

MEMORANDUM

MARCH 15, 1988

TO: CINDY JIMENEZ, DIRECTOR
WALKER COUNTY FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNCIL

FROM: JUDY HUNTER, MEMBER
WOMAN'S FORUM

RE: NOMINATION OF KATE BARR ROSS TO HUNTSVILLE/
WALKER COUNTY WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME

ON BEHALF OF THE WOMAN'S FORUM AND OUR PRESIDENT ESTHER STEM, I NOMINATE KATE BARR ROSS FOR ELECTION TO HUNTSVILLE/WALKER COUNTY'S HALL OF FAME RECOGNIZING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF LOCAL WOMEN.

KATE BARR ROSS SERVED AS CITY SECRETARY FOR THE CITY OF HUNTSVILLE FROM 1926 - 1968. HER VERY VITAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO CITY GOVERNMENT LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR THE EFFECTIVE MUNICIPAL ORGANIZATION WE HAVE TODAY. THE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION ATTACHED WAS RESEARCHED BY RUTH DESHAW, THE CURRENT CITY SECRETARY, CITY OF HUNTSVILLE.

SHOULD KATE BARR ROSS BE CHOSEN TO BE HONORED AT THE FRIDAY NIGHT GALLERY SHOWING, HER DAUGHTER, MRS. POLLY ARCHER, MAY BE CONTACTED AT (409) 283-3539. I WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO OBTAIN FURTHER DOCUMENTATION SHOULD IT BE REQUIRED FOR FUTURE JUDGING. AN EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTING MISS KATE'S CONTRIBUTION TO OUR MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT'S HISTORY IS PLANNED FOR THE NEAR FUTURE AT EITHER THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OR CITY HALL. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME AT 291-5470 OR 295-9214.

**KATE BARR ROSS
CITY SECRETARY
CITY OF HUNTSVILLE
1926-1968**

Kate Barr Ross was born on August 8, 1897. She was first employed with the City of Huntsville in 1926 at the age of 28, when the City Council took formal action on March 2, 1926 to appoint her as the City Secretary. Miss Kate took her official oath of office on April 6, 1926 and served until June 1, 1929. The Council appointed Ruth Dickinson on May 7, 1929 to serve as City Secretary, effective June 1. Miss Dickinson served until July 5, 1932. [The minutes do not reflect what Miss Kate did during those three years that Miss Dickinson served as City Secretary.]

On July 5, 1932, the City Council again appointed Kate Barr Ross to serve as the City Secretary, a position she held continuously until April of 1939. Since there was no city manager or administrator, Miss Kate performed the duties and functions of an administrator of the City and worked closely with the Mayor and Aldermen. She was generally responsible for the every day operations of the City.

The office of City Comptroller was created on March 21, 1939 and the duties were separated from those of the City Secretary. .On April 4, 1939, the position of City Secretary again appeared on the election ballot and Celeste Robinette ran against the incumbent Kate Barr Ross, defeating her by a vote of 206 to 6. Kate Barr Ross was appointed and sworn in as Comptroller and Celeste Robinette was sworn in as City Secretary on April 11, 1939. Miss Robinette was successfully re-elected in 1940 (after having served an apparent one year term), and again in 1942, unopposed each time. On June 1, 1943, upon the resignation of Celeste Robinette Mathis, the City Council conferred the responsibilities of the City Secretary on Kate Barr Ross, to be performed separately from her existing duties as Comptroller. [See Attachment I--City Secretary's Election History, 1939-1966.]

On October 4, 1966, [due an the apparent worsening illness of Kate Barr Ross, although there is no account of the nature or even existence of her illness in the minutes], Councilman Frank Sprott made several reports to the City Council, among which was the report to pay Mrs. Ross her regular salary until January 1, 1967 and after that to retain her at \$1,500 a year, provide her with the car and \$50.00 per month for car expenses. The motion was made by Councilman Fred Smith and seconded by Councilman Scott Johnson to approve of Councilman Sprott's recommendation.

On January 1, 1967, Councilman Costilow made the motion that Mrs. Ross carry the title of City Secretary but that Mr. Weldon Coleman be made the City Comptroller with the authority to sign all checks and Councilman King seconded the motion. The motion passed.

