

**Harris County Archives
Houston, Texas**

Finding Aid

**BAYLAND ORPHAN HOME:
BOARD OF TRUSTEES RECORDS
CR030
(1867 - 1948)**

Size: .8 cubic feet

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: None

Acquisition: Auditor's Office

Accession Number: 2003.009,
2003.017

Processed by: Sarah Canby Jackson,
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Citation: [Identification of Item], Bayland Orphan Home Records, Harris County Archives, Houston, Texas.

Agency History:

Upon the petition of Rev. C. C. Preston, the Texas legislature approved a bill on September 24, 1866, "To incorporate the 'Orphan's Home,' at Bayland, in Harris county, State of Texas." In addition to naming the first board members - W. P. Ballinger, J. L. Bryan, M. S. Munson, H. F. Gillette, J. T. Brady, Ashbel Smith, and F. H. Merriman – and providing them with the statutory powers to govern and manage the institution, the legislation also stated that the institution would be nonsectarian and open to all indigent white children free of charge. The Board elected Rev. Preston superintendent upon passage of the act and the home immediately opened to receive orphans.

The earliest existent recorded Board meeting took place in Houston, Texas, at the home of Dr. John L. Bryan on January 15, 1867. The urgent need for resources compelled the Board to hire traveling agents to raise subscriptions to support the home. Appeals were made for donations to buy land and a building to house the children. A new superintendent was hired to manage the running of the home and provisions were made for a matron and teachers.

In February 1869, 205 acres of land and a house were purchased from Dr. Bryan for \$4000 on San Jacinto Bay in eastern Harris County, midway between Houston and Galveston and accessible only by steamboat. (Currently Morgan's Point, Baytown, Texas.) The majority of the money to purchase the property came from Houston and Galveston.

Fund raising, both in cash and kind, became increasingly difficult. In 1873 the Board contacted former Governor Elisha M. Pease concerning the availability of state land for the orphans. Pease replied on March 19, 1873, that the 6th Legislature had set aside lands for orphans in 1856. However, as nothing had been done with the lands, he was concerned they would revert to other purposes. The Board sent H. R. Gillette to Austin to lobby for the lands. On June 5, 1873, the legislature granted the home 48,635 acres of land. If the home ceased to exist, the land would revert to the state. By 1875, the Board began to sell the lands to raise money to support the home.

An ongoing function of the Board concerned the admission and release of children from the home. Although the term “orphan” was used in the name of the home, the children – both boys and girls - were not always orphans in the sense that both parents were dead. Often children were admitted “on account of the extreme poverty of the applicants.” Provisions were made for mothers to accompany their children to the home. They were expected to work and were provided room, board, and clothing. The Board also voted to allow private pupils in the schools to support the home. However, only white children were admitted and no “defective” children or those of bad character were allowed.

From the beginning, the Board required any application to receive children to be in writing to prevent abuse and exploitation of the children. As the laws concerning adoption changed throughout the years, the Board kept current with those changes and acted accordingly. By 1895 children would only be released if they had been legally adopted.

As early as October 1886 the Board began to discuss moving the home closer to Houston due to the “undesirable locality” and “difficulty of access.” In the fall of 1887 the Board determined to buy the J. C. Baldwin property on the North Side of Buffalo Bayou, 1.75 miles from the courthouse. In an early effort to relinquish responsibility for the home, the Board suggested that the city of Houston buy the property for the home and the state relocate the State Orphans Asylum to Houston, but neither the city nor the state was interested. In January 1888 the Charter was amended and the name changed from “Orphans Home” to “Bayland Orphans Home at Houston” with the corporation to exist for an additional 50 years. In June the Board hired Kezia DePelchin as matron for the home. The farming operation became insupportable in the new location. In 1897 the Board sold the farm portion of the land. By 1907 only thirteen children remained in the home (a father had just removed his seven children that had been placed there).

In 1908 the Board once again began to look for another tract of land for the home. In 1912, Joseph F. Meyer donated 67.9 acres of land southwest of Houston. On New Years Eve 1914, the Baldwin Place home burned to the ground. No one was hurt and some furniture was saved. The Board decided to plat the “OLD HOME PLACE” and began plans for the new home in March 1915. A year later the children were relocated.

Financial problems continued to plague the Board along with a low census of children. The Board members themselves were aging and it was becoming difficult to bring in new

members to serve. In August 1917 the Board passed a resolution to find a “religious, fraternal or other organization with influence” to take over the work and assets of the home. In September it was agreed that Harris County would acquire the Bayland Orphans Home. The transfer took place on October 1, 1918. However, the county was slow to fulfill its obligations. On June 24, 1920, the Board notified the county to return the home to them by August 1, 1920. Negotiations ensued between the county and the board and two years later an agreement was signed by both parties. Harris County would build a home for white girls in Bellaire and Bayland would be used for boys.

