

Retrospect

Fall

September 2012

• Trivia

QUESTION: What community was once known as "Waintown," a take on a local physician's name, but when the Texas & Pacific Railroad arrived in 1881 was renamed as—

(Answer on the back page)

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From the Chair *by Rynell Novak*

DCHC Recognized with Distinguished Service Award

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) recently recognized our Denton County Historical Commission (DCHC) with the 2011 Distinguished Service Award. The honor was presented by the Commissioners Court on Tuesday, July 17, 2012, at the historic Courthouse-on-the-Square. Denton was one of the 78 Texas counties that received the designation for 2011.

The award recognizes county historical commissions that "work toward substantial preservation efforts that lead to a greater understanding of state and local history. These efforts also promote stewardship of our cultural and historic resources, encourage economic development within urban and rural areas of our state, and generate interest in the history and character of Texas."

"We want to see a team effort, evidenced by group participation," Bratten Thomason, di-

rector for the THC history programs division, said. "We also look for diversity of preservation and of projects. We like to see a broad range of activities."

The DCHC was considered for the award by answering and submitting a lengthy inquiry detailing achievements from the past year. DCHC Manager Roslyn Shelton received reports from each of the 10 committees and used the information to complete the questionnaire, along with information from groups in the community that partner with the Commission, including Holiday Lighting and the Main Street Program. Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) Funds from the City of Denton also played a significant part in preservations/restorations that are ongoing at the Historical Park on Mulberry Street.

(see *THC Award* on p.7)

County Historical Marker Website Up & Running

The Denton County Historical Commission's (DCHC) new website listing over 100 historical markers in the County was launched August 2. The site details Texas Historical Commission (THC) markers, DCHC markers and properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The website was a joint project of the DCHC Marker Committee and Denton County's GIS Division of the Department of Technology Services. Rachel Crowe, GIS Manager, coordinated the project and worked with Marker Committee Chair Beth Stribling and Joseph Luong, the County's website designer, to see the website become a reality.

The website is a companion to the brochure "Denton County Historical Markers" designed by Lucy Haverkamp in 2010.

Markers are grouped in 14 different areas with in five sections of the county for ease in planning trips to see them. The website contains photos, directions and marker text. The web address is: www.dentoncounty.com/HistoricalMarkers
—Beth Stribling

The Historical Park is "Just Peachy"



The judges didn't have to look far to find winning peaches at the Vegetable, Herb, Fruit & Flower Show hosted by the Denton County Master Gardeners Association at the Historical Park on June 16. The peaches growing at the Bayless-Selby House and the African-American House Museums took home the prize as the **Reserve Grand Champion**.

Robyn Lee Honored Upon Her Retirement

Robyn Lorraine Lee was honored in May upon her retirement from serving as Manager of Museums at Denton County's Historical Park with an afternoon tea at the home of Peggy and Lee J. Capps.

Lee served from April 20, 2001, to May 31, 2012, during several major improvements at the Park; and "We were very fortunate to have Robyn to take care of the Historical Park," says Peggy Capps, chairman of the Museums Committee of the DCHC.

The first major project for Lee was the completion of the Bayless-Selby House (BHS) and all its furnishings and the landscaping of the grounds. It opened five months after Lee began her service at the Park. She calls the house "The Miracle on Mulberry Street."

The next major assignment was working with the development of the African American Museum which opened Feb. 16, 2008. After that, the historical building that is to be the Welcome Center was moved to the Park, remodeled and is awaiting an official opening date. The Elm Ridge church building now is also on the property, awaiting plans and funds for its restoration.

Peggy Riddle, Director of Denton County Museums, says "Robyn's great appreciation of Denton County's history was reflected in the many wonderful programs she organized at the Park. Her knowledge of the Victorian era contributed greatly to the wonderful interpretative exhibits at the BHS."

Rynell Novak, DCHC Chair, says "It was great to have Robyn serving so many years at the Park. We have always appreciat-

ed the fact that she was both dedicated and professional and that things were in good hands."

Georgia Caraway, former Executive Director of the Museums, says "Robyn was the most dedicated person that I ever have been associated with. She took great care and pride in the Museums and was a joy to work with."

Robyn Lee sent a note to David Bayless Jr., about her retirement since she had become acquainted with the Bayless family members. David responded and said, "We always felt in very good hands with you at the front door, and you will be missed immensely. I hope you can give the House a hug as you leave and we know the House will hug you in return...and miss your presence terribly..."

