



THE CYCLONE



WTHA Celebrates its Centennial Year in Lubbock



WTHA Presidents Becky Matthews and Sylvia Mahoney.

The West Texas Historical Association celebrates its centennial year with the 2024 annual conference in Lubbock, Texas. The meeting will take place at the MCM Elegante on April 5-6, 2024. An extensive and varied program is planned with 31 sessions and over 90 presentations on West Texas history and culture.

The program also will include a Women's History Lunch on Friday and a breakfast on Saturday honoring the Edwards Plateau Historical Association and featuring Bill O'Neal, past Texas State Historian.

On Friday evening there will be a reception honoring association president Sylvia Mahoney followed by a banquet at the Lubbock Women's Club. Keynote speaker for the banquet is Jack Edmondson of Fort Worth, widely known for presenting educational programs in the guise of John Wayne.

The WTHA annual business meeting and luncheon will be held on Saturday in the banquet room at the MCM Elegante. This will include presentation of awards and election of officers for the coming year. President Mahoney will give her address to the association, "Weaving the Threads of West Texas History to Reveal the Big Picture."

Mabel Welch: An Architect in the Greater Southwest

(Part I)

by Troy Ainsworth

Martin Luther Vanderburg appreciated that the rich, dark soil near DeKalb, Texas, was more fertile than the soil in Panola County, Mississippi. In 1899, at the age of thirty-six, Vanderburg, his wife Lavada Josephine Taylor Vanderburg, and their children Lawrence, Thomas, and Mabel, emigrated to Bowie County in Northeast Texas to begin a new life. Upon a recommendation from Sam and Mark Braswell, farmers



in DeKalb whose sister was married to John Blackburn, a

neighbor of the Vanderburgs, that good land was available in Texas to plant crops, Mr. Vanderburg considered this new prospect. In Mississippi, he was a plantation owner, a livestock raiser, and an executive in a steamboat company, but he felt crowded in northwest Mississippi, and after careful discussions with Mr. Blackburn and John McBeth, another neighbor, the three families decided to sell their land in Mississippi and relocate to Texas. (Cont. on page 2)

The men purchased covered wagons and draft horses to convey their families and possessions across the Mississippi into southern Arkansas to Miller County in the southwest corner of the state in a late nineteenth century act of westward migration. The immigrants arrived in Texarkana, where the women and children remained while the men sought out land to purchase further into Bowie County, which they found near DeKalb. Soon, the new arrivals were planting crops and raising livestock in their new home. As for the Vanderburg children, Lawrence Taylor Vanderburg became a school teacher, a principal, and an accomplished musician; Thomas Jefferson (Pete) Vanderburg designed and operated saw mills throughout his career; and Mabel Clair Vanderburg became an architect.

Sixty-seven years after departing Mississippi, Mabel recalled that after her graduation from DeKalb High School in 1910, “[i]n those days there were only a few jobs considered respectable for women; the phenomenon of the modern ‘career girl’ was unknown.” With limited options, Mabel embarked on an apprenticeship in millinery and interior decoration to learn useful skills, and during this time she met Malcolm Hiram Welch, a local man from DeKalb who was about two years her senior. They married on February 28, 1915, at which time she ended her apprenticeship. She and Malcolm began married life by purchasing a large house on Main Street in DeKalb, an event that seemed to foreshadow her interest in architectural design. However, contemporary events in



The home designed and built by Mabel and Malcolm Welch in 1925-1926 at 3131 Wheeling Avenue in El Paso's Manhattan Heights neighborhood.

Europe proved impactful on the couple in faraway Bowie County, and when the United States entered the war in 1917, Malcolm was called to duty. During his physical examination, a doctor discovered tuberculosis developing in his lungs and advised that he seek recuperation in the drier climate of El Paso.

As Mabel noted, “So west we came. And this was strange. For when I had been a little girl in Mississippi, I was fond of studying a big map of the United States that hung on the wall of my father’s study. I remembered many times looking at El Paso on the map and wondering what the city was like. And here we were, en route to live there!”

(This is Part 1 of a three part article. Look for Part 2 in the Fall 2024 issue of the Cyclone).

In Memory . . .

Nadine McKown, Director of the Museum of North Texas History, passed away on December 14, 2023 from complications with cancer. Ms. McKown had been museum director since May 2023. Previously, she had been the long time site director of the Kell House Heritage Center where she spearheaded the major renovation of the historic house. She was a gracious host and very knowledgeable concerning architectural preservation.

