

HISTORIC WAXAHACHIE'S 2019 MOST ENDANGERED PLACES



*Historic Waxahachie, Inc. works to protect our heritage for
past, present, and future generations
through preservation, education and advocacy.*

HISTORIC WAXAHACHIE'S 2019 MOST ENDANGERED PLACES

Waxahachie is one of the most historic towns in Texas, but our heritage is fragile. Each year, many historic places disintegrate, are torn down, or are “remodeled,” and stripped of their historic features and significance. The reasons for the loss of historic places include neglect, encroaching development, or lack of resources, such as time, money and the skills needed to maintain a historic place. Often, a place vanishes without our ever knowing the stories connected to the place that tell an important part of Waxahachie history. And once these places are gone, they’re gone.

By creating a list of endangered places in Waxahachie, we highlight a few of the many historic places threatened. We hope that by spotlighting these endangered places, we will increase our community’s understanding of the value of our historic places and encourage people to preserve the places and their stories.

We are greatly indebted to the people who have preserved many of our current historic treasures for us to enjoy, and hope in years to come to be able to move places from our “Most Endangered Places” to a list of “This Place Saved!”

This year, the Waxahachie’s Most Endangered Places list includes:

South Ward School (716 Dunaway St.)

Lucas Home (105 Lucas St)

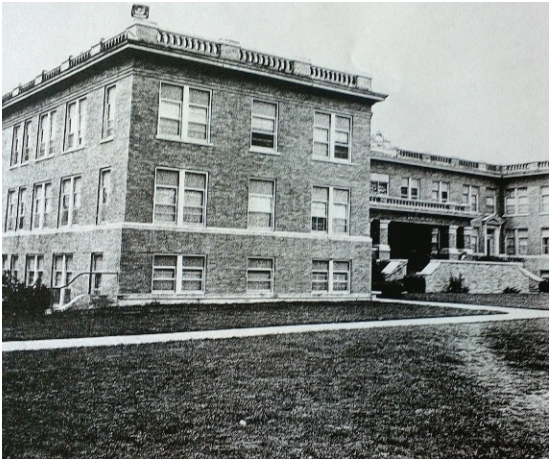
Optimist Youth Center (219 N. Patrick St.)

Farrar Home (509 E. Ross St.)

New Town Drug Store (516 Wyatt St.)



2017 ENDANGERED PLACES:



Drane Hall (1200 Sycamore St.)

No update is available for 2019. Collins Hall, SAGU, originally known as Drane Hall, was the female dorm for Trinity University from 1911-1942. The campus is a National Register of Historic Places whole-site designation. Some of the original buildings have been torn down since this nomination in 1985. Today it is a co-ed dorm with wings for men and women.



Joshua Chapel (110 Aiken St.)

Since being listed in 2017 as a Most Endangered Place, Joshua Chapel has completed many repairs and upgrades to the building, as well as substantial maintenance and thorough cleaning. Trees have been trimmed, Plexiglas has been removed, and the exterior structure, including the ramp and railing, have been painted and repaired. Repairs and painting have been done in the sanctuary and a railing has been added to the choir area.



Waxahachie Lumber Yard Office
(123 Kaufman St.)

No update is available for 2019.



International Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF)
(208 ½ S. Rogers St.)

The Odd Fellows organization is making lots of plans for the lodge. They will be replacing the flooring and new suspended ceiling tiles in the dining hall, are looking into removing the suspended ceiling to restore that room to a more original appearance, and before the year is out they will be painting the upper facade where it says “Odd Fellows Building”. They are currently getting bids on electrical work, which will be a big job, so it will likely occur in phases. Their newest tenant in the lower part of the building, Heart and Hand, will be opening very soon and they will be Holding their annual OddFest event on October 5, and plan on it being bigger and better than ever.



Waxahachie Cotton Mill Purser's Office
(Textile/Circle St.)

The Cotton Mill is no longer considered an endangered place! The building and land around it was purchased by new owners in 2018. These owners value its historic significance and want to preserve it. While there are still issues of contamination, the contamination diminishes with the passing of time.



1009 W. Main St.

Renovations to the house and lot continues. Work began in August 2017, with the plan being guided by an interest in returning the house to its original state as closely as possible. Great strides have been made to accomplish this, including converting spaces back to their original use, ordering custom windows and exterior doors that are historically appropriate, and the replication of salvaged trim and transoms.

