



THE CYCLONE



WTHA Returns to Sul Ross in Alpine



WTHA members attending the 2004 conference in Abilene.

Texas. Gray gradually acquired his own land and cattle, in part during a twenty-three-year stint on the Kokernot 06 Ranch. He is now retired and lives in Alpine, Texas, with his wife, Addie. Gray attends cowboy gatherings and has built a widespread reputation as a superb story-teller. In 2003 he won the National Cowboy Symposium & Celebration Award for "The Working Cowboy." The Saturday awards and business luncheon will be held at the Student Center featuring an address by WTHA president Preston Lewis.

For those who wish to stay Saturday evening a very special program is planned. Beginning at 6:00 p.m. Fort Davis National Historic Site will present "From Retreat to Tattoo." This once-a-year special event enables visitors to step back in time to when the fort was an active military post as they are guided by lantern light to witness living history skits at various buildings and locations around the post. Also available are a 7:00 p.m. dinner at the Indian Lodge and a 9:00 p.m. McDonald Observatory Star Party. Hotel accommodations for the conference have been made for \$71 per night at the Best Western Alpine Classic (800-528-1234); 2401 E. Hwy 90, Alpine, TX 79830, Phone: 432-837-1530; <<http://www.alpinetexas.com/html/bestwestern.html>>

The eighty-second meeting of the West Texas Historical Association will take place at Sul Ross University in Alpine on April 1-2, 2005. For those arriving early there will be a catered outdoor reception on Thursday evening at 5:00 p.m. On Friday morning at 9:00 a.m. two tours are tentatively scheduled to the Chinati Foundation, a contemporary art museum in Marfa, or to the "Museum of the Big Bend" on the Sul Ross Campus. Conference sessions will begin Friday at 1:00 p.m. in the Student Center building at Sul Ross. Sixteen sessions will be available from Friday afternoon through Saturday morning including at least 46 papers on all phases of West Texas history and culture. The banquet speaker on Friday night will be Ted Gray, a successful cattleman, who began his career during the Great Depression as a thirty-dollar-a-month cowboy in West

Shafter's Prairie Lighthouse

By David Murrah

[Editor's note: This is the second article written for *The Cyclone* by David Murrah that addresses the significant landmarks of West Texas and New Mexico. The first appeared in the August 2000 issue and dealt with Mucha Que Peak in Borden County.]

One of the Llano Estacado's most interesting historic landmarks was a man-made structure that stood for only a short time, yet left a indelible record of its existence. Designed to serve as a beacon to guide thirsty travelers to a nearby spring, the landmark was called a "prairie lighthouse" by its builder. Although it was less than eight feet high, the lighthouse stood on top of a mesa that rose above the surrounding plain. Its near-white color allowed it to be seen from several miles in any direction. It was a monument that



Monument Springs still produces water today.

testified to the approaching settlement of the barren plains.

The monument was the invention of Col. William R. Shafter. No one knew the importance of locating water holes on the Llano Estacado more than did Shafter. In July 1875, as part of an effort to clear the Llano Estacado of Indians, Shafter rode out of Fort Concho with about 450 troops of the 24th

Infantry and 10th Cavalry, the largest expedition ever to scout the plains.

After dividing his command at his supply camp in Blanco Canyon, Shafter led 220 of his men on a rigorous trip from Casas Amarillas Lake, north of present-day Levelland, southwestward into New Mexico, expecting to find water in playa lakes. But the summer heat had taken its toll, and no water was available. Still 50 miles from the Pecos, Shafter decided to make a run for the river. After forty hours without water, his troops finally reached the Pecos near today's Carlsbad. The experience tagged Shafter with a nickname that became the stuff of legend—"Pecos Bill."

On the return trip, Shafter's party was attacked at Dug Spring in Lea County by a group of Apaches intent on stealing horses. The troops chased the Apaches about twenty miles to a large spring. (continued on page 2)

From the Executive Director



Dear Friends:

Thank you to everyone for making the WTHA one of the best historical groups in the state. Your contributions and volunteer efforts have helped our association grow and prosper. Special thanks go to Mitchell Davenport and WTHA President Preston Lewis for presenting papers at the East Texas History Association fall meeting in Nacogdoches. It was a great session and the papers were very well received. Mitchell presented his paper, "Lt. Colonel C.B. McLellan: A Life of Service in the Texas and Southwestern Frontier." Preston's paper, "Charley Wilson: West Texas' Greatest Nineteenth Century Racehorse," attracted the interest of former U.S.