When speaking to the Commissioner's Court upon her retirement, Lee thanked the members for the support and guidance she received from them. Later, she reiterated her thanks to Peggy Capps for the "Marvelous Tea Party in her home...and a special thanks to Bob Rogers for his splendid music during the evening..."

Lee and her husband, Graham, went to Germany in June. She studied as an independent scholar on "Interpretation," or how people interpret history as works of art.

As for her future, Lee says "I will continue my research and studies wherever that leads me. I will be attending several conferences and hope to be presenting several papers. Interpretation is a fascinating area of research." —Joe Novak



LEFT: Robyn Lorraine Lee, recently retired Manager of Museums at Denton County's Historical Park, is shown in front of the Bayless-Selby House.

"Robyn was the most dedicated person that I ever have been associated with. She took great care and pride in the Museums and was a joy to work with." —Georgia Caraway, retired Executive Director, Denton County Museums

Retrospect is published quarterly by the Denton County Historical Commission Publications Committee:
Veronica Maldonado, Chair
DJ Taylor, Editor
Joe Novak, Reporter
and a host of contributors

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Those Daring Young Men and Their Flying Machines

Orville and Wilbur Wright had a slight problem when they left Kitty Hawk in December, 1903: no one believed they had actually flown. It would take a few years before their exploits were accepted as fact and by then, it seemed every man and boy in the world wanted to fly.

Denton County was in no way immune to such excitement. In the waning days of 1909 two young men, W. Ed Brown and Clifford Day, led the charge.

Building what amounted to a modified, large box kite, the two men successfully demonstrated in early December of 1909 that their unmanned glider could become airborne. On Christmas Day, they became the first in Denton County to fly. With a crowd of 200 watching at Denton's Highland Park, just east of today's Apogee Stadium, the pair flew the craft with no one aboard three times; the "aeroplane" crashing on the third attempt. After repairs, the horse-drawn craft reached a height of 30 feet with Brown aboard and flew 150 feet after releasing the tow rope.

Brown and Day tried their plane again two days later. This time, with the cooperation of the street car line manager, they reached a height of 200 feet and flew a distance of 600 feet after being towed by the street car at Highland Park. After more flights were made in early 1910, Brown and Day announced plans for a larger craft that would be equipped with a motor.

But in late January of 1910, the Brown-Day aerial attempts came literally to a crashing halt when their plane was demolished in a 40 mph gale. That likely ended their attempts to fly since no further reports of their exploits have been found.

W. Ed Brown lived on North Locust Street in Denton and some of the neighborhood boys were apparently watching the flights with great interest. Walker Jagoe, John and Robert Storrie, along with Raymond and Tom Fox, decided to build their own aeroplane. By September 1910, the boys, none older than 14, were ready to fly their glider.

According to Robert Storrie's son, Bob, the boys initially wanted to launch the glider from the top of a building at the College of Industrial Arts, now Texas Woman's University. Chased away by a watchman, they convinced Robert Storrie, the youngest and smallest at age 12, to make the first flights. The first two efforts went okay, the craft reaching a height of 15 feet when towed by the other boys. Then they decided they needed more power for higher flights, so they enlisted a neighbor's horse in their enterprise.

The one-horse-powered aeroplane climbed higher, to 30 feet, as the rope was let out. The excited shouts of the other boys about the success of their venture caused the horse's rider to become curious. John Storrie decided to take a look at his brother's flight and reined in his steed. The plane's forward motion stalled and it plummeted to the ground, where Robert Storrie lay still. The other boys rushed up and began shouting, asking if he was hurt. According to his son, young Robert, with eyes closed, finally answered: "You can't talk to me, I'm dead."

While young Storrie recovered from his bruises at home, a subsequent item in the *Denton Record-Chronicle* reported the

Fox boys and Jagoe had made several successful flights in their homemade aeroplane.

One of the boy "aeronauts" as the newspaper called them, pursued his dream of flying when America entered the first World War. Walker Jagoe joined the military, became a flying ace and won the Silver Star for gallantry in action.

By 1911 the word "airplane" had replaced "aeroplane" and Denton citizens were excited about seeing their first powered flying machine that year. But the pilot veered off course after leaving Gainesville and no one caught a glimpse of the aviator.

