and future generations. It is as if they have interviewed the walls of these structures and "the walls could talk." They conduct interviews of family members, research obituaries and old newspaper articles,

study and chronicle the architectural style of each structure with supporting photographs, examine city and county records when possible, and search any historical resource that better describes the structure and the importance it has to our community.

The dedicated work that Frank and Merlynn Hersom are performing, under the leadership of Perry Gotcher and the invaluable support of their team of church volunteers, will have a significant impact on the appreciation of our county's history for generations to come. The information they are collecting, along with the numerous photos taken of each structure, faithfully follow the guidelines of the Texas Historical Resource Survey Program.

The work of Frank and Merlynn Hersom and their team will assist our County Historical Commission and the Texas Historical Commission with future state and county historical marker designations. As their historical surveys of these buildings are being published on our website and on other websites, they will be indispensable in raising the awareness of the residents to our cultural heritage in communities across Montgomery County. Their work will elevate the appreciation for our communities' heritage and improve the quality of life for everyone who works and lives in Montgomery County.

The *William Harley Gandy Distinguished Service Award* is presented at the discretion of the Montgomery County Historical Commission to those special individuals, corporations or organizations who have exhibited distinguished leadership, initiative, and dedication in the preservation of the history of Montgomery County. The winner of the award must have shown significant accomplishments in the field of historical preservation and research. Such achievements must be notable and have made an important contribution to the preservation and/or advancement of the history of Montgomery County.

It is for those reasons referenced above that I enthusiastically nominate **Frank and Merlynn Hersom** for the *William Harley Gandy Distinguished Service Award*.

Larry L. Foerster, Chairman
Montgomery County Historical Commission
April 18, 2022