



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 XCV

June 7, 2018

NO MEETING IN JULY. SEE YOU IN AUGUST.

Program

Becky Trammell - Wichita County Archives

Walter Dearing Cline, Jr.

From the desk of Robert Palmer

“I do not believe anyone can ever forget any deliberate wrong of great magnitude, where that person or someone close, has been the victim. One can forgive, but forget, never!”

These are the words Clyde Fillmore wrote at the conclusion of his book, **PRISONER OF WAR, History Of The “Lost Battalion”**. Clyde was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, called to Active Duty just before the beginning of America’s involvement in World War II. The soldiers were primarily from the North Texas and Southern Oklahoma area. I recently read Clyde’s book and, at the same time, read Kyle Thompson’s book, **THOUSAND CUPS OF RICE**. Both were members of the same Battalion.

These men were starved, beaten, and forced to do labor for the Japanese Empire’s Army in Southeast Asia. The physical suffering and mental anguish was to the point of breaking completely men who entered the service healthy youths. We must never forget what these men experienced for the cause of Liberty.

Clyde Fillmore was born in Coalgate, Oklahoma in 1908. He got his law degree and moved to Wichita Falls in 1936 where he, eventually, became District Attorney. He resigned as District Attorney when the National Guard was called up November 25, 1940. He had grown up hearing his father telling about his experiences in the Spanish-American War and World War I. Patriotism had been a force in his family’s life from the beginning. Armistice Day and Fourth of July meant putting the American flag on the lawn at sunrise.

Kyle Thompson was a different story. He joined the National Guard at the age of 16, his mother signing that he was 18. This was a common practice all the way through the Korean War. It was the Depression and the monthly pay greatly helped to meet family expenses. Birth certificates weren’t that common. The men received preparation training at Camp Bowie, Texas and then headed for the South Pacific. It was an adventure until they got to the islands and realized how ill prepared they were. In military terms, they were a delaying force. Pearl Harbor occurred

and the United States was fully at war. From the beginning, the focus was on Europe. The forces fighting Japan were greatly outnumbered and lacked the needed implements to adequately fight. Their artillery pieces were outdated French pieces. Their rifles were mainly '03 Springfields from the First World War Surrender or fight to the end was a certainty. The commanders made the decision to preserve the men’s lives as long as possible. Kyle described how the men got the word they had surrendered.

“That morning we saw what looked like hundreds of Japanese bombers...At 11:00 am, a Dutch messenger ...gave the message...we are forced to surrender...It is useless to hold out any longer... You are ordered, immediately, to surrender your men and equipment to the Imperial Japanese Army. We were stunned, speechless, some cried.”

The men went through a series of moves, experiencing great abuse, until they ended up in Southeast Asia. They disappeared from the knowledge of the American Army and their folks back home. They became the Lost Battalion.

Eventually they worked on the Burma Railroad, being expected to move huge amounts of dirt with their hands and baskets. They slept on beds made of bamboo. They ate rations of rice, often dirty with maggots in it. Disease was common. Their weights dropped to 80 to 100 pounds. Skin ulcers were common and treated with almost no medical supplies. The stench was overwhelming. Prisoners picked lice and bedbugs off each other. Normal sleep was impossible. Their bodies began to consume their own cells.

On August 15, 1945, the prisoners got the word the war was over. The camp commander announced it in simple words. There was no great celebration. The work details went out as normal, but came back early. Gradually, they were liberated. These were regular people, caught up in one of the most horrible events in human history.

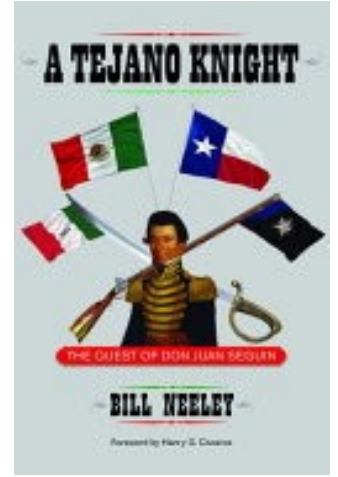
Question of the Month

To how many colleges did John G. Harding donate money?

Wichita County Archive News

June 2018

The Museum of North Texas History, the Wichita County Archives will sponsor, along with the Westerners International Wichita Falls Corral (152), a book signing by Mr. Bill Neeley on Tuesday, June 12th at 6:30pm. The signing will take place in the Harvey Exhibit area, our only area of air-conditioning. Mr. Neeley, author of “A Tejano Knight: The Quest of Don Juan Seguin” will make a short presentation on his research on Seguin. Books will be available for purchase after the presentation.



Museum of North Texas History News

The Museum of North Texas History
presents

Classic Country Concert
Volume Four: The Final Chapter
From the 70s to the 80s

WITH
Susan and Kenny Mayo
And Post Oak

Free Admission Tuesday, June 12th
7:00pm
Donations Centre Point Event Center
Accepted 900 Scott and 9th Street



Do you know anything about these coins? They commemorate the Wichita Falls Centennial 1982.

Our air-conditioning system at the Museum of North Texas History is based on a “chiller system” that is original to the building. And, as with anything that uses water, it is prone to rust. Sadly, our chiller has succumbed to the ravages of time. Our only air conditioned area is the Harvey Exhibit Room, which houses the current photographic exhibit “A View From Above.”



We will be without air-conditioning until sometime near the end of June. Because of this, we have changed our hours of operation during June. **We will be open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 10:00am to 2:00pm.** Please watch our Facebook page for updates. Thanks for your understanding.