Representative Charles Wilson of East Texas who had given a lecture the night before. We must presume that he was perhaps intrigued by his equine link to history.

As we approach the spring meeting in Alpine we must also thank Shirley Eoff and the program committee for their hard work in putting together an outstanding program. Finally, our sincere thanks go to Travis Roberts and JoAnn Pospisil of the local arrangements committee who have been hard at work planning and putting together an outstanding slate of events for the Alpine meeting.

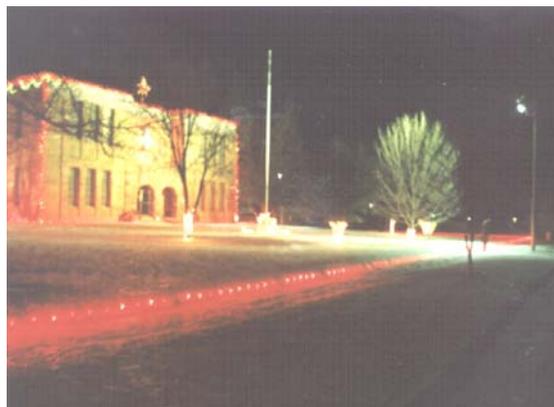
A blanket of snow and ice fell across the state for the December holidays visiting climes and cities that had not seen such an event in quite a while. "Snow in Victoria, Texas" read some national newspapers. Friends reported seeing beach goers in Galveston frolicking in the frozen stuff. How much fun!

Other friends drove home from Wichita Falls on the evening of December 24. It was nearly a full moon and the snow had blanketed the rolling plains the entire distance. No one else was out and they had the scenery to themselves. The entire view was lit up by the reflected light of the moon. So taken were they with the beauty of what they were seeing, they pulled over once, twice and three times, even though it was bitterly cold. They stood there quite a while taking in the beauty and not hearing anything—not one sound—except the West Texas wind whipping through the grass and a few errant mesquite. Late in the evening, at the Dickens Courthouse, the snow and the holiday lights combined to create a wonderland effect. They said it was all magical. What a way to end one year and begin the next—living in the "magical" and wondrous land of West Texas.

Happy New Year West Texans,

Tai Kreidler

Dickens County Courthouse
Christmas 2004



Prairie Lighthouse

(continued from page 1) southwest of modern-day Hobbs. There they found a large, hastily-abandoned camp, which Shafter ordered to be destroyed. He also dispatched some troops to build a rock marker on a nearby low hill to serve as a beacon to the spring.

In his Official Report, Shafter gave this description of the marker and nearby spring:

The monument is nearly white stone, about eight feet in diameter at the base, four at the top, and 7 ¼ feet high. It can be seen for several miles in all directions . . . Monument Spring is a very large spring of excellent water, furnishing enough for several thousand head of horses. The country to the north is, for fifty miles, hard high prairie, to the south and west sandy; grass in all directions, of luxuriant growth, of the finest quality found on the plains; wood abundant (roots) for fuel, and good building stone in the hills near by.

Shafter and his troops returned to Fort Concho in November 1875 after a two-thousand-mile scout. As Paul Carlson noted in his book *Pecos Bill: A Military Biography of William R. Shafter*, their work "had dispelled the dreary myth of the Staked Plains . . . They had explored, mapped and charted topographical features of the High Plains . . . and noted the region's excellent potential for ranching and farming."

Within a few years of Shafter's exploration, the sites of both Dug Spring and Monument Spring were occupied, first by buffalo hunters and later ranchers. Both springs still serve ranch headquarters to this day. Shafter's monument, however, was short-lived. Few ever saw it after it was built because, in all likelihood, Indians trying to hide the isolated spring may have scattered its blocks across the top of the mesa. Yet, remnants of the monument can still be seen—if you know where to look.

