



From the desk of Robert Palmer

Wichita County's history is rich with stories of aviators, flying history, and stories of life in the sky. Few have the thrills and daring of the first flight in Wichita County. We, the Wichita County Historical Commission, reenacted the event on April 14, 2012, at Lake Wichita. The actual event happened exactly 100 years earlier on April 14, 1912. Astute historians will immediately recognize that date...the day the Titanic hit the iceberg! As the story unfolds, it gets even more remarkable!

The pilot was a lady, Matilde Moisant. She was a product of the Albert Moisant Aviation School, owned by her brother. She earned her pilot's license on April 13, 1911. She was ladies' license number 2, and her best friend, Harriet Quimby, was number 1. This friendship played an important role in her flying career just one year later.

In September 1911, she won the Rodman-Wanamaker Altitude Trophy by flying to a women's altitude record of 1200 feet, quite an accomplishment in her 50-horsepower single-wing plane, a very unstable aircraft!

The team began an exhibition tour of The United States and Mexico, escaping death at the hands of Mexican Revolutionists. While flying in Dallas, the team was invited to Wichita Falls by a group of local businessmen. Aiding greatly to the decision to fly to Wichita Falls was the availability of a railroad to carry the plane and equipment. A rail to Lake Wichita was a bonus. **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

Valarie Maxwell
Gilbert Creek Gardens
Burkburnett, Texas
Meet in Burkburnett

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 - August 1, 2024

Call to Order: Robert Palmer called to order at 12:01 pm

Attendance Members: Bryce Blair, Celia Moseley, Billy Clark, John Yates, Douglas James, Suzanne Darr, Carol Rudd, Shanon Morton, Paul Bata, Byrle Graham

Attendance Guest: Josh Scott, Rose Wallace, Jody Bata, Clifford Bridwell, Jim Johnson, Gayle Slaughterhop, Clara Latham, Bill Steward, Jeremy Davis.

Program: Paul Bata talked about North Texas and Wichita County maps. One story he told was a mapmaker named Edward Stiff. In 1840, Stiff created a purchase map of land grants for settlers. But, there was a kicker. Settlers were to find their land and survey it themselves. Francis Moore Jr, editor of the Telegraph and Texas Register, called out Stiff as a “scandal and drunken fraud who had not traveled beyond Houston or Galveston.” If you want to know what happened to Stiff, go to the Texas State Historical Assoc. for the rest of the story. Thank you, Paul. It was enjoyable.

Approval July Minutes: No minutes to approve.

Chairman Reports:

Program: Douglas James has a speaker for December.

Cemetery: John Yates No report

Website: Becky Trammell and Elizabeth Hawley No report

Markers: Becky Trammell No report

Old Business: No old business

New Business: A reminder from Becky Trammell: Saturday, January 17 at 6 p.m. The Church of the Good Shepherd will celebrate 148 years with an unveiling of a historical marker. A reception will follow in the fellowship hall. The address is 1007 Burnett St.

Carol Rudd reminded the members that the September meeting will be in Burkburnett at the Gilbert Creek Gardens located at 411 3rd Ave. You don't want to miss this event. Blair Ramon and her mother, Valarie Maxwell, have worked hard to renovate and preserve the old Ice House structure. More work is to be done, but it will be a fantastic space for weddings, birthdays, reunions, and more. The building is very special to Blair and Valarie because of a family member who once worked at the Ice House. Parking will be in the lot across the street from Grace Lutheran Church. After the meeting, you may want to have lunch at The Feedlot or Carlitos.

Adjournment: John Yates made the motion to adjourn; Carol Rudd seconded.

UPCOMING SPEAKERS

October: Jeremy Davis; November: Orlando Sosa; December:

OPEN

**Wichita County Archives News
August 2024**

Susan Wiggins called to ask about the house in Electra that she and her husband have bought and are renovating. Taking a trip to the second floor of the building was required to locate Block 32 Lot. 7. Susan was pleased to know that the home was once Electra Floral with several hot houses and lots of glass.

Lita Watson’s son Carl dropped by looking for pictures to spruce up his son's law office. Lita’s grandson, Cole Watson, Attorney and Counselor of Law, has opened his law office on the top floor of the Pilgrim Bank building in Iowa Park. Great location but he has nothing on the walls. Cole’s dad made a trip to the Archives and found wonderful pictures. Thanks to Carl, the decoration and the tribute to Iowa Park is underway.

