

History of Brenham Fine Arts League

The Brenham Art Club was founded by a group of Brenham women who met informally in their homes to pursue the creation and appreciation of various forms of art. These meetings enriched the lives of the participants and nurtured a desire to share the world of art with the entire community.

In September 1956, the Brenham Art Club was formally organized through the special efforts of Jeanne Hawley, Madeleine Schwecke and Golda Johnson.

In addition to the local organization, the Club was instrumental in organizing the Lone Star Art Guild in 1961. Composed of art clubs in a 150 mile radius of Houston, the Guild's first president was Jeanne Hawley, who was also the first president of the Brenham Art Club.

Membership and enthusiasm of the Brenham Art Club grew rapidly and many artists were invited to Brenham for workshops and demonstrations. Art classes were held for adults and children in the Presbyterian Fellowship Hall.

Annual art shows were held in the Brenham Auditorium and from its first year, the Club exhibited paintings annually at the Washington County Fair. In 1967, an auction of art at the fair was initiated. It was a successful endeavor and a project of the club that continues today.

As the promotion of art flourished in the community and the Club activities expanded, the need for an art center building increased. With the growth of a special fund, a building at 402 College Avenue was purchased in May 1969. In appreciation of the devoted support of Mrs. John Giddings and William Schell, the building was named the Giddings-Schell Art Center, honoring Mrs. Giddings' husband and Mr. Schnell's mother. In appreciation

of Mr. & Mrs. Hawley and Mr. & Mrs. N. W. Freeman, the Center had a Hawley Gallery and a Freeman's Children Gallery.

As the Club grew, so did its many activities. The establishment of the "Best Floral Award" at the Spring Show and "Best Painting" for the County Fair Exhibit, all in appreciation and honor of devoted members and patrons. An Art Scholarship Fund was also established in 1969.

The note on the Art Center was paid in the Club year of 1971-1972. In July 1976, the building was sold and plans made for a new Center. The Club purchased the building at 113 West Alamo and the first meeting was held on June 20, 1977. A formal dedication and grand opening was held on March 31, 1978, with members, County and City Officials attending. In 1980, the Art Center building was sold and a 99-year lease obtained for a portion of the building for the Art Center. Shortly thereafter the interior was remodeled in time for the 1980 Lone Star Art Guild Convention hosted by the Brenham Art Club.

In the decade of the 1980's, the Brenham Art club changed the name to The Brenham Fine Art's League. Awarding scholarships to art students, as well as the various activities established in the past year, the League continued to advance the expansion of fine arts within the community. On May 2, 1987, the Brenham Fine Arts League once again hosted the Lone Star Art Guild Convention.

In 1992, a complete renovation updated the Gallery and a gala Open House for the public followed. The League continued its participation in activities in and around the Brenham area. The League began a yearly "Salad Luncheon" allowing the community the opportunity to view the members' art works at the Gallery.

The 1997 Lone Star Art Guild Convention was held at Blinn College in Brenham. It was hosted by the Brenham Fine Arts League who was graciously assisted by the Brazos Valley Art League of Bryan-College Station. The Convention was successful and provided an outstanding art show for the community.

A long awaited addition of an Art Library, complete with bookcases and art books, was realized in 1998. This generous donation was in memory of deceased member H.L.P. Moore by his family, Mrs. Josephine Moore and sons. In appreciation, the Library is named for H.L.P. Moore. In 2003, Josephine Moore was awarded an Honorary Life Membership for her continued support.

In over 50 years since its founding, the Brenham Fine Arts League has continued to maintain the ideals set forth by the original founders. Membership and sale of art has flourished in the Brenham area and has extended to collectors throughout Texas and beyond. The Lone Star Art Guild has also expanded to include a 200 mile radius of Houston and boasts of approximately 20 Member Clubs.

In 2015, the Art League received a Grant from LCRA for improvements to the Art League interior and the remodel began in 2016. It had a great impact on the League and enabled the front section of the building to function as a gallery, known as the Downtown Art Gallery, with the back section utilized for all types of art classes. This has had a positive effect on the League and Gallery alike.