



PRESERVATION NEWS

Wichita County Historical Commission

Robert Palmer, Chairman

Bill Steward, Archivist

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/

Wichita County Texas Archives is on Facebook

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

Location: Luby's

Reservations no longer needed

Volume LXXXIX

December 7, 2017

From the desk of Robert Palmer

History is all over Wichita County. The major historical sites most know about, but there are many lesser known places. We can call this a continuation of last month's line of thought and call it, "Places you probably don't know, but should." A word of caution; many of these places you can easily get to. Many are on private land.

W.T. Waggoner race track and polo field. It is located south of the Whiteface Ranch House and is easily visible on a frosty morning. Imagine Robert Taylor and Barbara Stanwyck watching the races.

"E" Lake W.P.A. quarry site. Where most of the rock for area projects were quarried. It is located southwest of Fowlkes Station. Called by one observer as a multilevel rattlesnake den.

Last wooden oil field tank in Wichita County. It is located at the north end of Slamma Road.

Tanner Building and well. Located in downtown Iowa Park. The well is in the back room.

Nitroglycerin plant explosion site. Located north of Lalk Road east of the Enterprise School Road. Bricks are scattered over about 10 acres. The explosion shattered windows as far as 8 miles away.

Bell Gasoline loading dock. Where most of the gasoline came from for many years.

Bradley 3 Ranch Headquarters. One of the most picturesque ranches in Wichita County.

Jennings Oil Mine. A hundred foot deep hand dug mine. Located southeast of Electra.

Beaver Creek rock dam. A flood control dam located east of Highway 25.

Dick Sparks Cemetery. Located west of the Electra Cemetery. It contains many significant graves.

Valley View School Entranceway. It is what is left of the school. The design is very special.

Phroechle House. Beautifully designed turn of the century farm house west of Clara on Highway 240.

Prairie Cottage School cistern. Made of brick,

PROGRAM

Going Way Back in Time to Israel Robert Palmer

located at the south end of Prairie Cottage Road.

Mount Carmel Cemetery. It contains many graves of early settlers including Emil Flusche, the land developer for the Mount Carmel area and the Muenster Area.

The Clara Cemetery. A tremendous walk through county history.

Rhonda's Hole. This one will really challenge you. It is a large depression located near the Wichita River, in Wichita County, east of the famed community of Rhonda.

The Ditch. The main Wichita Valley Irrigation Ditch. It is not only a tremendous engineering feat, but the source of hundreds of stories.

Electra Post Office W.P.A. Reliefs. They are one of the best reminders of Depression era projects.

Felty Museum. Located on the north loop around Burburnett. A tremendous collection of Spudders and Wichita Trucks.

Pete Koonce Museum. Located on 368 South in Iowa Park. Tractors and Wichita Trucks.

Shotgun Houses. They are disappearing in a hurry. Currently 8 in Electra, one in Burkburnett, and one in Kamay.

Taters Knob. Just one of the names for this unique hill southeast of Kamay.

Last log cabin in Wichita County. Located west of Iowa Park on the Thompson property.

As requested last month. What are unique historical sites you know of in Wichita County?

Question of the month.....

What did it mean to, "Chase rods"?

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Here at the County Archives we are currently resurrecting a project on the County Poor Farm. The lack of information and especially pictures are quite surprising and frustrating. Here is some information we have gleaned so far. The original 155.75 acres tract slated to be the poor farm was purchased in two parcels in 1908 and 1909. In 1912 a building intended "for the care of the indigents" was erected in 1912. Below is an excerpt from a July 29, 1973 article in the Wichita Falls Times. (Thanks to Archivist Bill Stewart)

A LAST CALL

The county farm has been a part of the Jernigan family since L. N. Jernigan, her father-in-law, became superintendent in 1917. Mrs. Jernigan's late husband, Lewis, succeeded his father upon the latter's death in 1935, and Mrs. Jernigan was appointed by the commissioners court to succeed her husband in 1969 following his death. Lewis Jernigan, she recalled, was reared at the county farm, having come at the age of nine with his parents. "He didn't know anything but that (working on the farm). Even before he took over as superintendent he worked out here and was foreman." In the early days, he used to "hitch up the horse and wagon and haul water from town." Their three children, likewise, were reared at the farm, and their four grandchildren "love this farm better than anything." "A lot of people," she mused, "have thought the land belonged to the Jernigan's." In days past, the county farm bustled with activity. "We had our own livestock, our own garden, raised corn, potatoes and onions and beans. We did our own processing of beef and

hogs." The farm still has 15 hogs. The cattle — "they were beautiful white-faced" — were auctioned off several years ago, the auction drawing, she said, "worlds of ranchers." There was a cannery (the building still stands) to can the vegetables. And feed crops were raised and baled to feed the cattle in the winter. An early-day courthouse record indicates cotton was once grown at the farm and sold. Although a practice not allowed now, trustees from the county jail at one time helped in the labor, she said. The county farm, located in the south section of the city, is now narrowed from its original 155.75 acres, which were bought in two tracts, 80 acres in 1908 and 75.75 acres in 1909. Records show the county paid \$2,000 for the first tract and \$2,100 for the second, and a building "for the care of indigents" was erected in 1912. Now, only 56.7 acres remain, with the cutting of an expressway through the farm's property, plus the sale of two pieces of farm land and the leasing of other acreage to schools and National Guard. But what is left still projects a pastoral scene— lush lawns and shade from thriving pecan, elm, cottonwood and bois d'arc trees. A dinner bell, no telling how old, is still rung at mealtime for the ambulatory patients, pealing its summons in loud, true tones. A cemetery at the south end of the farm, which the county will continue to use for the burial of the poor, contains 1,005 graves. Only 15 are marked "Unknown." Seventy-five luxuriant cedar trees border the big burial plot. Mockingbirds come to sound their variations on a song, keeping company with the redbirds and the mourning dove. Two men who became friends while patients at the county farm are buried there — close to one another, as they had asked. The smaller graves are those of infants. Of the eight buildings remaining at the county farm, six are in use, including the dining quarters, hospital, a building for ambulatory men patients, the barn, the superintendent's cottage and the foreman's cottage. A two-story brick building once used to house tubercular, and then small pox, patients, and later, the overflow from the hospital, has been closed for years, having been deemed structurally dangerous.



**Mrs. Mildred Jernigan
rings the dinner bell at
county farm.**