

# CEDAR HILL MUSEUM OF HISTORY

P. O. BOX 1021  
CEDAR HILL, TX 75106

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## NEWSLETTER

### CONTRACTS AWARDED FOR DESIGN OF NEW PUBLIC LIBRARY & SIGNATURE PARK

In May, the City Council awarded design contracts to PGAL for professional architectural and engineering services and Ten Eyck Landscape Architects for landscape architectural design services for the new public library and signature park project.

The contracts were awarded after the City underwent a public Request for Qualifications and extensive evaluation process. Both PGAL and Ten Eyck have a wealth of experience designing municipal projects, including the City of Seguin Public Library, City of Allen Public Library and Civic Auditorium, and the San Antonio Botanical Garden.

The design process will kick off this summer in coordination with a citizen design committee and with ample opportunity for public input.



*Cedar Hill Highlights*

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### MUSEUM OPERATIONS

The Museum office is temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If you need information or assistance from the Museum, please email:

[Karen@cedarhillmuseum.com](mailto:Karen@cedarhillmuseum.com)

or

[Geri@cedarhillmuseum.com](mailto:Geri@cedarhillmuseum.com)

Please see the Museum's website for future updates on re-opening and hours of operation:

[www.cedarhillmuseum.com](http://www.cedarhillmuseum.com)

Museum members continue to prepare for the Museum's future home in the new public library.

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

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## CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS PHOTO?



### CLUES:

1. She is a very early pioneer in Cedar Hill.
2. This picture can be found in the book, *History of Cedar Hill, Texas*.
3. Her marriage license was the first one to be issued in Dallas County.

The first person to correctly identify the photo will be recognized in the next newsletter.

Please email answers to:

[FLee.48@hotmail.com](mailto:FLee.48@hotmail.com)

## *Donating Historical Materials*

At this time, the Museum cannot accept donations or loans of **Artifacts** or **Furniture**.

The Museum welcomes historic documents that comply with the Museum's Donation Policy.

*Before you throw away those old pictures, letters or other documents, check with us to see if they may be of historical importance.*

The Museum encourages you to donate the following types of materials:

- *Old photographs, postcards, and other images of Cedar Hill, including school photos*
- *Documents that shed light on any aspect of Cedar Hill*
- *Old diaries and letters that have something about the life or people of Cedar Hill*
- *Old maps of the town or properties in town*
- *Books containing information on Cedar Hill or its residents*
- *Records of past business or organizations in town.*

*For more information about contributing material to the Museum, please email:*

[Geri@cedarhillmuseum.com](mailto:Geri@cedarhillmuseum.com)

**The Museum is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.**



## THE FAMOUS SWIMMING REPTILE OF CEDAR HILL, TEXAS

By Alan Peters

Swimming slowly in an ancient shallow, salty sea which once covered much of North America's interior, a large, long-necked reptile died and settled into the soft mud where Cedar Hill State Park is today. Its scientific name is *Libonectes morgani*. Pronounced Lie- bo- neck' tees, the name seems appropriate since the creature's neck was eighteen feet five inches long. Translated, Libonectes means "southwest swimmer". The name was chosen by paleontologist Kenneth Carpenter in 1997 because Cedar Hill's famous swimmer was located in the Southwest United States. But, fifty years earlier the monster was known by another name, *Elasmosaurus morgani*.

During the Great Depression of the 1930's, Andy Anderson's farm on the west side of Cedar Hill had a number of tenant farmers. One farmer, T. J. Tidwell, ventured to the north pasture searching for possible sulphur deposits. To his amazement he stumbled across an enormous set of bones. The shapes resembled a turtle shell with paddle shaped legs, a long, long neck, and a small perfectly preserved skull with large round eye sockets. The stomach area had ribs and numerous rocks, mostly black ones.

Once the skeleton was excavated and covered with a tent for protection, Mr. Tidwell charged visitors to see it. Eventually, Andy Anderson, the land owner, donated the fossil to Southern Methodist University with the promise to "write about it so common folks

can understand". At the Museum, Charles G. Morgan carefully prepared, measured, examined the fossilized beast. It was complete and well preserved except for the tail. Erosion had carried it away from years of exposure.

Plesiosaurs represent the group of extinct marine reptiles that swam the seas of the Mesozoic Era (Age of Dinosaurs). Elasmosaurs were specialized plesiosaurs that had very long necks and small skulls. The famous Cedar Hill lizard was originally named *Elasmosaurus morgani* in honor of the geology instructor who patiently and diligently prepared the skeleton for SMU. However, slight differences in the nose openings earned the reptile a new classification, (*L. morgani*).

