

PRESERVATION NEWS

NOVEMBER 5, 2015

Newsletter of the Wichita County Historical Commission

Volume LXVI

Robert Palmer, Chairman

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

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

Dr. Whitney Snow - Wichita Falls Municipal Zoo From the Desk of Robert Palmer -

Attention, Teachers. This is an Atomic Bomb Attack Drill! Please practice proper procedures with your students at this time." "Students, please kneel on the floor beside your desk. Bend forward and place your hands behind your head."

Today, a drill such as this would scare teachers, students, and parents half to death. In the mid 1950s this type of drill was common in all schools across the nation. Children of the 1950s were true "children of the atomic age".

As a young child I clearly remember my Dad talking about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. He fully believed it was, without question, the right thing to do. By the 1950s, he began to realize what a gate it had opened. Looking back, it is clear the world leaders were uncertain what the future held. The Cold War was a direct result. Slowly, the major powers worked controls into place. Today, that control is being challenged, again.

In the 1950s, my friends and I talked about nuclear bombs all the time. Events had happened. As bad as the atomic bomb was, the thermonuclear bomb was worse. The atomic bombs were fission bombs. depending on critical mass to trigger the explosion. The thermonuclear bomb, commonly called the hydrogen bomb, was a fusion bomb. The first one was set off by the United States November 1, 1952. It removed Enewetak Atoll from the face of the Earth. The Soviet Union soon set off one of their own. In all, over 2000 test bombs would be detonated worldwide. My eight year old friends and I knew all about it. We discussed it like young kids today talk about Superheroes. One day, in 1953, my Dad was angrier than I had ever seen him. He and our neighbor were talking about the Rosenbergs. They had delivered nuclear secrets to the Russians. My Dad was somewhat calmed when they were executed on June 19, 1953. His attitude had become, "Where are we headed?"

At school we practiced atomic bomb drills. My fourth grade teacher, whose husband was a Major in the Army, was really

fervent about the practice. One day, my Dad talked about one of our relatives who was making good money, after years of barely making it in the oilfields with his bulldozer and backhoe. He had won some contracts to work on missile silos in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Missouri. Of course, we didn't know where or what, but it gave me a new status when my friends and I talked about the possibility of nuclear war. The last time we got so excited that all our talk was about atomic bombs was October 16-28, 1962. I was a senior in high school by that time. We had gotten conditioned to talk about nuclear war and inter-continental missiles. Suddenly, they were on our doorstep in Cuba. We all watched the events unfold on T.V. President Kennedy backed the Soviets down, or so it seemed. We now know he made some very important concessions, which time has proven to be correct.

What are the results of all this? Some evidence still remains. My house in Electra had a bomb shelter in the back yard. The top was four feet underground. It was made by C.E. Natco Oil Field Tank Company. It was one of many scattered across Wichita County. When I was Junior High Principal, in Electra, there was a large box in the Principal's closet. It had a large, yellow Civil Defense sticker on it. It was full of yellow geiger counters. By estimate, there are 17,000 nuclear weapons spread out across the Earth. Most are owned by the major powers. How many others are there? That is the new fear we live in! It will be interesting to see how future historians describe the time after that first bomb in New Mexico.

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Question of the Month

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We all know Joe Golding won many state football championships. What former Coyote coach won four state football championships after he left Wichita Falls High School?

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November 15th is the deadline for submission of Texas Historic Marker applications.

We are awaiting wording for the Burkburnett Masonic Lodge marker.

MUSEUM OF NORTH TEXAS HISTORY NEWS

Best wishes to our departing board members, JoAnn Crites, Paul Ludwig, and Ralph Cuevas.

Also, best wishes to our departing curator, Kay and our volunteer, Rachael, who are also leaving.

City Lights is November 21 and the Museum needs volunteers to be present in each venue.

PARKS OF WICHITA FALLS

BELLEVUE PARK: Block 247 of original town site, Wichita Falls. The first and oldest park in Wichita Falls. It was given to the city in 1882 by R. E. Montgomery, Denver agent and head of the town site company that auctioned lots in September 1882. The deed restricts it to park use though attempts were made to place a city hall and a junior college there. The Civic League developed it 1905-1912 when the city took over. (*Renamed for former mayor and civic leader, Harold Jones, in 1987.*)

LAMAR PARK: Block 215 of original town site. It was known as the "Seven Sisters" block for the seven identical four-room houses on the Lamar St. side when sixteen public-spirited citizens bought it to sell at cost to the city for a park in 1910. In 1918 Kemp Public Library was built on it by J.A. Kemp. SCOTLAND PARK: In March 1914, Scotland Realty Co. (A. L. Huey) donated about forty acres of Wichita River bottom land, specifying it be named for the company. Area used frequently as camping grounds for units of Indians, military, etc. who came for celebrations and parades. In 1928 the city council voted to establish a zoo in the park, sponsored by the Lions Club.

O'REILLY PARK: Myles O'Reilly, a bachelor contractor, who died January 22,'27, left in his will three blocks of his property in the main part of town as a park for children.

HUFF-McGREGOR PARK: R.E. Huff and W.M. McGregor donated a large tract of land for a park near old Crescent Lake. Accepted by the city February 10, 1914. A swimming pool was opened and W. M. Priddy gave money to build a fifty-foot wading pool. In November 1926 Judge Huff signed a waiver so the city could build the Memorial Auditorium on part of the land. In 1939 plans for a boys club were made.

WEEKS PARK: On September 27, 1926, the city council thanked Fred and Harry Weeks, lawyer brothers in Wichita Falls, for 257.4 acres of land along Holliday Creek for park purposes. A golf course (since 1917) was already on part of the land.

LUCY PARK (west of Scotland Park): The original ninety-three acres were donated in 1963-64 by Mrs. Frances Ann Dickinson in memory of her mother, Lucy O'Neil Saunders.

REED PLAZA: a triangle at crossing of 9th and Kemp Blvd. named in June 1921 in honor of Dr. J. F. Reed, member of city council and parks board. Since disappeared in name of progress.

SPUDDER PARK: The park of four and one-half acres was built in 1920 with a grandstand for the pro baseball team called the Spudders. The team left Wichita Falls in 1932. In 1946 the city bought the acreage and an adjoining sixteen acres, used for circuses. The grandstand was burned several times.

From Louise Kelly, Wichita Falls County.