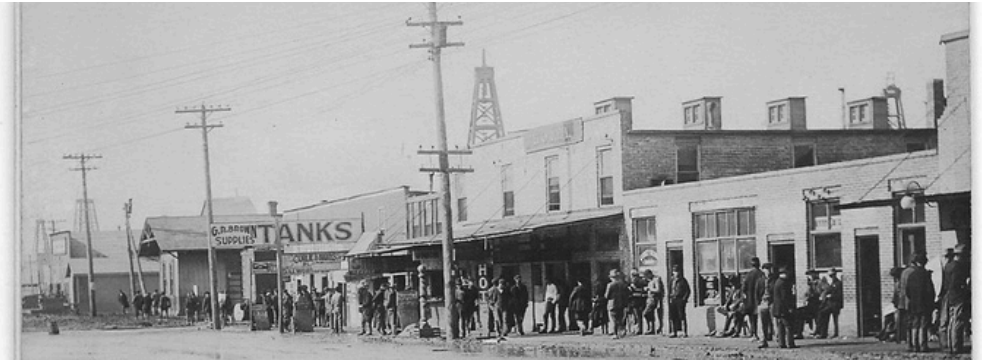


720 INDIANA AVE., WICHITA FALLS, TEXAS 76301



From the desk of Robert Palmer

One of the most interesting and entertaining parts of Wichita County culture from the 1930s to the late '60s was the Variety Stores, which were more commonly called Five and Dime Stores. All county communities had them. Electra had Wacker's and Stevenson's Five and Dime. Burkburnett also had Wacker's and Butler's Five and Dime. Iowa Park had Jim's and Hill's Five and Dime and, later, T.G. and Y., although that was pushing the definition of Variety Store. Wichita Falls had Kress's and Woolworth's. They were what they said, Variety Stores! They had everything, cheap! They were a mainstay of life until the big box stores came in. They just weren't the same. A mother could go to the Variety Store and get sewing supplies: thread, needles, cloth, scissors, measuring tapes, whatever they needed to sew. But, their real greatness was the toys. They had lots and lots of toys. A young person could go in with their weekly allowance or money made from selling pop bottles for 2 cents apiece and shop and shop and shop, cheaply. Many toys were a dime. There were toy cars of every description. Neighborhood kids would buy toy cars and then get together and build toy dreamlands in the dirt! They had all the traditional toys, again cheap! A kid could buy tops to spin, yo-yos to roll, and marbles to win and lose or simply admire. There were shooters, cat eyes, and just plain marbles. Teachers, at school, turned their backs when the kids drew a ring, threw their marbles in, and began shooting. Toy cap pistols were the top purchase. I talked to a friend yesterday and he told me he still had his toy pistol and I told him I did, too. The Movie Western stars of the 50s added to the cap pistol world. Roy Rogers and Hopalong Cassidy pistols were too expensive for most kids to own; for some strange reason, probably good marketing, Gene Autry cap pistols were affordable. Most every boy had a rabbit's foot for good luck, bought at the Variety Store, and, yes, they were real rabbits' feet. You could buy kites, although most made their own out of peach tree switches, newspapers, and flour glue. Girls bought Jacks and rubber balls, although boys played Jacks, too. It was somewhat disheartening to always get beat by the girls! There were whistles, cheap harmonicas, and toy drums. The boys bought pocket knives. Every boy had one. At recess, they played stretch and splits. The principal didn't care because he had done that as a boy, too. You could buy school supplies: number 2 pencils, Big Chief tablets, glue, and crayons. The kids whose parents had money bought the big boxes. Most of us had a small basic box. The boys bought \$1.00 straw hats and brown cloth gloves to work in. It was a wonderful time! The Variety Store was the thing dreams are made of, cheap!

