



PRESERVATION NEWS

Newsletter of the Wichita County Historical Commission

Volume LXI

Robert Palmer, Chairman

June 4th, 2015

Wichita County Archives

720 Indiana Avenue

Wichita Falls, Texas 76301

Hours of Operation: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 10:00am - 12:00pm & 1:00pm - 4:00pm

Telephone 940-763-0020

E-mail Address - archives@co.wichita.tx.us

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

Monthly Meeting: Location: **The Country Club**. Price for the luncheon is **\$17.00 each** which includes: salads, main course, vegetables, drink & dessert. Please bring the correct change.

Reservations: Call the **Archives (763-0020)** and leave your name and number of reservations on the voice mail up thru Wednesday prior to the meeting. Call the Archives Wednesday (763-0020 or 322-7628) if you have a change of plans.

PROGRAM

Robert Palmer - China

From the Desk of Robert Palmer -

After almost five years of devastating drought, area farmers were anxiously anticipating a good wheat harvest. Their hopes have been dampened in a really wet way. Many will be forced to fall back on their government backed insurance program. That didn't happen 80 years ago. A farmer made a crop or he, often times, sold the farm and 'moved to town'. "Moving to town" were sad words. Many times it meant the hopes and dreams of multiple generations had been drastically changed. I'm a small farmer by today's standards. My farm is made up of what was once nine farms. I never forget this fact. That meant that nine families had "lived" on 80 to 160 acres. Most had a milk cow, pigs, chickens, a large garden, an orchard, and a mule, horse, or maybe even a Farmall Regular or Fordson Tractor. Crops, many times, served many purposes. A field planted with field, not sweet, corn fed the animals and the family and, in good years, made some extra money. Modern families would be shocked by the thought of eating huge ears of yellow dent corn, but in the early history of Wichita County, field corn buttered with home churned butter and liberally salted was a wonderful treat.

The farmer would also plant a cotton patch and a Highgear patch. My Dad always said that was to keep young boys from being criminals. After you chopped cotton all day, you were just too plain tired to get in trouble. If you had enough land, you also planted some wheat. Most farmers didn't have enough money to own all the equipment needed to farm wheat. Cotton and feed were hand crops. All you needed was a turning or sulky plow and a one or two row planter. Wheat required a drill to plant the crop and then a multitude of expensive equipment to harvest it. In our area of Wichita County, along the Red River, the Ovenhaus and Barwise families owned the binders and threshing machines necessary to harvest wheat. Smaller farmers and their sons worked on the crews for some money and the promise to harvest their wheat after the large farmer had harvested his crop. Thirteen was kind of the crossover age when young boys became man enough to work on the crews. Young boys gave the money they earned to their families. Harvest started in mid-June and often lasted to well into July. It was very hard, dirty, and hot work. If you worked on the bundle wagon, you picked up the bundles tied by the binder and loaded them on the wagon. You then unloaded

them at the threshing machine site. The threshing machine was similar to a modern combine, but it stayed in one place in the field. The thrashed wheat was put in sacks or wagons to be carried to its destination. Grain augers didn't exist. All wheat was scooped. An accurate measure of the threshed wheat was a must. Scoopers knew how many of their scoops it took to make a bushel. Some scoops took two scoops, others took three. The scoops were not the light weight varieties we have today. They were made of steel and wood and became quite heavy by day's end.

The day started before daybreak, about 5:00 a.m. The workers were gotten up from their bedrolls under the wagons. A hearty breakfast of biscuits and gravy and sometimes ham was served. Then you went to work. Water breaks were taken at ten and two. Work did not stop for lunch. A sandwich, sometimes sausage, sometimes ham, was brought to you. In dry years, the water was, often, cistern water accompanied by an old cellar taste. Work stopped just before dark. The evening meal was red beans, black-eyed peas, collard greens, biscuits and gravy and, again, ham. Occasionally, fried chicken was served, but to be truthful, most farm wives were not going to waste their valuable chickens on crew hands. Fires were often a devastating occurrence. It could destroy a crop, equipment, even people. Thunderstorms were bad. There was no place to seek cover, except under the wagons or beside the threshing machine. Lightning could kill mules and horses, people, or start fires. My Dad told the story of his best friend, a teen-aged boy, being killed while driving the bundle wagon to the threshing machine. He was standing up while handling the mules and a small dark cloud appeared. One bolt came out of the cloud and struck the boy. Every worker saw it. Crews never worked on Sunday. Most people saw farmers who tried to work their crews on Sunday as a person in danger, or need, of Divine judgment. Nobody worked on the Fourth of July. Crews often played baseball or laid in the shade. Families would come visit their working members.

It was a simple time. It was a less complicated time. It was a hard time. It was a wonderful time.

Question of the Week - ON BACK

Wichita County Archive News

June 2015

Robert Palmer is scheduled to speak to the **Burkburnett Historical Society** on Monday, June 1st at 6pm. Robert's topic is the history of the Red River. The Burkburnett Historical Society is located at 104 W. 3rd Street in Burkburnett.

No newsletter or meeting in July

Marker Dedication Wichita General Hospital

11:00 a.m. 8th at Brook, Saturday, June 13, 2015

This year is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the hospital. It is only fitting that we mark the once dynamic presence of a building, no longer there, which affected the lives of countless people through the years.

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Who set foot in the Red River Valley first: Spanish, French, or English?



Fordson was a brand name used on a range of mass-produced general-purpose tractors manufactured by Henry Ford & Son Inc from 1917 to 1920; by Ford Motor Company (U.S.) and Ford Motor Company Ltd (U.K.) from 1920

to 1928, and by Ford Motor Company Ltd (U.K.) from 1929 to 1964.
(Wikipedia - Pictures and Text)

