



NOMINATION FORM  
HALF MILE OF HISTORY

**Section A: Nomination Information**

Name of Nominated person, place or event: Thomas R Benner

The nominee is being honored for outstanding contributions in the area(s) of (please check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment/Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Philanthropy
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government/Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Culture	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Aviation	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention/Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Business/Corporate Leadership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Law	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Oil/Gas	

**Section B: Nominator's Information**

Name of person making nomination: Mike Patterson

Address: 515 S. Vine

City: Tyler State: TX Zip: 75702

Daytime telephone: 903.592.4433 Email: mpptyler@yahoo.com

Relationship to nominated individual: none

Nominated Individual's year of birth: 1838 Nominated Individual's year of death: 1891

**Section C: Narrative**

The narrative section of the application is the most important. It is the primary source of information judges use to make their selection of new inductees. The two-page narrative submittal must utilize size 12 Times New Roman font and be double spaced. Please include a recommended 25-30 word marker caption at the end of the narrative. Any additional material will be referred to only for verification of accuracy of the nomination. No submitted materials will be returned.

The narrative section must contain an explanation of the nominee's enduring contribution that make this person/place/event worthy of the honor. Please describe the impact the nominee has had on the community, county, region, nation and/or world. For Individuals, please include any honors earned by the nominee as well as a list of organizations in which the nominee has been involved. Also, please indicate their educational background as well as the length of time the individual has lived in Smith County. Inclusion of photos is preferred but optional. Do not send original photos. All submitted materials will become property of the City of Tyler and its Historical Preservation Board.

Please submit nominations to:  
City of Tyler Historical Preservation Board  
Attention: Half Mile of History  
P.O. Box 2039  
Tyler, Texas 75710

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PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Thomas R. Bonner  
1838-1891

Farmer, soldier, banker and lawyer  
Speaker of Texas House of Representatives  
Founded First Bank in Tyler  
A leader in bringing the railroad to Tyler

*Instrumental*



# Texas Politics

<http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/>

Speakers of the House

Leg > Speakers > Bonner

## 2. Thomas R. Bonner

Thomas Reuben Bonner (1838-1891), son of William N. and Martha Ellen (Wade) Bonner, was born in Holmes County, Mississippi, on September 11, 1838. He moved with his parents to Rusk, Texas, in February 1850. At twelve years of age he became an apprentice printer on the Cherokee Sentinel. He began at that time to educate himself by reading and self-directed study. He left the Sentinel to take charge of his father's farm in 1854 and was a farmer at the outbreak of the Civil War. He entered Confederate service in April 1862 as captain, Company C, of Col. William B. Ochiltree's Eighteenth Texas Infantry. He was subsequently major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel of that regiment, which served in the Trans-Mississippi Department as an element of Walker's Texas Division.

After the war Bonner farmed until 1866, when he began reading law at Rusk in the office of his older brothers, F. W. and M. H. Bonner. He was admitted to the bar in 1867 and practiced law at Rusk until September 1872, then moved to Tyler, where he entered the banking business with E. C. Williams. Bonner became a leading East Texas banker, railroad director, and financier. He was apparently married twice, first to Cynthia A. Madden of Cherokee County and, later, to Mary Davenport. With Mary he had two sons. In 1866 Bonner represented Rusk County in the state legislature. In 1876 he was elected to the legislature from Smith County and was speaker of the House during the ensuing session. He was a Methodist and a high-ranking Mason. He died in 1891.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Sidney S. Johnson, *Texans Who Wore the Gray* (Tyler, Texas, 1907). William S. Speer and John H. Brown, eds., *Encyclopedia of the New West* (Marshall, Texas: United States Biographical Publishing, 1881; rpt., Easley, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, 1978).

*Lester Newton Fitzhugh*

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Texas Politics: 5 June 2013  
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[\(prev](#) [next](#))