In 1912 the barnstorming "Moisant International Birdmen" came to Denton and the locals gathered at Highland Park and finally saw their first demonstration of motorized flight.



ABOVE: A French Bleriot XI similar to the type that the Moisant Birdmen flew over the Denton County countryside in 1912.

Moisant pilot Harold Kantner demonstrated his airplane's ability to take off, land and maneuver during the Chamber of Commerce sponsored event witnessed by a crowd of 2,000. In a final show of power the plane flew southwest to Pilot Knob and returned at what was reported as "an amazing 60 miles per hour."

In the 1920s Denton's leaders were committed to many major improvements for their growing town. By 1928 a Chamber of Commerce campaign for an airport was well underway.
—DJ Taylor

Look for our story in the next issue of *Retrospect* about Denton's first airports.

We Want to Hear From You!

Let us know what you like or dislike about *Retrospect*. What would you like to see more of...or less of? Have a story idea? Want to submit an article?

Contact us at: retrospectdchc@gmail.com
or DJ Taylor (940) 368-1816
or Roslyn Shelton (940) 349-2860

Museum Docents: Engaging Our Visitors

A great team of volunteers at the Denton County Museums has grown this year! Three "Lunch 'n Learn" Docent Orientation and Training sessions were held in February, April and August in the 1896 Room. Attendees were given manuals with tour information on the Courthouse-on-the-Square, Historical Park on Mulberry, exhibits and educational programming.

Docents volunteer in various ways and the hours and days are flexible. At the front desk in the Courthouse-on-the-Square Museum, eleven of the fourteen time slots have been filled. A few time slots are still available at the Courthouse and at the Historical Park.

Newly-trained docents did a terrific job as museum guides in April when over 100+ third graders from Newton Rayzor Elementary School visited the museums. As students toured the Historic Park's African-American Museum and the Bayless-Selby House Museum, they were also able to sit on the front porch and hear Pioneer & Indian stories from DCHC's own Bob Montgomery.

RIGHT: Denton County Museums recently welcomed a new group of volunteers who will work with the museums as docents.

Back row, L-R: **Paul McCoig, Alan Schiegg & Deborah Boone.**

Front row, L-R: **Janet Latham & Bonnie Blanton.**



In April and May, seven volunteers were "shadow docents" as they accompanied Tourism Coordinator, Gretel L'Heureux, to Denton County schools to watch the Traveling Museum. After viewing presentations on "Then & Now" in Denton and "Ranching, Brands & Cattle Trails", all docents came together for a workshop and sharing of ideas at a follow-up training on July 12th.

On July 20th, a new Denton County resident from San Antonio, Alan Schiegg, shared his presentation on "Going Up the Texas Chisholm Trail - 1867". Having volunteered at the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio, Alan was more than happy to hop on board with his time and talents for the Denton County Museums. The fourth Docent Orientation & Training session for 2012 will be held on Friday, September 21. If you love history, enjoy learning and are able and willing to help we would love to have you join us. Please contact the Denton County Office of History & Culture at 940-349-2850 or send an e-mail to gretel.l'heureux@dentoncounty.com. —Peggy Riddle

"Ornamental Honor: The Art of Bryson Gappa" Opens at CHOS Museum



ABOVE: Lewisville resident **Bryson Gappa** is shown with her original front yard display honoring Texas servicemen who gave their lives in the Iraqi War.

On August 21 Denton County Commissioners Court recessed briefly to attend the opening of an unique and moving exhibit at the Courthouse-on-the-Square (CHOS) Museum. "Ornamental Honor: The Art of Bryson Gappa" presents the personal goal of Gappa, a resident of Lewisville, to honor all Texas soldiers who lost their lives in the Iraqi War.

The genesis of the idea began in 2004 after Gappa saw a newspaper story featuring photos of Texans who had died fighting the war. Documenting the fallen heroes on small, wooden panels, she made ornamental plaques that were placed on an oak tree in her front yard to call attention to the often unnoticed sacrifices of service members.

"Other people needed to see their faces," explained Gappa, adding that their absence should have meaning.

Reaching out to those who had lost loved ones, Peggy Riddle, Director for the Denton County Office of History and Culture, was able to add artifacts connected to those lost including medals and uniforms that belonged to Ernest Dallas, Jr., Johnny Craver, Peter J. Courcy and Ryan McCauley.

