

PRESERVATION NEWS

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Becky Trammell, Editor

From the Desk of Robert Palmer

Pivotal moments occur throughout history. Events change the uniform flow of history. We are experiencing that at this moment in history. It is characterized in many ways. Some indicators are: inflation, heavy financial involvement in a foreign war that is not being fought by our soldiers, a huge shortage of school teachers, record closing of churches, printed newspapers ceasing to operate, a dependence on electronic means for information dispersal, record home prices, potential food shortages, movement from small farms to corporation farms, movement of population from rural areas to mega-cities, history revision, record immigration, widening gap of wealth, questioned constitutional rights, and the list goes on and on. Blame can be placed where individual beliefs lead you. The bottom line is our culture is rapidly being changed and we haven't even touched on climate change.

Change is not new. It has occurred throughout Wichita County History. Here is a summary of things that have greatly affected our county's history.

The county was a

barren land inhabited by isolated Native American tribes until the Spanish and French crossed the county and then spread the word of the resources of the land. Not much changed until the Republic of Texas sought to find out what it had with the Texas-Santa Fe Expedition of 1841. Much of the county became defined by land grants. This gave individuals and institutions the title to land in the county. The Red River Indian wars brought a military presence. Ranches and small settlements developed.

The coming of the railroads accelerated the movement of people to the county. Cities became incorporated. The northern part of the county broke up into small farms with the forming of The Waggoner Colony and The Spect land. Rural schools and churches were built.

The oil booms changed the county overnight. Wealth from the booms became the driving force. It's no accident that most of the large brick schools and churches were built in the early 20s. World War I was a huge change force. Men were awakened to the world. The huge loss of horses and mules hastened the

move to gasoline-powered vehicles. Then the Depression happened. Families were uprooted overnight. It ended when the World War further changed the county and the world. The end of the war brought prosperity. Rural schools closed because the farmers were moving to the cities. Families bought cars, houses, air conditioners, televisions, and other things that now became necessities. The government supported farming and food was plentiful. Then the country became involved in a faraway country called Viet Nam. The country was ripped apart.

The nation passed non-discrimination laws. Medical aid to families became the norm. Farmers were given government-assisted crop insurance. Crop failure became less of a worry. The food was cheap.

And then we entered the technology age. The change will happen. Resilient people adjust and, we historians interpret and report it.

Wichita County Archives

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wchitacountyhistorical.com

mission.org/

Hours of Operation:

Tuesday, Wednesday and

Thursday 10:00am -

12:00pm & 1:00pm -

4:00pm

Wichita County Texas

Archives is on [Facebook](#)

Program John Yates Wichita Falls Patents

MEETING

12:00 Noon - 1:00pm
AGENDA FOR MEETING:

1. Call to Order
2. Introduction of Guests
3. Business
4. Program
5. Adjourn



I have been off for the month of July, recovering from hip replacement surgery. Needless to say, there is no activity to report this month. However, a recent email from Tai Kreidler of Texas Tech University in Lubbock highlights the town of Bandera, Texas' claim of being the "Cowboy Capital of the World". Tai alluded to the fact that Wichita County and our part of North Texas may be better known for cowboys than Bandera. The following is my response to the cowboy claim.

Home of the Cowboy

The term "cowboy" has recently been used to describe anyone that wears a cowboy hat, or cowboy boots, and drives a pick-up truck. Those cowboys, sometimes referred to as Rexall Rangers or Drug Store Cowboys are somewhat of a joke in the rural settings of Texas. A more definitive description of a cowboy today is an amateur or professional athlete that competes in a rodeo. Many places such as Stephenville, Texas and Oakdale, California stake a claim as being the Cowboy Capital for the number of rodeo cowboys from there.

There is even a little town in Texas that claims to be the "Cowboy Capital of the World". Bandera, Texas made that claim based on the number of cowboys that passed through their town during the early cattle drives in Texas. The fact that Bandera branded themselves the cowboy capital as a tourism marketing scheme smells like a pile that cowboys walked around on the cattle trail.

An accepted definition of a true cowboy is someone who tends cattle herds, usually on horseback, on ranches and cattle drives. Cowboys are regarded as independent, self-reliant, proud, fearless, and sometimes reckless. Being one with nature and avoiding the spotlight seems contradictory of the braggart attitudes of today's cowboy capitals.

Living on remote ranches, tending cattle herds from even more remote line shacks, getting cattle to market on drives through perilous conditions, and occasionally going to town to blow off a little steam might better describe the life of a cowboy. He would be at home on the range, on his horse tending, a cattle herd.

One place that offered a home to the cowboy was Wichita County, Texas. During the times of cattle drives from Texas to the railheads in Kansas and Nebraska, several large ranches were established in Wichita County. The Waggoner Ranch established in Wichita County in the late 1870s eventually became the largest ranch under one fence in the United States. Then there is the famous 6666 Ranch established in northern Wichita County in the late 1870s. Both ranches are still in operation today.

By the time of the 1880 U.S. Census, Wichita County had a total of 297 residents. Of those, 74 were cowboys working on three different ranches, the Waggoner, 6666, and the Ikard. Making the number of cowboys living in Wichita County even more outstanding is that 16 of those cowboys were black. During that time, blacks suffered from the stigmas of racial prejudice and segregation. But as cowboys, blacks proved themselves, many times, superior to their white counterparts and melded into the cowboy lifestyle.

Not only was Wichita County home to several cattle ranches, but also the only place within a hundred miles or so to blow off steam. Wichita Falls was the only town west of Gainesville and north of Fort Worth that sold alcohol. Cowboys came from miles around to enjoy a little comradery and rowdiness after being alone on the range for months at a time.

To this day, area ranches from the North Texas area come to Wichita Falls to compete in the annual Ranch Round-up. Real cowboys compete in authentic ranch activities-style rodeo at the Ranch Round-up with proceeds benefiting several area non-profits.

So, in contrast to the silly claims of being cowboy capitals; Wichita County, Texas offered the perfect combination of components desirable to cattle raisers and cowboys to be successful and thrive, making it "Home of the Cowboy".

A History of Wichita County in 25 Objects

What are some artifacts or objects that say

“This is Wichita County?”

Here is the beginning of a list, in no particular order, with thanks to Delores Culley, Elizabeth Hawley, Bryce Blair, Carol Rudd, and Billy Clark. What would you add to the list???

Gang Plow, Wichita Truck, Pump jack, Hotter N Hell, Funland, Flour Mill, Burnett/Waggoner Ranches, Sheppard/Call Field, Spudder, Pioneer – McBride, Tornados, Glass Coke Bottle, Jet training, Water improvements and re-use, Innovation in engineering, Art and Culture (Kemp Center for the Arts, the Arts Alliance, city murals, beautification of the city), August pies, Frontier Steak House, The Rabbit at Aboussie Shoe Store,

Underwood's cherry cobbler, Luby's little blueberry muffins, Kouri Grocery home delivery, the Central Feed and Seed parrot, Memorial Auditorium, Federal Building, The Falls, Littlest Skyscraper, Old High-Coyotes, Wee-Chi-Tah Sculpture, MSU Texas, Red Draws at a Pioneer restaurant, Ranch Roundup, 100 degree plus temperature, Fantasy of Lights, Backdoor Theatre, Red tacos at Casa Manana restaurant.

MoNTH News

Legends of North Texas returns on Wednesday, October 12th honoring racing legend Eddie Hill. Tickets go on sale August 12th. For more information, check the Museum of North Texas History Facebook page or call (940) 322-7628.