



# PRESERVATION NEWS

# Wichita County Historical Commission

Robert Palmer, Chairman

Bryce Blair, Archivist

Wichita County Archives

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

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[wchitacountyhistoricalcommission.org/](http://wchitacountyhistoricalcommission.org/)

Newsletter Editor: Becky Trammell

Wichita County Texas Archives is on [Facebook](#)

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Location: Museum of North Texas History Meeting 12:00 Noon - 1:00pm

AGENDA FOR MEETING: 1. Call to Order 2. Introduction of Guests  
3. Business 4. Program 5. Adjourn

June 3, 2021

## From the desk of Robert Palmer

Edgar Shockley  
Emil Hermann Donation

In this modern world of instant communication, the lowly letter slowly delivered by a dedicated servant of the people, still gets us excited. Hundreds of years ago, when the nation was still young, mail bore special meaning, it could bring joy or sadness. It was the link to family or, sometimes, the only link to the outside world. I've seen boxes of old letters at estate sales. I've never seen saved emails.

The Postal Service Act, creating the U.S. Post Office was signed by George Washington on February 20, 1792. The colonies had developed some form of mail delivery before the new nation was formed, but not to the extent the Postal Act would. Benjamin Franklin is often called the father of the Postal Service. He had developed a system that got the mail to its intended destination. Mail was carried by stagecoach, boats, and, eventually, by railroad. Politics was heavily involved. The politicians had realized early that newspapers could be their friends. Yes, early papers took political stances. As railroads developed, mail, especially newspaper mail was given special treatment. It gave the politicians contact with people living outside large populated areas. A mailed letter might take weeks to get to its intended person. A newspaper got there almost overnight.

As Texas developed, the creation of a post office was critical in each new community. It was a point of pride when the new post office opened in a developing community.

Most Wichita County towns had some form of post office early, sometimes in an old house or a building housing other businesses. The first Post Office built by the Postal Service in Wichita Falls was designed by Architect James Knox Taylor in 1898, who designed Post Offices all over the country. It was a modest-sized brick building.

At that time, the Postal Service was building ten post offices per month. Burkburnett's was built in 1907, when the railroad went through on its way to The Big Pasture, Iowa Park in 1888, and Electra in 1939. Up until that time the Electra Post Office had been housed in what became the Mike Baxter Building at the end of the business part of North Waggoner Street. An enduring mystery is the presence of railroad tracks just north of the

building. No old-timers remember trains ever being diverted to that location, three blocks north of the railroad's mainline. The new Post Office was built at the intersection of Waggoner and Cleveland streets where the multi-storied Jefferson Hotel had burned down.

The Electra Post Office contains wall stone sculptures of Wheat, Oil, and Cattle created by a depression era artist. Kamay's post office was part of the wonderful story of how Kamay got its name. The old saying goes that the Postal Service was never designed to make money and that's why letter stamps were 5 cents and postcards 1 cent for so long.

One of the most significant happenings in Postal history was Rural Free Delivery, RFD. Rural routes took the mail to farmers who were a major part of the population for over 200 years. It began in 1896, an almost unbelievable early date, but it completely changed the lives of farmers. They could now, not just get letters, but get chickens, fruit trees, and catalogs. Almost anything could be ordered through the mail. The rural mail carriers Model T sometimes was a rolling menagerie. The law gave them much protection. It's been said you can steal all my information on the internet, but, if you steal my letter, you can go to jail for a long time. Interfering with mail delivery was a serious crime.

Bonnie and Clyde made the mistake of kidnapping Electra Rural Carrier Bill Owens. They, eventually, let him loose near Cookietown north of Randlett, but the damage had been done. The U.S. Government got serious about catching them.

Air Mail started immediately after World War I. Pilots competed for contracts in their war-surplus Jennies. The competition was cutthroat with many pilots getting killed.

Kamay has one of the great mail delivery oddities. There was never any RFD from the Kamay Post Office. It came from Electra and Iowa Park divided by the paved road running north from the center of the town. Kamay resident, Danny Cravens, told me he moved across the street and had to change mail delivery from Electra to Iowa Park.

Yes, indeed. To get a letter is divine!

# Wichita County Archive News

## JUNE 2021

Monthly Report – May 2021

-**Carol Rudd**, a new member of the Historical Commission has started volunteering at the Archives. She has been very helpful in performing research and indexing our computer files. We sincerely appreciate Carol's dedication to our mission of preserving history in Wichita County.

-**Joseph Ross**, an architect with an office in the Hamilton Building came to the Archives looking for an old plat of the Country Club Addition. We found exactly the one he was looking for and made a digital copy for him. He very graciously donated \$50 to the Archives which will be added to our digitization fund. While talking with Mr. Ross, he made mention of an old architectural drawing he had. It was a 1931 Cabinet drawing of our post office on Lamar Ave. Cabinet drawings provided a place for each of the Presidential Cabinet members to sign-off approval on each of the projects proposed. Mr Ross provided us with a copy of his Cabinet drawing.

-**The City of Wichita Falls and the Hotter-N-Hell Committee** are getting together to prepare an exhibit celebrating the 40th HHH race this year. This was Carol Rudd's first project, which was to find HHH photos in the TRN files. We sent a total of 46 images that displayed many different aspects of the event over the entire history of the race. Great job, Carol !!!!

-**Ann Hunter of the Wichita Falls Art Association** came to the Archives to donate a copy of the book they recently published celebrating their 70th anniversary. Several members of the art association did extensive research in the Archives to complete this book.

-**Kate Singleton & Charlotte Adams of Post Oak Restorations** in Austin contacted the Archives to research the Savoy Hotel at 606-608 7th Street and the Pfaeffle Building at 604 7th. They are doing research for the owners to get historic designations on the buildings. They also disclosed that they are researching the building across the street at 609 7th for the same reason.

-**The Adult Literacy Council** donated several books to the Archives. The collection includes: 1984 Kirby Junior High Yearbook, 1973 Vernon Jr College Yearbook, AAA Hotel Directory (includes WF hotels & their rates & number of rooms and baths), Church Directories from: 1st Baptist Church of Iowa Park, Our Lady Queen of Peace, & Lamar Baptist Church and a 1892-2002 Alumni Directory for WFHS.



The **Museum of North Texas History** is excited to announce the opening of the exhibit **Grow Wichita Falls**. The exhibit will open Friday, June 4 and will be on display until Friday, July 23. This exhibit is a partnership between the **Museum of North Texas History** and **The Kell House Museum**. The exhibit will feature artifacts from both museums, children's art from the community, and hands-on activities for all visitors.

Want to see the interviews with **Robert Palmer** ([Punkin Center](#)) and **Ginger Beisch**

([Kamay](#)) done by WFAA-Dallas for their program about oddly named Texas towns? Click on the highlighted names!