2018 ENDANGERED PLACES:



Boze-Mitchell McKibbin Funeral Home
(511 W. Main St.)

Chelsea McKibbin-Langford has been terrific to work with as we try to figure out how to save the wonderful Masonic Temple on West Main Street, built in 1925. There have been many discussions about the '60 era sanctuary and there is talk from the THC that this portion may now have become historic. The property is not in the TIRZ district and thus does not meet standards for that money. the original building is a National Register property. The top floor and roof are big restoration problems, and many of the original windows will require an amazing amount of expensive restoration. It is an enormous work in progress.



Cecil-Levingston House
(602/606 N. Jackson St.)

A member of Historic Waxahachie's Most Endangered Places committee has been in contact with the current owner and has discussed the benefits and process of obtaining a local historical designation for the property in hopes of giving future family members pause before demolishing the home.



Sweatt House (509 MLK Jr. Blvd.)

Willie Cavitt is the 91-year old owner of the Sweatt house, though he does not currently live in the home. Willie was a contractor by profession, and it appears keeps the property reasonably well maintained. We appreciate his commitment to maintaining this historic property.



Thompson House (312/228 Kaufman St.)

Was 228 Kaufman, now is 312. The Thompson home is being lovingly restored by RK Real Estate - Ramona Taylor and Kathy Underwood. They researched the original look of the home and have returned a dormer window at the front roof, and removed the modern siding that had been added to the exterior, the front door is original. They have restored all windows except 8, and the others have original glass, and they even open now. Painting will be done ASAP, weather permitting. The interior is being restored to original as possible with window trim, baseboards and trim all refurbished. The chimney now has a proper cap. Of course modern conveniences have been added inside. Thanks to them for good restoration work.

HISTORIC WAXAHACHIE'S 2019 MOST ENDANGERED PLACES:

SOUTH WARD SCHOOL



Address: 716 Dunaway St.

Date Constructed: ~1912

Historical Significance:

The school was constructed about 1912 after a decade of neighborhood lobbying that followed Bullard Heights area being annexed by City of Waxahachie. The school functioned 50-years until the 1963-1964 school year, thereafter became activity center, then fell into private hands as either residence or use as storage facility.

Preservation Challenges:

While the premises have been boarded-up for years, the elevations are still original. The stucco siding is chipping, and it is suspected the roof is leaking. The property has not received maintenance in decades. The HWI-MEP committee has contacted the current owner and encouraged restoration or sale to another party that would restore the building, and they have been responsive to our ideas.

“South Ward School” Backstory:

On April 1, 1902, the Waxahachie city council voted to admit the unincorporated section known as Bullard Heights into the boundaries of the city of Waxahachie, increasing residency by some “400 souls”. The decision drew praise from the editors of The Waxahachie Daily Light, which had reported that 1/3rd of the population of the city was being unreported had the city’s boundary lines been placed “where they ought to be.”

Almost immediately, clamoring began for investing in public “ward schools”, which would be situated closer to residents. In the same report The Light also stated “The need of a new public school building is not debatable.” Initially, there was some discussion about removal of the recently closed Texas College structure from the West End to either serve as a dormitory for Trinity College or a ward school for Bullard Heights, yet, a decade after Bullard Heights was annexed, the debate continued. After more than a decade, the “South Ward” school was finally opened just east of Cantrell in Bullard Heights.

By 1960, residents of the area were seeking more modern facilities. During the 1963-1964 class year there were only 30-students and 2 teachers at the school. Since then the building has languished under alternate uses, including a short-lived senior activity center, and is now owned by SOUND BRIDGE ACOUSTIC LABS INC, with primary offices on I35E in Waxahachie.

HISTORIC WAXAHACHIE'S 2019 MOST ENDANGERED PLACES:

LUCAS HOME



Address: 105 Lucas St.

Date Constructed: 1932

Historical Significance:

This home's stone composition Tudor Revival architecture is uncommon to Waxahachie, and was constructed in 1932. Original owner L G "Louie" Lucas was a Greek immigrant that became a successful entrepreneur in the confection & hospitality businesses. With the rising popularity auto travel in the 1930's, Lucas constructed "tourist cabins" and operated a filling-station and grocery store nearby. The commercial structure at 1702 W Hwy 287 Business (c. 1940) is believed to be associated with Lucas tourist business. Lucas Street is named after Mr. Lucas.

