

## History of the Chandler Museum & Visitor Center

The idea for a museum was presented to a meeting of citizens in November, 2009. Chandler was established as a township in 1889, but its history and character were being overshadowed by modern developments.

The Chandler Historical Society was formed at this meeting and officers were elected with the goal of finding a location for a museum. Juanita Price was elected President; Jim Powell, Vice President; Lucinda McKay, Secretary; and Mary Stewart, Treasurer. Board members were Nancy Bertholf, Rosie Bussman, Charles Cade, Martha Copeland, Dorothy McHam, Sue Mills and Charles Price.

After considering several properties, the group was presented with an opportunity to purchase the home place of former U.S. Senator Ralph Yarborough by his great nephew Mark Mallett. Numerous fundraisers, grants, and gifts made it possible for the house to be purchased and moved to its McCain Park location in June of 2012. Skilled craftsmen generously volunteered their time and completed renovations in time for the grand opening in March, 2014.

The Chandler Museum and Visitor Center is operated and funded by the Chandler Historical Society and the City of Chandler.

Initial funding for purchase of the house was provided by the Chandler Economic Development Corporation with additional funding for renovations and restoration.



The Yarborough Home in the Original Location on Old Tyler Road

# Welcome to the Chandler MUSEUM & VISITOR CENTER



Located in McCain Park  
721 Hwy 31 West  
Chandler, Texas 75758

CALL FOR MUSEUM HOURS

903-849-2243 or 903-849-2243

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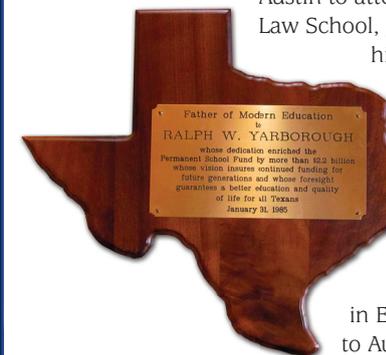
TEA AND TOURS AVAILABLE FOR GROUPS OF 12 OR LESS BY RESERVATION ONLY 903-521-5962

## Ralph W. Yarborough

Chandler native son Ralph Webster Yarborough, a man of the republic, sponsored more legislation in his 12 years as US Senator than any other Texas representative. He was co-author of the Cold War GI Bill enabling thousands of peacetime veterans to apply for benefits. He was the first Senator to introduce a bill to provide federal funds for special education and supported funding for science labs, libraries, Headstart, bilingual education, public broadcasting and Adult Education. He sponsored health care legislation for retired citizens (Medicare/Medicaid). Under his leadership Federal workers' status was upgraded. He sponsored legislation for new recreational areas for all people including the Big Thicket, Padre Island National Seashore, Big Ben and Guadalupe National Parks. He was the only Southern Senator voting for the Civil Rights Amendment of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.



Ralph was born in 1903 in Chandler, the seventh of eleven children born to Richard Yarborough and Nannie Spear Yarborough. He attended Chandler Schools before graduating 11th grade at Tyler High School in 1918. He received an appointment to the US Naval Academy but only attended one year. He realized that with his math skills lacking, he would never attain the rank he sought and returned to Chandler, and began taking courses at Sam Houston State University. He dreamed of going to Europe and caught a steamer to France. He soon knew that unless he spoke French he wasn't going to be able to support himself. He traveled to Germany and then back to London where, penniless, he hung out at the docks seeking work on a freighter to pay his way back to the US, finally making his way back to Chandler in 1924. He taught in country schools in Henderson County before heading to Austin to attend the University of Texas Law School, graduating in 1927 with highest of honors.



Ralph Yarborough considered a political career at this time but his childhood sweetheart, whom he married in 1928, said she would not marry a politician. His law career began in El Paso but soon led him back to Austin when he was appointed

Assistant Attorney General in 1930. He became the 53rd District Judge in 1936 and when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor he enlisted and served as a staff officer in the 97th Infantry. He lost races for governor in 1952, 1954 and 1956 before winning a senate seat in 1957 left vacant by the election of Price Daniel. Never a member of the "inside" political machine that runs Texas elections, Ralph's campaign funds were always meager. He lost the seat in 1970 to Lloyd Bentsen and was defeated again in the 1972 Democratic primary.

Ralph and Opal spent the rest of their lives in Austin. Ralph practiced law, taught classes at the University of Texas and continued to be an advocate for the "little guy" until his death in 1996. Opal passed away in 2002. They are buried in the Texas State Cemetery in Austin.

## The Yarborough Home



The two-story Yarborough home was located in Chandler on the Old Tyler Road, one block south of Hwy. 31. Charles Richard Yarborough, born 1864, purchased the house in 1903, from J. R. (Joel) Birdwell. The exact date the house was constructed is unknown.

