
Wichita County Archive News

April 2014

News Items

Burnett Horse Ranch marker is in the ground on Hwy 240 at Slama Rd. Dedication ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, April 26th at 10:00am.

We are searching for topics for the Undertold Marker Program. Currently, work is progressing on applications for Dr. C. B. Fuller, Providence Church in Burkburnett, and the "Colored School" in Burkburnett.

Welcome to new members of the Commission: Mel Feller and Lou Murdock

We are saddened by the February 13, 2014 death of Mary Thomas, long-time commission member. Mary provided the "Bit of History" programs for the Museum of North Texas History for many years. Mary was the second baby born at General Hospital (United Regional).

We may have enough money soon to place another historic marker. Let's start making a list of people, places or events in Wichita County that need to be marked. **What do you think needs to be marked for posterity?**

Barbs, Bullets, and Blood

The Wire War That Revolutionized Texas
Saturday, April 26th. For more information contact **Tales N' Trails**, Nocona, Texas
(940) 825-5330 www.talesntrails.org

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John Warne Gates built a small fenced in area and put untamed cattle in it. The fence held. He retired to the Menger Hotel and took orders. Cattle barons were incensed. The idea of eliminating open range was not in their thoughts. Wire was cut and range wars were fought. The greatest tragedy occurred in the 1880s with "The Big Die Off". Cattle herds were moved south during the harsh Plains winters. The Texas Panhandle ranchers decided to stop this by building a huge fence completely across the Panhandle. A very bad winter forced the cattle against the fence where unbelievable numbers died. Laws followed.

When was Wichita County first fenced? Old fences that can be traced to their patent dates give us clues. We know that the first settlers in western Wichita County did not have fences in the late 1870s. Electra High School Journalism student Carrie Rowe interviewed a descendent of the Banta family of Beaver Creek in 1972. She told how her parents year after year lost their gardens and hay fields to roaming animals. Bill Richardson of the Richardson-Ancell families collected old wire from his ranch in the 1960s and 70s. He had a very large collection of wire patented in the 1870s and 1880s. The land in northern Wichita County between The Waggoner Ranch and the Burnett Ranch was fenced with many forms of exotic 1870s barbed wire. Most prevalent was a wire called Scutts Arrow plate. It was a very thick gaged wire with pieces of metal shaped like arrow heads bent and embedded in it. For the most part it is still there. It was very good wire. It was patented June 18, 1878 by Hiram B. Scutt of Joliet, Illinois. The XIT Ranch in the Panhandle was fenced in by a flat, single strand wire with attached barbs called Brinkerhoff. It is all over Wichita County, too. It was patented by Jacob Brinkerhoff of Auburn, New York April 8, 1878. What an insult. The west was fenced by wire made in New York!!

What is old wire worth? Spur Rowell wire can go for \$50.00 for a standard 18 inch collector's specimen. Shorter pieces are virtually worthless as collector pieces. Don't go cutting wires from rancher's fences! ! Besides the danger of getting shot, it is against Texas law.