

# Wichita County Historical Commission

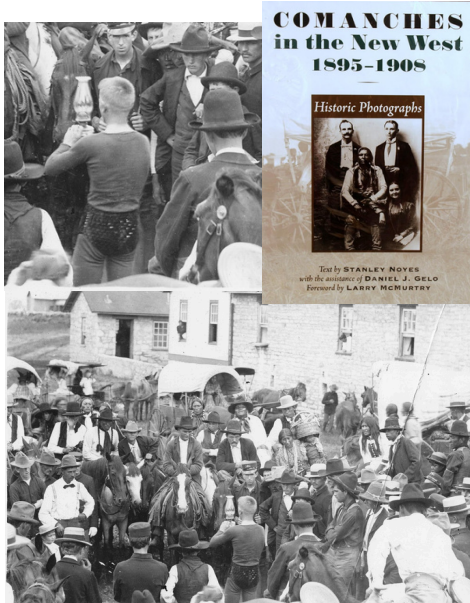
## Preservation News



### Boy With A Lamp - Photos by Lady Alice

A gathering at Fort Sill, circa 1901 watches a young man dressed in circus tights demonstrate a kerosene lamp. Was it the first time they saw a kerosene lamp or was it a "teaser" for a medicine show? The group may have come to Fort Sill to register for land as the local reservation was being open to settlement.

The photo was taken by "Lady Alice" Snearly. Born in Tennessee, she arrived in Henrietta with her family in 1877. She took photos in the heart of the Comanche land. Carol and John happened upon the photo and found it, along with others by Lady Alice, were contained in the book, "**Comanches in the New West.**" There is a Wichita Falls connection to the photo. Ask them. It's quite a story!



Wichita County  
Archives  
Carol Rudd, Archivist

Hours of Operation:  
Wednesday,  
Thursday,  
and Friday  
10:00am - 4:00pm  
720 Indiana

Wichita County  
Texas  
Archives is on  
Facebook

**Program**  
Joe Ross  
Downtown  
Architecture

**MEETING**  
First Thursday of the  
Month  
12:00 Noon - 1:00pm  
Museum of North  
Texas History  
720 Indiana

## What's Happening in the Archives

While working Saturday at the Burkburnett Historical Society, Kristina Pindell, from the Burkburnett Chamber of Commerce, asked if the County Archives had any information on the Burkburnett Cotton Gin. On February 28, 1892 George Washington Wigham married Sarah Bell Goins. They lived in Wichita Falls until 1907. Cotton was King and Wigham moved to Burkburnett and operated the first cotton gin. Wigham bought the first lot in the town sale, built the first bridge, helped to build the first school, and opened the first subdivision. Wigham also owned the city's first automobile and gave Mr. Kemp and Mr. Kell their first car rides. Wigham's story is full of helping others and improving Burkburnett.

Another cotton gin story is about the Jamison family, who moved to Wichita Falls in 1912 and opened the Jamison Gin. It was overwhelmed with more cotton than it could handle. In 1915, the gin caught on fire, and the Jamisons pledged to rebuild. In 1932, John Jamison died of a heart attack, leaving the business to his wife, Nannie, and son Jack. Mrs. Jamison made the business a great success. She died in 1950. Her son, Jack B. Jamison, a graduate of the University of Texas, was now owner and operator of the Jamison Gin. In 1957, Jack advertised in the newspaper, saying, "Anybody want a cotton gin, free?" Jack also "guaranteed to operate the gin for at least three years." Sadly, there were no takers. Jack died in 1988 and is buried in Riverside Cemetery along with his parents. Nannie Jamison's story is featured in ***Women of Wichita County: Stories of Remarkable Women***.

### December 4, 2026 - Meeting Minutes

**Call to order:** Robert Palmer called the meeting to order at 12:00 noon. After a big "Thank You" to the Historical Commission, Robert turned the program over to John Yates.

**Attendance Members:** Billy Clark, Susanne Darr, John Yates, Carol Rudd, Joe Ross, Douglas James, Bryce Blair, Celia M. Moseley, Becky Trammell (by phone)

**Attendance Guest:** Rose Wallace, Josh Scott

**Program:** John Yates passed out a map that was prepared by Geologist John A. Key for the 75th Anniversary of the organization of the County's government in May 1882. If you are doing research, most of the time you rely on maps. The Wichita County Map is very detailed with original names from the North Texas Boom Era and more. Those doing research will find the map very handy. John grew up in Electra and told three interesting stories. The first story was "The City of Electra Throws a Party." The second story was about parking meters in Electra, and the last story was a tribute to an old friend named Nathan Carlos Byers.

**Approval of Minutes:** All the members approved November 2026 minutes as written.

**Chairman Reports:** No Meeting in January.

**Program:** February - John Ross: Downtown Architecture

**Cemetery:** No report

**Website:** Becky Trammell and Elizabeth Hawley

**Markers:** Becky Trammell: The Burkburnett Junior High has received its marker. It will be put up sometime in the spring.

