

THE JOURNAL

The unofficial newsletter of Wilson County Historical Society



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March

Lots of happenings in March. Women's History Month (March 1-31). Texas Independence day (2nd). Battle of the Alamo (March 6th). PI day (14th). Saint Patrick's Day (17th). First of Spring (20th). Goliad Massacre (March 27th). The first quarter of the year comes to an end (31st).

To learn more about Texas-related historical events check out TSHA's "Day By Day" website:

<https://www.tshaonline.org/texas-day-by-day>

Mark Your Calendars & Plan to Attend

Rancho de Pataguilla
The historic ranch of Mission San Juan

**Historical Marker
Dedication & Unveiling**

**April 5, 2025
10:00 AM**

Near 601 Goliad Road
Floresville, TX 78114

Event sponsored by:

Image extract of 1780 Cabello Map

Reception to follow in our meeting room

Reception foods co-sponsored by:



***Stomping Ground* Receives Donation**



Photo courtesy of Carol Chitty

At our February 25th meeting, Vice-President Sarah Gella announced a special fundraising event for **Stomping Ground**, a local non-profit where, according to their website, “...adults with intellectual disabilities find purpose, meaningful life experiences, and work.” Having heard the organization’s mission and a personal testimony from VP Gella, the membership appeared moved and unanimously approved donating \$1,000 to **Stomping Ground**. Sarah Gella is pictured here with Stomping Ground Director, Susan Schwartz, and clients making the donation on behalf of our Society.

To learn more about **Stomping Ground**, check out their website here: <https://www.stompinggroundadultdayservices.com/>

Polish History & Heritage Learned at Panna Maria



WCHS members visited the oldest Polish community in the United States, Panna Maria, last week. The first stop on the day-long tour was the multi-million dollar Polish Heritage Center where members learned all about the historic journey of a group of Silesian families that arrived in the area in 1854.

The center's staff also shared the the late Bishop Yanta's vision of center and its establishment. Following the excellent tour of the center, its informative exhibits and beautiful paintings, and lunch, WCHS members were met by the Panna Maria Historical Society. The Historical Society showed off the beautiful, historic church and the double oak tree where the first mass was held on Christmas Eve in 1854. More pictures are on the next page.



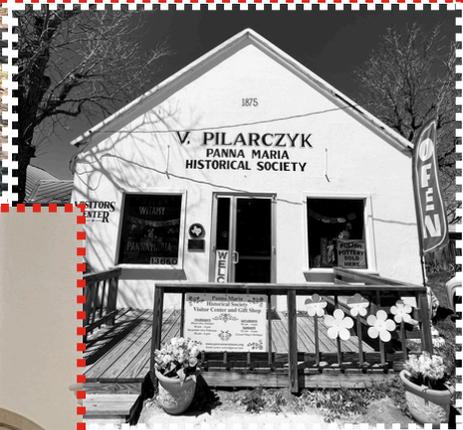
Those who visited recommend a return trip!



Group pic under the double-oak tree



Gorgeous altar w/handpainted walls



Custom chairs used by Pope John Paul II during his 1980s visit

Floresville Opry Line-Up

Floresville Opry with Dancing
Feb. 6, 2025 Sean O'Brien

90th Birthday Bash Feb. 15, 2025 Celebrating the Music of Johnny Bush featuring the Bandolero Band Members by the Justin Trevino Band at the (Floresville Event Center) Doors open 5:30 pm Music 7:00pm to 11:00pm Call #830-391-1062 for reservations

Mar. 6, 2025 Tony Booth
Apr. 3, 2025 Bobby Marquez
May 1, 2025 Bob Appel
Jun 5, 2025 Gabe Galvan
Jul 3, 2025 Freddy Cruz
Aug. 7, 2025 Wyatt Aleman

*Information for First Thursday of each Month
 Wilson County Expo & Community Center (Show Barn)
 435 St Hwy 97 East out of Floresville, Texas
 Doors Open @ 5:00 pm—music 6:00-9:15 pm
 Info: Viola Henke 830-391-1062
 Gen Admission \$15.00 Reserved Table Seats (8) \$100.00
 Dinner \$12.00 Concessions Desserts \$2.00
 Bring your own adult beverages.
 Benefit for the Wilson County Historical Society*



The monthly Opry is a great event but it cannot happen without volunteers. Please consider giving a helping hand. The load gets lighter when others are there to help carry it.

Story Gathering: A Successful Event



Dr. Melinda Creech's second annual Story Gathering Day was a huge success. Once again, Pastor Ray Warren, Haven Oaks Community Bible Church, hosted the event where about forty descendants of once enslaved families in Wilson County came together to learn about and share information regarding their family histories.

