



PRESERVATION NEWS

Wichita County Historical Commission

Robert Palmer, Chairman

Bryce Blair, Archivist

Wichita County Archives

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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 CCLXIII

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

November 4, 2021

From the desk of Robert Palmer

Throughout North Texas history the most enduring form of transportation has been the railroad. Like many other forms of transportation, it faces an uncertain future. Political forces are proposing changes that could greatly change the way we transport people and goods.

Wichita County history was greatly determined by railroads.

Before the railroad, goods and people were moved by horses, mules, and, sometimes, oxen. Cattle were driven on the hoof along trails to market. As the area began to produce wheat, cotton, chickens, and milk, there were demands to find ways to move more goods even faster. The railroads were the answer. The War Between the States had proved that point.

It became apparent a line was needed between Ft. Worth and points north. Warren H.H. Lawrence had proposed, as early as 1869, the need for a railroad to connect the Gulf of Mexico to Colorado. Grenville M. Dodge, a man with an extensive railroad background, became very interested in the project. The Ft. Worth and Denver Railway Company was chartered by the Texas Legislator on May 26, 1873. Grenville signed on for \$20,000 in stock and \$20,000 in bonds for each mile of track laid. Construction began on November 27, 1881. The line did not face obstacles faced by most railroad constructions. Most tracks are laid with less than 4% grade and usually not to exceed 6%, involving cutting through hills and filling in valleys. Ft. Worth to the Colorado border is a very stable area, grade-wise. Very few rivers stood in the way, so trestles were at a minimum.

By September 1882, the track had reached Wichita Falls, Harrod by 1886, Chillicothe by 1887, and Texline by 1888. This was amazingly rapid construction.

Communities sprang up along the line. With amazing quickness, new markets were available for cattle and farm goods. The railroad, itself, fed this market by furnishing free seeds and trees for the farmers. Daggett Switch and Beaver Switch became Iowa Park and Electra. Railroad switches had very important functions. Usually, a secondary short line was built along the mainline. Cars

were pulled out and left for filling with cattle, grain, or cotton bales. Businesses grew up along switches. W.T. Waggoner and S.B. Burnett now had a way to load and ship cattle. Farmers were rewarded, too. One of the more interesting stories involved farmers' wives. They now had a source of money. After the completion of the line to Colorado, milk and cream could be shipped, by train, to Trinidad, Colorado. It was taken to the nearest depot, put in a refrigerated rail car, and sent to Trinidad. Many milk and cream cans still exist with the farmer's name and a Trinidad brass tag.

Harrod is an interesting story. It was an end of the line for a fair amount of time, probably caused by an unusually bad winter. It reached a population of 700 with 16 saloons. When the rails moved on, it fell back to its former status.

The oil business would not have reached the level it did without the railroads. When gasoline vehicles began to dominate, the need to rapidly move a lot of oil could only be accomplished by rail. There was a particularly high demand for the sweet crude produced in the area.

It was all multiplied when Frank Kell built the Wichita Falls and Northwestern to gather grain and cotton from The Big Pasture and the Wichita Falls and Southern to bring coal from Newcastle. World Wars I and II were fed by the railroads; mules, oil, and horses for the First World War, and oil and troops for the Second World War.

Politicians are fooling themselves when they think the need for railroads will diminish.

**November Program
John Yates
3 Notables from Electra:
Abbie, Carlos and Bill**

Wichita County Archive News

October 2021

Monthly Report

-Jeff Miller of the Texas Monthly Magazine contacted the Archives looking for information about a dispute in 1972 at Burkburnett. It involved Sam Walton (not that Walton), an oil operator in Wichita Falls and some oil wells near the Burkburnett High School football stadium. Seems the oil wells were smelly and unsightly. The school board asked him to clean them up. This angered Walton, so he threatened to drill an oil well in the middle of the football field. To see how this dispute played out, read Jeff's article on-line. He did a great job telling the story.

-Pat Price from Nashville, Tennessee contacted the Archives. Pat is a archives research assistant at Lipscomb University at Nashville. He was inquiring about Nathan Chenault of Wichita Falls. It seems Chenault was a wealthy oil producer and had donated \$50,000 to the university in 1920. All the information gathered was sent to Pat. He in turn, sent us all the information they had on Chenault and his donation to the university.

-Lynn Walker contacted the Archives about getting information for another TRN newspaper article. This time he was doing a write-up about the Kemp Home. We learned that Kemps' home was one of the finest in Wichita Falls. Sybil, one of the Kemps' daughters, lived next-door to her parents, Joseph and Flora Kemp. She told of the sad day when the Kemp home was demolished. Another of our historic landmarks gone forever; its place taken by an apartment complex.

-Dierrica Smith from the North Texas Area United Way contacted the Archives about doing some research on their organization. She said it was organized in 1922 as the Wichita Falls Municipal Board of Charities and Benevolence. They plan on celebrating their 100th Anniversary next year and wanted a little historical background on how it started.

-John and Becky made a presentation to the Electra City Council concerning potential placement of Texas Historical Markers in Electra.

The Heart of Downtown Model Train Exhibit opened October 23 and will continue through the Holiday Season.

Showtimes: 11:00am, 1:00pm, and 2:30pm; Thursday through Saturday