Looking Back . . .

100 years ago

The West Texas Historical Association officially organized on April 19, 1924 with annual dues of three



R. C. Crane

dollars. Royston Campbell Crane of Sweetwater led the effort to organize the association and served as its first president. Crane had four vice presidents in addition to Carl Coke Rister as Secretary and Laura Jewel Davis Scarborough as Treasurer. There was also a Committee on Membership and Marking of Historic Places.

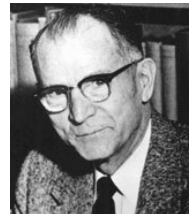
Publication of the first *Year Book* and the first annual meeting in Cisco, Texas did not occur until 1925. The introduction to the



first *Year Book* noted **Jewel Scarborough** “Our people have hardly begun to realize that our region has just as colorful a history as any other part of Texas; and it shall be our main aim to apprise the people inside and outside of West Texas of the fact that we have a history which the present generation and those who come after us should know more about.”

That first issue contained three original articles by Crane, Rister and William Curry Holden taken from their papers presented at the Cisco meeting. It also contained source material described as “not generally known about and difficult to obtain” edited by Rupert N. Richardson.

The 1925 *Year Book* concluded its introduction with “It is hoped that this book may be of use to teachers seeking source material on the history of West Texas for class use as well as to club women and others who are studying the history of this section.”



Carl C. Rister

Our First Fifty Years

by Rupert N. Richardson

[Condensed from the 1974 Year Book]

It was a goodly crowd with high hopes that met one April afternoon in 1924 in the Taylor County courthouse to organize the West Texas Historical Association. Considerable preparation had preceded the meeting. The idea of such an organization had been suggested by Royston Campbell Crane, Sweetwater lawyer and history buff. He thought the colleges of the area should initiate the movement and some years before had mentioned it to me and to others. He was a collector of Western Texana. Simmons College recently had acquired the major part of his collection. It was small but contained some good material that might be used as the basis for research on a number of subjects pertaining to the region.

I had been too busy trying to finish my schooling and do my work as a college teacher to give much thought to the idea, but now that we had the Crane collection it seemed urgent that some start be made. William Curry Holden, then teaching in McMurry College, and I called on Judge Crane at his home in Sweetwater where we laid plans for a meeting. We decided there should be a publicized call for it. Later J.M. Radford, Abilene business leader and eager student of history agreed to head the list of those who signed the call; the names of Presidents J.D. Sandefer of Simmons and J.W. Hunt of McMurry were used, Lorin G. Kennamer represented Abilene Christian College and Bert E. McGlamery, Abilene High School.



Rupert N. Richardson. Courtesy Hardin-Simmons University.

A score or more of people were in attendance, at the meeting, among them Mrs. Dallas Scarborough and Mrs. McAllister Stevenson.

Organization took little time. R.C. Crane was elected president, Mrs. Dallas Scarborough treasurer, and R.N. Richardson secretary. Other officers were chosen, but the slate has been lost. There was too much zeal about the opportunities for investigating West Texas history to squander much time on mere details of organization. Such matters could be attended to in due season. We were intrigued by the vision of possibilities in our new field. We should first publish a year book, and before long that would give way to a quarterly!

The next meeting was held in Cisco in April 1925, with Mrs. R.Q. Lee heading a cordial local arrangements committee. At the Cisco meeting the organization was enlarged. Judge Crane was continued as president and placed at the head of a publications committee of five members. C.U. Connelley of Eastland, J.M.

Radford of Abilene, C.A. Broome of San Angelo, and D.N. Arnett of Colorado City made up the list of vice presidents. Carl C. Rister was made secretary. To the list of officers were added Clifford B. Jones of Spur, Fred Cockrell of Abilene, and Mrs. J.D. Alexander of Cisco.

A program was given at the Cisco meeting. Carl C. Rister read a paper on Fort Griffin, a subject he had touched in his dissertation at George Washington; W.C. Holden expounded the subject of local history as material for literature; R.C. Crane read a paper on Indian wars of the 1870s; and R.N. Richardson read a paper on the Southern (Butterfield) Overland Mail. Most of the papers were published in a *Year Book* which Rister and I managed to put out in June 1925. More than half of this first *Year Book* was reprinting of rare newspaper material and government documents. The introduction states in part:

The association was organized to promote the study of the history of West Texas, to collect and preserve its traditions, and mark the noted historic spots left within its borders. . .