Dr. Creech has spent several years researching the Wilson County Freedom Colonies and the results of which can be seen on her "Stitched Together" blog page as well as the exhibit highlighting the formerly enslaved at Polley's Whitehall plantation.



This year, several of the attendees are descendants of the Nious family whose ancestor was one of enslaved at the Polley plantation. You can read about James Nious here: <https://www.polleyassociation.org/single-post/james-nious-1811-unknown>

Photos courtesy of Robert Creech

LAST WEEK FOR WOMEN OF WILSON COUNTY EXHIBIT

Members of our Society, Dr. Melinda Creech and Anthony Delgado, launched the “Women of Wilson County” exhibit on March 3rd in recognition of Women’s History Month. The twelve panel exhibit highlights seventeen women, from the eighteenth century through the twenty-first century, who once called home the land that makes up modern-day Wilson County. Some of the women highlighted include the county’s first and only woman sheriff, Jane Sample Booth. It also includes the county’s first and only woman County

Ana María de Arocha (1754-1830)

Ana María de Arocha was the second of eight children born to Simón de Arocha and Ygnacia Urutúa who survived into adulthood. Ana María was born in San Fernando de Béxar, present-day San Antonio, Texas, on August 15, 1754. Her parents were first-generation descendants of the first Spanish colonial governmental and soldier families that settled San Antonio. Her father was lieutenant general of the local Spanish militia as well as Lieutenant Governor of Texas while her paternal grandfather, Francisco de Arocha, a Canary Islander, was Secretary of the town council having been elected to that position at the founding of Texas’ first municipal government in 1731 and served for more than three decades.

Ana María married Joaquín Leal around 1770, another Canary Islander, and together they had more than fifteen children but only five of them lived past infancy. During their marriage, they established a large ranch, Santa Rita de las Litas. Their large ranch bordered her father’s to the south, at the confluence of Calaveras Creek and the San Antonio River and extended more than six miles north into present-day Elmendorf. The ranch included property that is now part of Helton Nature Park in Wilson County.

Ana María, her husband, and many of her immediate and extended family would pay a dear price for their involvement in the first Texas revolution. Following the failed rebellion at the Battle of Medina in August 1813, and branded as insurgents and traitors to the Spanish crown, Ana María, Joaquín and many of the Leal, Arocha and other families fled Béxar and sought refuge in the neutral ground between Texas and Louisiana. Joaquín and two of their sons were captured at the Trinity River. The sons were executed on the spot. Joaquín was shackled, along with other rebels, and led to Fort Trinidad where he was presented to Lieutenant Colonel Elizondo who condemned the men to death. The Spanish crown seized all of the property belonging to the named rebels. Ana María, along with two of her daughters, were imprisoned in La Quinta, a make-shift prison, for months where they were abused and forced to make meals for their captors.

Ana María and her daughters survived the calamities of Texas’ first revolution. In 1818, she signed a four-page affidavit identifying her extensive property lost during the rebellion including her large ranch. Her son-in-law, José Antonio de la Garza, is recognized as the owner of the ranchlands that was once hers. Also among her land holdings was a parcel of land that is occupied today by St Joseph’s Catholic Church and Rivercenter Mall in downtown San Antonio.

Ana María de Arocha died June 23, 1830.



Three page of Ana María's 1818 petition
Governor of Béxar Governor's Spanish Archives.



See Ana María's list of items lost




Enslaved Women of Wilson County

In 1860, 1,000 enslaved people lived in Wilson County and 1,800 in neighboring Guadalupe County. They were brought by their slaveowners from the Texas Coast and the Deep South to settle along the Cibolo Valley. Their stories are untold, but their strength and hard work built the plantations, feeding and clothing the families, growing and harvesting the crops, and enriching their own families with the perseverance and resilience to see them through that difficult period. Few images of the enslaved women of Wilson County exist. These quilt squares represent them and the stories pieced together about their lives.

 Theresa McCloud Moore (1837-1887)	 Nancy McDaniel Edwards (ca. 1842-ca. 1934)	 Harriett Stevenson (1825-?)	 Mary Anne Hitchins Montgomery (1840-?)
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Theresa Moore was a house slave of the Poles. She was the personal slave of Susan Polley Henderson, J. H. and Mary Polley's daughter. She moved to Fayette County after emancipation to marry a carpenter, Aaron Lewis Moore (1810-1870). She wrote a letter to Mary Baker Polley, February 4, 1849, describing her first year of marriage and the difficulties she was facing with her own health and the health of her first child. Theresa asked Mrs. Polley to keep in touch because she missed the Polley and their "house by the Company." Her handwriting is beautiful and her grammar is perfect.