The exhibit will run through the end of November. Riddle hopes to take the exhibit to other towns around the county if suitable facilities can be found.

Denton County Museums News



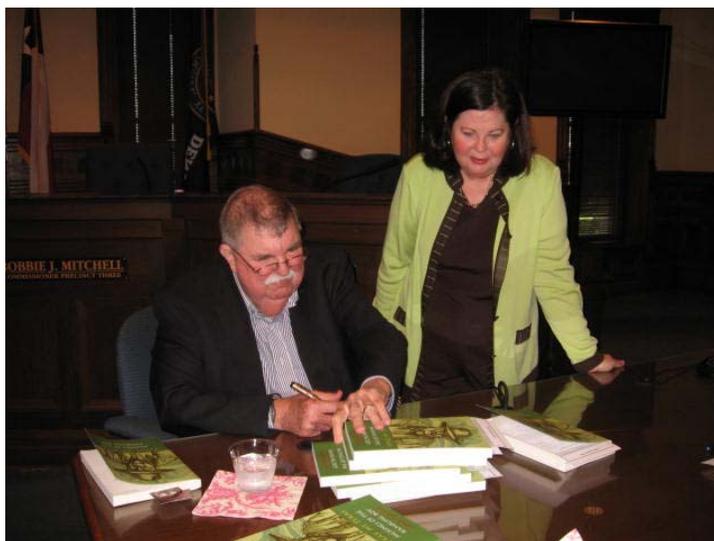
ABOVE: A native of Manitou, Kentucky, **Joe Duncan**, new museum assistant, received a BFA in graphic design and traditional printmaking from Murray State University and has worked as a freelance illustrator and designer. Joe recently relocated to Denton because of its art community, music scene, and the great food.



ABOVE: Museum Visitor Discovers it Really is a Small World Eldrena Douma is a storyteller from Canyon, Texas who recently visited the museum with her daughter **Cherilyn McMenemy**. A friend of Peggy Capps, Eldrena mentioned her grandmother, a member of the Native American Hopi tribe, who was noted for her pottery. Eldrena was shown pottery from the museum's UNT collection and it turns out that the three pieces shown in the above photo were made by her grandmother!



LEFT: Members of the **Logan** Family visited the African-American Museum, recently. Shown standing in front of family photos are—
L-R: Adrian Anderson, Damon Logan and Anita McClinton.



ABOVE: Author and former Smithsonian Curator **Lonn Taylor** signs a copy of his book, **Texas, My Texas: Musings of the Rambling Boy** for the Director of Denton County's Office of History & Culture **Peggy Riddle** at his May 31 appearance at the Courthouse-on-the Square.

Uncletown? Where the Good Times Were Found on Lake Dallas in the '30s



Oswin K. King, "Uncle Jake," with his wife, Naiada

Sometimes when a place name is mentioned eyebrows are raised and a look of puzzlement appears on faces. No

place has elicited more such responses than when this writer mentions "Uncletown." "Really?" they ask. "There was such a place?"

Indeed, it was real. The name wasn't official; it was actually designated as Frank's Camp on old maps from the 1930s and 1940s. Old newspaper accounts, however, mention the fun times at a community known as Uncletown.

So, how did this community get that moniker? It began in 1936 and 1937 when eight Dallas citizens purchased lots and built small cottages in an addition near present-day Lakeshore Drive, now part of Shady Shores. Developed by J. W. Francks, it was planned as a weekend and summer getaway retreat. Many of the original inhabitants were either in the advertising or newspaper business, accustomed to attracting attention and well-known for their fun-loving ways.

One of the first residents was Oswin K. King, a well-known journalist for the *Dallas Journal* and the *Dallas Morning News* who penned a column called "Uncle Jake Sez" featuring a bearded, rural character offering humorous philosophical opinions on sports and the world in general from a soapbox.

King gained notice in 1919 when he was one of the first sports writers to express concerns that the Chicago White Sox had thrown the World Series. Earlier, in 1909, the Abilene native was dispatched as a 20-year-old reporter for the New York Herald to Paris. There, he and two French friends established the continent's first roller rink where he taught others to skate, including Queen Helena of Italy.

When other Dallas residents, such as advertising executives Margaret Evans and Don Baxter, built cottages on the lake, the name Uncletown was bandied about in honor of "Uncle Jake"—their first "mayor."