**Colonel Thomas R. Bonner - Tyler, Smith County, Texas**

**Address:**

**Directions:** Bonner Elementary School, 235 S. Saunders St.

**Marker #:** 5423007707

**Year Dedicated:** 1963

**Size, type:** Civil War Series

**Last reported condition:** No report

**Colonel Thomas R. Bonner - (Star and Wreath) (1836-1891)** Born in Mississippi. Came to Texas 1849. In Texas militia at start of Civil War. Elected captain Co. C, 18th Tex. Infantry, C. S. A., 1862. Commanded 18th as Colonel, 1863-65. Gallantly led unit in battles at Bourbeau, Mansfield, Pleasant Hill, La. and Jenkins' Ferry, Ark., all being vital actions to prevent Federal invasions of Texas. After the war, admitted to bar and practiced law in Tyler. Served in 11-15th Texas Legislatures and as speaker of the house in 1876. Founded the first bank in Tyler. Leader in building Tyler Tap Railroad. Established an insurance company. Trustee, East Texas University. Grand Master of Masons in Texas, 1875. Texas made an all-out effort for the Confederacy after a 3 to 1 popular vote for secession. 90,000 troops, famed for mobility and daring, fought on every battlefield. A 2,000-mile frontier and coast were successfully defended from Union troop invasion and savage Indians. Texas was the storehouse of Western Confederacy. Wagon trains laden with cotton - life blood of the South - crossed the state to Mexico to trade for medical supplies, clothing, military supplies. State and private industry produced guns, ammunition, wagons, pots, kettles, leather goods, salt, hospital supplies. Wives, sons, daughters, slaves provided corn, cotton, cloth, cattle, hogs, cured meats to the army, giving much, keeping little for themselves.

**Decimal degrees:** N 32.347983 W -95.290122

**Degrees, minutes:** N 32 20.879 W 095 17.407

**UTM:** Zone 15, Easting 284482, Northing 3581313

**Maps:**

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Sample Marker Image

[Colonel Thomas R. Bonner map](#)

## TYLER TAP RAILROAD

Search Handbook

**TYLER TAP RAILROAD.** The Tyler Tap Railroad Company was chartered on December 1, 1871, by a special act of the Twelfth Texas Legislature. Twenty-three prominent citizens of Tyler applied for the charter under the direction of future governor Richard B. Hubbard and Maj. James P. Douglas. Tyler was the center of agriculture and trade, but its prosperity was threatened by the construction of the Texas and Pacific Railway to the north and the International and Houston and Great Northern railways to the south. Tyler citizens feared that the nearby railtowns would attract business away from their growing city unless they had a railroad. The charter authorized the construction of a railroad from Tyler in Smith County to a point no more than forty miles away on either the Southern Pacific Railroad Company (Texas and Pacific), International, or Houston and Great Northern. The legislature granted a right-of-way 200 feet wide, as well as the use of any natural resources on state land within five miles of the track. Capital was set at \$1 million. In 1873 the charter was amended to increase capitalization to \$3 million and to provide for a route northward through Gilmer, Pittsburg, Mount Pleasant, and Clarksville, which increased the projected mileage to 127. In return for right-of-way, each of the towns was promised a depot located within one mile of their respective county courthouses.

In order to economize as much as possible, the Tyler Tap selected a gauge of three feet, which had a fleeting popularity at that time. This change was approved by the legislature on February 25, 1875, although the promised land grant was reduced to twelve sections of land per mile from the sixteen sections granted to standard gauge railroads. Construction finally began in the summer of 1875, but it took the company two years to build twenty-one miles of track to a connection with the Texas and Pacific at Big Sandy. On October 1, 1877, the Tyler Tap's only locomotive, named the Governor Hubbard, steamed into Tyler with the line's first train. Company offices were located northwest of the crossing of East Valentine and North Fannin streets. Douglas served as the first president, Ed. W. Willis as conductor, and J. M. Hopping as ticket agent. Although it was Tyler's own railroad, the Tyler Tap was not the first railroad into town. In 1873 the Houston and Great Northern had built through Tyler on its route from Troup to Mineola.

Although the Tyler Tap was built as economically as possible, it was not a financial success. Douglas succeeded in interesting James W. Paramore, president of the St. Louis Cotton Compress Company, and his associates in the line. The St. Louis capitalists felt that an additional connection for the Tyler Tap might result in lower rates on cotton. By charter amendment, the Tyler Tap was renamed the Texas and St. Louis Railway Company on May 14, 1879. On July 12, 1880, the company completed 107 miles of narrow-gauge railroad between Texarkana and Big Sandy and by the end of the year an additional thirty-seven miles from Tyler to Athens. The thirty-eight miles from Athens to Corsicana opened on April 2, 1881. Another charter amendment dated August 16, 1881, changed the name to the Texas and St. Louis Railway Company in Texas. An additional 102 miles between Corsicana and Gatesville was completed on October 21, 1882. The company was sold at foreclosure on February 10, 1886, and the property was acquired by the St. Louis, Arkansas and Texas Railway Company in Texas. By that time the little twenty-one-mile railroad promoted by the citizens of Tyler had become part of a system extending from Bird's Point, Missouri, to Gatesville,

and the company is considered to be the beginning of the St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company (Cotton Belt).

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Morris Burton, "Tyler as an Early Railroad Center," *Chronicles of Smith County*, Spring 1963. Joseph A. Strapac, *Cotton Belt Locomotives* (Huntington Beach, California: Shade Tree, 1977).