Annual dues were set at \$3. There were fewer than a hundred members at the start, but through the generous terms accorded by George S. Anderson of the Abilene Printing Company the body started free of debt and has continued so to this day.

The annual meeting was at Abilene in 1926. It began with a welcome address by Mayor Charles E. Coombes and a response

by President Crane. As the program proceeded, Judge Crane, staunch defender of West Texas, criticized Dorothy Scarborough's new book, *The Wind*, which has its setting in Sweetwater. He contended that for all its disagreeable features, the country was not half as bad as Miss Scarborough described it. Some ladies in the audience challenged the defense, contending that it would be next to impossible to exaggerate an account of Sweetwater's weather at its worst. Judge Fred Cockrell talked on pioneer lawyers of West Texas, most of whom he had known personally. His address was not published, but fortunately John R. Hutto took notes and listed most of the men named and the communities with which they were linked. Among those names was J.V. Cockrell, father of the speaker, who for a period represented the West Texas district in Congress. While serving as district judge the versatile pioneer often preached. It was not uncommon for him to hold court during the week and then preach in the same building on Sunday.

Stamford was the meeting place for 1927. Publicity given the meeting was woefully weak, and attendance generally was disappointingly small. The faithful few, mainly visitors to the community, stayed through the sessions and kept the organization going. Oral history in type made up a good part of Volume III of the *Year Book* published in 1927.

Help from the Universities

At the annual meeting held in Carnegie Library Hall April, 1928, the West Texas Historical Association began a new chapter. Thus far teachers in the Abilene



Taylor County Courthouse, where the WTHA organizational meeting took place. Courtesy Texas Historical Commission.

colleges and history buffs had done the planning and the work. This year scholarly, talented aid was brought in from the outside through solicitation and persuasion. At Oklahoma University where he was a visiting faculty member on leave from Simmons, Carl Rister contacted Alfred B. Thomas who had lately taken the doctorate in the University of California under the guidance of Herbert E. Bolton. Thomas assented to read a paper at the West Texas meeting. At the University of Texas, W.C. Holden and I were under the pressure of completing requirements for the doctorate, but we managed to enlist Walter Prescott Webb and Charles W. Ramsdell for places on the program of our own Association. Webb, then a relatively obscure teacher and scholar, was laboring with what he termed his "Opus Magnum." The article which he read before the Association and published in the *Year Book* sets forth and amplifies the thesis of his renowned *The Great Plains* that appeared in print three years later. Ramsdell made a talk on Robert S. Neighbors, the Indian agent whose career was so intimately interwoven with the North Texas frontier. Their papers and others made a *Year Book* volume of a hundred and fifty

pages. The *Year Book* had become established. It was now a worthy medium of publication on Western Texana and a source which historians henceforth would have to take into account.

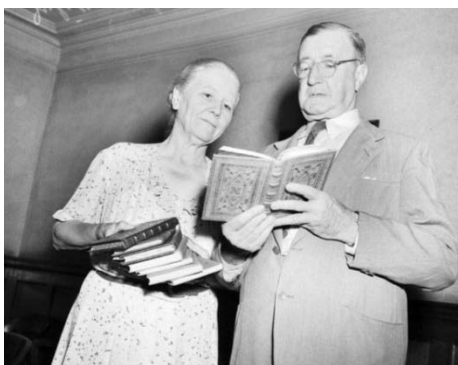
The annual meeting of 1929 held at Abilene City Hall was also accentuated by contributions of quality. Edward Everett Dale read a paper he called "The Romance of the Range," a sketch of the range cattle industry that will endure both as history and as literature. On the same program was J. Evetts Haley, whose "Grass Fires on the Southern Plains," was in keeping with the historical scholarship and literary skill that has placed him among the most widely read writers on the West.

Through Depression and War

In keeping with the times the Association prospered during the garish 1920s, and 1930 was also a good year. The *Year Book* now measured 215 pages. With its short membership roll, however, three dollar membership fee and no other income, it was necessary thereafter to hold the length of publication to approximately 150 pages. Even then the organization was under obligation to George C. Anderson whose charges each year could not have greatly exceeded the cost of publication. It must be said also that usually there was not available enough good regional historical material to have filled a book much larger.

