

THE CYCLONE



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- This Issue Features Condensed Fort Griffin Article from 1925
- Death Claims Two Longtime WTHA Members

WTHA EXECUTIVE OFFICE MOVES TO TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Open House Set for September 18 at SW Collection

After more than three years of planning, the West Texas Historical Association is set to relocate its executive offices from Abilene to new quarters at Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

Formal ceremonies to mark the occasion will be staged from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm on Friday, September 18 in the Formby Room at the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library.

Brief presentations will be given by WTHA officials, including retiring executive director B. W. Aston, former editor Ken Jacobs, and WTHA contributor Dr. Clint Chambers of Lubbock. Texas Tech Chancellor John Montford is



The Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library at Texas Tech University, the new home of the West Texas Historical Association. An Open House is set for September 18.

also expected to be on hand to extend an official university welcome.

Entertainment will be provided by Lanny Fiel and the Ranch Fiddle Dance Band.

Founded in 1924, WTHA maintained its offices at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene for 74 years under the guidance of history professors Rupert Richardson and B. W.

Aston. In 1995, due to Aston's approaching retirement, the WTHA Board of Directors solicited proposals from area universities interested in housing the Association. In 1996, the Board voted to accept Texas Tech's proposal to provide a new home for editorial office, and, in 1998, its bid for the executive office...

B. W. ASTON STEPS DOWN AS WTHA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AFTER 24 YEARS OF SERVICE



Dr. B. W. Aston

After serving as Executive Director of the WTHA for nearly a quarter of a century, Dr. B. W. Aston is turning over the reins to Dr. Paul H. Carlson, professor of history at Texas Tech. Carlson will serve as interim Executive Director until a permanent replacement can be found. Carlson also serves as Editor of the Association's *Year Book*.

WTHA honored Aston at its annual meeting in May for his 24 years of service as Secretary-Treasurer and Executive Director. Aston was honored with a Lifetime Directorship.

Aston's wife, Lillie Mae, was also recognized for her long-time work at the annual meetings. WTHA's tribute to Dr. Aston will be printed in the 1998 Year Book.

"A. C. Greene's

Friday night

banquet speech

was. . .a captivating

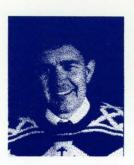
story with mystery

and suspense as well

as good history."

PAUL H. CARLSON

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dr. Paul H. Carlson, Interim Executive Director

Greetings from Lubbock and Texas Tech University where the new offices of the West Texas Historical Association will be located beginning September 1. B. W. Aston, Paul Carlson, Tai Kreidler, and Andy Young are in the process of moving the Association's archives, business records, extra Year Books, and other materials from Abilene and Hardin-Simmons University to Lubbock and the Southwest Collection. The move should be completed, except for some of the business records, by the time you receive this newsletter. For those of you who were unable to attend the 75th annual gathering in Abilene, you missed a great meeting. A.C. Greene's Friday night banquet speech, actually read by his wife after A.C. made some opening remarks, was a captivating story with mystery and suspense as well as good history. Afterward the Cooper Fiddlers provided some lively music for

At the Saturday business meeting David Murrah, in what for all of us was an emotional presentation, reviewed B.W. As-

ton's long tenure with the Association and thanked both B.W. and Lille Mae Aston for the many years of dedicated service they have given to the Association. It was a grand moment.

The program sessions were held on the Hardin-Simmons University campus. The Presidential reception and Friday night banquet were at the Grace Museum in downtown which was opened for our viewing. The local arrangements committee of B. W. Aston, Ken Jacobs, and Lawrence Clayton once

again provided wonderful facilities and fine entertainment to ensure the success of the meeting.

As noted elsewhere in *The Cyclone*, on September 18 from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm, the Southwest Collection, the History Department at Texas Tech, and the WTHA will hold a reception to commemorate the move to Texas Tech. B.W. Aston and Clint Chambers will speak, Bill Tydeman will host the affair and Tech Chancellor John Montford will be present to welcome guests.

We hope you will be able to attend.

