



# PRESERVATION NEWS

# Wichita County Historical Commission

Robert Palmer, Chairman

Bryce Blair, Archivist

Wichita County Archives

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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 CCII

# Feb. 7, 2019

### From the desk of Robert Palmer

### PROGRAM

Jeff Spencer

**Early Texas Oilfield Photographers.**

"Comb your hair and paint and powder, you act proud and I'll act prouder.

You sing loud and I'll sing louder, tonight we're settin' the woods on fire!"

Hank Williams caught the mood of a people recovering from the dismal days of The Great Depression and the jolt of wartime. Many men in our area, then, worked in the oil fields and the cotton fields, in the hot summer sun and the bitterly cold winter. Saturday night, with your favorite gal, at your favorite night spot, was a strong motivator.

"We'll take in all the Honky Tonks, tonight we're havin' fun. We'll show the folks a brand new dance, that never has been done!"

The writers in Austin would have us believe that the Hill Country was the hotbed of dance halls, but the truth is that Wichita County can lay an even stronger claim. They were here from the beginnings of the oil boom. Bridgetown was one long street with churches, stores, bars, and dance halls. Fowlkes Station had the Bloody Bucket, a popular destination for farm boys and roughnecks. Unbelievably, they seemed to mix with few problems, although the location was not near any municipal government and infrequently visited by the Sheriff.

Electra had The Red Roof Dance Hall on the west edge of town. It was well known throughout the Southwest. Many up and coming singers got their first experiences of dance hall performing there. It had its share of rough times, too. One of the popular stories was of the outlaw, Pretty Boy Floyd, being encountered by Police Chief Walter Suttle. In a story that's been told in many other contexts, Floyd told the Chief, "To give me the gun before you hurt someone!" It was later the site of many Hadacol Medicine Shows.

Wichita Falls was where the big action was. Kenny Mayo's book on Honky Tonks is a classic. The three best known were: M.B. Corral, Jack Frost Ranch House, and Mack McCray's Guys and Dolls. The M.B., as most people called it, featured The Miller Brothers, who were, actually, The Gibbs Brothers, a condition caused by being under contract to two different radio stations. It drew airmen,

college students, and, of course, oil field workers and farm boys. It was heavily scrutinized by: air police, the Wichita Falls Police, the Sheriff, and, as many want-ta-be high school boys found out, the Liquor Control Board. The acts ranged from "up and comings" to professionals. Many "names" appeared there, including Jerry Lee Lewis and a very young Elvis.

Jack Frost Ranch House was more isolated and, as a result, a very different environment. It was smaller and the performers were closer, and cheaper, with a 90 cent entrance fee at one time. The closeness of the performers led to many interesting stories, including one about a young lady, sitting in front, who was totally infatuated with Marty Robbins. The show she put on in the audience was, reportedly, more entertaining than Marty's.

Mack and Billye McCray and their band The Melody Macs, later The Versatilles, were a Wichita County legend. They were on radio, t.v., and you could go to Mack's barber shop and get your hair cut. Occasionally, Mack would sing while cutting your hair, for sure, always, humming a song. His deep, rich voice was a sound all its own.

There were many more: The J-Bar Corral, Willard's Club, Dale's Blue Lounge, The Wagon Wheel, Jimmy's Place, The Embers Club, Wildcatter Lounge, Pioneer Club, Cactus Club, Melody Club, Little Stork Club, Ronnie's Club, The Ponderosa, The Velvet Barn, and many more. They all provided entertainment and that's what the dance hall going crowd wanted. For sure, they were a unique part of Wichita County history!

"You clap hands and I'll start bowin', we'll do all the laws allowin'.

Tomorrow I'll be right back plowin', setting the woods on fire!"

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### Question of the Month

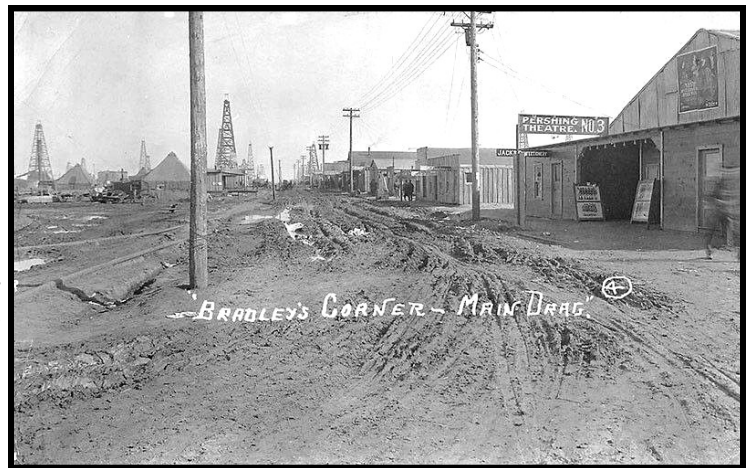
**Who was on the bill with Elvis at the M.B.?  
Marty Robbins, Willie Nelson, Leon McCauliffe,  
Lefty Frizzell.**

# Wichita County Archive News

## February 2019

### Monthly Report - January 2018 Archive Activity

- James Nordstrom lives on the old Waggoner Refinery property on Iowa Park Road. He brought in an old copper printing plate that was used to print the Wichita Falls Bench & Bar poster from 1926. The copper plate had been cut on and was in bad shape. He found it in a house he was salvaging on Iowa Park Road. The Museum has a copy of that poster on exhibit in the rear hallway next to the 1979 tornado display.
- Amy Scott, Interior Decorator for Gary Baker & Associates came in to get copies of downtown streetscape postcards. She was working on a project for the Texoma Community Credit Union. The credit union is opening a branch in the old City National Bank at 8th & Scott. The project will be a wall of streetscape posters, past and present.
- Stacie Flood, Curator at Kell House asked for information about ice delivery in Wichita Falls. The topic was researched and she was given a two page narrative on the subject.
- \*\*Kenny Mayo is working on a publication about all the deaths that occurred at Call Field military post while it was active in Wichita Falls. He came in to match the dates of death that he had with photos of plane crashes that we have archived. Mr. Mayo must be commended for doing a superb job of identifying the names of those who died in plane crashes at Call Field. His efforts have made our Call Field photo collection much more complete.
- A photo of the "Do Drop Inn" barbeque restaurant located at 103 Lake Street in W.F. was researched. The photo was found by Bill Steward and left in the archives. The photo shows four ladies standing in front of the restaurant with the Budweiser Clydesdale Wagon. The Clydesdales were here in April 1953 to promote the Red Cross Fund Campaign and Blood Drive. This photo was posted on our Facebook page and generated a great deal of interest. Arthur Bea Williams has been contacted to help identify the women. This is a work in progress.
- Dr. Kindig, retired MSU History Professor donated about 30 research papers written by his graduate students. The topics covered involve historical buildings, people, or events in Wichita Falls. These compositions are very interesting and contain well documented information.
- Anthony Patterson contacted the archives to reassure the construction date of his Brown Building apartment project at 9th & Lamar. The archives had earlier provided Mr. Patterson with a detailed history of his building and the lot it was built on.
- Jane Engbrock contacted the archives with news of more B.H. Loden photos to be donated.



**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED** - To help organize and fill out accession forms on the Times Record News files that were recently donated. One or two hours per week would make a BIG difference.

## Museum of North Texas History News

If you miss Mr. Spencer at the Commission meeting on the 7th, he will make another presentation about his research on historic photography on Thursday evening at 7:00pm at the Museum.