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** It was announced that John Yates and Becky Trammell will be co-chair for the Commission. John Yates made suggestions of where to hold our meetings from now on. Parking is a problem as well as the building is cold.

**Adjournment:** At 1:00 p.m. Robert Palmer made the motion to adjourn and Douglas James seconded

# Agenda - February 5th

- Call to Order:** John Yates
- Attendance Members:**
- Attendance Guest:**
- Program:** John Ross - Downtown Architecture
- Approval of Minutes:** December
- Chairman Reports:**
- Program:** Douglas James & Shannon Morton
- Cemetery:** John Yates:
- Website:** Becky Trammell and Elizabeth Hawley
- Markers:** Spring cycle begins March 1, 2026.  
Three marker moves approved. Pending rededication ceremonies.
- Old Business:**
- New Business: Meeting location, day, and time; yearly report; Archive needs**
- Adjournment:**



## The Archives Needs YOU!

Do you have an hour a week to give to the Archives? We need you. There are many projects that need sorting, filing, and recording. Please, give an hour to the Archives. Promise you will learn something and help those who come to the Archives to do research.



## Yearly THC Report

The Texas Historical Commission gathers information from each county on a yearly basis. Please submit your history volunteer hours for this report as soon as possible.



## Black History Month

- The first celebration of Black History Month took place at Kent State a year later, from January 2 to February 28, 1970

- President Gerald Ford recognized Black History Month in 1976, during the celebration of the United States Bicentennial.
- The Wall Street Journal describes Black History Month as "a time when the culture and contributions of African Americans take center stage" in a variety of cultural institutions, including theaters, libraries, and museums.

**Can you name the people pictured?**



# The Oldest Newsboy

## A Wichita Falls Newsie Story

"The Oldest Newsboy" in Wichita Falls was named "Wild Bill" Owens.

Bill was born on October 16, 1900 in Waco, Texas. His family moved to Mason, Texas and nine year old Bill started selling newspapers.

Later, the family moved to Ranger, Texas where Bill worked for Noble Grey News Agency. In 1914, when Grey moved to Wichita Falls, Bill followed.

Bill's family also moved to Wichita Falls and had a farm on Seymour Road. He got up early to sell his papers, walking back and forth seven miles every day. A crew of oil field workers noticed Bill and stopped to drive him to and from the city.

Bill had physical handicaps which wracked and twisted his body. But that didn't keep him from being on time for work.

Bill's corner was Eighth and Scott, a prime location. He worked 18 hours a day walking up and down the corner hawking "chewing gum, candy and newspapers." Bill was a go--getter in bleak winter weather and hot summer sun that beat down on main street. Bill was happy and he made lots of friends.

Although not a rich man, "Wild Bill" always supported the Community Chest, the YMCA, YWCA, Boys Club, Camp Fire, Salvation Army, Faith City Mission, and encouraged others to pitch in. He said, "It helps people who are not able to work."

On his 38th birthday, he was given a surprise birthday party at the Coney Island Restaurant. Mayor Harold Jones proclaimed the day, "Bill Owens Day," in honor of the veteran newspaper salesman. Mayor Jones' seven point proclamation was moving. But #2 and #7 was a challenge for each man, woman and child.

"Each day his labored shuffling gait under his heavy load has reminded us of just how light most of our imagined burdens are and,"

"Because the awkward, tiring struggle by which he completed each task was a living example of patience which public officials so badly need"

On Christmas Day 1957, Bill went to Fort Worth to visit family and became ill. Word got back to Wichita Falls that Bill was in the hospital and "over 250 of his friends-- millionaires and the poor-- sent him a giant get-well card."

Between 1958 and 1964 Bill was in and out of the hospital. He was eager to get back to "his corner" on Eighth and Scott but standing or walking up and down all day would be difficult.

Since 1914 Bill's corner was the City National Bank. Chairman of the Board, Charles P. McGaha, had the idea for "a news stand with two coin-operated newspaper vending racks, a folding seat for the veteran newsboy" and a sign that read: "Wild Bill's Newspaper Depot." Bill was back in business.

Bill Owens died of cancer April 12, 1964 at the age of 63. He is buried in Fort Worth.

Glenn Shelton wrote, "Wild Bill" Owens, he of the stout heart and tortured limbs, is dead, his twisted body free of pain for the first time in 63 years. Yesterday in Fort Worth the shriveled body was laid to rest, but the indomitable spirit of this little "newsboy" will live on to rebuke contemporaries who weep and whine out of self pity for their own tribulations. Here was a man born to pain and adversity, but who insisted resolutely upon on making his own way through his vale of tears. His friends were of the elite, but Bill asked nothing of them but that they buy a newspaper from him. Staunchly he forged his own way when he easily could have surrendered his wild and independent spirit in a home from the crippled, and live off of others."

Wild Bill Owens was a unique person. He made friends with men from all walks of life and he knew all the names of his customers. Despite his twisted body, he smiled and waved to everybody.

We are nearing 2026 and Wild Bill is a living legend to all men and women that if we have enough perseverance and tenacity and courage, then nothing is impossible in this world.

**Wild Bill's Newspaper Depot**