Next year, the spring of 1999, the Annual Meeting will be in Lubbock. We presently are looking at dates in early April. Full information will be coming later. For those of you who may be working on papers, send proposals to me or to Tai Kreidler at the Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock 79409.

We encourage all members to participate in the annual meetings of the Association either by present-

ing a paper, chairing a session, or being a member of the audience. To participate is a rewarding experience. If you would like to invite the Association to meet in your region of West Texas, let us know, and we will forward your invitation to the Board of Directors.

I hope *The Cyclone* finds you in the best of spirits and that you are having a rewarding summer. Hope to see you in Lubbock in September.

Paul Carlson

The West Texas History Test

This West Texas county, first named in honor of U. S. President Buchanan, was later named in honor of someone else, reflecting popular sentiment of the times. What is that county named today?

The correct answer is located elsewhere in this newsletter.

Not a member of WTHA?

You are cordially invited to join with hundreds of people interested in the rich history of West Texas. Members receive The *Year Book*, which contains outstanding historical articles, book reviews, and news about West Texas history. In addition, you will receive the Association's newsletter, *The Cyclone*, published twice annually, and an invitation to the annual meeting.

Name	
Address	
Street	City, State ZI
Type of Membership: (Check choice	ce)
Student	\$ 10.00
Regular	\$ 15.00
Family	
Sustaining	
Institutional/Library	\$ 15.00
Life (individuals only)	\$ 300.00
Sponsoring	\$ 1000.00

Join today by filling out this form and mailing it to:

West Texas Historical Association Southwest Collection Texas Tech University Box 41041 Lubbock, TX 79409-1041

All Back Issues of WTHA Year Book Available!!

Since 1925, the West Texas Historical Association has published its *Year Book*, which represents the most comprehensive source on the history of West Texas. Each volume is packed with a dozen or more articles on various topics about the region.



Set of all back issues

CONDENSED FROM THE 1925 WTHA YEAR BOOK

FORT GRIFFIN BY CARL COKE RISTER

"Of these posts none was more important than Fort Griffin."

[Editor's Note-The following was adapted from a longer article authored by Carl Coke Rister which appeared in the first volume of the West Texas Historical Association Year Book, published in 1925. Rister, then a young history professor at Hardin-Simmons University, Rister went on to enjoy a distinguished career at the University of Oklahoma and Texas Tech, producing 10 books on the history of the American Southwest. He died in 1955.]

When the dawn of peace

came following the close of the Civil War, the Texas frontier presented a pitiable spectacle. Homes were in ashes; horses and cattle were gone; fields were filled with weeds or grass; fences were down; and along the entire border were evidence of desolation. The frontier had been pushed in for a distance of 150 to 200 miles, and where civilization once held sway, now wild beasts and savages roamed at will.

People taking up the unoccupied lands on the frontier at this time were dismayed to find that the Federal Government was slow in sending adequate forces to the frontier after the Civil War. Here was to be found a far-flung frontier of 1300 miles, open to the depredations of the Indians and white outlaws. The border people were helpless to prevent the constant incursions directed against them.

With the increased depredations from the Indians it became necessary that the old frontier posts be occupied and new ones built. This policy was soon put into operation on with the result that there was a frontier line of [Continued on next page]

[continued from previous page] defense beginning with Fort Richardson on the north, and passing through the following: Fort Griffin; the picket posts of Belknap, Phantom Hill and Chadbourne; Fort Concho; Fort McKavett; and then almost to the west of Fort McKavett. In the Big Bend country were the four posts of Stockton, Davis, Ouitman, and Bliss. Then from Fort McKavett was another line composed of Forts Clark, Duncan, McIntosh, and Brown, which followed the Rio Grande.

It was the line of posts from Fort Richardson to the Rio Grande, including the four posts of the Big Bend District, which played the more important role in the defense against the hostile Indians. Of these posts none was more important than Fort Griffin. This post was established on the afternoon of July 31, 1867, by Brevet Colonel Sturgis, Lieutenant Colonel of the Sixth United States Cavalry. The forces under his command consisted of four companies of the Sixth Cavalry. which formerly had been stationed at Fort Belknap. The latter place was found to be unsuited for a military post, due to the fact that the water was insufficient for the use of the garrison stationed there.

