
Wichita County Archive News

September 2015

Midwestern University Desegregation was approved by the THC-Undertold Marker Program. This is the second Undertold Marker for Wichita County.

We have received marker inscriptions from THC for the Zale Legacy, Dr. C. B. Fuller, and Joe and Lois Perkins Estate marker.

Museum of North Texas History Upcoming events: Sept 12—Stroll ‘n Roll; Sept 21—An Evening with Hank Williams; Oct 01—Still on Pointe, The story of the Wichita Falls Ballet; Oct 20—Honoring Hometown Legend—Nat Fleming; Nov 21—City Lights



Concrete Arrows Across America

lit beacons that would extend from New York to San Francisco. Every ten miles, pilots would pass a bright yellow concrete arrow. Each arrow would be surmounted by a 51-foot steel tower and lit by a million-candlepower rotating beacon. (A generator shed at the tail of each arrow powered the beacon.) Now mail could get from the Atlantic to the Pacific not in a matter of weeks, but in just 30 hours or so.

Even the dumbest of air mail pilots, it seems, could follow a series of bright yellow arrows straight out of a Tex Avery cartoon. By 1924, just a year after Congress funded it, the line of giant concrete markers stretched from Rock Springs, Wyoming to Cleveland, Ohio. The next summer, it reached all the way to New York, and by 1929 it spanned the continent uninterrupted, the envy of postal systems worldwide.

Radio and radar are, of course, infinitely less cool than a concrete Yellow Brick Road from sea to shining sea, but I think we all know how this story ends. New advances in communication and navigation technology made the big arrows obsolete, and the Commerce Department decommissioned the beacons in the 1940s. The steel towers were torn down and went to the war effort. But the hundreds of arrows remain. Their yellow paint is gone, their concrete cracks a little more with every winter frost, and no one crosses their path much, except for coyotes and tumbleweeds. But they're still out there.

From *Conde Nast Traveler*; These Really Exist: Giant Concrete Arrows That Point Your Way Across America

Check out www.dreamsmithphotos.com/arrow/arrows.html for locations of beacons and arrows. Seems most of the beacons are at small airports and the arrows lost to time.

On August 20, 1920, the United States opened its first coast-to-coast airmail delivery route, just 60 years after the Pony Express closed up shop. There were no good aviation charts in those days, so pilots had to eyeball their way across the country using landmarks. This meant that flying in bad weather was difficult, and night flying was just about impossible.

The Postal Service solved the problem with the world's first ground-based civilian navigation system: a series of