

720 INDIANA AVE., WICHITA FALLS, TEXAS 76301



From the Desk of Rober Palmer, Commission Chair

The beginnings of Wichita County have been clearly recorded or have they? Sometimes a single word can make us look at history differently than we have.

It's natural to want to be described as the "first". Nobody questions that Mabel Gilbert is the first settler in Wichita County, but his Texas Historical Marker describes him as, "The First Permanent Settler in the Area."

Really? Gilbert's life did not reflect the word "permanent"! He lived in many locations before moving east of present-day Burkburnett on the Red River. His time in Wichita County had many interruptions. He would leave for several years and live in Montague County. The reason was always the same, Native American attacks.

He first came to Wichita County in 1856, moved to Montague County in 1857, and after three years returned to Wichita County, then back to Montague County, then back to Wichita County for three years until his death on March 1, 1870. His family then moved to Cooke County. The Texas Historical Association calls him, "The first Settler in the Area".

Who was the First Permanent Settler in Wichita County? Here are some names. Joseph Hudson Barwise is rightly called the First Permanent Settler in Wichita Falls. He came to Wichita Falls in 1879. Samuel Burk Burnett began his 6666 ranch in 1875. He moved cattle herds north that he had formed in North Texas and Southern Oklahoma. He built his permanent headquarters in 1881.

The people in Western Wichita County have claimed the First Permanent Settler was Mart Banta who settled on Beaver Creek on October 5, 1877. I was fortunate to interview his descendants many times. They told great stories of the many wild animals: buffalo, cougars, and antelope that ate their gardens. Their nearest neighbors were Tom Roberts and, a very famous name, Dick Sparks. That opens a trail to follow. Dick Sparks was a black man who was in Wichita County very early in his life. How early? We just don't know.

Continued on page 4.

Wichita County Archives Carol Rudd, Archivist

Hours of Operation:
Wednesday, Thursday,
and Friday
10:00am - 4:00pm

*Wichita County Texas
Archives is on
[Facebook](#)*

Program

Woody Gossom County Judge Stories

MEETING
**First Thursday of the
Month**
12:00 Noon - 1:00pm
**Museum of North
Texas History**
720 Indiana

Becky Trammell, Newsletter Editor

Wichita County Historical Commission
January 4, 2024 Agenda

Call to Order: Robert Palmer

Program: Woody Gossom

Approval of minutes for December meeting: Sent to all members in newsletter.

Financial Report: Status of Account

Committee Reports:

Program Committee: Douglas James, Chairman

Cemetery Committee: John Yates, Chairman

Website Committee: Becky Trammell/Elizabeth Hawley

Marker Committee: Becky Trammell

Old Business:

New Business:

Adjournment:



The Museum of North Texas History sadly reports our Executive Director, Nadine McKown, passed away on Thursday, December 14th after struggling valiantly against cancer. Though only with us for a short time, we mourn her loss personally and the loss to the Museum.

Nadine had worked in the North Texas community for many years for the Kell House Heritage Center. Starting as an assistant, she progressed to the site supervisor for the Kell House. Nadine spearheaded the major renovation of the historic house before coming to the Museum as Executive Director. She leaves behind family and many, many friends.

Wichita County Historical Commission**December 7, 2023 Minutes**

Call to order: Robert Palmer called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.

Attendance:

Members: Carol Rudd, Bryce Blair, John Yates, Billy Clark, Brenda Jarrett, Robert Palmer, Douglas James, Katherine Phillips, Suzanne Darr, Pam Morgan, Celia Moseley, Russell Miller, Medrith Collins

Guest: Josh Scott

Program: The program was a video memorial tribute to Don Burkman. Afterwards, people shared some of their favorite stories. Don Burkman is greatly missed.

Minutes: The November minutes were approved. Katherine Phillips made the motion to accept and Russell Miller seconded.

Old Business:

If you know of someone interested in becoming a member of the Historical Commission, have them write about their interest in history and add a resume about themselves. The information will be passed onto the Commissioners Court for approval.

As a reminder, each Century Plaque that has been given to commemorate buildings for 100 years runs approximately \$350 each. Please see Carol Rudd in the Archives to donate. Members are encouraged to give generously.

New Business: John Yates gave a short presentation of the “North Texas Tales” podcast that can be found on Spotify. However, the podcast is no longer free. To keep “North Texas Tales” up and running, it will cost \$147 per year. Billy Clark made the motion to pay the fee and Douglas James seconded.

It is time to total up your volunteer hours for the year. Please bring or send the hours to Carol Rudd. An accounting is submitted to the state of Texas.

The historical marker for the Providence Baptist Church of Burkburnett will be delivered in two to three months. Please consider being at the dedication ceremony in Burkburnett. More information later.

Committee Reports: No Committee reports

Adjournment: John Yates made the motion to adjourn and Brenda Jarrett seconded.

Minutes prepared by Carol A. Rudd

Monthly Archives Report**December 2023**

- On December 5th Austin Allison, from Texas Tech University Special Collections Library, came to pick up 2898 boxes of microfiche from the Archives. The microfiche dates back to the very beginning of the city newspaper: Daily Times, Wichita Falls Post, Wichita Falls Times, and Times Records News. The digitization will probably take two years.
- Since October, I have been talking to and sending pictures and information about the Littlest Skyscraper to John Reitzammer, who lives in Florida and Tennessee. I suggested that John also speak to Bryce Blair and Lynn Walker, who know much about J. D. McMahon. Reitzammer is a producer who works with the State of Texas tourist division and on December 18th, he visited to Wichita Falls to shoot early morning pictures of the skyscraper. Soon, John will have a meeting with the tourist division to determine if our story will be told as rest stops. Keep your fingers crossed.
- Lauren Love will start working with the Archives in January. Lauren is enrolled at the University of North Texas and is pursuing a concentration in Archival study. As part of her program requirements, she will complete 120 hours of practical experience.
- Things are rather slow at the archives because of the holidays. However, it has been the perfect time to tidy up shelves, see what's in the vault, and dust and rearrange books. There is and never will be a dull moment in the Archives.

Rober Palmer Column - Continued

A must-book for every Wichita County Historian is, "Pioneers Remember". Mary Kirby, Lita Watson, and Becky Trammell did a marvelous job assembling the interviews from the Golden Jubilee Celebration in Wichita Falls September 25, 26, and 27, 1936. In it members of the Taylor Family describe what date they came to Wichita County - 1876 - and where they settled - on the Red River. They were not the first members of their family to be settled on that location. They were predated by their sister's husband, R.D. Bateman. Briefly, here is his story.

R.D. Bateman was an elderly gentleman from Yorkshire, England. When the Army abandoned Camp Augur in 1874-1875, he purchased the land and 500 surrounding acres in 1876. He brought lumber from Henrietta and built a house. In 1890, it was replaced by a larger house for his wife, Mattie Taylor, a picture of whom hangs in our hallway. The Taylor family is all through early Wichita County. Mattie's brother, Phi Taylor, is in two iconic pictures. He's the cowboy in the lower right-hand corner of the picture of the famous Wolf Hunt. He's the cowboy roping the pilot of the First Airplane Flight at Lake Wichita. His brother, John Taylor, worked for Mr. Kemp and Mr. Kell. He was a deal arranger. His nickname was "Bowler," but that's another story.

I've said all that to say all this. R.D. Bateman was, probably, the first permanent settler in Wichita County. It's a story to be further researched.