During depression years annual meetings were held away from Abilene consistently. The old guard of writers was reinforced from time to time by new contributors who provided something worthwhile each year. Martin Lalor Crimmins had a lifelong career in the military. The

erect, handsome veteran, whose personal appearance gave no hint of his age, contributed an article to almost every *Year Book* from 1933 to 1952. The Association also benefited from the presence of O.W. Williams and the articles he published. His article recounting experiences on a trip from Dallas to Lubbock site is a well-told story of adventure. Also J. Wright Moorar, who had with his own rifle killed more than 20,000 buffalo, wrote of the beginnings of Adobe Walls, the famous buffalo hunters stockade in the Panhandle; in other articles he told of his high adventure in buffalo hunting. Realizing that the grim reaper was claiming frontiersmen rapidly during these years, the staff sought diligently to record or to entice these laymen to record at least some phase of their life stories.



Colonel Martin L. Crimmins inspects books with Julia Grothaus. Courtesy *San Antonio Light*.

The Centennial Commission of 1936 recognized West Texas generously as an historical area. R.C. Crane as president went before the Centennial Advisory Committee on History in Austin, and in a lengthy hearing reviewed the salient features in the history of the Western part of the state. The committee evidently was impressed by his presentation, for a large share of historic site markers was awarded to the region.

In his "Review" of the Association in 1939 John R. Hutto, faithful recorder of meetings, stated that the Association had published about 2,000 pages of historical material covering 155 different subjects.

For the annual session of 1942 the Association turned again to Abilene for the first time since 1929. Reporter Hutto related that war conditions, especially the shortage of rubber, limited attendance from a distance. He thought, nevertheless, that in this time of "stirring emotions and busy preparation to maintain our political and social institutions, those appearing on the program discussed their subjects pertaining to Western History with unusual interest."

For the three years following 1942 there were no annual meetings. Much of the work of the organization went on, however. The executive committee met from time to time, and each year published the *Year Book*. In 1944 it was reported that after all bills had been paid the organization had \$391.30 in the treasury. Lest that sum seem inconsequential, it is well to keep in mind that the Association has always operated with a slender budget and up to that time nobody had ever given it a cent.

New Zeal for a New Era

The annual meetings of the Association were renewed in the spring of 1946. After a gap of three long war years it was gratifying to gather again, greet old friends and meet new ones, and take up the work of the Association in a new era with renewed zeal. Once again a war to end wars had been fought and won. Disturbances and tensions still

troubled the world, but we believed that these would soon pass. Surely a long era of peace and understanding must lie ahead. The program did not, however, bear on the world scene. It followed faithfully the pattern of other years, bearing on regional subjects.

The history faculty of Texas Tech hosted the annual meeting in 1948. The organization met at Wichita Falls the following year. Judge Crane declined re-election, declaring that a quarter century in the post of president should be enough for any man. He was voted president emeritus, and Colonel M.L. Crimmins was elected president.

During the middle years of the century death laid a heavy hand on the organization. John R. Hutto died November 18, 1954, age seventy-five. His accounts of the annual meeting had become a tradition. Following an unusually active day in Albany incident to completing his *Fort Griffin*, Carl Coke Rister was claimed by death on April 15, 1955. During the early years of the association Rister's service was immeasurable and his interest continued until his death. R.C. Crane died January 20, 1956; it was given to him to be active in the Association almost to the end of his life.

A basic feature of the *Year Book* that came into use during the mid-century years is Ernest Wallace's "History in West Texas," which he has consistently either written or edited from the hands of contributors. It represents a good summary of important work, studies, and proceedings in the area covered by the Association. Meanwhile, out of an occasional book review or book

notice that the *Year Book* carried in early issues, Robert C. Cotner as book review editor has developed a review section of ample size and superior quality. Scores of professional and lay historians of stature have shared in these reviews both as authors and as reviewers.



Ernest Wallace

In respect to its main features, the recent years of the West Texas Historical Association have been much like those that preceded. Although relative more have been held in Abilene, meetings have been well distributed across the area.

