



PRESERVATION NEWS

Wichita County Historical Commission

Robert Palmer, Chairman

Wichita County Archives

Bill Steward, Archivist

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 CC

Dec. 6, 2018

From the desk of Robert Palmer

PROGRAM Dr. Scott Meddaugh - MSU Climate Change

One of the great characteristics of history is that stories lead to stories. This was illustrated by one of the pictures donated to the Archives. The picture showed the two story Electra Hotel in early Electra being moved down a street pulled by a team of mules. Research showed that the hotel had been built about 1911 at 310 West Cleveland. It was moved three blocks in 1930 to 218 West Bryan to be joined on the south end of The Wofford Hotel, already at that location to create an even larger hotel. In 1940 it was purchased by the congregation of The First Church of The Nazarene and was remodeled to become a church. It remained a church until the late 1960s when the congregation purchased a building on north Highway 25 and sold the building to Barbara and Gary Lowe. The Lowe family still own the snow white stucco covered, imposing structure which sits by itself on the northwest part of Electra's downtown.

That story leads to another story involving how a mostly low-income congregation could afford to do what they did. Interviews with surviving members, Velma Lee Kee Moore of Bowie and Mavis Ruth Spikes of Carrolton, immediately bring the response of the one name was most likely the catalyst that caused it to happen. That name is the name of one of the most interesting people ever to walk the streets of Wichita County, Barney Clemons.

Barney was born in 1900 in Alvord. After his father died, his mother brought her family to Wichita Falls. At that point, Barney's formal education ended. He began what he later called, "his real education" on the streets of Wichita Falls, selling newspapers, polishing shoes, and washing windows. He also learned "the art of the deal". As soon as he was big enough, he went where the real money was, the oil fields of North Texas. Soon he had a good money job with Continental Oil Company. As soon as he had a base of money, he purchased Miller Furniture Store, one of only two four story buildings in early Electra. Oil fields produced money in many ways. Barney understood this. He bought used furniture, refurbished it, and resold it. He knew workers needed other thing, too. He created Clemons Mattress Factory, Clemons Lumber Yard, bought three two story rooming houses, started Clemons Moving and Storage, opened three clothing stores, bought rent houses as soon as he could afford to. He hired carpenters to do his work. When water-cooled air conditioners emerged, he went in the business. He loaned money: two dollars, five dollars, twenty dollars. If people couldn't pay, he provided them a job: painting, pouring sidewalks, working in the mattress

factory.

When his family was poor, early in his life, their church was there. He never forgot. He was a driving force in his church. It can only be imagined how much of his own money he poured into that old hotel turned church. Velma Lou Callender Greer, wife of legendary Wichita County Precinct 4 Commissioner Bud Greer, says he was the "force" that got her in church. Barney's passion was to take his furniture store truck, get up at sunrise on Sunday morning, drive the streets and "invite" any kid, out in their yard, to go to his church. Velma Lou said he wore her down. She finally gave in and hasn't looked back since then. At one time, he taught a kid's Sunday School Class with an average attendance of 50. Any kid who could say the 23rd Psalm got a free Bible.

After World War II, he formed a Tent Revival, traveling all over North Texas and Southern Oklahoma. He'd drive the streets of the town in his Chrysler, with huge gray speakers mounted on top of the car, playing Revival songs on a record player lying on the seat. His evangelist was the Reverend Alvin Maule, a handsome, deep voiced, ex-soldier who had been shot by a Japanese Sniper on a South Seas Island. His last night sermon was always delivered in a white sports coat, entitled, "God in the Fox Hole". And then television appeared. Attendance waned. In 1954 a powerful wind destroyed the tent and the tent revival ceased to exist.

Barney understood history. The famous picture of the Model T, stopping the train going through Electra, when the Ft. Worth and Denver Railroad decided to make Electra "A Whistle Stop Town", features Barney in the back center. He ran for Electra City Commissioner, getting elected...Police Commissioner. That is another story in itself! He tipped waitresses generously. He understood them and how hard they worked. If a relative needed a job, he hired them. At one time he employed his brother, his nephew, his brother-in-law, his son, and his cousin. He was a tough negotiator, but had a soft heart, willing to help people who needed help. He died of a sudden heart attack in 1959. He was a man of many faces, one of the truly interesting stories of Wichita County.

In the book, **ELECTRA, A CLASSIC STORY**, I described him this way, "He was a unique talent and Electra gave him the perfect stage to practice his act". Historical stories do truly produce other stories!

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

**Who was the first singer to have a hit with "Blue Christmas"?.....
Elvis Presley, Bing Crosby, or Ernest Tubb**

Wichita County Archive News

December 2018

FROM ARCHIVIST BILL STEWARD

My last official day as Wichita County Archivist is December 15, 2018, it was after much soul searching that I reached the decision to leave. My time here has been marked by a wonderful education not only by the archives but especially by all the people associated with the archives and museum. I have had such great opportunities to meet wonderful people from all stations of life and all have made me a more rounded person. I plan to serve as a volunteer in the archives from time to time and look forward to seeing old friends when I do. With my friend Bryce Blair coming in to replace me and Madeline Calcote as our new Executive Director at the museum, there are new and exciting times on the horizon at 720 Indiana. Most of all I will miss my visits with Lita Watson, Becky Trammell, and my favorite Yankee, Don Thomas, they set a standard for all to aim for, Thanks and tiaraidh an dràsda.

A few quick notes:

Undertold marker application period begins May 1st. Start getting your topics together. Welcome to Bryce Blair, our new archivist. He has been a regular at the Archives while performing his research on the local fire department. Hours at the Archives will remain the same for the foreseeable future. We will miss our "old Archivist" Bill Steward. He has brought an energy and interest to the Archives. Plus, he knows EVERYBODY or is related to them. Best wishes, Bill. Come by often.

And finally, we wish you the best, safest, and the happiest of holidays.

Museum of North Texas History News

Be sure to stop by the Museum during the Christmas season. Our Hospitality Committee has decorated and we are definitely

showing our holiday spirit. Stop by our Facebook and Instagram pages to keep up with our other events occurring during December.

