

September Events

Woodcarving Class

Sept. 11 | 8 am - 5 pm

Bladesmith Class

April 23 | 6 pm - 8 pm

Jazz and Wine

September 23 | 6 pm - 8 pm

Closing of Historical Southeast Texas Art Show

September 26 | 2 pm

First Open Mic/Family Picnic

September 26 | 4 - 6 pm

DRILL BITS

Letter from Director Troy Gray

First, I must put in a plug for Dow Chemical and Invista. They came to our rescue with the gusher. It took some time but, through their generous donation and time, we are able to gush again! We have so much planned this year. This is a great year to get involved as a volunteer, as a sponsor, and as a visitor. Make sure you show your membership card to enjoy everything. New membership brochures with new incentives are available in the gift shop.



Dow Chemical and Invista taking the Gusher motor.

Historical Southeast Texas Art Show

In collaboration with the Artists of Southeast Texas, the museum has an art show in the Caroline Room. This show includes 13 pieces of art from 8 different artists. Three of the pieces are in a silent auction that benefits both the museum and the Artists of Southeast Texas. This show is the second temporary exhibit in recent years with more small exhibits being planned. Exhibits in the future include archaeology at Spindletop, Women on the Oil Field, and more.

Other Upcoming Events

October 9

Dow/Invista Appreciation
Day

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

October 10 & 24,
November 7 & 21

Open Mic/Family Picnics

4:00 – 6:00 pm

October 14

Coffee & Spindletop
Online Event

October 22

Spindletop Spookfest
5:00-7:30 (Movie
afterwards)

November 6

Big Red's Ride Classic &
Antique Car Show

10:00 – 3:00 pm

UPCOMING EVENTS

Every other Sunday starting on September 26 and ending on November 21, we will have open mic/family picnic afternoons from 4 – 6 pm. This is a new event that is meant to resemble the outside entertainers of early 19th century. Bring food and enjoy entertainment brought by the talent of Southeast Texas. If you have a talent, plan on taking the stage.

The museums of Beaumont are excited to bring the first Museum Madness on the weekend of October 22-24. Spindletop's offering will be the yearly Spindletop Spookfest on October 22 as well as a spooky open mic/family picnic time on the 24th. We will also be offering a movie after the Spookfest. A ghoulishly great time is planned!



Lamar's Homecoming is scheduled for November 6 and Gladys City will offer the annual Classic and Antique Car Show. Enjoy cars of many kinds inside and outside the city. Take the shuttle over to Fanfest on campus. If you are a classic or antique car owner, bring your car and have people vote. Prizes are offered to People's Choice, Best in Show, 2nd and 3rd places.

We are taking Spindletop online during our first Coffee and Spindletop scheduled for October 14. We are going to do this series 4 times a year and will feature guests who have a variety of connections to the Spindletop story. October 14 will feature Ellen Rienstra and Judy Linsley, two of the three authors of **Giant Under the Hill**. More information about how to connect will be coming soon on our social media sites.

We are already planning great events for this fall and next spring. These include open mic/picnic nights, Spindletop Spookfest, Big Red's Ride Car Show, Christmas in Boomtown Light Show, 121st Spindletop Anniversary, Country Life Festival, and the Black Gold Bash. You will hear more about these in a later newsletter but there are always chances to participate, become a sponsor, or volunteer.



History Corner



Present day picture of the doctors office in the Gladys City Drug Store at the museum.

A DOCTOR AT SPINDLETOP

By Judy Linsley

Some of the most vivid accounts of life in Spindletop and other early oil boomtowns came not from a roughneck or a saloon owner, but a doctor. George Parker Stoker, M.D., practiced for a time at the Spindletop, Saratoga and Batson oil fields. Years later he recorded those memories in a book titled *Oil Field Medico*.

In 1901, in the wake of the Spindletop oil discovery, Stoker stepped off the train into Beaumont mud and in his words felt “a wave of distaste and excitement”—distaste toward the filth and chaos; excitement at the fortune he intended to make there, not from drilling gushers but from practicing medicine in a place with high danger, few doctors and huge amounts of cash.

The culture shock must have been enormous. Stoker was only 23 and fresh out of medical school. He came from a wealthy family and walked away from a promising hometown practice. His only exposure to danger and violence had come from college football (in truth, a brutal sport back then, with almost no protective gear or rules), and Stoker credited his experiences as a quarterback with giving him the toughness to survive anything he might encounter in the oil boomtowns.

Unable to get a hotel room in Beaumont, or even a cot or a chair, Stoker finally found a filthy, barely furnished hotel room at the Spindletop oil

Gusherometer

Our rise to \$300,000.

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Boomtown Museum

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field. He then located the resident doctor in an equally dirty, bare office, who delightedly handed over his entire practice in order to go on an extended drunk.

Stoker's first case was to sew up a roughneck's leg, which earned him twenty dollars—a fortune compared to what he would normally have received for an office visit. Suddenly the dirt and chaos were more bearable; as he put it, “How often the possession of money changes the outlook on this old mud-ball!” He also saw his first gusher, confirming Spindletop's promise of wealth.

Word of Stoker's skill traveled, and soon he found himself on call literally day and night—delivering babies and treating everything from broken bones to fevers to bullet wounds. He got very little rest but soon became hooked on the “strange, tense excitement” of the oil field. Before long he was “rushing through the days as wildly as the others,” earning a reputation for being able to reach and treat a patient in record time.

One day a huge fire engulfed much of the Spindletop field, destroying wells and equipment and taking lives; when the smoke cleared, Stoker found that his life had become too quiet, and he missed the excitement. Along with many other boomers, he headed to the new boomtowns of Saratoga and Batson Prairie, which were not only rough and lawless but presented new dangers. At Saratoga he walked over undulating, “springy” ground caused from underground gas pressure building just before a well blowout; at Batson he nearly died from poison gas escaping from the wells.

Eventually Stoker decided to return to a more civilized world, where, in his words, he could be “buried in decency and order.” He never forgot the drama of his oil boom days, though, and his lively, detailed writing reflected those memories. He originally went to the oil patch to reap financial reward but gained much more than that, learning about a broad spectrum of medicine and developing his own methods for treating injuries, disease, poison gas inhalation, and difficult births, not to mention gaining experience in human nature and the ways of the world.

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