Preservation Challenges:

HWI-MEP committee has general concerns about homes' status as the sole residential property among vacant lots, commercial businesses, etc. Homes of this type are far more common to Kessler Park and "M-Streets" areas in Dallas than in Waxahachie. The current homeowners have responded favorably to interest in preserving their home.

"Lucas Home" Backstory:

In December, 1906, an 18-year old from near Athens, Greece, arrived at the Port of New York. Initially working as a waiter in Manhattan, Loukas Georgios Loukas (1888-1950) saved money to help his brother Elias Georgios Loukas (1892-1961) join him.

5- years after his arrival, Loukas first signed a "Declaration of Intention" for U.S. citizenship when he made his way to Venice, California. Before the end of that decade the brothers accumulated enough investment capital to run a restaurant there, but Loukas resided in Texas during 1917 when he completed his WWI registration card. The two brothers left California in the 1920's. "Louie" established a confectionary in McKinney, and married Texas-native Fairy Anderson (1903-1967). Elias developed a talent for Asian cooking in Dallas, then moved to Houston.

While visiting from Dallas in 1924, Louie reunited with former business associate Nick Karras of Waxahachie, another Greek whose confectionary (Palm Sweet Shop) Louie was employed at around 1918, but this time as 50% owner. A month later Louis Georgios Lucas again declared his intentions for citizenship (this time granted), and moved with Fairy to Waxahachie. Nick moved to Los Angeles leaving the entrepreneurial Louie to create his personal empire in Waxahachie.

Several years after his initial investment, Louie expanded the Palm Sweet Shop, moving from a location on College St next to the Interurban, to the East side of the Square, adding soda fountains and cigar cases, and generous seating for an ice cream parlor.

In August of 1932, Louie entered an agreement with William Cameron & Co. to build a small Tudor-Revival styled home, on Hwy. No. 34 (287 Business), a/k/a Sardis & Midlothian Hwy, along with several acres. Louie may have drawn his inspiration for the home from those that were springing up in Oak Cliff and Dallas during this time. Purchase of the home, situated between the Country Club and the W Main, was announced in the Waxahachie Daily Light/And Weekly Enterprise in October. In 1933 he purchased the Texas Oil Products office nearby.

The confectionary establishment on the square flourished for nearly 15-years, but was sold in 1939, when Louie foresaw opportunities that arose from America's love-affair with automobiles. He opened a filling-station and tourist court (motor inn) on the western outskirts of Waxahachie near his home. In March 1939, Louie's tourist cabins, called Ideal Tourist Court, opened.

The cabins were constructed in a natural setting, nestled among pecan and peach tree orchards. There was an office in the Texaco filling station / grocery with a buzzer for nighttime service. The amenities were described as more modern and comfortable than established hotels in town, with locked garages, and the court was quickly booked-up with travelers, particularly for sporting events. Demand grew, and Louie added cabins just a few months after opening.



Above picture courtesy of Sylvia Smith, Chair, Ellis County Historic Commission

While wartime had curtailed leisure travel, the court was successful during the 1940's, however endured some difficult events. The business sustained fire damage multiple times, and Louie and Fairy were held at gunpoint, robbed, then bound & gagged in 1943. While Louie died after more than 10-years in operation, the business would go on until the 1960's.

Louie's attachment to Waxahachie began well before 1924. In addition to being employed at the sweet shop, he played saxophone in the Lone Star Band in 1918. Shortly before death, he happened upon his 1918 Band Annual, which had listed all 86-members, with special mention of those whom served in WWI, and their unit of service.

Louie was a Waxahachie Rotary Club speaker, presenting Greek plantation methods for cycling crops on small plots of land for the betterment of Ellis County farmers. He also led humanitarian efforts for his homeland, editorializing hardships and initiating clothing drives as local chairman of the Greek War Relief Association. At some point Lucas Street was named in his honor.

As further evidence of Waxahachie becoming his adopted home, Louie attempted to retrieve the body of his cousin Gustav Lucas for burial here after a coal mine explosion in Utah in 1924, and brother Elias G Lucas' body was interned here after his death in Houston in 1961.

