



PRESERVATION NEWS

April 6th, 2017

Newsletter of the Wichita County Historical Commission

Volume LXXXII Robert Palmer, Chairman

Wichita County Archives

720 Indiana Avenue

Wichita Falls, Texas 76301

Telephone 940-763-0020

Hours of Operation: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 10:00am - 12:00pm & 1:00pm - 4:00pm

E-mail Address - archives@co.wichita.tx.us

www.wichitacountyhistoricalcommission.org/

AGENDA FOR MEETING

Lunch at 11:30am Meeting 12:00 Noon - 1:00pm

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

Monthly Meeting: Location: Luby's. Price for the luncheon is **\$10.00** each which includes: one meat, salad, vegetables, drink & dessert. Please bring the correct change. **RESERVATIONS NO LONGER NEEDED**

PROGRAM

Eck Robertson - Panhandle Fiddler 1887-1975
Bill E. Steward

From the Desk of Robert Palmer -

Recently, I purchased part of the book collection of Burkburnett inventor and businessman Jay Carter. As might be expected, there was a wide variety of books on subjects such as: wind dynamics, mechanical engineering, and physics. It brought home the old adage that genius is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration. We all dream of getting that one idea that will result in us becoming famous and rich. However, most great inventions come from hours and hours of work and study. We study and build on what others have done before us. A very good example is Mr. Carter's wind generator idea.

The first workable Wind Generated Electricity came in 1888. Charles Brush, an Ohio based engineer, built a 60 foot tower with a 56 foot rotor to generate up to 12kW of electricity. The generator weighed 80,000 pounds and had 144 blades. He built it to provide electricity for his home. The basement had 12 batteries charged by the generator. It powered the home for 20 years. After his death, Henry Ford tried to buy the generator, but the city had destroyed it to make way for a road.

A friend of mine and I were looking at one of our wheat fields when he asked how much money could be made if the field made 40 bushels per acre. We used the GPS on our phone to measure the amount of land and then used the calculator on the phone to get the answer. The whole process took about five minutes. I grew up when calculators were mechanical with handles and land was measured by 60 foot chains. The first hand held calculator was The Curta Calculator developed in 1948. The first all electric calculator was The Casio Model 14-A developed in 1957. The first portable calculators were developed in the mid 1960s. A partnership between Texas Instruments and several Japanese companies produced the first pocket calculators. There were many models. Initially, the cost was close to \$300.00. Recently, Wal-Mart had models on sale for less than \$5.00. There were few takers.

The modern phone will take excellent pictures and video record. Most people know Thomas Edison invented the first phonograph, a cylinder type machine. It was improved to the vinyl record format. Instant recording was elusive. Many crude Dictaphone devices found their way into business offices, but they were generally unreliable and unaffordable for the masses. This changed with the marketing of wire recorders. The first wire recorder was invented by engineer Valdemar Poulsen in 1898. It went nowhere. It

sat on the shelf until the end of World War II in 1945. Soldiers coming home were much more aware of what a modern world could provide. The wire recorder hit its peak from 1946 to 1954 when tape recorders were developed as a marketable product. In 1946, the Brush Company (does that name sound familiar?) and the Armour Institute developed an inexpensive model and they became the rage. People could instantly hear their own voice for the first time. It was a frightening experience! We just didn't sound like we thought we would. My Uncle in Electra, the owner of Clemons Furniture Store, sold many, particularly at Christmas. He also sold garbage disposals. He drove a new Chrysler and wore handmade suits! America had, pardon the pun, disposable money.

In the early 1950's, one of the hot new inventions was the Geiger Counter. America had entered the Atomic Age. Uranium was the dream discovery. It was thought that, if you found a deposit of uranium, you would become unbelievably rich. Geiger Counters were on the market, well you know, in case of nuclear attack. You would know when to come out of your backyard shelter. Many were bought to prospect with.

In 1908 Hans Geiger developed an experimental technique for detecting Alpha particles. His device became a vital part of the eventual Geiger Counter. It became known as the Geiger-Muller tube. A practical radiation detecting instrument could be produced cheaply. And, yes, amateurs in Wichita County did find rock areas that set off the Geiger Counters. The land owners did not share their enthusiasm and nothing happened.

Americans are great thinkers. We seek that elusive idea that nobody has thought of before...the one that will make us rich.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Where was the Ball Glass Jar factory?

Wichita County Archive News

April 2017

Welcome to our new Archivist, Bill Steward. His first day learning the Archives was March 28th.

Does anyone have a purpose for a cornerstone from a 1919 building? We talked with a gentleman who has the cornerstone for the Labor Temple, which is now the parking lot for the Hamilton Building.

Received second revision of wording for Dr. Anne Roark historical marker.

Looking for topics for Undertold markers for the 2017 cycle.

John Hart Wilson

Entrepreneur John Hart Wilson was born in Pueblo, Colorado and grew up in Clarksburg, West Virginia. He graduated from Purdue University in 1914 with a degree in electrical engineering and joined the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He then worked in Toledo, Ohio, setting up electrical generating plants, before serving as an engineer during World War I. After the war, he organized a company in Clarksburg to manufacture electric lights to be installed on Model T Fords after purchase. In 1920, Wilson moved to Burkburnett, joining his brother. There, he met and married Ella Nevile, a nurse. Wilson designed a winch that could be mounted to a tractor and moved between oil wells; the product's success led Wilson to move his manufacturing company to **Wichita Falls** in 1926. In 1932, he introduced a mechanical drilling rig, which helped make steam-powered drilling rigs obsolete. Wilson patented 118 inventions, including the chain transmission, which made possible the use of larger engines with greater drilling speed and depth potential. He also improved a pneumatically controlled clutch, making it possible to control large amounts of power by moving a small actuating valve. He organized Wichita Clutch Company to produce this equipment; he also owned Wichita Falls Foundry and Machine Company, which produced castings. During World War II, Wilson redesigned and manufactured barrage balloon winches, used to keep low-flying enemy aircraft away from troop positions. He also built houses and commercial buildings. Today, John Hart Wilson is remembered as a gifted inventor whose accomplishments were matched only by his ethics and generosity.



Henry C. Luecke Pioneer, Blacksmith and Inventor

A native of Missouri, Henry C. Luecke (1861 - 1937) came to Texas about 1890. He opened a blacksmith shop at this intersection in 1903. Here he developed and manufactured the Wichita Gang Plow, patented in 1905. His device was similar to other plows designed to turn several furrows at once but included three levers to improve maneuverability. The Wichita Gang Plow was widely sold in this area before the steam tractor made it obsolete. Luecke and his wife Emma (1866 - 1950) were members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. They had eleven children.
