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spelled then) in the archives of the Jasper County Historical Society in the Old Jail Museum. Family records and recollections filled in many gaps.

The Cook family first established itself in Texas before the Civil War (the family traces its roots to ancestors who arrived at Plymouth Rock shortly after The Mayflower).

William Parker Cook, born in 1862, likely learned the basics of carpentry from his father. However, when he began his career it was as a first grade teacher. In fact, the book reports that Cook took the first written examination for a teaching certificate in Newton County, where he earned a grand salary of \$45.50 per month.

Hanna reports, "Cook never had any formal training in regards to architectural design ... It is likely he relied on architectural magazines, his experience, the desires and needs of his clients as well as his developing sense of design to craft a beautiful variety of buildings."

Cook began constructing houses in 1890. Shortly after his first house, he built the R.C. Lanier store and residence in Kirbyville, just in time for the arrival of the railroad.

Soon he was building railroad depots all over East Texas, often camping out near construction sites.

When his wife fell ill and died, he was left to raise six young children. Cook gave up the lucrative railroad contracts to stay closer to home, and his work in Jasper began in earnest.

A 1904 *The News-Boy* proclaimed Cook as "one of the most successful contractors in this section of the state." It goes on to say, "He employs none but skilled mechanics ... (he) plans and estimates on

buildings of every description."

People would see a house they liked while traveling, take its measurements and bring them back to Cook.

"It was common during this time for contractors to be paid as work on the house progressed. The clients would order materials themselves, which left the carpenters to document their work by signing a rafter or a cabinet," according to Hanna's book.

The book presents more than 60 photos and illustrations of known Cook homes and buildings in chronological order, but it is likely that many more structures in Jasper were built by him.

At the time of his death in 1934, *The News-Boy* reported in his obituary that Cook had built more than half the houses in Jasper.

Breidenthal says her dad, Charles Kent, still has the carpenter's square that "Bamp" used to build Jasper.

**All in the details**

Houses built by Cook utilized abundant local materials like heart pine floors and solid wood beams. He was known for attention to details, whether in the gingerbread trim of a Victorian home or the solid oak built-in cabinets found in craftsman designs.

Walls were built of boards rather than lath and plaster (sheetrock didn't exist yet). If economy was uppermost, boards would be sanded and varnished, but in finer homes the wood walls were hung with canvas and then wallpapered.

Joe Chapman, who with wife Gayle Meigs is remodeling the old Mays house at 157 W. Milam, says he removed three layers of wallpaper. He preserved

some samples in an album for future owners of the home.

A 1911 edition of *The News-Boy* called the home being built for A. L. Leake Mays, "One of the handsomest and most convenient homes in Jasper."

Chapman said the house originally had two staircases, one centered on the front door for guests and family, and another stairway parallel but opposite for servants to access the upstairs from the kitchen.

The early houses Cook built did not have electricity. Chapman says when it was added later, this house became one of the first homes in Jasper to be electrified. You can still see the old knob-and-tube wiring, and he has kept the fuse box with an inspection sticker dated 1927.

The original slate roof was intact until Hurricane Rita, but now only the garage has slate. Another example of Cook's slate roofs can be seen at 451 N. Bowie.

When Cook built the Prairie-style home at 452 W. Houston in 1919, it would have been cutting edge modern. Frank Lloyd Wright pioneered the style, which has low horizontal lines, large overhangs and an open floor-plan that is once again stylish.

The house, now empty and for sale, still has the original built-in parlor cabinets and stained-glass windows with a Scottish thistle design.

Most of the windows have the original hand-poured glass with wavy imperfections now highly prized by craftsman aficionados.

Under the house are huge solid wood beams doubtless cut from local timber, but of a size that today would only be available laminated from pieces.

Many of the homes and

the Belle-Jim Hotel had sleeping porches off upstairs bedrooms. They were long rooms with many windows to take advantage of breezes at a time when no one had air conditioning nor even fans.

In his later years, Cook built the house at 301 N. Main for Homer and Dess Gibbs. In 1927 *The News-Boy* reported, "Finishing touches and final detail work are being put on the new brick veneer home of H.N. Gibbs, a striking example of the Old English type of residence and one of Jasper's many new homes."

The house reportedly cost \$12,000, a fortune at a time when a complete craftsman bungalow could be purchased from the Sears catalogue for about \$3,000.

Page after page shows houses still familiar to Jasper residents, albeit sometimes greatly altered. One sketch shows the original version of Cook's own house at 401 N. Main, a one-story frame with a porch. By 1911 it had second wing and second story addition. It was proclaimed in *The News-Boy* as "one of the most stately and handsome (homes) in town."

The Historical Society and the county are financing the limited edition printing of the hardbound book. Books will be sold at a book signing Feb. 3 and through the Jasper library.

Hanna donated her research and writing on the book, Bill Wise donated use of his watercolors of many historic homes, and Georgia Purdy donated photography to make the book possible.

According to the preface, "Profits from the book will contribute to the preservation and knowledge of the early days of this much beloved stretch of land."

**March, program set to honor MLK**

In honor of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., the annual MLK Day march and program has been scheduled for Monday, Jan. 15 in Jasper.

The Deep East Texas Foundation is sponsoring a youth service program Sunday, Jan. 14 at 11 a.m. at the New Lighthouse COGIC Ministries, located at 1013 Helen Street.

A group of youth will take part in a neighborhood clean-up program Monday, Jan. 15 at 9 a.m. in the parking lot of New Lighthouse COGIC Ministries.

The march will begin at

10 a.m. in front of Greater New Bethel Baptist Church located at 1288 E. MLK. The march will proceed west to Main Street, south on Main Street to Houston Street, west on Houston Street to Marvin Hancock Drive, south on Marvin Hancock Drive to Jasper High School.

The program will follow the march at the Jasper High School gym. The featured speaker for the program will be the Rev. Douglas R. Wright, pastor of the Jasper Circuit U.M.C. The public is invited to attend.

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all the flooding," Allen said.

He said the disaster declaration is the first step towards allowing county crews help private landowners clear ditches on their property.

"It also lets the state know that we still have a problem and I will continue to file a

declaration every time we have bad flooding," Allen said. "They are going to get used to me."

In the first 2007 meeting of commissioners' court, the county will consider extending the declaration of disaster.

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