The Board continued to manage their financial assets and to make significant donations to the homes of furniture, equipment, animals, and cash. In 1925 they donated \$4000 for a schoolhouse to be located between the “Bayland Girls Home and the Harris County Girl’s Home.” In January 1932, J. V. Dealy, the long time Treasurer, was accused of embezzling \$4338.42 from the funds of the home. Although unable to make restitution, the Board decided not to call in his bond and agreed to a repayment plan by Dealy and the Elgin heirs. The Board never recouped this loss.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s the Board continued to age. By the mid-1940s there were only three members left serving on the Board. In 1948 A. E. Clarkson proposed to liquidate the assets by giving the 1/16 royalites to the land in Callahan County to Harris County, \$1000 to Houston Church Women for maintenance of the Chapel at the Bellaire School, \$2237 for chlorinating units and equipment for the swimming pools at the Bayland Orphans Home for Boys and the Mary Burnett School for Girls, and \$180.27 to the Mary Burnett School to improve the swimming pool area. The Board dissolved and the records closed on September 19, 1948.

Bibliography:

No definitive history has been written on the Bayland Orphans Home. The following sources are available at the Harris County Archives or on the Internet.

Beverly, Trevia Wooster. *Suffer the Children: A History of the Confederate Orphanage at Baylands, Harris County Texas 1867 to May 1918*. Houston: Tejas Publications & Research, 2003.

Board of Trustees, Bayland Orphan’s Home. *Orphan’s Home at Bayland, Harris County, Texas*. Houston, Texas: A. C. Gray & Co., Printers and Book-Binders, 1871. This short pamphlet contains a list of the inmates of the orphanage from 1866 to 1871 including county of origin, age, date of entry, date leaving, and remarks.

Handbook of Texas Online, “Bayland Orphans’ Home for Boys.”

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/BB/ynb1.html> (accessed May 14, 2007)

Scope and Contents Note:

Minutes, financial and legal records, correspondence and printed materials document the activities and functions of the Board of Trustees of the Bayland Orphan Home from 1867 to 1948. The earliest minute book, *Old Book of Minutes, Bayland Orphan Home* (1867 – 1890), records Board deliberations, decisions, resolutions, financial reports, correspondence, and memorials and has been indexed by various users with notes on the inside cover and fly pages. Of particular interest are the organization's By-laws (February 4, 1871), the difficulties in raising funds, the decision to relocate to Houston, the Board's decisions concerning the welfare of children, and their offer to care for the children orphaned by the hurricane that devastated Sabine Pass in 1886. The second volume of minutes, *Bayland Orphan [Home]* (1891 – 1932), documents changes in admission rules, the establishment of the Lady Auxiliary Board (1895), the sale of the Bayland Farm (1897), and the decision to relocate to southwest Houston (1912 – 1916). Of particular interest is the original plat for the "Bayland Home Addition" (August 9, 1916). The minutes record the desire of the board to have another entity take over the responsibilities for the home (1918), the negotiations with Harris County (1920 – 1922), the management of the Board's assets, and the embezzlement by J. V. Dealy (1932). Obituaries of G. W. Kidd, p. 112, S. J. Westheimer, p. 299, and William Christian, p. 302 detail the lives of men who were involved with the Bayland Orphan Home. *Minute Book, No. 3, Bayland Orphan's Home* (1932 – 1948), the final volume of minutes, continues to document financial decisions, the removal of the Boy's Home to Clear Lake (1937), the disposition of the Board of Trustee Records (1932, 1935) and the final dissolution of the Board (1948). Of particular interest are the obituaries of Jacob V. Dealy, p. 6, Joseph F. Meyer, p. 22, Ennis Cargill p. 31, and Chester Bryan, p. 62 – 63.

The six volumes of financial records (1883 – 1947) complement the minutes and document the difficulties in raising money, the financial transactions in running the home, and the management of the assets of the corporation. Entries record contributors, employees and their salaries, the sales of land, purchasers, and the terms of sale.