Buffalo hunters Jim Harvey and Dick Wilkerson filed claim to the site of Monument Spring in the early 1880s, and by 1884 had built a fortified stone structure at the spring. This rock house was constructed with stone hauled from the nearby mesa on which Shafter's monument had stood. The house still stands at the headquarters of the Monument Springs Ranch near Hobbs.

Soon, residents of the Llano Estacado can see Shafter's monument again. A full scale replica of the monument is planned for inclusion in the new Lea County Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center at Hobbs, scheduled to open in the fall of 2005.

Beginnings of the Big Bend Park

by R. M. Wagstaff

[Reprinted from the 1968 Year Book.]

One day in December, 1930, I chanced to pick up, from an Abilene, Texas, newsstand, a copy of *Nature Magazine*. It attracted my attention because on the front of it was a map of Texas. Glancing through it, I saw that the entire issue was devoted to Texas. A story called "The Texan Part of Texas" by J. Frank Dobie was illustrated by a picture of the Santa Elena Canyon on the Rio Grande; and another story entitled "The Last Frontier-- The Big Bend Country of Texas Still Sleeps, Untamed" by Claude S. Young was illustrated with pictures of Patricia Canyon [now better known Boquillas Canyon] and Mariscal Canyon, also on the Rio Grande. I purchased a copy of the magazine and read the stories with much interest.

In his story, Dobie expressed regret that none of the state's public lands had been set aside for park purposes:

When Texas entered the Union it reserved the right to control its own public lands; as a result it is the only state in the Union in which the federal government has not directed the distribution of the public domain among settlers-- and speculators.

The land-- where has it gone? Vast areas were patented to homesteaders. Other vast areas have been sold, mostly for grazing, to the highest bidders. Millions of acres were granted as subsidy to railroads; millions more issued in scrip. Another vast portion, much of it not reckoned as tillable, was set aside for the University of Texas and the common schools. The finding of oil on some of the grazing land owned by the University of Texas has made that institution wealthy. And now the public domain, except for scattered sections, has all been distributed. Texans of cultivated minds are lamenting with increasing regret that none

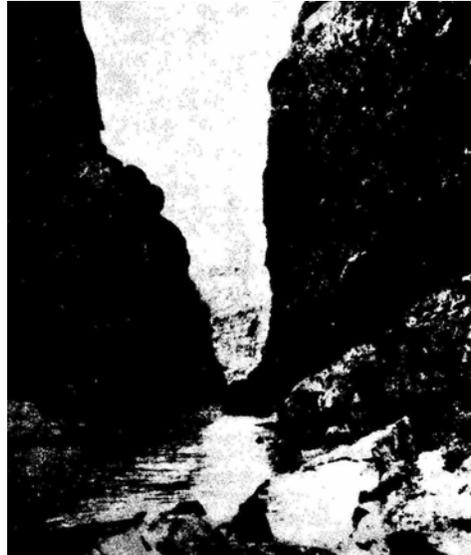


Photo from *Nature Magazine*, December 1930.

of the beautiful "hill country," none of the deep forest land, none of the coastal marshes, none of the wild Big Bend Country, none of the cool Davis Mountains, none of the deep and mighty gorges of the plains-- not one acre of the multiplied millions was set aside for parks and public enjoyment as so much federal land has been set aside. The proverbial 'wise forefathers' of Texas did not reserve even enough land to maintain a herd of the all but extinct Texas Longhorns.

In November of 1930, I had been elected to the Texas House of Representatives. The regular session of the 42nd Legislature was to meet at Austin in January 1931. I decided to investigate whether or not the state had any unsold lands remaining in the Big Bend area which might be set aside as a state park, including the canyons referred to above. The area was rough and rugged; the rainfall was scant; the land was practically a desert and worthless for any imaginable purpose. I was a lawyer, and a large part of my practice involved the consideration of West Texas land titles. As a

consequence, I was very familiar with the history of the disposition of the state lands in the western part of the state. I felt that it was quite possible that the state still owned some land in this vicinity.

