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# Docent brings history to life

■ Heritage Park offers glimpse of early settlers

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**W**HEN Mary Alice Rheman talks about growth in the Katy area, she speaks as an eyewitness.

The 85-year-old Green Trails Oaks resident has lived in the area for more than 40 years. She and her late husband, George Rheman, spent nearly 20 years before that living in nearby Brookshire.

"When we moved to Katy in 1962 it was just a little country town, and now it's spread out all over the prairie with these subdivisions and shopping centers," Rheman said.

Rheman's love for Katy inspired her to become a volunteer docent for the Katy Heritage Society last year.

"I thought it would be a wonderful way to preserve the history of Katy," she said. "We're growing so fast; I was worried it would disappear.

"One of the most rewarding things about doing it is the people who come in; the reason they come is they're interested in Katy's history."

Rheman is one of 20 Heritage Society docents who welcome guests to the society's  
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SUZANNE REHAK : FOR THE CHRONICLE

**A GUIDE TO HISTORY:** Mary Alice Rheman is a docent for the Katy Heritage Society.



# DOCENTS: Katy group recruits volunteers

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historical houses at Heritage Park, 5990 George Bush Drive.

She volunteers Sunday afternoons at the Wright Museum, the 1898 home of John Henry and Pauline Wright.

"The Wright family is very interesting," Rheman said. "He (John Henry) was the first pharmacist in Katy."

Pauline Wright's daughter, Roberta Rylander, donated the house to the Heritage Society.

The society also brings guests through the Featherston House, which was built on Second Street and Avenue A in 1898 for W.H. and Amelia Featherston.

"Their ground floor was their living quarters, and they rented the top floor," Rheman said.

Even after W.H. Featherston was called to the ministry in 1906, the family continued to operate its boarding house.

"More people were settling in Katy, and the need for housing was exploding," Rheman said.

In 1910, the Cobb Hotel next door was attached to the Featherston house.

First Baptist Church bought the building in 1981 and sold it to the Heritage Society in 1987.

The society's third house,

## TAKE A TOUR

Katy Heritage Park is open the first weekend of every month. Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays and 1-4 p.m. Sundays. Details: 281-391-2550.

the Stockdick House, was built in 1916 for Chester Stockdick and his wife, Zeta. Its first site was 4th Street and Avenue A. The Heritage Society obtained the building in 2002, the same year the society moved its historical houses to Heritage Park.

"I happened to be in Katy the day they moved these houses," said Rheman, the mother of two and grandmother of seven. "It was a big deal in Katy, and it was fun to be part of it."

Rheman seems to delight in her role as docent, said Carol Adams, Heritage Society president.

"She's a darling, darling lady," Adams said. "She knows so many people in Katy, and (volunteering) gives her a chance to stay in touch with the community."

Adams encourages more volunteers to become docents.

"All of our houses have a self-guided tour, but the docents are there to welcome people," Adams said.