Fort Griffin was named in honor of General Griffin, a commander of the department after the Civil War. It was proposed to construct the permanent buildings of stone, and every preparation to that end was made. Temporary quarters for the officers and men were erected. Small wooden houses were built for the privates and non-commissioned officers, and a line of officers' quarters were put up, consisting of one room and kitchen each. Two buildings of two rooms and a hall each were hauled in from deserted ranches nearby, one of which was to be used for commissary quarters and the other for a hospital.

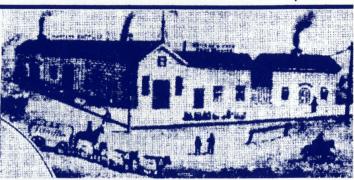
During the early period there were no stables built with the result that the horses suffered severely, many of them dying from pneumonia. The hospital,

commissary, and Quartermaster's storeroom were originally made of logs; but additions made from time to time, as the necessary lumber could be secured from the sawmills, partially satisfied these needs. Due to the fact that the frontier moved on westward, the more permanent buildings were never erected; however, inexpensive buildings were added from time to time as was the case in the history of a majority of the posts, where there was an imperative need for such additions.

frontier soldiers. Patrols were constantly out on the frontier, escorting Government mails, surveying parties, cattle drivers, and following up and punishing bands of depredating Indians. More than once the work of pursuing troops was interfered with by vast herds of buffaloes.

Many of the depredations in the vicinity of Fort Griffin were committed by white outlaws and not by Indians. The harboring place for these desperadoes was a settlement of whites and Tonkaway Indians called "The Flats" near Fort Griffin. Here gathered the most desperate and lawless gangs of thieves and desperadoes in the entire west. So turbulent were the lawless characters in this notorious settlement that robbery was frequently perpetrated in open daylight, and at night "The Flats" was an inferno of ribaldry, lewd women, drunken gamblers, and designing thieves. The soldiers of the fort had very little to do with the inhabitants of "The Flats" save when they were off duty and came to the settlement saloons for liquor. On these occasions many tribulations were brought to those in authority at the post by reason of the many excesses in drink. It was because of this condition that the post commander on one occasion wrote: "Fully one-half of the surgical cases occurring in times of peace are produced through whiskey supplied to the troops."

The environment of the post together with the loneliness of frontier life probably caused



The only known sketch or image of Fort Griffin. From C. C. Rister, Fort Griffin on the Texas Frontier.

many of the troops to desert. To Arduous were the duties of the the young recruit from the East, Fort Griffin was a lonely place indeed. The only means of communication with any town or nearest railway station (which was Calvert, Texas) were government trains. These trains consisted of a number of wagons drawn by horses, mules, and oxen; sometimes as many as ten wagons were tied in one train.

Four mails per week were received at the post. The mails were often delayed by floods and freshets that occurred during the rainy season, and occasionally the Indians captured the cargo. Eight days were required for a letter to reach department headquarters and twelve days to reach Washington. The arrival of the stage coach was an event of considerable interest to the shut insoldiers. It was then that they received news from the outside world.

Then again, another cause for desertions might have been the kind of food which the soldiers had to eat. Rations consisted of the following articles: pork, bacon, fresh beef, flour, hardbread, commeal, beans, peas, rice, hominy, coffee, tea, sugar, vinegar, candles, soap, salt and pepper. Since vegetables could not be raised in sufficient quantities in the post garden, and since they would decay before the freighters could bring them to the post, the soldiers suffered greatly from the lack of vegetables in their diet. To make up partially for this deficiency, canned vegetables were used, but even this did not wholly meet the need.