Upon arriving at the State capitol in Austin, I checked with the General Land Office. Commissioner J. H. Walker assisted me in every way possible, and we carefully checked the ownership of all surveys adjoining and abutting upon the river in the vicinity of the three canyons. A number of tracts were still owned by the State of Texas. However, there were some tracts which had been sold but were subject to forfeiture on account of non-payment of interest, and other tracts which had been forfeited only within a few months prior to our inspection of the records. Mr. Walker stated that he would proceed with the forfeiture of the lands upon which interest had not been paid, but that it was the policy of the Land Office to give purchasers time within which to pay the delinquent interest and reinstate their purchase. He suggested that I defer the filing of the bill until the next session of the Legislature, at which time there would probably be a larger number of tracts adjoining these canyons which could be set apart for park purposes. I agreed to this procedure.

The 43rd Legislature met on January 10, 1933. A few weeks later I checked with the General Land Office and found that the desired lands were owned by the state, and that the period for reinstatement on previous foreclosures had expired. I prepared a bill to set aside the lands adjoining these canyons for a state park. I represented the 116th Legislative District composed solely of Taylor County, while the land for the park was located principally within the 67th District in Brewster County, represented by E. E. Townsend of Alpine, with a small amount in District Number 88, represented by B. Frank Haag of Midland. In legislating any matter located in another district, it is customary as a matter of legislative courtesy and to prevent any possible opposition, to ask the representative

of any such district to join as a co-author in the bill, and I gave each of these representatives an opportunity to join me.

Frank Haag of Midland was agreeable. E. E. Townsend of Alpine was also agreeable, and very much interested, but he was unwilling to sign until he first contacted some of his local constituents at Alpine. He wrote a number of letters, but some of his constituents apparently did not understand the significance of what we proposed to do and the reaction was mixed. Finally he made a special trip back to his district, had a conference with a number of businessmen and ranchers at Alpine, and secured their enthusiastic cooperation. Upon his return to Austin, he brought with him a portfolio of very excellent pictures of the three canyons, the Chisos Mountains, and various scenic points in the Big Bend.

The bill was signed by Wagstaff, Townsend and Haag, the caption being as follows:

By Wagstaff, Townsend, Haag.
H. B. No. 771. A bill to be entitled "An Act providing for the creation of the Texas Canyons State Park; withdrawing certain public school lands in Brewster and Presidio Counties, Texas, from sale; providing for conveyance of said land to the State of Texas for park purposes; valuing same, and making an appropriation out of the General Revenue for payment of the Permanent School Fund of Texas for consideration of such transfer; providing that said Texas Canyons State Park shall be under the supervision and control of said Texas Park Board, and declaring an emergency.

The amount of the appropriation was \$5,000.

The bill was filed with the Clerk of the House on March 2, 1933, was given its first reading, and referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

We began contacting each member of that committee individually in reference to the bill. Townsend carried with him the portfolio of pictures, and the members of the committee seemed greatly interested. He had lived near or in the Big Bend most of his life. He had been a

cowboy and a Texas Ranger, and he proved to be an effective lobbyist for the measure. At the hearing before the committee, J. Frank Dobie, who was a professor at the University of Texas in Austin, supported the bill, and I presented Townsend, with his portfolio of pictures, as a witness. The bill was ordered favorably reported by a vote of about 15 to 2. We considered this a remarkable achievement, as this Appropriations Committee was extremely economy-minded; in fact, the 43rd Legislature distinguished itself as an economy legislature, balancing the budget in the midst of the Depression, and cutting all state expenses approximately twenty percent. The appropriation in the bill was small, but that session all appropriation bills were looked upon with suspicion, and we felt that we had achieved a major victory in securing the approval of the Appropriations Committee.



One of the greatest obstacles we had to overcome was the fact that the bill had been delayed in introduction, and filed so late in the session that it carried the number 771, and under normal conditions that number would not be reached before the session expired. Prospects for its passage seemed quite dim. Attempts were made to have the measure placed upon the "Local and Uncontested Calendar," but there was sufficient opposition to the bill to prevent its consideration by such procedure. Fortunately, however, the bill carried a small appropriation and had been referred to the Appropriations Committee and favorably reported by that committee, and we decided that we would ask the Speaker to lay out the bill before the House as an appropriation bill, appropriation bills having priority under the rules over all other bills. The Speaker, Coke Stevenson, agreed, and by this

method we got the bill before the House for consideration.

