



PRESERVATION NEWS

Wichita County Historical Commission

Robert Palmer, Chairman

Wichita County Archives

Bryce Blair, Archivist

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Wichita Falls, Texas 76301

Telephone 940-763-0020

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

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wchitacountyhistoricalcommission.org/

Newsletter Editor: Becky Trammell

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

Volume CCXLXVII

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

May 6, 2021

From the desk of Robert Palmer

Douglas James
Birk - George Gin Iowa Park, Texas

The small communities of Wichita County are treasure chests of wonderful stories. Sometimes, others have to wake us up to these stories. Such is the case with Punkin Center, more correctly known as Haynesville on Highway Department signs.

Punkin, as locals call it, has a history almost as old as the county. WFAA Television, in Dallas, called the Wichita County Archives about doing a feature on Punkin. They are showing small communities in Texas with unusual names and interesting histories. That's Punkin! Articles about Punkin say it was founded in 1890. That's probably correct, although there are no official documents to verify it. Its origin is very closely tied to the famous Waggoner Ranch. In 1879, W.T. Waggoner moved his ranch to the area of Wichita County's China Creek in the north part of the County. When the railroad reached Beaver Switch, now Electra, he built a large loading area and pens to load his cattle on the rail cars.

Where Punkin is now, would have been right on the route from the ranch to the pens.

Several years ago, I purchased a large 1862 railroad anvil. The old man, who sold it to me, said it belonged to his dad who had done blacksmith work for the Waggoner Ranch in the 1800s. Punkin began as a blacksmith shop with a large pumpkin painted on the blacksmith sign. It was a stop in the road until the Waggoners decided to sell their China Creek land as farmland in 1903.

It became known as the Waggoner Colony land. The primary seller was Emil Flusche, who had done colonies before at Munster and near Dallas. Agents were hired to go north and find buyers. Chief among these was Reese Allen, the "A" in KMA. One source said he brought in over 200 buyers. The land sold for \$4.00 to \$8.00 per acre. Although the farmers came from many backgrounds, chief among these were Catholics. They formed their community based around the wonderful church named Mt. Carmel. They built the church on the large hill by the same name two miles north of Punkin.

Cotton was the major crop in the early 1900s. Punkin soon had two cotton gins. The foundations and the scales house remain. There was a grocery store, a filling station, and several liquor stores, or as the locals called them - beer joints. That's where the story of Punkin gets really interesting. Punkin was the last "wet" spot going north into "dry" Oklahoma and northwest into the "dry" panhandle of Texas. Bootlegging was a major business. Truckloads of booze were delivered to Punkin. It was said the many beer joints and bars in Electra bought their booze in Punkin because the volume ordered made the price lower than they could buy it from their suppliers.

In the 20s Electra contracted with the local farmers to build a City Lake just southwest of Punkin. Residents suddenly had fresh water. The filtration plant was a large brick structure on the south side of the dam.

During this time, Electra built a golf course just east of the community. Punkin flourished. Before World War II, the only tractor selling businesses were Fred Lalk's John Deere on Mt. Carmel and Mike Baxter's Farmall dealership in Electra. After the war, the Wittenbach Brothers opened up Lake Road Equipment in Punkin, selling Oliver Tractors, but, most importantly, offering repairs. They kept the farmers going with supplies and repairs. Bill Moser operated a grocery store that sold ham sandwiches. He was highly respected, but unfortunately, was murdered by an unknown killer.

When the County Line School closed, the building was moved to Punkin and became the Knights of Columbus Hall where many dances were held. The story is that an old carpenter cut the building in half with a hand saw so it could be more easily moved.

When WFAA asked where they could meet me, I told them there was only one place, Ralph's Service Station, a station run by Ralph Gilbert for over 40 years. It is the remaining business in Punkin.

There are many, many more stories, waiting to be written.

Wichita County Archive News

MAY 2021

Monthly Report – April 2021

-John Yates has started the process of digitizing the audio tape interviews stored in the Archives. There are about 110 cassette tapes and so far, John has digitized nine tapes. To complete the process, he has been taking them home to complete. To make it more convenient, we are updating the visitor's computer to enable him to complete the process in the Archives. We have already discovered several very interesting comments and interviews on these little treasures.

-David Band, a local artist, called the Archives asking about Lucy Park. It seems he has painted many painting of Lucy Park and sold them all over the United States. He even has several of his works at the University of Texas. He went on to say that Lucy Park is a pretty well-known place outside of Wichita Falls and that locals here have no idea of that fact. He plans on changing the local perspective of our precious Lucy Park. The land for the park was donated to the city in 1963 by Frances Ann Dickinson and was named in honor of her mother, Lucy O'Neill Saunders.

-Lita Watson, Patsy Todd, and Jean Johnson, all from Iowa Park brought in several scrapbooks and historical records from the 23 Study Club of Iowa Park. They also donated some more scrapbooks and program books from the Women of Rotary. Mrs. Patsy Todd said she will also donate her late husband, Delbert Todd's collection of Hirschi High School yearbooks. He was a biology teacher there when it opened in 1962 and was coincidentally my teacher when I attended Hirschi.

-Karen Montoya of Hutchinson, Kansas was contacted by John Yates about a collection of photos and letters we had in the Archives. There were a few photos that were identified, so John looked them up on Ancestry.com. All the images were of a family from Houston, TX, of which Ms. Montoya was a descendant. John offered to send her the entire collection and she gladly accepted. She refunded John the cost of shipping and said she will attach the photos to her family members in her on-line family tree.

-Amanda Norwood, an employee of City View School contacted the Archives looking for photos of the Ball Brothers Glass Jar Plant located where Parker Square is now. She said her grandmother and other family members worked there and she wanted to make a special display for her parents showing their early history in Wichita Falls. Amanda was very surprised when we furnished her with several digital images of the glass jar plant.

MUSEUM OF NORTH TEXAS HISTORY NEWS

Current Exhibit - Bones of Texas

Upcoming Exhibit - Grow Wichita Falls



Beginning May 3rd Expanded hours - Thursday, Friday, Saturday

10:00 am to 4:00 pm