The frontier developed so rapidly that Fort Griffin soon found itself within the line of settlements. However, the settlers still desired the government to retain forces there. On August 2, 1873, having heard of a proposed abandonment of Fort Griffin, the citizens of Shakleford, Throckmorton, Young, Stephens, and Palo Pinto counties sent a petition to the Secretary of War asking that the post not be abandoned, giving as their reason for the petition the frequency of Indian raids. In the following year, the Commander of the Department of Texas made a tour of the frontier line of defense and in his report, concerning the conditions at Fort Griffin, said: "The post is an important one, in my opinion, and should be retained. I respectfully recommend that \$80,000 be asked for to build suitable quarters there for six companies, four companies of cavalry and two of Infantry." The recommendation of the Colonel were never carried out as it became more and more evident that the post must be abandoned.

The coming of railways, and the remarkable growth in population along the frontier made the Indian frontier posts unnecessary. General Auguar, commander of the Department of Texas, in his annual report of 1881, said that Forts Concho, McKavett, and Stockton were thus rendered unnecessary, and that Fort Griffin, ceasing to serve as a useful purposed, was abandoned in May of that year. Thus the history of one of the most colorful forts on the Texas frontier comes to a close.

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IN MEMORY OF

WILLIE EVERETT "BILL" STEGALL

Bill Stegall of Holiday (1905-1997) died May 5, 1997, in Dallas. A long-time member of the WTHA, Stegall worked as a pharmacist in Holdiay, but history was his first love. In his later years, he became fascinated with the history of sheep brought to West Texas during the late nineteenth century from Russia. His interest focused on a breed whose fleece seemed more like fur than wool. He collected articles, newspaper accounts, and other materials on the breed and kept the information in scrapbooks.

Stegall remained active in the Association until health would no longer allow him to be present at the annual meetings. He usually attended with his good friend and former president of WTHA, Jack Loftin of Archer City.

Stegall's wife preceded him in death in 1985, and at the time of his passing, he was living in a nursing home near his daughter in Dallas.

Dr. Ralph A. Smith

Death claimed Dr. Ralph A. Smith of Abilene on July 4, 1998. He was 86.

Dr. Smith was one of WTHA's most active members. His presentations and articles on unique aspects of West Texas history were often the highlight of annual meetings. In a seven-year period from 1973 through 1979, Dr. Smith was named recipient of the Association's Best Article Award three times.

He was a Life Member and past president of WTHA. He is survived by his wife Sadie, a son, David of Abilene, a daughter Annette Shelfer of Arlington, one grandchild, and one great-grandchild.

Dr. Smith was born in San Augustine and graduated from Stephen F. Austin State College in 1934 after working his way through school. After teaching in public school for a year, he returned to graduate school at the University of Texas where he earned his MA degree in 1936 and Ph. D. in

1938

After graduation, Smith taught at Hardin-Simmons University for a year, then moved to Chickasha, Oklahoma, where he taught at the Oklahoma College for Women. In 1942, he returned to H-SU for eight years. In 1950, he moved cross town to Abilene Christian College where he taught for the next 30 years, retiring in 1980.

During his long teaching career, Dr. Smith wrote 42 articles for professional journals, including dozens for the WTHA *Year Book*.

In the 1996 Year Book, Dr. Duane Hale, a former student of Smith's, paid tribute to his old professor in an article entitled "Ralph A. Smith: Gentleman, Educator, Scholar": "Dr. Smith has touched and inspired many of his students, colleagues, and friends to reach for higher goals, to aspire to obtain seemingly unobtainable heights of success, to live decent and dedicated lives so that our world will be a better place for future generations."

"Dr. Smith has touched and inspired many of his students, colleages, and friends to reach for higher goals..."

DID YOU KNOW? WEST TEXAS FACTS AND TRIVIA

COMPILED BY VICKY JONES, REFERENCE ARCHIVIST, SW COLLECTION/SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

temperature in Texas was in Tulia. On February 12, 1899, Tulia reported a temperature of -23 degrees F. The winter of 1898-1899 was also the coldest winter in Texas tod date. On February 8, 1933, Seminole also reported a temperature of -23 degrees.