Samantha Forester, the new social media and marketing specialist for the City of Wichita Falls Public Information Office, was looking for information to celebrate National Women’s Equality Day. Becky Trammell gave her a list of potential candidates from Wichita Falls, Burkburnett, Iowa Park, and Electra. Samantha wanted to know who was the first woman to cast a vote in Wichita Falls. In 1918 the first woman to be in line at the courthouse when the polls opened was Mrs. Martha Caroline Napier. She cast her first vote for William Pettus Hobby for governor.

Larry Singleton has bought what used to be the Burkburnett Bank on Main St. He is researching the building for a possible historical marker. Before the property was a bank, it was home to several car dealerships starting around 1922. In 1927 Barrow-Grace Chevrolet Co. took out a full page in the Burkburnett paper “Celebrating the Bridge Opening and the Community Fair.” In the same year, Barrow-Grace sold Buick's in Wichita Falls.

Summer is rather slow but it gives the Archives a chance to do deep-dive cleaning. One big project is going through the Flat Files and verifying what is in each drawer. We are finding that some files were never recorded, some are in the wrong drawer and some have disappeared. The second project is going through the Times Record News file cabinets and pulling files that have nothing to do with Wichita County or North Texas. Come and beat the heat in the 63-66 degree Archives.

Church of the Good Shepherd Marker Dedication



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The flight would take place at the ballfield near The Pavilion. This is where the story gets sticky. Some say she had decided to make this her last flight. Her brother John had been killed in a crash in 1910. Most likely she decided after the events that were to follow.

It was not a good day to fly. Wind conditions had to be just right for safe flight by the flimsy aircraft. A large crowd had attended and they waited all day for the flight to occur. Late in the day, conditions improved and her mechanic, Andre Houpert, made a short test flight, the first flight in Wichita County. Finally, she went up, flew over the downtown area, and returned to land at Lake Wichita. It wasn't going to happen. The crowd had squeezed onto the field, leaving no place for Moisant to land. There was no communication between Moisant and her mechanic, who sometimes called her instructor. She, finally, made a decision, to bring the airplane in very low, find a small open area, stall the craft, and nose into the ground from a height of about 10 feet.

It would have worked perfectly if the gasoline tank hadn't burst, catching the plane on fire. Wichita Falls Newspapers took pictures of the events. One showed two Burnett Ranch Cowboys roping her before the flight. One cowboy was Phy Taylor who was also the lower right-hand cowboy in the famous Wolf Hunt photograph. He had a knack for being in the right place at the right time! And, yes, he is from the Wichita County Pioneer Taylor family! Another photograph shows the plane on fire.

Because of her heavy wool flight jacket, she only received small facial burns. Two months later her close friend, Harriet Quimby, fell out of her plane when it accidentally inverted. There were no seat belts then! Then she announced she would no longer fly. She lived to the age of 85!

The crash, when allowing for time differences, had occurred at almost the exact moment the Titanic hit the iceberg! And the story gets weirder! Two teenage boys from Electra talked their dad into buying the wrecked plane. That story is told under the title, "The Electra Monoplane". I interviewed one of the boys' grandsons several years ago. That is another story, although I will tell you I think the wrecked plane is somewhere in Electra!



Texoma Gives early giving started on August 22nd and is ongoing. The big day is Thursday, September 5th. Give to your favorite nonprofit. Please support the Museum of North Texas History. The Wichita County Historical Commission and the Wichita County Archives work hand in hand with the Museum.

Please show your support.

[Donate Now!](#)

**Wichita County Historical Commission
Agenda - September 5, 2024**

- Call to Order:** Robert Palmer
- Attendance Members:**
- Attendance Guest:**
- Program:** Gilbert Creek Gardens in Burkburnett
- Approval of June Minutes:**
- Chairman Reports:**
- Program:** Douglas James
- Cemetery:** John Yates
- Website:** Becky Trammell and Elizabeth Hawley
- Markers:**
- Old Business:**
- New Business:**
- Adjournment:**

September Meeting - Road Trip



If you need help with directions call Carol at the Archives.

Our September meeting will be held at Gilbert Creek Gardens located at 411 3rd Ave., Burkburnett. Located in the Old Ice House, Blair Ramon and her mother, Valarie Maxwell, have worked hard to renovate and preserve the structure. The plans include a venue for weddings, birthdays, reunions, and more. Parking will be in the lot across the street from Grace Lutheran Church.