In 1889, C. R. Yarborough married Nannie Jane Spear. They were married in Chandler. Five of their eleven children were born in this house including Ralph W. Yarborough who served as a United States Senator from Texas, 1957-1970. Their other children were Sunshine, Grace, Orelia, Nell, Harvey, Margaret, Donald and Janette. Two children died at a young age.

The home was originally built with a staggered-type construction with two rooms on the east side of a wide hallway and four rooms on the west side. In about 1914, the house was enlarged to give added space for a larger family with the construction of an upstairs bedroom for the boys, and the addition of another bedroom on the east side of the house. At this time, the hallway was closed on the south end and an interior stairway was added.

Through the years the Yarborough house received additional remodeling. In July of 2012, the home was moved to its present location in McCain Park, opening as the Chandler Museum and Visitor Center on March 1, 2014.

Sources: *The Observer Benefit Dinner Honoring Ralph Yarborough Program*. May 23, 1989. "Ralph Yarborough, Still a Maverick After all these Years." *Westward (Dallas Times Herald Magazine)*. Dallas: June 5, 1983. *Texas Appreciation Dinner Honoring Ralph W. Yarborough*. Houston, Texas: July 27, 1972. "Yarborough, 'The People's Senator,' Dies." *Austin American Statesman*. January 28, 1996.

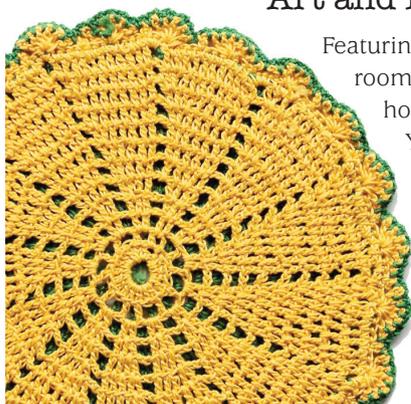


### Visitor Center Room

Chandler school articles, railroad memorabilia and city history items are showcased in this room. Also, the room contains the visitor center's welcome desk and brochure display rack, offering information for the museum, Chandler and local attractions. A painting of the Chandler Depot by Carney Waller is surrounded by a collection of antique railroad lanterns.

### Art and Handcraft Room

Featuring bay windows, this room was originally the home's parlor and the Yarborough family used it as a reception room. Handwork, crochet, arts and crafts and rotating collections are featured in this room.



### Telephone Switchboard Room

The main feature of this room is a mannequin operating an old-fashioned telephone switchboard. It is a partial replica of the Chandler telephone office



of Fannie Jones, who operated the Chandler switchboard from 1923 to 1969.



### Military/Yarborough Room

This room is dedicated to citizens of Chandler who have served in politics, military, community, state and nation. It features a large collection of Senator Ralph Yarborough memorabilia. Highlighting his boyhood life in Chandler, his accomplishments as U.S. Senator, Texas Attorney General and as a member of the state library board.



The veteran's section includes items from the Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War and conflicts in the Middle East.



### Fireplace Dining Room

Perhaps more so than any other, the fireplace dining room represents the grandeur of the Yarborough Home with its twelve foot ceilings, ornate tin ceiling and generous wood trim and wainscoting.

This large room displays items from Chandler businesses, churches, homes and schools—including an 1898 sewing machine, school letter jackets, a 1946 child's dollhouse and drugstore items. Tucked into one corner is a portable fold-down organ that was used by circuit preachers.



Carney Waller's painting of Hart's Cotton Gin and a large dolly used to transport bales of cotton highlights another corner.

Two additional Waller paintings hang above the 1913 bank ledger desk from the Citizens Guaranty State Bank.



### The Centennial Paintings

Carney and Jane Waller lived in the Chandler area during the 1970's and early 80's. A retired sign painter, it is believed that at one time Carney painted sets for Hollywood studios. He became the unofficial artist for the 1980 Chandler Centennial Celebration and painted signs for local historic homes as well as a set of panels depicting the history of Chandler. The Wallers returned to their home in Alabama shortly after the Centennial and he passed away in November, 1982, in Jefferson City.

Don Copeland displayed one panel at Chandler Drug for years and others ended up in assorted storage rooms around the community. The panels were reunited in 2013 for the new Chandler Museum.

### The Kitchen

A highlight in the kitchen is a collection of kitchen utensils and other items that were used by the Yarborough family. It also contains items from the 1930s-50s era.



### Café/Sunroom

The Café room is reminiscent of a café operated by Katherine Carnes in the 1940s as well as other past Chandler cafes. In addition to café memorabilia, it has displays of Depression-era dishes, kitchenware and glassware. Old typewriters, books, tools, and pottery may be found in the vintage display cases. Café style tables covered with red checkered cloths will seat twelve people for group Tea and Tours (by reservation only).