The Lucas family was associated with the house from 1932, until 1968 when daughters Virginia (Lucas) Mosley and Carolyn (Mosley) Hall sold the property to Carl N Gressett.



Louis "Louie" Georgeos Lucas



Fairy (Anderson) Lucas

Several families occupied the home for the next 20-years.

Current owners William Ray and Wanda Jean Porter acquired the home in 1989, nearly equaling the time the Lukas family spent in the home.

HISTORIC WAXAHACHIE'S 2019 MOST ENDANGERED PLACES:

OPTIMIST YOUTH CENTER



Address: 219 N. Patrick St.

Date Constructed: Prior to 1932

Historical Significance:

The Optimist Club in Waxahachie, an outgrowth of the Optimist International organization, was founded in 1946. The organization was created as a “Friend of Youth”, with a particular interest in developing hope and vision in young boys, and later girls (“Optimisses”). Acreage on corner of Patrick & Water was deeded by Rev. E.S. Bledsoe to the President of Optimist Club in 1948 for a youth center, which up till that time was being used for grazing cattle, less than 1-mile from town center. Plans to repurpose a 60’ barn on the site were approved the following spring, and the building officially opened in June, 1949. The building, adjacent to ballfields named in Mrs. Bledsoe’s honor, has hosted many community and social gatherings to the present time.

Preservation Challenges:

Funding for repairs is primarily dependent upon facility rental. Building deterioration may cause the facility to be less attractive to host events, exacerbating funding challenges. Tidy siding on front elevation may mask substantial deterioration, as indicated by pictures on side of structure.

“Optimist Youth Center” Backstory:

War, disease, dangerous occupations, childbirth, and a great depression were among factors in the loss of a child’s parents in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Civic and religious leaders influenced by the Christian Science movement sought to restore hope for children that had lost parents, through a powerful message of “optimism”, which focused on developing a positive mental attitude.

In 1912, Christian D. Larson wrote a poem, which was adopted as “The Optimist Creed” for Optimist International, which had been organized from various Optimist Club chapters in 1919.

The creed emphasized strength, positive expectations of one’s self and others, personal resilience, and general optimism in one’s demeanor towards one’s pursuits and others.

The earliest charters formed not long after the Boy Scouts of America came to the U.S. from Great Britain. While both groups shared the goal of developing a young man’s character, Optimist organizations placed more focus on underprivileged youth, and on Christian Science.

In the beginning, the philosophy of the organization was somewhat controversial to conservative religious leaders, because of its’ humanistic and self-deterministic (Man’s Will vs. Omnipotent Power) messaging, however resistance eventually waned.

The organization received some national exposure in 1930, when Col. Charles A. Lindberg’s son, “Young Lindy”, received an honorary membership in Kenosha’s Junior Optimist Club chapter. Colonel Lindberg was also selected as the “Ideal Man” role model.

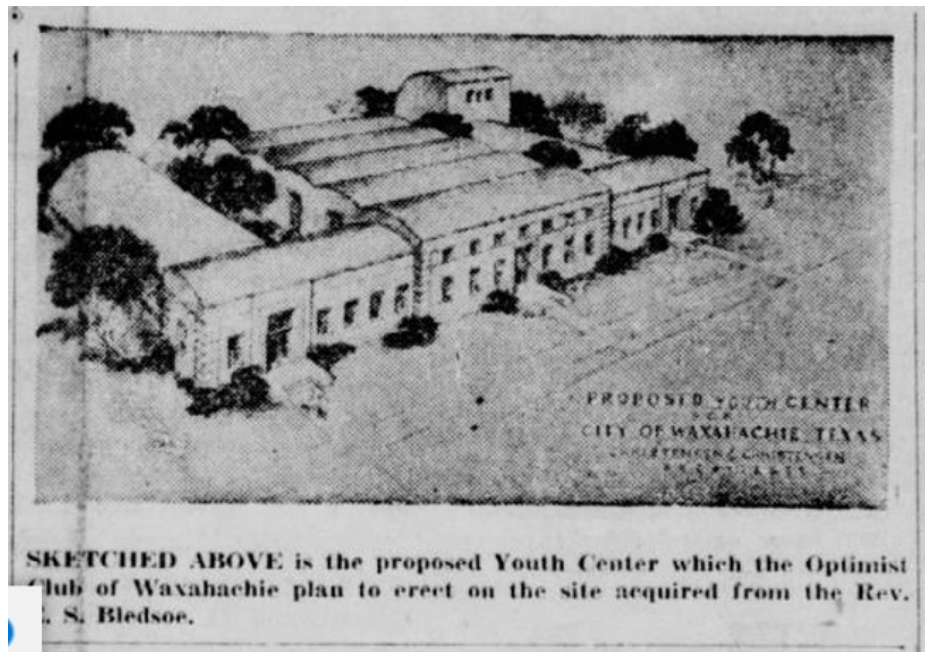
Local interest didn’t arise until after WWII, possibly a consequence of fathers lost during the war, however leaders had been exposed to club benefits in Ft. Worth, Houston and elsewhere. The initial meeting of the membership was held at the end of June, 1946, and guided by J. Preston Hodges of the Ft. Worth Optimist Club, and William E King, a representative of Optimist Int’l.