(see **Uncletown** on p.7)

North Texas State Fair & Rodeo Marker Dedicated

The rumble of thunder and a brief shower did little to dampen the enthusiasm of a crowd estimated at 130 for the dedication of a Texas Historical Commission marker at the Fairgrounds of the North Texas State Fair on August 8. The welcome rain just sent the ceremonies into the nearby Livestock Pavilion.

The gathering centered on the long legacy of Fairs in Denton County and the efforts of those who have worked long and hard to make the annual event a success. Michael Seman of the Center for Economic Development & Research at the University of North Texas told the crowd that the Fair generates \$6 million in revenue every year, including about \$100,000 in tax revenue.

Kim Wendt, who researched the Fair's history and wrote the historical narrative, reflected on Denton County's first Fair in 1885 and told how the Fairs had many starts and breaks before the current association was formally organized in 1928. Recognition was given to longtime Fair supporter Dr. W. C. Kimbrough, who sold 22 acres of the current Fairgrounds to the association in 1948 for \$5.

DCHC Chair Rynell Novak and Historical Research & Marker Committee Chair Beth Stribling presented certificates of appreciation to William Allen, Carl Anderson, Ken Burdick (posthumously), Glenn Carlton, Nanci M. Kimmey, R. D. Martin, James Roden, Kim Wendt and North Texas State Fair and Rodeo Board of Directors.

A cool breeze greeted the exiting crowd; all agreed that although brief, it was a "Fair" trade for the August heat. —DJ Taylor



ABOVE: North Texas State Fair & Rodeo board of directors' chairman **Carl Anderson** and Denton County Judge, the Honorable **Mary Horn**, prepare to unveil the Fair's Texas Historical Commission Marker.

Looking Back

with DJ Taylor

We look back at Denton County's history over the past 100, 125 and 150 years through books and the archives of Texas' newspapers.

150 years ago: Not all the news was about the war

During the Civil War years, the news was mostly about the ongoing conflict. But day-to-day life went on in Denton County and a few everyday items were addressed in the papers. Courtesy of County Clerk S. A. Venters, the *Dallas Weekly Herald* in its October 4, 1862, edition listed the stray animals being boarded in the County until they could be retrieved by their owners. Among those strays was this one:

Taken up by L. A. Sanders...one flea-bitten GRAY MARE, supposed to be 20 years old, 14 ½ hands high, branded M on the left hip and a diamond on the left shoulder. Has a colt; mare and colt appraised to \$40.

125 years ago: New railroad town bustling

First called Huling, the name of a local family in the vicinity, then named New Bolivar after the Santa Fe tracks passed through, the recently renamed town of Sanger was growing according to the December 3, 1887, *Dallas Morning News*:

This little town has been enjoying a small boom for the past few weeks. A new drug store and blacksmith shop have gone up, and the ground is selected for the erection of a new gin and mill. Several other buildings are being talked of.

The article went on to say: *What this place needs, and must have, is a new school house.*

100 years ago: Rancher fences off popular swimming hole

Rancher John H. Paine owned the Pilot Knob Ranch. Part of the ranch included the popular swimming and picnic spot on Hickory Creek known as "Blue Hole." To the distress of many, the following report appeared in the November 30, 1912, issue of the *Dallas Morning News*:

J. H. Paine is preparing to erect fifteen miles of hog-proof fence about his Blue Hole place, southwest of this city, which will be one of the longest stretches of improved fence ever erected in this county. The fence will enclose about 2,200 acres of his nearly 10,000 acres of land.

Subsequent accounts reported the local citizenry's dismay at the restricted access.

THC Award (cont'd from p.1)

While work of the entire DCHC membership contributed to the 2011 award, the report to the THC was highlighted by the accomplishments of the Marker Committee, chaired by Beth Stribling, and taking advantage of a significant amount of research by committee member DJ Taylor.

Although this year is not the first time the DCHC has received the award, we hope it will help bring more exposure to the Commission and our mission of preserving the history of Denton County.

Congratulations to all of the DCHC members, Denton County Commissioners and other County employees for their role in reaching the level of competency needed for the DCHC to receive the Distinguished Service Award for 2011 from the THC!

Uncletown (cont'd from page 6)

The loosely organized community's light-hearted take on life is evidenced in several old newspaper clippings. Every resident was required to have an "official" job in Uncletown and titles were passed around every year. In the late 1930s, Mayor George Preston announced that he and the other Council members would run on a platform of advocating for "more rain" so there would be plenty of water in the boat houses.