On Friday, May 19, 1933, the Speaker laid the bill before the House on its second reading and passage to engrossment. No one raised any objection to its consideration. The bill was amended by providing that: (1) "All minerals in and under the above described section of land are reserved to the public free school fund"; (2) some corrective changes were made in the description of the land; and (3) the amount of the appropriation was reduced from \$5,000 to \$1,250. These were amendments recommended by the committee.

Mr. Rogers of Hunt moved that further consideration of the bill be postponed indefinitely. The motion to postpone was lost by a voice vote, and the bill was then passed to engrossment. I then moved that the constitutional requirement requiring bills to be read on three separate days be suspended, and House Bill Number 771 was placed on its third reading and final passage by a vote of 97 to 21. The Speaker then laid the bill before the House on its third reading and final passage, and it was passed by a vote of 90 to 27.

House Bill 771 was sent over to the Senate, arriving there on May 22, 1933, where Senator Ken Regan of Pecos sponsored it, the park area being within his senatorial district. Time was short, and he maneuvered the bill through the Senate without delay. It was read and referred to the Committee on Finance, which met that same day and reported it favorably. On May 24, 1933, the Chair laid before the Senate by unanimous consent House Bill 771. An amendment was adopted, further reducing the appropriation from \$1,250 to \$1,000, and the bill was finally passed by a vote of 26 to 3. The bill was returned from the Senate to the House on May 25, 1933, was called up for consideration that afternoon, and the House concurred in the Senate amendment by a vote of 109 to 3. The bill was enrolled and signed by the Speaker in the presence of the House on May 26, 1933, and forwarded to the

Secretary of State. That officer filed it on May 27, 1933, at 9:20 A. M., and the final Act was signed by Governor Miriam A. Ferguson on May 27, 1933. The Act had passed by large majorities in both houses, carried the emergency clause, and hence was effective immediately upon signature.

The Legislature adjourned on June 1, 1933. Our bill creating the Texas Canyons State Park had gotten under the wire just four days before the Legislature adjourned!

The newly created park covered lands adjoining the three canyons, but they were detached, unconnected by roads, and there was a great deal of other land in that area which properly belonged within a park along with the three canyons. The 43rd Legislature met again in a called session on September 14, 1933, and two additional bills were prepared increasing the size of the park.

House Bill Number 26 by Townsend and others transferred to the State of Texas for park purposes all lands that had been sold to the state for delinquent taxes south of parallel of latitude 29 degrees 25 minutes

north in Brewster and Presidio Counties, Texas. House Bill Number 44 by Wagstaff and others changed the name of the Texas Canyons State park to Big Bend State Park and withdrew from sale all unsold Public Free School Lands situated in Brewster County, Texas, south of north latitude 29 degrees 25 minutes. These lands, estimated to consist of 150,000 acres, were valued at 1c per acre and were transferred from the State Public School Fund to the State of Texas for park purposes, the minerals being reserved to the School Fund.

Both bills were referred to the Committee on Public Lands and Buildings and were both reported favorably on September 27, 1933. The Townsend Bill Number 26 having a lower number came up first, and I attached the entire contents of the Wagstaff Bill Number 44 as an amendment to the Townsend Bill, and both bills were passed as a single unit on October 4, 1933, by a vote of 120 yeas and 0 nays. This was the last day of the session, the Legislature adjourning that date! The bill was

signed by the Governor Miriam A. Ferguson on October 27, 1933.

The creation of this park met with general approval by the press and public of the state. The West Texas Chamber of Commerce and various statewide organizations and influential individuals began a campaign seeking to have the federal government take it over as a National Park. This movement was eventually successful, and with additional lands added to the original park, it became in 1943 the Big Bend National Park, one of the great parks of the national system.

[Abilene lawyer R. M. Wagstaff (1892-1973) served two terms in the Texas Legislature, from 1931 to 1935. In addition to the bill creating Big Bend National Park, he helped write conservation statutes that brought stability to the oil and gas industry and sponsored the Wagstaff-Woodward Water Priority Act, which is still in effect. He taught business administration at Hardin-Simmons University from 1947-1951.]