For the next 3-years the club was very active, particularly with fundraising. Program director and WWII veteran Lieut. Commander William “King” McDuffie, who died of lingering war injuries at age 32 in 1949, was credited for fund-raising efforts benefiting the building, swimming pool, and other nonprofits, such as hosting annual carnivals on the grounds of the club. Proceeds went towards the building fund, as well as funding for the Baptist Orphan’s Home on Farley St.

The ball fields and a youth center were also made possible by a donation from Rev. Elijah Solbiske Bledsoe (1872-1961), in memory of his wife Edna Nash (Thompson) Bledsoe (1881-1948), for whom the Edna Bledsoe Guild was named. 10-1/2 acres on the corner of Patrick & Water, which belonged to Mrs. Bledsoe’s sister, was deeded by Rev. Bledsoe to the President of the Optimist Club in 1948. The land at that time was still being used for grazing cattle, less than 1-mile from Waxahachie’s town center. Elijah’s loss of his father before age 13, and Edna’s loss of her father when she was less than 1-year old, likely influenced the couple’s mindset for gifting the land.

Rev. Bledsoe’s decision to be a benefactor for the Optimist Youth Center was detailed in the Waxahachie Daily Light published 10 Dec 1949. Details were also provided of a grand Youth Center, which would also serve as a Civic Center.

(continued on next page)



This vision, whether put forth by Optimist leaders or Rev. Bledsoe, never came to fruition. However, a barn was relocated and improved 6-months after Bledsoe's gift.

This June (2019) will mark the Optimist Youth Center's 70th year of service to the community.

HISTORIC WAXAHACHIE'S 2019 MOST ENDANGERED PLACES:

FARRAR HOME



Address: 509 E. Ross St.

Date Constructed: Prior to 1930

Historical Significance:

This home shares many architectural attributes, and may be of similar age with the Ellis County Rural Heritage Farm (McKinney-Aday farm house), albeit with additional dormers and larger porch. Early resident John Sidney "Sid" Farrar, was the son of Ellis Co. pioneers Captain Simon Bowden and Leila (Smith) Farrar. Sid lived here with his wife Maude Boyce, from another Ellis Co. pioneering family. Sid's father Capt. S.B. Farrar figured prominently in Republic of Texas history as one of five men to select and locate a fort, which became Ft. Worth. Local celebrity musician and square-dance caller "Pinkie" Archie Dawson also lived here for a time.

Preservation Challenges:

The home is located within an original plat of the town of Waxahachie still reliant upon primitive, 19th century infrastructure conditions. This section of town is plagued by lack of curbs and proper drainage. Many residents' homes become proverbial swamps after even moderate rains. Some residents rely upon ditches and culverts for drainage, however most have no drainage at all. Consequently HWI-MEP is concerned for many preservation-worthy properties in the vicinity at risk of water & termite damage, accelerating loss of taxable value and historic property inventory.

“Farrar Home” Backstory:

ECAD has erroneously recorded the 1920's (or earlier) farmhouse of John Sidney “Sid” Farrar (1871-1948), son of Ellis Co. pioneers Capt. Simon Bowden Farrar and Leila (Smith) Farrar, as having been built in 1945. This may be due to splitting Ross St into East & West sections.