... Ozona is the largest town in Crockett County (population 3,335 in 1990) and serves as its county seat. It is also the only town in Crockett County! ... The movie *Leap of*Faith (1992) starring Steve
Martin and Debra Winger, was
filmed in Plainview and Amarillo.

... The small town of Zepher located southeast of
Brownwood has had its share
of trouble. The town was misnamed when, in 1850, a surveyor trapped by a blue norther
commented that "This is some
zephyr we have run into." Actually, a zephyr is a gentle and
spring-like breeze! Zephyr
soon lived up to oxymoron

nameing when it was almost completely destroyed in May 1909 when a tornado tore through, killing 28. Then, in September 1985, the town was evacuated due to the threat of an explosion at the nearby Alamo Explosives Company. Luckily, there was no explosion, and the residents of Zephyr were allowd to return home a few hours later.

... Lubbock was once known as the "Chrysanthemum Capital of the World," but the saline content of its water has made raising mums impracticable. TEXAS TECH SUMMER FIELD SCHOOL

FORT PHANTOM HILL REVEALS SECRETS OF PAST

Fort Phantom Hill, located a few miles north of Abilene, was the site of the 1998 Texas Tech Archaeology Summer Field School, held May 27 through July 1.

Dr. Grant Hall, Tech archaeology professor and director of the Field School, reported that 16 participated in this year's program, including 5 graduate students in history and anthropology. Staged at the invitation of the Fort Phantom Hill Foundation, the field school demonstrated archaeological techniques to students and revealed new information about the historic post.

Established in 1851, Fort

Phantom Hill is one of the oldest forts in West Texas, but it was also short-lived. Located above the junction of Elm Creek and the Clear Fork of the Brazos, the site lacked both adequate supplies of wood and water, and the Army abandoned the post in 1854. Shortly after the soldiers marched away, some reportedly slipped back to set fire to the primitive quarters so that they would not have to return. Since then until now, the charred rock chimneys stand as silent trophies, testimony to the victory of the arid West Texas environment over American effort to settle the region.

The Field School project

unearthed wall lines of selected buildings, including a kitchen, surgeon's residence, and hospital. The study revealed that the structures were made of wattle and daub. Even those the construction method was primitive, the study revealed that window glass was used in the buildings. Crockery, bottles, and eating utensils were also found.

Also participating in the study were researcher and historian Martha Freeman of Austin, who is working on the historical background of the fort, and Abilene architect Rick Weatherl, who serves as coordinator for the Fort Phantom Hill Foundation.



Ruins of Fort Phantom Hill, as illustrated by Jack Jackson in Robert Wooster, Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers (Texas A&M University Press, 1987), p. 4. The chimneys still stand today north of Abilene near Lake Fort Phantom Hill.

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM AROUND WEST TEXAS

STUDY DOCUMENTS TRAIN SERVICE

Bob Burton of Snyder notified us recently that one of his articles, "Passenger Operations at the Hub City of the Plains" has been accepted by the Santa Fe Railway Historical and Modeling Society, Inc. Quarterly magazine.

AASLH COMMENDS CARLSON FOR BOOK

The American Association for State and Local History has announced that it has awarded its Certificate of Commendation to Dr. Paul Carlson for his recent study. Empire Builder in the Texas Panhandle: William Henry Bush. Carlson is professor of history at Texas Tech and currently wears two hats for WTHA, as Interim Executive Director and Editor of the Year Book. AASLH is one of the nation's largest historical organizations.

NEWS ON DOC NEIGHBOOURS

Dr. Kenneth Neighbours of Montague County reports that he is "still raising hell and horses." He now has 25 horses, including 6 foals. If his equestrian work were not enough, Dr. Neighbours has started work on a history of the World War II Pacific Theater.

Cashion Authors Another Winner

Ty Cashion, book review editor for the WTHA Year Book, has a new book, entitled Pigskin Pulpit: A Social History of Texas High School Football Coaches. His viewpoint is that of an insider as his father was a long-time Texas high school football coach.