*Libonectes morgani* was quite a fancy reptile. At first glance it seems to have the head of a lizard, teeth of a crocodile, a long thick snake-like neck, a turtle shaped body, and big paddle-like legs. Researchers from SMU provide us with some details: Its total length is about 35 feet (maybe 40 feet if the long-necked beauty had not lost its tail). The body is rather flat with four limbs like a whale.

The thick curving neck is eighteen feet long with limited flexibility. Oddly, the skull is small in comparison to the creature's overall size. It is only eighteen inches long and six inches wide; about the same width as an adult human skull. Nasal openings are set near the eye sockets, not at the tip of the snout. Cone shaped teeth are designed to stab food, not chew it.

Imagine such a creature swimming in the ocean and trying to catch a fish meal with a mouth only six inches wide. Unable to chew the prey, it likely flings the fish in the air and swallows it as the meal falls and aligns with the throat. Cormorants catch and eat fish in such a fashion. *L. morgani* uses stomach stones (gastroliths) to grind the prey. The Cedar Hill reptile skeleton was filled with a large quantity of stomach stones inside its rib cage. Most of them were taken as souvenirs when they visited Mr. Tidwell's tent.

As a swimmer, the Cedar Hill specimen is known to have swum a considerable distance to gather the flint gastroliths it used to grind its meals. The closest shoreline at the time was probably in the north central Texas area. The creature was free to roam the oceans along with other swimming reptiles such as Mosasaurs, Ichthyosaurs, Tylosaurs plus various fish and sharks, too. All of these have been found in Dallas, Ellis, and Tarrant counties. The blue and tan colored Eagle Ford shale formation on the west side of Cedar Hill makes an excellent place to find such fossils. Invertebrates, especially clams, oysters, and cephalopods (ammonites) are also common in the soft shale deposits.

During the Cretaceous Period the Cedar Hill area was covered by a shallow seaway. Sand and mud from some unknown landmass were deposited onto the seafloor by rivers, spreading material evenly and gently. It buried shells living on the bottom as well as any animals, shellfish, and plankton that settled from the waters above. Conditions were perfect for preservation.

When *L. morgani* hit bottom, it settled in the right place at the right time. The right time was at the end of the Mesozoic Era, the Cretaceous Period, the Eagle Ford formation, estimated to be approximately 90 to 80 million years ago.

Fortunately, it was discovered and researched at the right time. Today much of the Eagle Ford shale is under water again below Joe Pool Lake. Its original location rests within the boundary of Cedar Hill State Park. Thanks to Andy Anderson, Charles Morgan, and others at Southern Methodist University, we have the records of *L. morgani*, the famous "Southwest swimmer" of Cedar Hill, Texas.

**IT IS FAMOUS BECAUSE PALEONTOLOGISTS AGREE IT IS THE BEST, PRESERVED SPECIMEN OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD.**



T. W. Tidwell, who found and uncovered *Elasmosaurus morgani*, holds a part of the mid-skeleton showing ribs and gastroliths. A thin veneer of concretionary lime covered the bones of the head and the neck vertebrae. The neck is over 18 feet long.

#### RESOURCES:

[Discover Texas Dinosaurs](#); Charles E. Finsley. Taylor Trade Publishing, 1999

<https://www.dinosaurfact.net/Marine/Libonectes.php>

<https://www.sachspal.de/libonectes/>

[http://fossilworks.org/bridge.pl?a=taxonInfo&taxon\\_no=100109](http://fossilworks.org/bridge.pl?a=taxonInfo&taxon_no=100109)

<https://palaeo-electronica.org/content/in-press/418-plesiosaur-mastication>

[https://sites.smu.edu/shulermuseum/type\\_specimens/SMU69120.html](https://sites.smu.edu/shulermuseum/type_specimens/SMU69120.html)

<https://thereaderwiki.com/en/Elasmosaurus>

## SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

Museum members and volunteers are essential to maintain the Museum and expand services to the community. This month, we spotlight the Vice-President and Secretary of the Museum Board.

### NORMAN AND SUSAN PATTEN

Norman and Susan both grew up in Dallas and graduated from Kimball High School. They moved to Cedar Hill in 1990, because they felt it would be a good place to work, worship and raise their three young children, and it's a decision they have never regretted.

Both are active members of the Downtown Church of Christ. They enjoy sports, the outdoors and especially family time spent with their eight grandchildren.

Norman and Susan chair the Museum's annual **TOWER CITY CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT**.



**NORMAN** has been a member of the Cedar Hill Museum of History for the past ten years and currently serves as Vice-President of the Board. He served as Board President from 2014 - 2018. Norman is also involved with the Cedar Hill Historic Downtown Preservation Board and is very interested in the continued revitalization of the downtown area. Norman graduated from UTA with a degree in architecture and has had his own architectural firm since 1984.