The prime assignment may have been Police Chief, because in that capacity you were allowed to wear a Keystone Cops hat and enforce the laws as you saw fit.

In 1938, when an algae bloom infected the lake, Police Chief Raymond Daniell warned algae to stay out of Uncletown or it would be arrested. The next year, when the Dallas Advertising League held a picnic at Uncletown, many Dallas office holders were invited. The Dallas County District Attorney rose to make a speech but his first utterance was cut short when the Police Chief restrained his movement and informed him that speeches by politicians in Uncletown were against the law.

Uncletown had a short run, as it turned out. World War II came along and more somber times began. Shortly after the war began, "Uncle Jake" came down with a bad cold that worsened to pneumonia. Oswin K. King died on April 15, 1942, and without "Uncle," the Uncletown community, especially its organization, began to fade although the name was still mentioned in some quarters into the 1960s. In his will, "Uncle Jake" left his beloved property to his wife, who held it until the mid-1950s.

Today, the old resort known as Uncletown is part of Shady Shores. Much has changed and the small cottages that sprang up in the 1930s are either gone or remodeled into larger dwellings. Today, if you happen to be in the vicinity of the former community at Lakeshore Drive and Francks Circle, you might encounter a bit of the spirit and whimsy, perhaps inherited from the lively residents of old Uncletown: a full-sized replica of a Tyrannosaurus Rex in one front yard. *-DJ Taylor*

DO YOU ENJOY HISTORY? ARE YOU INTERESTED IN DENTON COUNTY HISTORY?

If you want to preserve, protect and promote the history of Denton County as an active volunteer, there is a place for you to serve and to enjoy doing it.

The Denton County Historical Commission meets at 2:00 p.m. the first Thursday of each month, except for August and December. Unless publicly announced otherwise, meetings are held in the Commissioners Courtroom, 2nd floor, of the Courthouse-on-the-Square.

Visitors are welcome!

Committees for service include Archaeology/Cemetery, Education, Historical Research and Markers, Fire Truck, Museums, Membership, Oral History, Publications and Special Events.

Apply to be a member of the Denton County Historical Commission by e-mailing roslyn.shelton@dentoncounty.com. You will be sent an application form to be completed and returned. The application will be submitted to the Commissioners Court for approval.

Lets go to work!

Denton County Historical Commission

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com

Trivia ANSWER: Argyle.
Waintown consisted of a single store and the doctor's office. The physician, Cornelius Wainwright, later moved to Denton and developed lots for a neighborhood southeast of the Square. Part of that tract bears his name, Wainwright Street.

Denton County Historical Commission Executive Committee

Rynell Novak
Chairman

Kathy Strauss
First Vice-Chairman

Millard Heath
Second Vice-Chairman

Bill Coleman
Recording Secretary

Beth Stribling
Corresponding Secretary

John Genung
Financial Secretary

Don McClure
DJ Taylor
Veronica Maldonado
At-Large Members

Roslyn Shelton
Manager, Resources & Programs

Upcoming Events

Denton County Historical Commission Meetings

October 4, 2:00 p.m.
Courthouse-on-the Square, 2nd Floor Courtroom
November 1 @ Justin

Docent Orientation & Training
1896 Room Courthouse-on-the-Square, Sep 21

Bayless-Selby House Lectures
Masters in the Garden, Planting for Fall & Spring,
Sept 29

The House Museum as Queen Anne Style,
Oct 6

Victorian Culture, Nov 28 & Dec 1

Victorian Décor, Dec 1

Courthouse-on-the-Square Museum Lectures

Haunted Denton, Oct 18
Denton, Horse Country, Nov 16
11th Annual Sing-A-Long, Dec 12

Community Events

Krum Birthday Celebration
Sept 15

Fiesta on the Square, Denton, Sept 21

Peanut Festival, Aubrey, Oct 6

Bonnie & Clyde Days, Pilot Point
Oct 13

Celebrate Roanoke, Oct 13

Holiday Lighting Festival on the Square, Denton,
Nov 30

Old Fashioned Christmas & Parade, Roanoke,
Dec 1

North Pole Day, Krum
Dec 1

Old Fashioned Christmas on the Square,
Pilot Point, Dec 1 (tentative)