Sam Houston State University
An Institutional Memory: 1879 - 2004
Ty Cashion

Art Direction by Tom Seifert
Foreword by Dan Rather
Art Director’s Acknowledgments: I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Barbara Kievit-Mason, Paul Culp, and Cheryl Patton in Thomason Special Collections here at SHSU for the important work they do and the wonderful materials they provided us. Bob Lefebvre at the Sam Houston Press offered critical technical support when needed and helped us avoid impending disaster. I also want to express my appreciation to Paula Vernik, Terry Thibodaux, and Paul Ruffin, who granted us the freedom to work undisturbed and gave us critical feedback when we most needed it.

To my family, who saw my obsessive side too frequently during this time – I will make it up to you.

My biggest smile is reserved for my friend, Ty Cashion, who not only “told the tale” but did so with both style and scholarship. The tone that he established and the integrity with which he pursued this history, provided for me an example I have tried my best to follow. His enthusiasm and humor made this an enjoyable experience and for that I shall always be thankful.

Finally I want to send out my heartfelt thanks to all those, both in the present and distant past, who took the photographs that ended up in this book. Without them, it would not “come alive” as I hope it does for all who turn its pages.

Tom Seifert
As a graduate of Austin College and a professor at Sam Houston State University, I feel a great affinity for this campus where these two great institutions were founded. Light T. Cummins, Bryan Professor of History at Austin College, recently completed a scholarly account of my alma mater, and, appropriately, the story began here in Huntsville; its departure to Sherman provided a beginning for this work. As a student in Dr. Cummins’ first class at Austin College during the autumn of 1978, I remain his long-time admirer and would like to believe that our separate histories strengthen the circle of admiration between our academic homes.

That said, if this nine-month project were a creation entirely of my own efforts I would have been lucky to produce a popup book! What resulted was the orchestration of many hands. Earlier Sam Houston historians Mary S. Estill and Jack Humphries provided a foundation on which to reconstruct an understandable past. That context made it possible to move forward, knowing how key events would affect the sweep of so many details. Humphries, a former vice president of academic affairs, wrote the more comprehensive history of the two, but tragically he died before completing the manuscript. I pray this volume will at least keep the spirit of his work alive.

More immediate was the assistance provided by my graduate research associates, Tracy Derks and Joe Braden. Tracy came recommended as one who possessed a good eye for anecdotal information, and he certainly proved to be equal to the task. Joe mined the institution’s official records in Huntsville and Austin, a tedious job that required unusual perseverance. He also filtered every source used in this work through the Chicago Manual of Style. Jennifer Kazmierski, one of the brightest undergraduate students I have taught in recent years, helped chase down some contextual information for dealing with the transitional period between the administrations of Harmon Lowman and Arleigh Templeton.

As keepers of the records, Paul Culp at the Thomason Special Collections, ably assisted by Cheryl Patton, and archivist Barbara Kiewit-Mason provided cheerful and unstinting support. Often anticipating the direction of the research, they pointed my graduate assistants and me to specific files and documents that might otherwise have been overlooked, and saved countless hours of digging. The research also came at a time when the archives were being moved from the Peabody Library to the Newton Gresham Library, and not once did Barbara miss a beat in locating essential information.
A particular debt of gratitude is due the many readers who know this history more intimately than I through their long association with the university. Third-generation Bearkat James Patton, all would concede, is Walker County's foremost authority on local history. His knowledge of even the most minute details rescued me from many inaccuracies. Paul and Joan Culp, Jim Gaertner, Frank Krystiniak, Bob Marks, Jim Olson, Eloise Powell, Nancy Sears, Dorothy Woolen, and Pat Ziegler, either read the manuscript in its entirety or particular chapters, offering many constructive points of welcomed criticism. Several Sam Houston State alumni and professors also related their experiences or steered me to enlightening sources: Dale Brown, Ronnie Choate, M. B. Etheredge, Bill Fleming, John Hall, Robert Hunt, Margaret Quales, Ed Sandhop, and John Skeeters.

This work was also made easier because of the support and encouragement of my history department family. Notably, Jim Olson and Caroline Crimm rearranged their schedules and helped carry my teaching load at the expense of their own research and service activities. Department chairman Terry Bilhartz also assured that I could direct my energies toward the task at hand. I am especially indebted to our department secretary, Charlanne Morris, for keeping me afloat. She knows no peer. Otherwise, every member was solicitous of the book's progress and carried the burdens of my departmental responsibilities with alacrity. Without the help of teaching assistant James Phelps, moreover, keeping up with daily paperwork would have been overwhelming.

The entire credit for the book's layout and art design belongs to photography department coordinator Tom Seifert. He drew in large part from a Hyperion digital media collection that Barbara Kievit-Mason initiated in anticipation of this anniversary project. Nancy Sears, head of computer services, helped maintain this valuable resource, which received a boost from a call for image contributions from alumni and local citizens. Because the illustrations Tom Seifert included here are so "clean," it is difficult to appreciate how much time and expertise he invested in reconditioning the many marginal selections. He balanced light and contrast in photographs that were barely recognizable, reattached pieces of missing ears and noses to portraits, made tears and water damage disappear, and produced seamless photographs from panoramas that were either folded or spread across pages of other works. Going into this project, Tom seamlessly photographs from panoramas that were either folded or portraits, made tears and water damage disappear, and produced barely recognizable, reattached pieces of missing ears and noses to selections. He balanced light and contrast in photographs that were time and expertise he invested in reconditioning the many marginal included here are so "clean," it is difficult to appreciate how much

any outpouring of thanks cannot express adequately my gratitude to the 125th Anniversary Committee and President James F. Gaertner for extending to me the opportunity to compose this work. I wish also to acknowledge others who kept me focused or provided some assistance or encouragement at particularly stressful moments, whether they realized it or not: Maggie Babcock, Cheryl Bumpas, John Caudill, Brian Chapman, Keith Jenkins, Mitchell Muesham, Pat Nolan, Mitch Roth, Judy Taft, and Mac Woodward. Not least, my wife Peggy and son, Sam—named for the great man—deserve medals for suffering my lack of attention at times with complete understanding and affection.

Finally, I would like to relate a pleasant experience during the course of this undertaking: the privilege of observing Dan Rather. Our most distinguished alumnus exudes equal measures of grace, humility, warmth, and gravity that can be appreciated only by seeing him in action. My eleven-year-old son Sam regularly watches the CBS Evening News with my wife and me. When he heard Mr. Rather was going to discuss his foreword with "daddy," there was just no way to keep him from tagging along. As Mr. Rather entered the room, where about a dozen of us awaited, he saw my son, and, ignoring everyone else in the room, walked up and said: "Hello, young man, I'm Dan Rather." They visited until I got almost uncomfortable; then I looked around and saw a sincere smile on every face in the room. I will remember that moment always. At a banquet that evening, after a day when every minute of his schedule was filled, Mr. Rather visited with alumni and admirers until the very last of them had bid him Godspeed and farewell. I learned later that he had been due back in New York much earlier in the evening, and that his plane had been waiting on the runway at the Huntsville airport for hours. In these busy times when all of us feel that nothing is quite so important as our own endeavors, I will remember that always as well.

The retouched 1895 photograph of the Old Main building

The retouched 1895 photograph of Old Main building
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Sam Houston, umbrella in hand, shades college president Samuel McKinney as he delivers the keynote address after laying the cornerstone for Austin College. June, 1851.