Did You Know? West Texas Facts and Trivia

COMPILED BY VICKIE GINTHER

-----Margaret Formby, a former director of the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in Hereford, TX, died on April 10, 2003.

-----Do any of you remember the Blizzard of '64 (1964, that is!)? From February 2-5, Borger got 26 inches of snow, and Amarillo recorded 17.5 inches. That's nothing compared to the February 1-8, 1956 snowstorm, when Vega (Oldham County) got 43 inches!

-----In 1849, the Ford and Neighbors Trail between Austin and El Paso was laid out. The trail was used by emigrants headed to California, and the entire trip of 580 miles took around 20 days on horseback. It passed through Concho, Irion, and Crane counties, among others.

-----The Permian Basin International Oil Show is held every two years in Odessa, TX. The three-day show, which began in 1940, features the latest technology and newest equipment in the petroleum industry.

-----How many West Texas town or place names can you think of that relate to food? Here are just a few: Noodle, TX (Jones County), Beef Hollow Canyon (Dickens County), Berry Hill, TX (Shackelford County), Celery Creek (Menard County), Coffee Creek (Palo Pinto County), Pecan Creek (Coke County), Salt Creek, TX (Cottle County), and Turkey Canyon Creek (Dickens County). Let us know if you think of any others, and we'll run them in the next column! Send food related names to Vickie Ginter at <victoriaandjames@hotmail.com>

NEWS FROM AROUND WEST TEXAS

Kenneth W. Davis will read a paper-- "Canning Lore in Central Texas in the Thirties and Forties"--at the 2005 meeting of the Texas Folklore Society in El Paso. He will also read a paper-- "How Thick Are The Shucks: Texas Weather Lore"--at the 2005 Texas State Historical Association meeting in Fort Worth. His most recent publication is "Pepe's Panaderia: Bread Lore in Texas" in *Both Sides of the Border: A Scattering of Texas Folklore* (Publication of the Texas Folklore Society LXI) Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2004, 83-91.

Lou Rodenberger has two books coming out. One is a collection of quotations by Texas women, *Quotable Texas Women*, which she co-edited with **Susie Kelly Flatau**, published by State House Press. Her second book will be out late this spring-- *Writing on the Wind: An Anthology of West Texas Women Writers*, a collection of essays and short stories published by Texas Tech University Press, co-edited with two young writers, **Jackie Kosolov** and **Laura Payne Butler**. Laura has recently joined the faculty at West Texas A&M. Jackie is an instructor in the Texas Tech creative writing program. Rodenberger also had an essay, "Sloshing Around in the Mainstream," in the new journal, *Langdon Review*, based at Tarleton.

Jim Matthews' book *Fort Concho* published in the Texas State Historical Association's Popular History series is scheduled for release in Fall 2005.

The Permian Historical Society lost two former presidents during the Christmas-New Year's holiday. **Dr. Warren Gardner**, who had served ably as the society's journal editor for many years, died in Houston after a valiant struggle with cancer. **Betty Orbeck** of Midland, a longtime director and past president, was found dead of natural causes in her motel room at Eastland during the holiday. She had been on a research trip, according to friends.

Amy David is the new programs coordinator at the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Canyon. She was previously the curator of education at the Henry B. Plant Museum in Tampa, Florida.

Kirk Bane was hired full time this fall at Blinn College, Bryan.

Sundown Historical Preservation Society and Hockley County Historical Committee have initiated a project to preserve the ranch house and headquarters for the historic Mallet Ranch, about 7 miles west of Sundown off Highway 1780. They are also planning a Historic Tour of Ranches in Cochran and Hockley Counties on Saturday, September 24, 2005, to be jointly sponsored by the **Cochran County Historical Committee**, the Sundown, and Hockley County groups.

The **Permian Historical Society's** fall meeting, conducted at Big Spring last October 16, was one of the best attended sessions in recent years, drawing more than 100 persons to hear a special presentation by **Tumbleweed Smith** on the 75 year history of the Big Spring Refinery. Others giving outstanding presentations were retired rodeo clown **Quail Dobbs**, who reviewed his 35-year career in the rodeo arena; **Stan Cosby** of Oklahoma, who gave a program on the 1902 range war shooting of Robert C. Johnson, a lone wolf settler of Howard and Dawson counties; and **Rhonda Campbell**, who talked about the History of Hanger 25 and the growth of the air museum located at old Webb Air Force Base.

