

PRESERVATION NEWS

Newsletter of the Wichita County Historical Commission

Volume LIVRobert Palmer, ChairmanOctober 2nd, 2014

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 Order2. Introduction of Guests3. Business4. Program5. AdjournMonthly Meeting:Location: The Country Club.Price for the luncheon is \$17.00 each which includes: salads, maincourse, vegetables, drink & dessert.Please bring the correct change.

<u>Reservations</u>: Call the <u>Archives (763-0020)</u> 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

Virginia Lee Vaught Randall Growing Up in Burkburnett before WWII

From the Desk of Robert Palmer -

Midwestern State University holds a very valuable role in the history of the North Texas area. It has contributed greatly to the economics of the area and has given status to an area that was once only known for tough minded and bodied oil men and ranchers. Created in 1922 as Wichita Falls Junior College, it has grown to now be considered among the elite learning institutions in the country.

It began as part of the public school system and charged no tuition until 1929. Jonnie Morgan in her history of Wichita Falls stated how good it was that expenses were kept down by sharing classes with the high school students. She also described the many paintings and sculptures that adorned the building, many of which have now been lost. In 1928 J.G. Hardin offered \$400,000.00 to build a four year college if the county would match that amount. The Depression slowed down any progress until 1934. N.H. Martin and W.B. Hamilton donated forty acres on Taft and the board bought 40 more. On January 17, 1936 the official ground breaking was held and first classes were held on March 15, 1937.

The college was renamed Hardin Junior College. The main building was Spanish Colonial and held a beautiful bell tower. The bells still ring on the hour. In 1946 the senior college division was added and the name changed to Hardin College. The end of World War II brought major changes. Classes and buildings were added to handle the influx of returning G.I.s. Many of the buildings were converted military barracks, all done to match the campus style. Courses were offered in many new areas including watch repair. On September 1, 1961 the college became part of the Texas College and University system and the name changed to Midwestern University. After the war the college fielded a football team coached by legendary Texas coach Tugboat Jones. Expenses mounted and the program was dropped and did not return until the early 1980s. Today, it is one of the premier small college programs in the nation. When the program was dropped, an assistant coach who had football experience from Tulane University and Texas Tech remained to coach basketball. He was Dennis Vinzant and he began a tradition in basketball which has endured to the present time. Among the courses taught in the new Midwestern University was agricultural science. The school owned land and buildings in what is now the Midwestern Farms area of Wichita Falls.

The school brought in, and sometimes lured from the public schools, outstanding instructors. Jeannie Louise Hindman established an outstanding theater arts department. The Government and Political Science department was very strong, eventually giving one of its own as U.S. Senator John Tower. The science department had a major influence on the oil industry by producing a large number of geologists. The biology department was very good. Art Beyer taught botany and Walter Dalquest was recognized as one of the best discoverers of animal fossils. At his death he left the university a large piece of land in West Texas to be used as a research center.

The university, now known as Midwestern State University, is recognized nationally in many areas, including the health care industries.

The greatest effect the university has had on North Texas may be in the field of education. A large number of public and private school students now have their futures shaped by teachers trained at Midwestern. The question can be asked, "Where would North Texas be without Midwestern State University?"

Question of the month Name the smell you most remember from your childhood days.

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Men With Vision and Determination



Lee Clark

J. W. Cantwell

If Lee Clark seemed nervous as he strode into the high school auditorium on a March evening in 1922, it shouldn't have been a surprise. It wasn't the audience that caused him anxiety—as school Superintendent of Wichita Falls, he was enormously popular with the parents and teachers in the room. Rather, it would have been the vision he was about to share with his listeners. For Clark wished to redesign the city's educational system: "We have to accustom ourselves to thinking in larger terms": he would exhort his listeners. "Now is the time and place for dreaming dreams."

And dreams were closer to reality as funds were found and the new building to house both the high school and junior college was completed in 1924. But Lee Clark, who was terminated in 1923 over a dispute with a school board member over the location of a new elementary school, was not there for the celebration. J. W. Cantwell took the reins when only lower walls were standing. He had to move the construction forward, choose the school's equipment, and plan the classroom use. He, too, was the man for the job and the dream became a reality. (Taken from A History of Midwestern State University by Dr. Everett Kindig.

Why does MSU have such an attractive campus?

Ralph Harvey told us that when he was on the Board of Regents, he proposed his wife, Juanita's idea that all the brick should be a near the same as possible.