



PRESERVATION NEWS

Newsletter of the Wichita County Historical Commission

Volume XLVIII

Robert Palmer, Chairman

March 6th, 2014

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

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|------------------|---------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 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 - Joyce Krajca James Czech Settlements of North Texas

From the Desk of Robert Palmer -

Western entertainer Dan Seals wrote and recorded a song that said,

*And I think God must be a cowboy at heart,
He made wide open spaces from the start...
He made grass and trees and mountains
And a horse to be a friend
And trails to lead old cowboys home again.*

Historians and Texans, in general, have always been fascinated by "trails". We put signs beside our highways to mark "Texas Fort Trails". We do reenactment rides to commemorate cattle drive trails. Trails have a special place in our hearts.

In truth, trails are an important part of our history. The evidence of past trails still scar parts of our countryside and Wichita County has its share of historic trails.

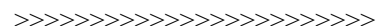
The huge numbers of North American Bison that once roamed our county left trails cut into the ground that led to water and food. The Native Americans followed these trails and the first explorers, settlers, and military followed these same trails. The early French and Spanish explorers generally followed the Red River. Trading centers were set up in Northern Montague County and Southern Oklahoma. Evidence exists that these same traders plied their trade in Wichita County, again, along the Red River. The first organized exploration of Wichita County, the Texas-Santa Fe Expedition of 1841, sought the Red River, but was led to the Wichita River by its Native American guides. It crossed the Wichita near present day Dean and followed the river on the north side until it reached the junction of the Wichita and Beaver Creek. Just west of that point, it crossed to the south side of Beaver Creek. If you look at the river today, you will see that those are the only points where the river can be crossed because of the high banks on the river and Beaver Creek.

Earl Van Dorn's Expedition of 1858 sought to create a wagon road. Van Dorn chose to cross The Wichita from south to north at

a point north of Valley View. This involved cutting the bank on both sides, a measure that is still visible today. The major cattle trails, the Western Trail and the Chisholm Trail, crossed the Red River west and east of Wichita County. The difficulty in crossing the banks of the Wichita and Beaver Creek were no doubt factors. The trail drivers would not have avoided water sources of that size except for that reason. With the creation of Ft. Sill and the line of frontier forts in Texas, military roads became a necessity. The road from Ft. Sill to Ft. Richardson came south and then crossed the Red River just west of the mouth of the Wichita River. When Henrietta later became a major trade center, the road continued to follow this same trail. Frederick Remington in, The Comanches wrote of riding down this road. The trail from Ft. Sill to Ft. Griffin followed a more western route, crossing the Red River near the mouths of Cole Creek and China Creek. When Dan Waggoner established his ranch headquarters on China Creek and his railroad shipping pens on the railroad at present day Electra, he followed this same trail to drive his cattle to the pens.

Several stage coach and heavy wagon trails crossed the county. In general, they stayed north of the Wichita River and south of the Red River. All stayed close to water sources and avoided difficult crossing of natural terrain. Early settlers, the Bantas on Beaver Creek and the Taylors on Red River, followed these same trails to get to Henrietta and later, Wichita Falls.

Now for the challenge part...these trails are largely unmarked in Wichita County. We do have two markers, the Buffalo Road Marker and the Van Dorn Marker, that describe those two trails. Other than that the other trails are fading away.



Question of the month

What did "Gee" and "Haw" mean?

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Marker Report

Burnett Horse Ranch marker is in the ground on Hwy 240 at Slama Rd. Dedication ceremony to be scheduled soon.

Applications for **Wichita General Hospital** and **Bethania Hospital** markers are paid. It will be quite while before we receive the wording for our approval.

We are searching for topics for the Undertold Marker Program. Currently, work is progressing on applications for Dr. C. B. Fuller, Providence Church in Burkburnett, and the "Colored School" in Burkburnett.

Would you like to know how to submit an application for a marker? We have planned a Texas Historic Commission Marker Application Seminar on Wednesday, March 19th, from 10:00am to 12:00pm at the Museum of North Texas History.

REECE SAMUEL ALLEN 11-25-1874 - 11-9-1946

Who was Reece Allen, often mentioned in obituaries as the deceased was named for Reece Allen?

Reece Samuel Allen was born in 1874 near Sedalia, Missouri. He was educated in the local school. In 1899, he married Jenie Ferguson and in 1900, the Allens welcomed a son, Reece DeCourse Allen. The following year, Reece Allen entered the oil business in the Spindletop area.

In 1905, Allen came to Wichita County, buying 40,000 acres from Tom Waggoner in the northwest section of Wichita County. With Herman Specht as his agent, he brought over 150 families to the area, many from Missouri. Allen had a great interest in fruit growing.

The first oil well near Electra in 1910 came in close to Allen's land and he soon became a major operator in the Electra field. In 1918, Allen joined in a venture with Joseph Kemp and W. Munger to form the Kemp-Munger-Allen Oil Company. From the company name, K-M-A, the community of Kamay was named. Allen was also the President of Reece Allen Refining Company in Amarillo. He also owned extensive land holdings in the Panhandle, including the LX Ranch. The Hamilton Building was one of Mr. Allen's projects.

Tragedy struck the Allen family when their only son, DeCourse, was killed in an automobile accident in New Jersey in 1922 when he and a friend were returning from the Penn-Cornell football game. DeCourse was 21 and a senior at Princeton University and a member of the business boards of *The Princeton Tiger*, *The Princeton Pictorial Review*, and a member of the Ivy Club. He was a member of the Beta Theta Pi at Cornell. At the time of his death, DeCourse was assisting two students in college with money from his allowance.

Reece Allen was a well known philanthropist, giving freely to community projects. Following the death of DeCourse, Mr. Allen started assisting students to attend college through student loan funds. By 1942, he had helped between 700 and 800 students.