Upcoming Events

March 24-26, 2005. Texas Folklore Society meeting, El Paso, Texas. WTHA past-president Ken Davis will read a paper. For more information contact Ken Untiedt at 936-468-4407 or email tfs@sfasu.edu

April 23, 2005. Permian Historical Society will conduct its spring meeting at the Permian Basin Oil Museum and Hall of Fame in Midland, beginning at 10 AM. The program will again focus on Permian regional history, according

to program chairman A. L. "Bud" Lindsey of Stanton. For information on the society's activities, please contact Ross McSwain, 325-949-6180, or e-mail yonder1@juno.com.

Call for Submissions

Scholarly articles that deal with the Big Bend Region, Trans-Pecos, or northern Mexico are now being accepted for peer review for the *Journal of Big Bend Studies*. The deadline for submissions to the *Journal of Big Bend Studies*, Vol. 17, is March 31, 2005. There isn't a minimum or maximum length for papers or a limit for photographs/illustrations. If your paper is primarily historic in nature, please follow Turabian style with endnotes. If your paper is more scientific/archeological in nature, please follow American Antiquity style guide with in text references, not endnotes. All papers must be submitted in electronic form and with a double-spaced hard copy. Please send submissions to Kelly Garcia, Editor, Center for Big Bend Studies, Box C-71, Alpine, TX 79832.

WANTED: Your submissions for the "News from Around West Texas" column. Appropriate submissions include publications, awards, election or appointment to office, promotions, and moves. We also welcome news of special exhibits and upcoming events. Please send your entries to Jim and Becky Matthews at <jbmatthews2@juno.com> or mail to 4230 Briarcrest, San Antonio, TX 78247.

The Cyclone seeks articles about historic sites located on private land or in out-of-the-way places. The articles should be 700-1000 words in length, written in popular rather than scholarly style, preferably with photographs. For an example, read the "Shafter's Prairie Lighthouse" article in this issue. Please query the editors with your ideas. Contact: Jim and Becky Matthews, 4230 Briarcrest, San Antonio, TX 78247 or email <jbmatthews2@juno.com>

In Memory . . .

Betty Jean Orbeck

Betty Jean Orbeck, of Midland, passed away Wednesday, December 29, 2004, in Eastland, Texas. She was born on November 29, 1929, in Austin, Texas, and was raised and educated there. Betty graduated from Austin High School in 1949. After working for the Maintenance Division of the Texas Highway Department in Odessa, she began her career as Archivist at the Petroleum Museum in February 1976 and retired in February 2001. Betty was a founding member of the Odessa / Ector County chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She was certified as an Archivist by the American University Department of History and the National Archives and was a member of the Texas Association of Museums, Permian Historical Society, Ector County Historical Commission, and the Santa Rita Club. She did research, compiled and wrote Permian Basin history, specializing in the petroleum industry, cattle industry and military history of Texas and the Permian Basin. Betty received the Heritage of Odessa Foundation Award in February, 1997. Memorials may be directed to the Petroleum Museum, 1500 I 20 West, Midland, Texas 79701.



WTHA members Preston Lewis and Mitchell Davenport presented papers at the East Texas History Association meeting in Nacogdoches.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MULESHOE HERITAGE CENTER

by Sammie Simpson

One of the small miracles of Muleshoe is the Heritage Center, which had its beginnings in 1976. That year, the seventh-grade sponsor challenged her students with the idea of publishing a history of Bailey County. The school year was spent recording oral and written histories of early settlers. Pictures were collected and taken of historical land marks that have since vanished. The gatherings were successfully turned into a published county history.

In 1982, the Santa Fe Railway System offered the Santa Fe Depot to the city, provided it was relocated. The townspeople wanted to save the historic landmark but did not know how to fund such a large undertaking. Immediately, the group of high school students, who in their seventh-grade year had published, *EARLY HISTORY OF BAILEY COUNTY*, became interested in saving the Depot. They established the Students Community Action Club (SCAC) under the sponsorship of their U.S. Government teacher. The club and interested local citizens began to raise funds to move the Depot to its present site, donated by the county. In March, 1985, restoration began.

