



PRESERVATION NEWS

Wichita County Historical Commission

Robert Palmer, Chairman

Wichita County Archives

Bryce Blair, 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/

Newsletter Editor: Becky Trammell

Wichita County Texas Archives is on Facebook

Volume CCXV

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 2020

Guest Columnist - Bryce Blair, Archivist

No Meeting in May

CORONA VIRUS DISEASE 2019 vs. SPANISH INFLUENZA 1918

Today, COVID 19 has made an impact on how we perceive the world around us. A very similar event occurred about one hundred years ago that probably had an even stronger impact on people's perception of human life. The Spanish Flu struck first in the Spring of 1918 during WWI in Europe. It is believed military men coming home brought it to the United States.

It is estimated that 500 million people or one third of the world's population became infected with the virus. The number of deaths is estimated at 50 million worldwide, with about 675,000 occurring in the United States. Places with high concentrations of people such as New York City were struck the hardest.

The Spanish Flu of 1918 progressed through three distinct waves. The first wave occurred in the spring of 1918. The second and third waves terrorized global populations respectively in the fall and winter of 1918. The second and third waves "caused the majority of deaths."

In Wichita County, the Spanish Flu occurred just as the Burkburnett Oil Boom was starting. Due to a bad crop year, crowded conditions in Burkburnett worsened as the influx of poor farmers from West Texas and Southern Oklahoma arrived looking for work. The farmers brought their families in horse drawn wagons and usually tied a tarpaulin to the side to make a tent for shelter.

The first case of Spanish Flu in Wichita County was reported on September 29, 1918 by Major Atkinson, the medical officer at Call Field. A young corporal, travelling to Oklahoma by train fell ill with the virus. By October 4, 1918, only five cases of flu were reported. Three days later the number of cases had jumped to one hundred. By October 11th there were more than 1000 cases of flu reported in Wichita County. The first death in Wichita County occurred on October 8th which prompted city officials to close public gathering places such as movie theaters, schools,

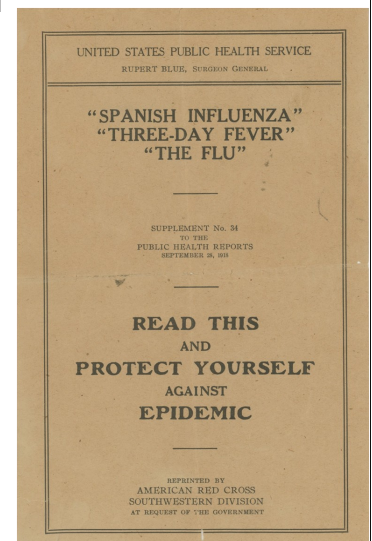
churches, and the oil stock exchange.

Out of concern for troop safety at Call Field, Red Cross Field Director Walter Cline contacted Major Atkinson to organize a trip to the Burkburnett oil fields. They agreed that Burkburnett being so close to the military installation, could pose a hazard to our military forces.

Rain and sleet were falling as the contingent of medical personnel left for Burkburnett. On arrival, they were shocked to find the overcrowded conditions had caused a large number of people to be infected with the virus. One case that was burned in Cline's mind forever was a woman they found dead. Her infant child was crawling on her breast, trying to open her dress.

In his report Cline stated "we gathered up six or eight dead bodies and returned to Wichita Falls." A large-scale recovery effort for the sick patients in Burkburnett was organized. Lumber to build shelters, bedding, food, and clothing were all donated and shipped free of charge to Burkburnett. Oil activity came to a standstill as everyone pitched in, working for free, to help with the recovery effort.

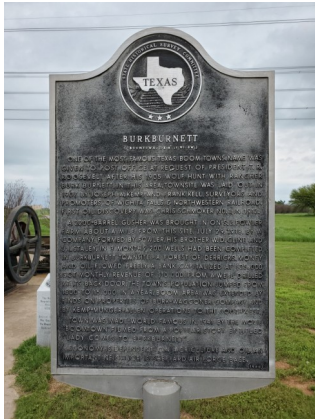
Overall, the epidemic lasted only for a few months in Wichita County and caused relatively few deaths, numbering a few dozen. Notable differences in the two pandemics is the fact that the newspaper in Wichita Falls reported almost nothing about the 1918 event. City officials lifted the 1918 quarantine after only 19 days and refused to consider orders of closure as the third wave of the flu took hold. Perhaps history has taught us some lessons after all.



Wichita County Archive News

May 2020

How to Refinish A Historic Marker (Burkburnett)



Before



Next stage, the leftover finish is removed with a wire brush



Then, the marker gets a good scrubbing with soap and water



The band around the marker is taped off.



Basecoat of heat tolerant paint



The letters and seal are cleaned with sandpaper and paint thinner. The final step is a clear coat.

Here is a YouTube video on how to refinish a maker. It includes a list of the equipment you need.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCzbCRIJhbs>

Museum of North Texas History News

At the present time, the Museum of North Texas History will remain closed. The staff is working on some needed renovations and working to implement CDC guidelines for the protection of Museum visitors. Please watch the Museum's social media for updates.