### Citation

Vista K. McCroskey

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## Smith County, Texas

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### THOMAS REUBEN BONNER & CHARLES TAYLOR BONNER

By Andy Leath

**Thomas Reuben Bonner** born 1838 Holmes Co., MS, died 1891 Tyler, TX, married **Cynthia Ann Madden** born 1835 Claiborne Par., LA, died 1884 Tyler, TX, no children. Both buried Oakwood Cemetery, Tyler, TX. Smith County Federal Census Images - 1880 - [Image 094-19](#)

Thomas Reuben Bonner married 2nd 1885 Smith Co., TX, **Mary I. Davenport** born 1866 TX died 1933 Tyler, TX, buried Oakwood Cemetery. Her parents: **Joseph W. & Isabella (Dial) Davenport**. He was a banker in Tyler, was a member of the Texas House of Representatives.

(Mary Davenport Bonner married 2nd 1893 Smith Co., TX, **Charles Taylor Bonner** born 1856 Rusk, TX, died 1918 Tyler, TX, buried Oakwood Cemetery, Tyler, TX. Smith County Federal Census Images - 1900 - [Image 097-18a](#); 1910 - [Image 066-04b](#); 1930 - [Image 06-05a](#))

- 1. **Thomas Davenport Bonner** born 1885 Tyler, TX, died 1924 Tyler, TX, married 1914 Tyler, TX, **Azalie Durst** born 1884 died 1929, no children, both buried Oakwood Cemetery. He was president of Tyler Cotton Oil Co. Her parents: **John & Nannie (Sleet) Durst**. Smith County Federal Census Images - 1920 - [Image - 081-01b](#)
- 2. **Herndon P. Bonner** born 1887 TX, lived Fort Worth, TX.

#### SOURCES:

Smith County Probate Records, Case 1064 Thomas R. Bonner, decd.



Cemetery Records of Smith County, Texas, Vol. 1 (Tyler, TX: East Texas Genealogical Society, 1981)

Marriage Records of Smith County, Texas 1846-1899 (Tyler, TX: East Texas Genealogical Society, 1979)

Marriage Records of Smith County, Texas, 1900-1926 (Tyler, TX: East Texas Genealogical Society, 1999)

Obituary in Tyler newspapers, microfilm, Tyler Public Library,

- Thos. D. Bonner Aug. 29, 1924;
- Mrs. Charles T. Bonner May 29, 1933.

Smith County, Texas, Deed Records 175:344, 221:458.

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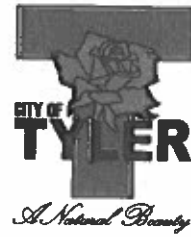
# About the Half Mile of History

The City of Tyler's historic preservation program, the Half Mile of History, resulted from a recommendation that came out of the Tyler 21 planning process. The fifth goal of the Historic Preservation Chapter is:

*"Promote and display diverse aspects of Tyler's history to enhance resident and visitor awareness of its importance."*

The goal of the Half Mile of History is to pay tribute to people, places and events that have contributed to the rich history of Tyler and Smith County.

The Half Mile of History is a permanent, outdoor, half-mile loop that surrounds the square in the heart of downtown Tyler. Stone plaques are placed in the sidewalk along the Half Mile of History to commemorate significant people, places or events.



# Half Mile of History Marker Unveiling

*in honor of*

*Tyler Civic Theatre Center*

*and*

*Thomas Bonner*

*Wednesday, Jan. 29, 2014*

*Tyler Civic Theatre Center* is approaching its 65th consecutive season of providing outstanding amateur plays and musicals to "Entertain, Enrich and Educate through Theatre." The incorporation coincided with the building of a 130-seat theatre at 400 Rose Park Drive. The driving force behind designing a theatre-in-the-round was Alfred Gilliam, who at that time was the director of the Circle Theatre at Tyler Junior College.

Over the past 64 years, the Tyler Civic Theatre Center has averaged six major productions per year to an estimated audience of 50,000 individuals.

*Thomas Bonner* was born in Mississippi in 1838 and moved with his parents to Rusk, Texas, in February 1850.

He entered Confederate service in April 1862. After the war, Bonner farmed until 1866, and was admitted to the bar in 1867. In 1872, he moved to Tyler, where he entered the banking business with E. C. Williams.

Bonner represented Rusk County in the state legislature, and in 1876, he was elected to the legislature from Smith County. He was speaker of the House during the ensuing session. After a term in Austin, he returned to Tyler to organize another bank, Bonner & Bonner, where he served as president until his death in 1891.

## *Half Mile of History Marker Unveiling*

*in honor of*

*Tyler Civic Theatre Center  
and*

*Thomas Bonner*

*Tuesday, Jan. 29, 2014*

*Opening Remarks: Mayor Barbara Bass*

*Half Mile of History honoree histories by:*

*Historical Preservation Board Member Jim Robertson  
Historical Preservation Board Member Bryan Campbell*

*Unveiling of Markers and Certificate Presentation*

*Responses*

*Special Announcements*

*Adjourn; reception following*