As in preceding years, papers read at the annual meeting and papers published have covered a wide range of subjects. The Executive Committee, generally meeting each year in November, serves as a program committee and no serious effort has even been made to shape a program on any one theme. Prospective contributors are not that plentiful. The committee seeks to use the best of whatever is available, and generally after the committee has gone as far as practicable the editor has to do much writing and inquiring to shape a program that will be creditable and acceptable.

Among the subjects selected by contributors, old trails still bring

out some good work. The Indian frontier has been the field of many studies. On Indian fighters of the Army, Ernest Wallace has written and directed the writing by students about Ranald S. Mackenzie and other military men of the Nineteenth Century. Biographical writing has been popular, while ranchmen and ranching have not been neglected. Still such classification leaves out a score and more of published articles, some outstanding.

The Association has made some important gains in recent years. Through donations to Hardin-Simmons University, Robert E. Steakley has been paying the salaries of the editor and secretary. In 1971 an anonymous donor [Mrs. Percy Jones] contributed \$4,000 as endowment to assure the payment each year of a prize of \$200 for the best article published in the *Year Book*. Several years ago Escal F. Duke of Angelo State University began preparing a general index to the *Year Book*, and the *Index*, covering all issues from 1925 through 1969, was placed on sale in 1972. This book of 200 pages makes available momentarily information that could be had otherwise only through hours and days of searching. It makes the *Year Book* an important source of history for both general readers and researchers.

There is much history in West Texas yet to be written. Business history is just now being touched, likewise the stories of clubs, churches, and communities. Of opportunities in the field of biography there are really no limits, and biography is inseparably linked with another field increasingly popular,

genealogy. Every year regional and statewide subjects associated in a special way with West Texas make their appearance. Every generation prefers to write history for itself, furthermore. Much that we have written those who follow after us will write again and do it better, but let us hope that our successors will deem of enduring value at least some of the things that we have done and will profit from some of the material that we have preserved and are transmitting to them.

At the time that he helped to establish the West Texas Historical Association, Rupert Norval Richardson was a professor of history at Simmons College and a PhD student at the University of Texas. He went on to serve as dean of students, vice president and president of Hardin-Simmons University. He served as editor of the WTHA Year Book for most of its existence until his death in 1988.

Looking Back . . .

50 years ago

The 1974 meeting of the West Texas Historical Association was held at Texas Tech University in Lubbock with 130 members and guests attending. It began with a reception and banquet on Friday evening, followed by two sessions with only eight total presentations on Saturday morning. One of those presentations was "William R. Shafter Commanding Black Troops in West Texas" by Paul H. Carlson. That paper became the first article published by Carlson in the WTHA Year Book. During the business session, the membership agreed to raise the annual dues to \$7.50. The committee on membership sent letters to numerous chambers of commerce, libraries and professional organizations to encourage membership in the association.

NEWS AROUND WEST TEXAS

Duane Hale will be honored with Cisco College's "Dr. Duane Hale Day" for a lifetime achievement in compiling the Cisco College Oral History Collection. From 1995 to 2019 Hale guided Cisco College students in amassing 5,570 oral history recordings on the history of West Texas. The college is working on plans for a ceremony on the Abilene campus this fall.

Debbie Liles, Tarleton State University Associate Professor and the W. K. Gordon Endowed Chair in Texas History, has been unanimously elected to the board of the nonprofit Texas Library and Archives Foundation. TxLAF supports the Texas State Library and Archives Commission in promoting learning, literacy and the preservation of Texas history. The volunteer TxLAF board works with museums, schools, universities and fundraisers to share TSLAC resources and make them available for teaching, research and public exhibits.

Unpublished letters of iconic artist **Georgia O'Keeffe** officially were added to the permanent collection of West Texas A&M University's Cornette Library during an event to celebrate O'Keeffe's 136th birthday.

Amy Von Lintel, WT professor of art history and director of gender studies, spoke on the collection during a Friends of the Cornette Library event November 15. Von Lintel is an expert on O'Keeffe's time in Texas and published "Georgia O'Keeffe's Wartime Texas Letters" in 2020 and "Georgia O'Keeffe: Watercolors, 1916-1918" in 2016.

Bill Wright's Texas: Luminous Landscapes March 21 - September 21, 2024. The Grace Museum in Abilene, TX. "Texas is renowned for its diverse and expansive landscapes, showcasing a remarkable array of natural features. . . My goal is to use photography to interpret this incredible panorama." – Bill Wright



Leland Turner, Holle Humphries and Troy Ainsworth presented a WTHA sponsored session at the Center for Big Bend Studies conference in 2023.