**SUSAN** has been the Secretary of the Museum Board for the past two years. She studied at North Texas State University (now UNT) with plans of being a teacher, but soon devoted herself full time to raising their children. She has worked with Norman since he began his architectural practice. Susan enjoys learning about American history and especially the history of our local area.

# THANK YOU MUSEUM MEMBERS

The Museum appreciates and depends on the support of its members and encourages new members to join the team.



## INVITATION TO NEW MEMBERS

Do you love history? Do you love Cedar Hill? If so, we want **YOU** to become a member of the Cedar Hill Museum of History! (*Membership Application Form on Page 8*)

## GREAT WAYS TO SUPPORT THE MUSEUM

- Museum Membership
- Monetary Donations – by PayPal or Check  

Mail checks to:  
Cedar Hill Museum of History,  
P. O. Box 1021, Cedar Hill, TX 75106
- Memorial or Honorary Donations - Please contact the Museum for donation forms
- Select the Museum as your Charity in the following programs:

**North Texas Giving Day – Sept. 17, 2020**

**Amazon Smiles: [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/smiles)**

**Kroger Community Rewards Program**

### KROGER COMMUNITY REWARDS

This program makes fundraising easy by donating to local organizations based on the shopping you do every day. Once you link your Card to an organization, all you have to do is shop at Kroger and swipe your Shopper's Card.

Go to [www.kroger.com](http://www.kroger.com). Click on **Sign In** and select **Create Account**. Follow instructions on website.

**Please note:** You must have a Kroger shopper's card. Ask at the check-out counter next time you shop. They can help you get your card.

A digital account is needed to participate in Kroger Community Rewards. If you already have a digital account, simply link your Shopper's Card to your account so that all transactions apply toward the organization you choose.

Selecting the organization that you wish to support is as simple as updating the Kroger Community Rewards selection on your digital account.

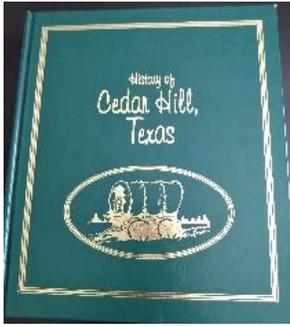
Sign in to your digital account.  
Search for your organization.  
Enter the name or NPO number of the organization you wish to support.

Select the:

**CEDAR HILL MUSEUM OF HISTORY (VR531)**

from the list and click "Save."

**BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM THE MUSEUM**



**HISTORY OF CEDAR HILL, TEXAS**

COST: \$65.00 plus \$5.00 shipping



**GONE WITH THE WIND -  
THE 1936 CEDAR HILL TORNADO**

COST: \$35.00 plus \$5.00 shipping

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***VISION STATEMENT***

***WE ENVISION A MUSEUM OF HISTORY THAT HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON OUR COMMUNITY, EMBRACES CEDAR HILL'S DISTINCTIVE HERITAGE AND ENLIGHTENS THROUGH MEANINGFUL AND ENGAGING PROGRAMS.***

***MISSION STATEMENT***

***THE MISSION OF THE CEDAR HILL MUSEUM OF HISTORY IS "TO COLLECT, PRESERVE AND SHARE THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF CEDAR HILL BY PROVIDING MEMORABLE AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES CONSISTENT WITH OUR HOMETOWN SPIRIT."***

**MUSEUM BOARD**

**EXECUTIVE**

President Karen Aruda  
Vice-President Norman Patten  
Secretary Susan Patten  
Treasurer Geri Klauck

**TRUSTEES**

Patty Bushart  
Georgia Calloway  
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Linda Patton  
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Jerry West

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*Where a community embraces heritage and nature*  
**Be a part of history ... Join today!**

There has never been a more exciting time to become a member of the Cedar Hill Museum of History. We have interesting artifacts and exhibits, oral histories and a wide variety of membership benefits to enthrall history lovers of all ages. Rediscover Cedar Hill's history and join our membership family today.

The Cedar Hill Museum of History wants you to discover yourself through the collective past. Choose from a variety of Annual membership levels:

**Annual membership levels:**

- Student/Teacher      \$10
- Individual            \$35
- Family                \$50
- Supporting Member   \$100
- Sustaining Member   \$250
- Patron Member       \$500
- Leadership Circle    \$1,000

We have moved our offices to 409 Texas Street. We are planning on locating our displays in the new library in 2022. View our traveling display in the Cedar Hill Government Center on Uptown Boulevard in Midtown.

The Cedar Hill Museum of History is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to:      Cedar Hill Museum of History  
P. O. Box 1021  
Cedar Hill, TX 75106-1021

Please return this application form with your payment. THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE MUSEUM.