Sid and his wife Maude (Boyce) Farrar, from another Ellis Co. pioneer family) were residing in the home no later than 1930, after moving from E University Ave after 1920. During Republic of Texas era in 1848, Sid's father Captain S.B. Farrar was one of five men to choose and locate a fort, which became Ft. Worth. Sid was born near Palmer, and in 1895 married Maude, daughter of Captain W.B. Boyce, of the Boyce community. Sid was a successful real estate developer in Texas.

After Sid's death the property was owned by “Pinkie” Archie Dawson (1901-1959), leader of Pinkie Dawson's Kim Ranch string band, which performed square dances, with Ft. Worth television personality Calvin Moore frequently serving as “Caller”. Pinkie also owned a service station presently called “One Stop Grocery” at 211 Ennis St.

The home boast nearly 2,000' living space on the first floor, and 600' covered porch, and appears to be in substantially original condition. Current residents (Jose M & Esperanza Flores) since 1994 reached Senior discount (freeze) in 2014 however ECAD increased appraisal by 75% from prior year before freezing assessment.

HISTORIC WAXAHACHIE'S 2019 MOST ENDANGERED PLACES:

NEW TOWN DRUG STORE



Address: 516 Wyatt St.

Date Constructed: mid-1920's

Historical Significance:

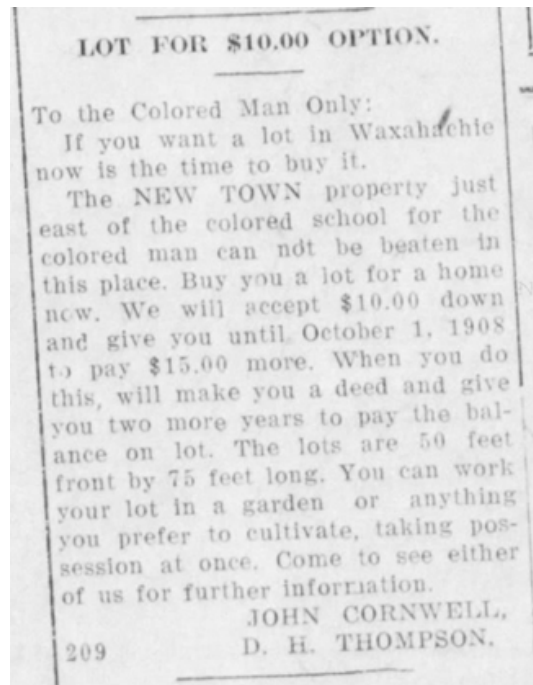
This building was constructed in mid-1920's as commercial business to service the "New Town" area of Waxahachie, and for years was known as "New Town Drug Store". Ownership and management included prominent black and white residents, including first female council member elected to City of Waxahachie (Rutha Bell Waters).

Preservation Challenges:

The building is currently vacant and surviving family members that own property may have limited means for upkeep or preservation.

"New Town Drug Store" Backstory:

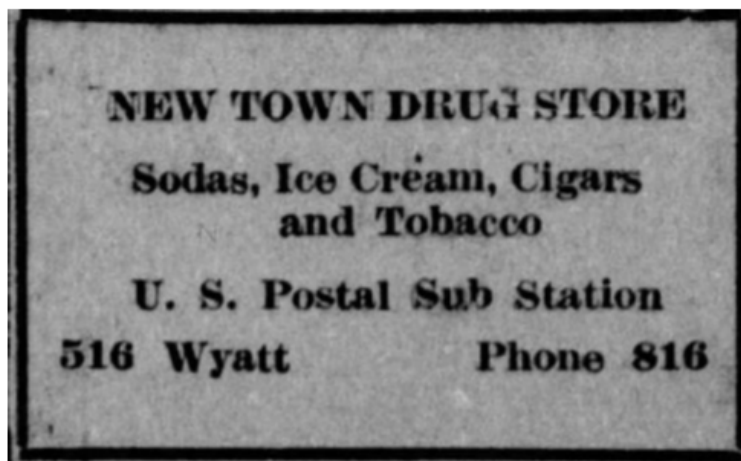
An area east of the central business district of Waxahachie had been mapped as "Freedman's Town" after reconstruction (1865-1877). In 1908 a new "colored" settlement was established near the "old Coates gin", and was named "New Town", signifying a new post-slavery identity for African-American citizens. Members of this new community lobbied for their own postal office and began a campaign to build sidewalks, only a few years after they were first constructed in other parts of Waxahachie. Sidewalk building begun in the earlier Freedman section as well.