Theresa, Aaron, and their family eventually moved to Austin, and Aaron worked as a butcher. Their son, John, attended Military College and became a doctor, practicing medicine in San Antonio. Their daughter married a doctor from Houston. He was later on the General Cemetery in Austin, Texas.

You can read more about Theresa Moore here.

Nancy McDaniel Edwards was born around 1842 in Wilson County. She married Andrew Edwards on July 9, 1860. On the 1870 census, the Edwards were living in Sutherland Springs. Andrew Edwards got a land grant, a Bear River grant, August 1, 1870. This probably made it possible for the Edwards to purchase land in Palestine around 1880 to begin the Palestine Freedmen Colony. Their daughter Eliza married James Walker, and they also settled in the Colony.

Andrew died in 1905 and is probably buried in the Walker Edwards Cemetery.

Nancy continued to live in the Colony, next door to the Daniel School. She continued to help those who were in need. She is mentioned in the San Antonio Register, February 17, 1905, as being on the 60th list and being "nearly of a hundred years old." She died sometime the next year and is buried in the Walker Edwards Cemetery. The Walker Edwards Cemetery is located behind the FHS store in Palestine.

Harriett Stevenson was born in 1825, married John Russell ca. 1848, after John Russell's death, Harriett married Charles Stevenson, a farmer from Alabama. They lived in "Stevenson Colony" in the La Verne Area. The Colony consisted of a church, school, lodge hall, small grocery store, and a cemetery.

Charles Stevenson and Harriett Russell had two daughters, Harriett Stevenson and Anna Stevenson. Stevenson's two children and Harriett's three children completed the household in 1870. Fourteen-year old Wilma was the only son in the family.

The Western Chronicle of February 2, 1877 has a glowing description of the Stevenson Colony. You can read about "The Freedmen of Wilson County."

Charles died in 1880, but Harriett went on to raise their community jointly. Harriett Stevenson gave birth for the Palestine Freedmen Church in Palestine on April 15, 1880, and had her own burial located on August 15, 1884.

Mary Anne Hitchins Montgomery born in 1840 in Kentucky, married Samuel Montgomery around 1867, after emancipation. Mary Anne was given 50 acres of land on the west side of the Cibola by Benjamin Goodwin on January 22, 1868 "in consideration of the care and kind attention which I have received from the said Mary Anne and for the being care of me for so long as I may live."

On November 15, 1874 Samuel and Mary Anne Montgomery sold their 50 acres on the west side of the Cibola and bought land on the E. 1/2 of Sec. 10, T. 15 N., R. 10 E. to begin the Montgomery Colony.

On October 18, 1874, the Montgomerys "in consideration of the regard we have for the education of our son and grandsons one-half acre of the land to the Trustees of the Samuel Montgomery Community School."

The Walker Montgomery Cemetery is located on County Road 401 near Goodsville. Walker Montgomery is buried there, and it is likely that Samuel and Mary Anne are also buried there.

You can read more about Mary Anne Hitchins Montgomery here.




Judge, Honorable Martha Schnabel. Other women highlighted in the exhibit are Spanish colonial ranchers, educators, four formerly enslaved women, a Texas Secretary of State, and a town doctor. You can see the exhibit this week, Monday-Thursday, in the Society’s meeting room. Check-in with Sandra Smith in the Archives next door for entry. Stay tuned to learn the next location where the Women of Wilson County exhibit may be hosted.

Polley Mansion House Tours April 5th

If you have not yet toured the Polley Mansion, north of Sutherland Springs on FM 539, you will have an opportunity on April 5th from 10:00AM to 3:00PM.

The mansion is a nineteenth century, two-story home that is listed on the National



Photo courtesy of Polley Mansion Facebook page

Register of Historic places as well as a Registered Texas Historical Landmark.

Current owners, Robin and Keith Muschalek, a Society member, have painstakingly restored, over the past several years, the once neglected mansion and have acquired numerous artifacts associated with the Polley family. Descendants of the Polley family have graciously donated many of the historical relics on display while others have been uncovered by Robin and Keith on the property.

Be sure to visit this fine example of our county's historical gems.

Be sure to check out our Website and "like" our Facebook page



<https://www.wilsoncountyhistory.org>



[facebook.com/wilsoncountyhistorical society](https://facebook.com/wilsoncountyhistorical%20society)

Our Website Story Highlight:

Click the link below to read a little history while also perusing our website.

Caiphas Kenard Ham