Soon afterwards, a local rancher donated an unusual two and one-half story ranch-house, known as the Janes Ranch House. The house was built prior to 1916. It stood tall on the West Texas plains helping early cowboys navigate the treeless terrain. The stately home became a center of social activity in a sparsely populated area. The Janes Ranch House was no ordinary house. Old timers tell of celebrities, such as cowboy humorist Will Rogers, being entertained there. It is reported that Russian royalty came to hunt game, still plentiful on the plains at that time. The allure of the Janes House sparked more planning, scheming and fundraising. In 1987, the house was placed at the Heritage Center, and again the community united to begin restoration.

The next building to join the Heritage family was the Muleshoe Cookhouse. It was originally located in Bovina on the famous 3,000,000 acre XIT Ranch, formed from public lands exchanged by the state of Texas for construction of the State Capitol in 1882. By 1905, the XIT had begun selling its lands and buildings, and the cookhouse was moved to the Muleshoe Ranch. Cowboys came from all around to eat when they heard the dinner bell ring. The bell still hangs nearby.

A two-story structure from the Janes Ranch was soon reunited with the Ranch House. The upper story was used by its housekeeper, and the ground floor was a garage, a rarity for the early century. Next, a small log cabin, built ca. 1879, was moved from the North Canadian River bottom near Shawnee, Oklahoma.

The world's largest mule shoe was completed in 1994 by an Eagle Scout candidate. Standing at the entry to the complex, the 27 feet tall, 14,000 pound mule shoe's magnitude adds interest to the Center and beckons visitors to stop for a visit.

The Figure 4 Ranch House, from the southwest corner of the county has become a part of the Center as well. The forty-two section ranch was created in 1908. The original headquarters included a bunkhouse equipped for twenty-five to thirty cowboys.

In 1908, a town plat was filed for Virginia City, Texas, with the hope of it becoming the Bailey County seat. It was near the center of the county on the Ft. Sumner Road, previously known as the Comanchero Trail. Over two hundred lots were sold. A hotel was moved in from an unknown location. The upper floor of the hotel was one room with enough space for about eight cots, equipped to bed prospective land buyers who came into Portales on the train bi-monthly from Kansas City. The main floor was a kitchen and dining room, also used as a post office. The years 1911 through 1913 were drought years, and Virginia City became a ghost town. The hotel was removed to the Wilson Ranch, west of Maple, and became its headquarters. The third move for this building was to the Heritage site.

Volunteers operate the local Heritage Thrift Shop in a donated building on Main Street, selling articles contributed by local citizens. This provides an ongoing stream of revenue to fund Center activities. The past seven years, the Center has sponsored the Tour de Muleshoe Bike Ride as an additional fundraiser. This year there were over two hundred entries from Texas and surrounding states. Some of the restored buildings came with large cash donations to start renovations. Other donations have financed the restoration of five completed historical buildings, with two restorations still in progress.

SCAC has stayed a very active club of high school students under the guidance of teachers, with the original sponsor. Fundraisers have enabled them to donate over \$23,000.00, plus many volunteer hours. They have kept "the seed watered." Running the Heritage Center is undertaken by the Muleshoe Foundation Board, an organization formed in 1983. It works in partnership with SCAC. The Center is a venue for educational programs, community entertainment and recreational events. The past year, there were over five hundred registered tourists from the United States and two foreign countries.

Board members and community volunteers with unique talents and expertise have continually "cultivated the seed." The "fruit" is a beautiful Heritage Center, a small miracle for Muleshoe.

Join the West Texas Historical Association

Throughout its distinguished eighty-two year history, the West Texas Historical Association has encompassed a wide range of both professional and non-professional historians, from lawyers to ranchers to teachers. Although their interests vary, members share a common desire to preserve the rich history of West Texas. All members receive the *Year Book* and a subscription to the *Cyclone*.

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THE CYCLONE

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Editors: Jim & Becky Matthews

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