

PRESERVATION NEWS

Newsletter of the Wichita County Historical Commission

Volume LXIV Robert Palmer, Chairman September 3.

Wichita County Archives 720 Indiana Avenue

September 3, 2015

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

Out of Africa and Back Home - Robert Palmer

From the Desk of Robert Palmer -

When I give historical presentations, an often asked question is, "Is there buried treasure in Wichita County?" When the giggling stops, I give the following reply.

"Maybe, could be, quite possibly." There certainly has occurred the ingredients necessary for buried treasure in Wichita County.

During my 70 years in the county, I had the opportunity to be around many story tellers who knew the history of the county quite well. The most frequent treasure stories were as follows.

The Ft. Worth/Santa Fe stagecoach which passed through the county was attacked by Indians/robbers and hid its cargo to keep the Indians/robbers from getting it.

The Texan/Santa Fe expedition of 1841 hid gold to keep it from being taken by the Indians who deceived them.

A US Army payroll moving from Ft. Sill to Ft. Richardson, Belknap, Griffin was taken by Indians/robbers and hidden.

A silver dollar payroll for a drilling crew was buried. German Immigrants hid their valuables to keep them from

robbers. That, actually, comes from an old German folk story. Coronado. He actually was far west of Wichita County.

Comanches stole treasure from Missions to the east and south and buried it in the county. That story has credibility because pieces of Mission statuary have been found in the Native American campsites.

Two stories have more facts to back them up. The Spanish used the Red River as a travel way for hundreds of years. In the 1890 court case, The United States v Texas, much testimony was given to that fact. The book, OKLAHOMA TREASURE and TREASURE TALES, written by Steve Wilson and published by the Oklahoma Press in 1976 states, "The ancient Spanish Trail that led east from Santa Fe across western Oklahoma and down the Red River...over which treasure laden pack trains...once travelled...is by far Oklahoma's oldest highway of commerce." "Not a few of those expeditions were in quest of Lost Spanish Mines - both gold and silver - reportedly lying somewhere in the Red River."

"In the volume of depositions taken in, The United States v Texas, are found the eye witness testimony of early traders, soldiers, muleteers, miners, buffalo hunters, and early treasure hunters." Many speak of buried treasure along the Red River.

One in particular speaks of Wichita County. A man named Parsons says, "An old Spanish Fort had been found near Camp Augur about nine miles southwest of Grandfield, Oklahoma." He goes on to describe a more exact location approximately in the middle of northern Wichita County.

The second factually backed story involves the James Gang. Most know the James sister, Suzanne Parmer, lived in Wichita County and was visited by, for sure, Frank and guite possibly by Jesse. What most people don't know is that many of Quantrill's Raiders. where the James' learned their ways settled in Wichita and Wilbarger Counties. Dr. Kindig stated in Michael Collins' book, TALES OF TEXOMA. "A great many of Quantrill's Gang settled near Wichita Falls and Vernon." An old gentleman in Holliday told that one of the James cousins and gang members spent his last days in Holliday. Before he died, he took the old gentleman to the Red River and showed him the general area where the James hid their "escape gold coins". A recent show on the Travel Channel was based around the fact that the James frequently did that. We know that Frank occasionally appeared to have more money than would be expected. Mystery, Mystery!

Question of the Month

..."You're Sixteen, You're Beautiful and You're Mine" was a hit song in the 60"s. What Wichita Falls disc jockey produced it?

Wichita County Archive News September 2015

<u>Midwestern University Desegregation</u> 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 <u>Zale Legacy</u>, <u>Dr. C. B. Fuller</u>, and <u>Joe and Lois</u> <u>Perkins Estate</u> 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

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

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 tumble-weeds. 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.