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

MSU Texas Student Films

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
Minutes - February 6, 2025**

Call to Order: Robert Palmer called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

Attendance Members: Byrle Graham, Jeremy Davis, Bryce Blair, Shanon Morton, Carol Rudd, Douglas James, Suzanne Darr, Paula Elmore, and Leanne M. Ray

Attendance Guest: Rose Wallace, Candace Roney, Dorothy Palmer, Cindy Kahler Thomas, Deb Cornelius, Elaine Miles, Holly Roberts, Lauri Cruse, Sarah Johnson, Tysh Huddleston, Perry Curry, Leann Curry, Adam Roberts, Madge Henny, Lynn Bryant, Nancy Markes, Helen Willington, and Lynn Seman.

Program: Burkburnett resident Deb Cornelius presented a program about her new book, *Rivers and Destinies*, a fictionalized history of pioneer North Texas settler Mabel Gilbert. In the late 1960's Dr. Kenneth F. Neighbours, Hon. Vernon Stewart and Catherine Clack, all members of the Wichita County Historical Survey Committee, worked diligently to have a Historical Marker for Mabel Gilbert who came to Texas in 1837. The marker was approved in 1970 and was erected on the Perkins Scout Camp. Always curious about the man and the family, Deb Cornelius started researching the Gilberts in 2017. The deeper she dug brought her face to face with property deeds, patents, correspondence, surveys, pictures, and personal letters. After the meeting Deb, did a book signing in the Archives. Her book can be ordered from Amazon in paperback, hardback and Kindle.

Approval of Minutes: The December minutes were approved after a correction. Douglas James made the motion to accept and Bryce Blair seconded.

Chairman Reports:

Program: Films made by MSU graduates with assistance from the Archives/Wichita County Historical Commission will be the March program.

Cemetery: John Yates

Website: Becky Trammell and Elizabeth Hawley: The website has been updated.

Markers: Robert Palmer reminded the dedication marker for Spudder Park on Feb. 13 at 1:00pm.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Adjournment: At 12:44 p.m. Carol Rudd made the motion to adjourn and Shannon Morton seconded.

2025 Spring Marker Cycle

Now is the time for marker applications. The marker price has increased from \$2500 (\$100 application fee) to \$2600 (\$100 application fee). All applications must be submitted online.

Agenda - March 6th

Call to Order: Robert Palmer

Attendance Members:

Attendance Guest:

Program: MSU Student Films

Approval of Minutes: February

Chairman Reports:

Program: Douglas James

Cemetery: John Yates:

Website: Becky Trammell and Elizabeth Hawley:

Markers: Spring Marker Cycle began March 1.

Old Business:

New Business:

Adjournment:

ARCHIVE HAPPENINGS

February 2024

John Lovelace called the Archives looking for any information about his great-grandfather, Virgil Chase, who was a band leader in the late 20s, 30s, and 40s. Although the band members lived in Seminole, Oklahoma, they played all over the country and spent their winters in Florida and New Orleans. In 1934, the orchestra played for President Roosevelt's birthday. The Virgil Chase Orchestra also had a 10 day gig at the Holt Hotel in January 1934.

Cindee Mines of Ohio called to ask if we had any information about Ernie C. Hall who was a civilian flight instructor at Call Field. Ernie took a room in "The Joline" in 1918. He moved to 1201 Scott in 1919. His landlord was Ira. D. Brown who was part owner of "Palace of Sweets." In 1920 he moved to Call Field and lived in E Row 58. Ernie C. Hall was a personal friend of Orville Wright who taught him how to fly in 1910. Hall also ran the world's oldest flying school in Hall Airport near Warren, Ohio.

Still working through the Times Record News File Cabinets. I'm now wrestling with the letter "W." The project started in July and soon things will be easier to find.

Join the Museum of North Texas History in March 2025 as they celebrate our 25th Anniversary. They plan to commemorate the Museum's founders and provide a look toward the future. Watch social media for more information.



Thanks to everyone who came out for the dedication of the Spudder Park marker.