

720 INDIANA AVE., WICHITA FALLS, TEXAS 76301



From the desk of Robert Palmer

Wichita County, throughout its history, has been blessed with skilled artisans who created wonderful treasures with their hands. Astute collectors search through estate sales and antique shops to preserve the work of these magnificent people.

The lists start with the painters and sculptures. Many were self-taught. Midwestern State University and local schools taught some. Up front is self-taught Jack Stevens. If you collect, you have to have a Stevens drawing or sculpture.

Close behind, in skill, is Terrel Silvers. One of my favorites is Jim Henson, the son of skilled artists James and Betty Henson. His collection of German drawings is amazing. Others, equally skilled but not as well known, are Barbara Neff, Faye Pritchard, and western artist Barbara Patton.

North Texas is outdoor country, so crafters who choose this as their subject are very sought after. Knowledgeable collectors know among the best are Bamboo Fly Rod builder Neil McMullen, former head of Production Machine, and Architect Dick Buddy who creates Graphite Fly Rods. One of my treasures is the Bamboo Fly Rod McMullen built for banker Dick Waggoner. Guns are king in North Texas and the creations of Wichita County builders are true works of art. The best was Fowlkes Station rural school graduate Ralph Bone. He was sent to gun engraving school by his brother-in-law Wichita County Oil Man Roy Smith. He has been immortalized in a magnificent, recently published book THE ARTISTRY OF RALPH BONE. I once had the honor of holding a gold embossed 410 double barrel shotgun he built for Hank Williams, Jr. On the gun market, his guns can reach \$100,000.00 and his knives start at \$1000.00. Other skilled gun builders include former Coyote football star Pat Hamilton, Armen Neff, and gun stock carver Ted Brogdan.

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**Wichita County
Archives**
Carol Rudd, Archivist

Hours of Operation:
Wednesday, Thursday,
and Friday
10:00am - 4:00pm

*Wichita County Texas
Archives is on*
Facebook

Program
**Memorial High
School Tour**

MEETING
**First Thursday of the
Month**
12:00 Noon - 1:00pm
**Museum of North
Texas History**
720 Indiana

Becky Trammell, Newsletter Editor

**Wichita County Historical Commission
Minutes - November 7, 2024**

Call to Order: Robert Palmer called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm.

Attendance Members: Elizabeth Hawley, Paula Elmore, Byrle Graham, John Yates, Robert Palmer, Douglas James, Suzanne Darr, Billy Clark, Becky Trammell, Carol Rudd, Russell Miller, Shanon Morton, Brenda Jarrett, Jeremy Davis, Bryce Blair.

Attendance Guest: Orlando Sosa, Carmen Sosa, David Gray, Laurie Cruse.

Program: Orlando Sosa, a local Native American artist, was the November speaker. Orlando paints on old ledger sheets, works with beads, cloth, wood, metal, feathers and more. Self taught, the quality of Orlando's work is filled of love and respect to the elders.

Approval of Minutes: The October minutes were read and approved. Becky Trammell made the motion and John Yates seconded. All attending members accepted the motion.

Chairman Reports:

Program: The December program will be a tour of Memorial High School. The school is located at 6600 Kell West Blvd. on December 5 at 3:30 pm. We will meet in the foyer of the school. The tour guide will be Dr. Lee, superintendent of WFISD.

Cemetery: John Yates:

Website: Becky Trammell and Elizabeth Hawley:

Markers: The Ralph Harvey marker presentation encountered some bad weather, but it still was a time to rejoice in the life of a generous and true pioneer.

Old Business: Untold markers are season is from Oct. 1 to Nov. 15. These are being submitted: Abby Cooper, Dick Sparks, the East Branch YMCA, Charles Emerson and Gwendolyn Jackson.

New Business: In 2025, Executive Director Jeremy Davis wants to add the story of the 1896 bank robbery in the Nat's Hats area. Davis also wants to use the second tombstone in the exhibit. The old stone is property of Wichita County and is stored in the Archives. After deliberation a motion was made by Becky Trammell to lend the tombstone to the Museum of North Texas History and the tombstone will be housed in a sturdy glass case. The Motion to loan was unanimously seconded by all in attendance.

Adjournment: John Yates made the motion to adjourn; Carol Rudd seconded. The meeting ended at 1:00 pm.

Wichita County Archives News November 2024

Wendy Dugan of WF has owned the Number 5 Fire Station for many years. Now she and her husband are ready to take it back to its original look. Wendy did some research on when it was built and when it was decommissioned. The family is looking for original pictures. If you have any, we can get you in touch with Wendy.

We had a phone call from Gwen Koenig asking if we would like a panoramic of an oil field in Burkburnett. It is a beauty! Come and see it.

A friend of mine lives near Roller Road in Burkburnett and asked if I had any information on who Mr. Roller was. General Roller was a Civil War veteran from Harrisonburg, Virginia. He enlisted in the Army of Virginia in 1862 and served under Stonewall Jackson until the surrender. Roller was intrigued with the Burkburnett oil boom and hoped to make good. To his credit, Roller did well. He made trips every year to check on his venture. He died in 1918.

Remember going to TRN and seeing the ladies who clipped all the news stories and put them in files? We received a fantastic grouping of pictures from the daughter of a "clipper." She apologized that the box was a little dusty but it has been sitting in the garage for three years. Upon opening the box, John and I were giddy. Not only were there at least 150 8x10s or more, but there was hand writing on the back of most of the pictures. HOT DOG!! What a collection.

Wichita County Historical Commission Agenda - December 5, 2024



The December meeting will take place at Memorial High School (6600 Kell West Blvd) for a tour of the new high school. We will meet at 3:30 pm in the foyer at Memorial High School. Dr. Donnie Lee, our tour guide, will meet you there to begin your tour.

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Many ladies create highly collectible quilts. Among the best I have seen are those made by Donna Blair. She is a skilled designer and seamstress. A well-kept secret was the metal works of art created by local blacksmiths. The spurs created by Jerry Neff featured on Texas Country Reporter, are highly sought after. Have you noticed that is the third Neff mentioned? Yes, the whole family was artists in their way.

The king of Wichita County saddle makers was K.E. Batch whose shop was on North Ohio Street. His saddles and chaps still show up in local sales. One of the best Bauch chaps I have seen was the pair he created for Wichita County Mounted Patrol member Don Holsen of Burkburnett. The Museum of North Texas History's Cow Lot collection of hats is a widely known draw to the museum, but did you know that real cowboys want a hat personally creased by Nat Fleming or, even greater, one personally creased by Cow Lot employee J.R. Gahagen?

Two of the most skilled artisans, but not widely known, are Mark Lee and his brother. Mark builds detailed copies of Martin Guitars. His brother builds violins. They are exceptionally built. But, if you want to be on a three-year wait, put your name on Electra graduate and Texas University physics professor Lynwood Givens's list to have a violin built. It will prove to be the best investment you will ever make.

This has been a small list among the hundreds of Wichita County residents who create art with their hands. There are fields we haven't explored including the large number of people who build custom cars, handmade boots, and metal works of art. Be proud that we live in a county that has created an environment for skilled people to leave us with a legacy of artisan skill.

**We received notice that the
THC marker for Athletic Park/
Spudder Park will arrive in
Wichita Falls this month.
Watch for the Dedication!**





And a
Happy
New Year!

ANNOUNCEMENT

**THERE WILL BE NO
MEETING IN JANUARY**