Angelo State University has received a Library of Congress award to produce a project titled "All History is Local: Celebrating the People of West Texas." Using digital collections as inspiration, a team of students, staff and faculty will identify sources and write short articles that build connections between national topics and local history. Their work will focus on illuminating the lived experiences of Black and Hispanic or Latino populations in West Texas.

CONFERENCES:

April 25-27, 2024. **New Mexico History Conference** will be held in Albuquerque April 25-27. Conference sessions and events will take place at the Embassy Suites, 1000 Woodward Place NE. Rooms can be booked at a special conference rate. For info go to <https://hsnm.org/history-conference/>.

September 26-28, 2024. **The East Texas Historical Association** Fall Conference will take place at the Fredonia Hotel & Conference Center in Nacogdoches, TX. For details visit <https://www.easttexashistorical.org/conference>.

CALL FOR PAPERS:

The East Texas Historical Association invites proposals for papers, sessions, roundtables, and poster sessions for its 2024 annual fall meeting to be held in Nacogdoches, Texas, from Thursday, September 26 through Saturday, September 28, 2024. Please fill out the submission form on the ETHA website. Deadline for submissions is

April 29. Presenters will be notified of acceptance by June 30.

The Center for Big Bend Studies is accepting papers to be presented at its conference this fall in Alpine, TX. Presentations should focus on prehistoric, historic and modern cultures of the Borderlands Region of the United States and Mexico, with emphasis on the area encompassed by the greater Big Bend region of Texas or adjacent areas of West Texas and northern Mexico. Submissions should be made the CBBS website. The deadline is October 3, 2024.

In Memory . . .



Joe Don Weaver passed away at his home in San Angelo, Texas, on February 16, 2024, after a battle with mantle cell lymphoma. Joe was

born in Hereford, Texas, in 1954. Growing up on his family's farm, Joe developed a lifelong love of music, history, and humor. Joe is survived by his wife, Linda; their two daughters, Joi and Anne; his sister, Mary Ruth Baird; and other nieces, nephews, and extended family members. Joe attended West Texas A&M University where he met Linda and the two were married in 1977. Joe found a true calling when he began working at the Deaf Smith County Library in Hereford, Texas. When he became the director of libraries in Moore County, he passionately pursued using the library as a means of helping the people he encountered. Joe retired from library work and dedicated himself to volunteering in a variety of ways. He was active with Shannon Hospital Auxiliary, Fort Concho, Lions Club, Vitalant Blood Center, and the San Angelo Symphony, the latter leading him to regularly performing at nursing homes, retirement centers, schools, and churches.

A Scholarship for Those Interested in Study of the History and Culture of West Texas

The scholarship in the amount of \$750 is open to both high school seniors with a proven interest in history and historical research and undergraduate college students with a proven interest in history and historical research who also are declared history majors.

1. Applicants must return a completed official application by April 15th.
2. All applicants must have a minimum of a 3.0 (B) grade point average.
3. Applicants must forward two letters of recommendation to the scholarship committee. One of these letters should be from a teacher, counselor or employer. The second should be a personal recommendation from someone other than a family member.

Notification: All applicants will be notified upon completion of the evaluation process.

Contact:

Scholarship Committee
West Texas Historical Association
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Lubbock, TX 79409-1041
<https://wtha.wildapricot.org/page-18084>

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Editor: Jim Matthews at jjmatthews2@att.net.

WEB PAGE

This site lists association news, conference updates, and membership forms for new members. Members are encouraged to submit professional and organization news and photographs.

Editor: Lynn Whitfield at Lynn.Whitfield@ttu.edu.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The WTHA Facebook and Instagram are maintained for the benefit of members and affiliates who are interested in West Texas history.

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WEST TEXAS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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Join the West Texas Historical Association

Throughout its distinguished 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 *West Texas Historical Review* and the *Cyclone*.

Membership Levels

Student	\$ 10
Regular	\$ 30
Institutional	\$ 25
Family	\$ 35
Sustaining	\$ 50
Sponsoring	\$1000

To join mail your check to: West Texas Historical Association, Texas Tech University, Box 41041, Lubbock, TX 79409-1041 or register online at <https://wtha.wildapricot.org/>.