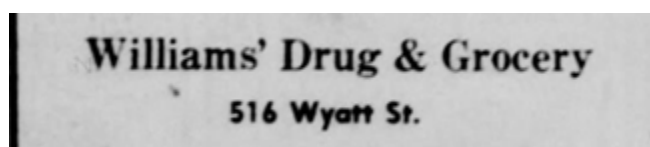
A visible sign of progress was the construction of a small, multipurpose commercial building about 1920, that would become a neighborhood gathering point that lasted for several decades.

Rev. Wilson L "W L, or Deacon" (1876-1971) and Alice (Rucker) Williams (1883*-1964), whom married 8 Apr 1899, descendants of former slaves of Washington County, Texas, were among the first to establish business at the location. In addition to his work selling life-insurance and her work at the drug store, he was the Superintendent of Sunday School's at New Mount Zion Baptist Church. W L was also a member of Southwestern Assembly of God College (now SAGU) Alumni Assn., graduating in Ft. Worth, and gave key-note addresses at SAGU Homecoming events.

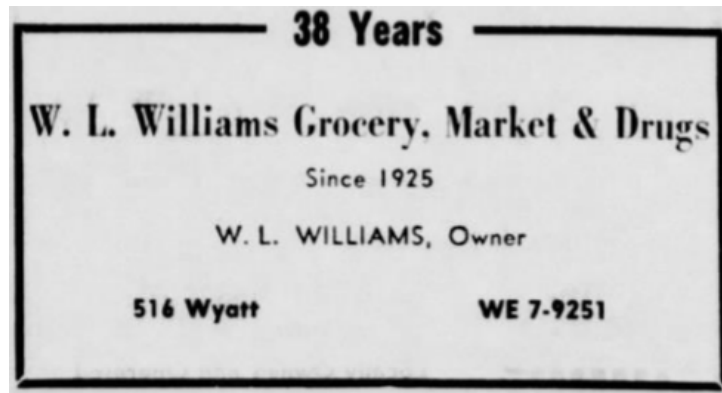
From a 1932 Advertisement in The Waxahachie Daily Light...



While references to the business as "New Town Drug Store" would hang on well into the 1960's and beyond, William's operated under the name "Williams' Drug & Grocery" as this Cabell's Dairy Products cooperative advertising of 1952 shows.



The Waxahachie Daily Light published an annual list of businesses that provided long-term service to the community, showing a variation of William's business name, as the following 1963 advertisement illustrates.



The year after his wife died W L Williams Grocery became WATERS GROCERY & MARKET, after the new owners, whom operated the grocery business for no less than a decade.



Ezra Waters (1917-2008) was a star on the "local negro high school" football team (Oak Lawn Lions) and enlisted in the U.S. Army during WWII, rising to the rank of Sergeant. He was buried with military honors at the DFW National Cemetery.

Ezra's trailblazing wife Rutha May (Bell) Waters (1926-2002) was the first woman elected to the Waxahachie City Council.



The property remains in the Waters family today.

For a brief period of time (advertisement below 24 Dec 1964) part of the building may have been used for automotive service. Taylor's business had been located at the corner of Ennis & Wyatt in the current "One Stop Grocery" building.



2017 PRESERVATION TEXAS HONOR AWARD RECIPIENT
ELLIS COUNTY AFRICAN AMERICAN HALL OF FAME



Did you know the Ellis County African American Hall of Fame was on Preservation Texas' 2011 Most Endangered Places list?

It received an Honor Award from Preservation Texas in 2017 for the renovation work that was done to make it the wonderful building it is today.

THANK YOU TO THE HALL OF FAME FOR HOSTING US!

SAVE THE DATE!

HISTORIC WAXAHACHIE CHRISTMAS TOUR OF HOMES

December 14-15, 2:00-8:00pm

Featured Homes Include:



210 S. Hawkins St.



329 Virginia Ave.



1001 W. Main St.



1109 W. Main St.



118 Overhill Dr.

Find out more: www.historicwaxahachie.com



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