THC SENDS FIELD TEAM TO PANHANDLE

This summer an archeological team from the Texas Historical Commission has been



The Moving Crew—Lending a hand in moving the truck load of documents from Abilene to the new WTHA office at Texas Tech are (1 to r) Paul Carlson, Tai Kreidler, and Daniel Sanchez. Andy Young (in shadows) had enough sense to get out of the sun!

surveying some of the battle sites for the Red River War of 1974-75. A spokesman for the THC said he was hoping to locate the main site for the first Battle of Palo Duro that took place August 27-31, 1874 between U.S. Army units under the command of

Colonel Nelson Miles, and Cheyenne Indians. The team was successful in finding spent cartridges, and other debris, but had yet to locate the primary site. The THC will release a summary of its findings at the end of the summer.

WTHA SEEKS TO DEVELOP ITS ARCHIVES

Got any WTHA pictures or programs?

The relocation of the WTHA office to the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library at Texas Tech University has provided an excellent opportunity for the Association to develop an archive of its own history.

Janet Neugebauer, WTHA board member and archivist for the Southwest Collection, has

Answer to The WT History

Buchanan County was renamed as Stephens County in 1861 in honor of CofederateVice-President Alexander Stephens. requested that WTHA members send any memorabilia pertaining to the Association to the Southwest Collection for preservation.

"We would like to have pictures, old programs, and correspondence related to the activities of the WTHA," said Ms. Neugebauer. "The Association is nearly 75 years old, and it's time we started preserving its history."

The Southwest Collection already serves as the official archives for a number of professional and scholarly organizations, including the Western Writers of America, Southwestern Social Science Asso-



ciation, and the Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars.

For additional information, contact Janet Neugebauer or Tai Kreidler at the Southwest Collection (806) 742-3749, or the WTHA office (806) 742-9076.

NEW OFFICERS NAMED AT ABILENE MEETING

Dr. Harwood Hinton of Austin was named the new president of the WTHA at the 1998 annual meeting in Abilene.

Other new officers include Darlene Bellinghausen of Knox City, vice-president, and Tai Kreidler of Lubbock, associate editor of the WTHA *Year* Book. Hinton, a widely-recognized scholar of the West and Southwest, will serve a one-year term. He is a former editor of the journal *Arizona* and the West.

New board member who will serve three-year terms are Mike Harter of Amarillo, Ross McSwain of San Angelo, Charles Rodenberger of Baird, and Cynthia Savage of Midland.

Continuing in their present positions are Dr. Paul H. Carlson of Lubbock as editor (he will also serve as interim director), Dr. Ty Cashion of Commerce as book review editor, and Freedonia Paschall of Lubbock as West Texas history editor.

Hinton, Bellinghausen, and Kreidler are elected as new officers of the West Texas Historical Association

NEWS WE CAN USE

The Cyclone needs reporters for the various areas of West Texas. You need not apply for the job: just send us information on events in your county or community which would be of interest to historyminded West Texans.

The next issue of The Cyclone will appear in March 1999. Deadline for news items will be February 1.

Please send your reports to

The Cyclone Editor, WTHA, Box 41041, Lubbock, TX 79409-1041.



POST MUSEUM REPRINTS POST CITY, TEXAS

Thanks to the generosity of the Maxine Durrett Earl Charitable Foundation of Post, the Garza County Historical Museum in Post will release a handsome reprint of the classic book, *Post City, Texas*, by C. Dudley Eaves and C. A. Hutchinson. Orignially printed in 1952, the book has long been out of print.

An Announcement Party is planned for October.

WEST TEXAS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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Phone: (806) 742-9076 Fax: (806) 742-0496 Email: wthayb@ttacs.ttu.edu

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THE WEST TEXAS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION cordially invites you to celebrate

THE OPENING OF ITS NEW HEADQUARTERS at the

SOUTHWEST COLLECTION/SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARY TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Friday, September 18, 1998 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

presentations at 6:15 pm

RSVP by Sept. 15

hors d'oeuvres and wine