On January 23, 1968, Mayor Beckham explained to the Council that due to Mrs. Ross's health [Miss Kate is now 70 years old], he thought it would be advisable for Mr. Weldon Coleman to be appointed as Deputy City Secretary. Councilman Costilow made a motion, seconded by Councilman Johnson that Mr. Coleman be made Deputy City Secretary. The motion passed.

Mrs. Ross died after a lengthy illness with cancer at the age of _____ in _____, Texas. She was widowed at an early age with the death of her husband from _____ in 19_____. She is survived by her daughter, Juliana, Mrs. Polly Archer of Woodville, Texas.

In 1976, when the City named a park after "Miss Kate," namely, "The Kate Barr Ross Memorial Park"; the city's Bicentennial Park, then Publisher Emeritus of the Huntsville Item, Mr. Don Reid, Jr. wrote about Miss Kate in his "Listening Post" column, which is reproduced below:

"Attending the community's bicentennial celebration Sunday [July 4, 1976] in the new Kate Barr Ross Park at the Huntsville Municipal Airport, our thoughts wandered back to the days when Mrs. Ross, long-time city secretary and comptroller ran the business of Huntsville through a dedication unequalled in the annals of municipal governments. When she was re-elected city secretary in 1956, she began her 30th year of service with the municipality. She retired in September, 1966. She died several years ago.

"At a surprise retirement party, former Huntsville Mayor, W. S. Gibbs, made this observation: 'Let me say that you have helped bring Huntsville from a sleepy and muddy little country town to its present of a fine, modern city.' On her 30th anniversary with the city, 'Miss Kate' as she was known to countless friends said that she was interested in the city business and vitally concerned with the city's records, which in 1926 were anything but good. At her insistence the city's first audit was made that year. She also recalled that in 1926, the city had four full-time employees, including one policeman, and that its total assets were around \$8,000. There was paving only around the Square and a short five block stretch from the square to the college campus of Sam Houston State College. Record keeping was her big love and when she 'ran the show' city auditors said she kept a 'wonderful set of books.'

"In her long political career, Mrs. Ross lost only one race and that was in 1939, when she was defeated for the post of City Secretary, another woman, now Mrs. J. W. Mathis of Madisonville. However, the Council immediately named her City Comptroller and from then on she never had an opponent. Throughout the years we found Miss Kate to be a strict disciplinarian, never playing any favorites, regardless of their standing in the community.

"To her, right was right, and wrong was wrong, and she never wavered from that policy. This probably didn't help her public image, but she never was concerned about her public image. 'I have to live with myself,' she told us on numerous occasions. When it came to city business, she operated it as if it belonged to her. And while some people resented this policy, nevertheless, she kept Huntsville's finances in the 'black,' while other towns in East Texas were having financial problems.

"She left us a legacy that means a great deal to every resident of this growing and vibrant community. Educating a park to her memory is a real tribute to one of the finest community leaders in Huntsville's long and colorful history."

**KATE BARR ROSS' ELECTION HISTORY
1939-1966**

THREE WARDS		Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Total	
4/4/39	Celeste Robinette	56	43	107	206	
	Kate Barr Ross	0	0	6	6	
This appears to have been a one year term.						
4/ /40	Celeste Robinette	28	36	43	107	
4/ /42	Celeste Robinette				46	
4/ /44	Kate Barr Ross	28	13	16	57	
4/2/46	Kate Barr Ross	31	28	26	87	
4/6/48	Kate Barr Ross	30	24	19	73	
4/1/50	Kate Barr Ross	277	330	234	136	
FOUR WARDS		Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Total
4/ /52	Kate Barr Ross	107	95	104	28	334
4/ /54	Kate Barr Ross	130	117	80	46	373
4/ /56	Kate Barr Ross					129
4/ /58	Kate Barr Ross	265	291	244	93	893
4/ /60	Kate Barr Ross -- re-elected -- no record of votes cast					
4/ /62	Kate Barr Ross	605	456	405	247	1713
4/ /64	Kate Barr Ross					304
4/ /66	Kate Barr Ross	370	48	41	23	482

CALL: Mrs. F. M. "Polly" (Juliana) Archer, Miss Kate's daughter, at: 409-283-3539 for additional information on Kate Barr Ross.