

# ROLL CALL - Friends of Camp Hearne

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Dear Friends,

Many of you are aware that Hearne, Texas, was the site of an "Alien Enemy Internment Camp" during World War II. Our rural traits as a community were actually an advantage for us in locating this camp just outside Hearne. We had the open space necessary to build the camp. It was basically flat and close to the railhead, but not too close to town. With the surrounding farms in desperate need of labor, prisoners were a welcomed addition to the workforce. The camp was built within six months to house 4800 prisoners by the Army Corps of Engineers and was ready for use by December 1942. It did not take American's forces long in their first North African engagement to begin filling **Camp Hearne** with Hitler's elite *Afrika Korps* in 1943. This also brought a host of American officers and guards to **Camp Hearne**, some of whom made Robertson County their home.

Wartime industry was not an option for Robertson County communities. There were few left to work in factories. Throughout our young history, our economical prowess has always been agriculture, but our local production was suffering. The placement of an internment camp in Hearne would be the answer to many problems. However, there were other agricultural areas, just as remote and in need, that were vying for the same solution. The Hearne Internment Camp, as it was called then, became a reality only because of the focused persuasion of Hearne's Chamber of Commerce president, Mr. Roy Henry, and a group of community supporters that chose to get involved. It is our hope that we can assemble similar community support for our vision for **Camp Hearne** today. Your investment in our community is already greatly appreciated. Your continued involvement in our community's future economic development is essential. It is only through the help of our friends and neighbors that a vision like Mr. Henry's becomes reality.

Good history is always worth repeating. Mr. Henry's vision recognized our community resources as meeting the special needs of another. Our vision sees Robertson County as an emerging travel destination for thousands of Texans and other out-of-state visitors. Rural tourism is a multimillion-dollar business in Texas. It accounted for 47,000 related jobs in 1999. **Camp Hearne** is just one of many interesting historic sites in Robertson County that are yet to be developed. By sharing our stories with others, our community will benefit in several ways. Tourism creates new jobs and businesses. It brings in outside dollars for existing businesses. It adds to the tax base that supports community services. And, tourism usually accomplishes these things without demanding too much from existing local services.

**Camp Hearne's** untold story is that of Rural America's contribution to the War effort at home. The coinciding renovation of Hearne's Depot to reflect these same War Years will complements this theme. It was a time when train travel was at its peak. Soldiers in uniform rode free. The USO canteens provided old fashion hospitality. While American's young men went to the battlefield, those who stayed behind played a very important role on the homefront.

Although this destination is just beginning to materialize as a historic attraction, our vision for our community is clear. We want and need to diversify our local economic base. Tourism takes advantage of our existing resources and provides an economical development strategy that can be implemented quickly without major infrastructure upgrades. Partnering with other locations in a region will serve to strengthen our appeal. Early plans include capitalizing on our rural roads as bicycle trails that will potentially link all Robertson County communities. The creation of a Volksmarch ("the people's walk") around the Camp and Airport will introduce a leisure walking trail that will attract a different tourist activist. **Camp Hearne's** Museum/Visitor Center will exhibit artifacts from archeological surveys and other collectables donated by local citizens, former guards and the prisoners themselves that appeals to yet another tourist seeking an educational/historical experience.

What we have here is an opportunity. What we need is help transforming our vision into a reality. Tourism is an industry. One we can develop in our rural community. A plan is being formulated to present **Camp Hearne** as a travel destination. A visit to Hearne brings travelers through other communities in Robertson County that have their own history to market. We are asking for your support to complete Robertson County's first planned tourist attraction. Your contribution today will greatly improve our chances for success. Hopefully, you will join our endeavor as a generous supporter and help us share our rural surroundings, historical structures and sites and hometown hospitality with visitors seeking a rural travel experience.

**ROLL CALL - Friends of Camp Hearne** is a non-profit, 501(c)3 tax-exempted organization that has already succeeded in obtaining Texas Historical Commission official recognition of **Camp Hearne** as a historic, archeological site. Our continuing goal is to develop a park and museum that will tell others this unique story. We sincerely ask that you consider our cause and give your support to this project.

Please accept our gratitude in advance for your consideration .

Sincerely,

Cathy Lazarus, Chair  
Board of Directors

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