Correspondence, financial records, legal documents, and printed materials filed within the volumes of minutes and financial records reveal the functions of the Board from 1870 – 1939. Correspondence covers topics from donations (1870) to land sales (1884, 1904) to the return of children to their parents (1915). Financial documents (1897 – 1918) record assets, monthly expenditures, and worksheets, however, a letter, receipt, and list of contributors to a fundraising matinee at the Majestic Theatre (1917) document the effort expended to raise funds for the home. Legal documents contain a report on the examination of titles to land owned by the corporation (1914), the agreement between Bayland Orphan's Home and Harris County (1922), and the 1939 amendment to the Charter of the Bayland Orphans Home. Of particular interest are the three subject files which deal with an agreement with J. Harrell to lease land on Richmond Road and the drainage ditch that was built (includes contract, specifications, invoices, receipts, inspector's reports), the documentation of the embezzlement by J. V. Dealy, and the removal of the Boy's Home to Clear Lake.

Unfortunately, these records provide only a glimpse of the records that at one time were created by the Board of Trustees. The remainder, at least one box of records, has been lost.

Archivist's Note: Provenance and Processing Note

The Board of Trustees transferred the records of the home to Harry Washburn, Harris County Auditor, on April 26, 1932, for safekeeping with an additional itemized list which included the minute and financial books and a box of papers in 1935. When the Board ceased to exist in August 1948, the remaining records were given to the Auditor's Office. Only the present nine volumes survive, none of the correspondence or other papers that were indicated earlier. Seven of those nine volumes were transferred to the Houston Metropolitan Research Center in the early 1980s as a part of the Regional Historical Records Depository program and returned to Harris County in the summer of 2003 by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. In December 2003, an additional two volumes were found in the Auditor's Office and transferred to the Harris County Archives.

The volumes were used as convenient places to "file" papers, often with no discernible order or arrangement. The loose papers have been arranged for the most part by series and placed after the volumes of minutes and financial records in the arrangement of the records. Those records that were fastened together remain so physically and intellectually in the arrangement. Separation sheets indicate the original and new locations for these documents.

It should be noted that a significant number of records have been lost and that all of the volumes may not have been accessible to the public until the present. Therefore, secondary sources concerning the history of the home should be treated accordingly.

Additional information on the Bayland Home may be found in the Juvenile Probation Records (1913 – 1989), Harris County Archives, Houston, Texas.

Inventory

Series / Title	Date	Location
Minutes:		
<i>Old Book of Minutes, Bayland Orphan Home</i>	1867, 01/15 – 1890, 09/29	0528-X-01
<i>Bayland Orphan [Home]</i>	1891, 09/24 – 1932, 02/15	0091-V-00
<i>Minute Book, No. 3, Bayland Orphan's Home</i>	1932, 04/26 – 1948, 08/19	
Front Cover – pg. 26	1932, 04/26 – 1936, 10/30	0528-X-08
Pg. 27 – pg. 46	1937, 01/05 – 1940, 11/11	0528-X-09
Pg. 47 – pg. 70	1940, 11/07 – 1947, 09/08	0528-X-10
Pg. 71 – pg. 94	1947, 09/26 – 1948, 09/19	0528-X-11
Financial Record Books:		
<i>Bayland O Home Cash Book</i>	1895, 01/01 – 1904, 02/07	0528-X-02
<i>Cash, Bayland Orphans Home</i>	1904, 02/01 – 1914, 10/29	0528-X-03
<i>Cash Book</i>	1915, 01/01 – 1932, 03/17	0528-X-04
<i>Cash Book, Bayland Orphan's Home</i>	1915, 12/04 – 1918, 03/18	0528-X-05
<i>Cash-Journal and Ledger No. 3, Bayland Orphan's Home</i>	1932, 01/27 – 1947, 11/20	0528-X-06
<i>Bills Receivable Book / B. O. Home</i>	1883, 03/02 – 1896, 09/15	0528-X-07
Items originally filed in books:		
Correspondence: General	1870, 07/12 – 1915, 02/08	0528-X-12
Notes, Memorandum	n.d.	0528-X-13
Reports	1902, 06/10	0528-X-14
Subjects:	1914, 01/17 – 1937, 04/28	
Richmond Road Property	1914, 01/17 – 1915, 05/10	0528-X-15
Embezzlement of Orphan Funds	1921, 10/26 – 1932, 02/06	0528-X-16

Series / Title	Date	Location
Removal of Bayland Orphans Home to Clear Lake	1937, 01/14 – 1937, 04/28	0528-X-17
Financial	1897, 03/09 – 1918, 03/13	0528-X-18
Legal: General	1909, 02/23 – 1939, 03/01	0528-X-19
Legal: References to Minutes	n.d.	0528-X-20
Printed Materials	n.d.	0528-X-21