

THE KNOX COUNTY News-Courier

THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2013

KCNEWSCOURIER.COM

75 CENTS

Local sales tax collections up 9 percent

By Wayne Hodgin
The Knox County News-Courier

Collective sales tax collections for Knox County's four municipalities were up a little more than 9 percent last month compared to February 2012, according to information recently released by the state comptroller's office.

The city of Goree saw the most increase — percentage-wise — at nearly 200 percent. Total collections for Goree last month were \$1,309 compared to \$439 compared to the same period last year. Compared to January collections, however, revenue was down more than 28 percent.

Collections for the city

of Munday were up more than 5 percent at \$12,324 compared to \$11,704 in February 2011. Compared to January collections, February's receipts were down more than 32 percent.

Total collections for Knox City were up more than 8 percent last month at \$20,691 compared to \$19,110 over the same pe-

riod last year. Compared to January collections, however, revenue was down nearly 21 percent.

The city of Benjamin collected about 10 percent less sales tax money than it did last year at \$890 compared to \$997 last February. Compared to January collections, sales tax receipts were down about 55 percent.

Comparing year-to-year allocations, the combined sales tax collections for all four municipalities are up more than 8 percent over 2011 allocations. Payments to date in 2013 are \$124,082 compared to \$114,548 in 2012.

Statewide, total sales tax

See SALES TAX, Page 4

Knox Notes

Events are listed free of charge for nonprofit civic organizations, schools and community events. Submit listings at least two weeks ahead of the date. Listings will run through the date of the event. Emailed submissions are preferred to kcnewscourier@gmail.com.

One-Act fundy

The Knox City High School drama department will have a dinner-theater fundraiser March 25 at the high school. Tickets cost \$8 for adults and \$5 for children. A taco dinner will be served from 5:30 to 7 p.m., and the show will begin at 7:30 p.m. Takeout plates available. Students also are selling handcrafted KCHS metal keychains for \$7. All proceeds benefit the one-act play production. For information, call the high school at 940-657-3565 or email terra.martinez@esc9.net.

Chamber banquet

The annual Knox City Chamber of Commerce banquet will be at 6 p.m. April 6 at the Knox City Community Center. Guest speaker will be Donnell Brown of Throckmorton, former state and national FFA president. For information, contact Gail Nunn at 658-3442 or email kcchamber@srcaccess.net.

Retired teachers

The Knox County Retired Teachers organization will meet at 2:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall at First Baptist Church of O'Brien, 904 Grand Central Ave. Guest speaker will be Knox County Sheriff Dean Homstad. All members and prospective members are encouraged to attend. For information, contact Daniel Sloan at dnsn@srcaccess.net.

Mom Prom fundy

The third annual Camo Chicks Mom Prom benefiting the local American Cancer Society's Relay for Life will be from 8 p.m. to midnight April 6 at the Macias Ballroom in Haskell. Tickets cost \$20. No one younger than 18 will be allowed. Ladies, pull out your old prom dresses and join the fun. For information, contact Betty Enriquez at 864-2391 or Stacia Leach at 864-8138.

Bone marrow registry

The Seymour High School Student Council is holding a bone marrow registry drive at the city's annual Ag Day from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 9 at the Cliff Styles Building at the rodeo grounds. The drive is through the Be the Match organization and the Oklahoma/Texas Blood Institute. For information, contact Sunday McAdams at sunday.mcadams@seymourisd.net or 940-889-2947. More information on the drive can be found at marrow.org.

Class reunion

The Munday High School class of 1978 will celebrate its 35th reunion July 6. The agenda will include a golf tournament, good food and a live band. Any money raised will go to scholarships. Expect more information as plans take shape.

Corrections

An editorial appearing on page 2 of last week's News-Courier stated no government entity in Knox County posts meeting agendas online. However, Knox City ISD board of trustee meeting agendas are posted at knoxcityschools.net.

If you spot an error of fact, contact Editor Wayne Hodgin at kcnewscourier@gmail.com.

News on the go

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Census: Oil, gas boom drives population

By Wayne Hodgin
The Knox County News-Courier

The population of Knox and Haskell counties grew from April 2010 to July 2012, according to U.S. Census estimates released last week, a trend that follows that in or near the Great Plains and West Texas.

Census estimates released March 13 show Knox County grew steadily from 3,719 people to 3,789 during that period. Haskell County's population saw growth, but in a more roller-coaster effect: from 5,899 in July 2010 to 5,974 in July 2011 and then down to 5,901 in July 2012.

Not unexpectedly, Midland was the fastest-growing metro area over the July 1, 2011, to July 1, 2012, period in the United States, with its population increasing 4.6 percent. Adjacent Odessa ranked fifth overall, Austin-Round Rock was seventh, while two areas in Wyoming (Casper and Cheyenne), along with Manhattan, Kan., and Bismarck, N.D., were also among the 20 fastest-growing metropolitan areas.

"After a long period of out-migration, some parts of the Great Plains— from just south of the Canadian border all the way down to West Texas — are

experiencing rapid population growth," said Thomas Mesenbourg, spokesman for the U.S. Census Bureau. "There are probably many factors fueling this growth on the prairie, but no doubt the energy boom is playing a role. For instance, the Permian Basin and North Dakota accounted for almost half of the total U.S. growth in firms that mine or extract oil and gas, during a recent one-year period."

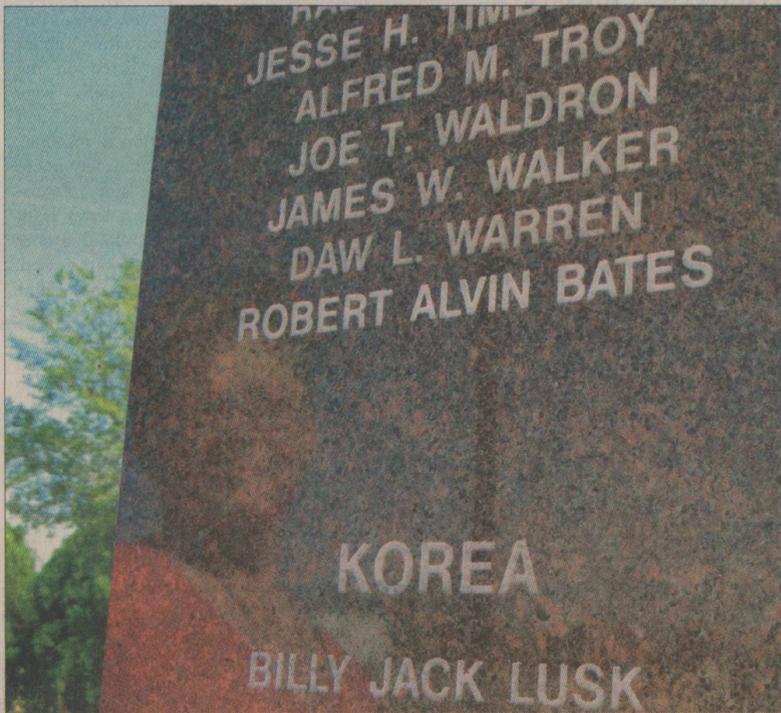
Knox County Judge Travis Floyd said while the population spurt may not seem like much to those outside West Texas, it's a boon here at home.

"Seventy people is nothing to scoff at," Floyd said. "That's a lot of people for right here in Knox County."

Floyd attributed the growth not only to the oil and gas industry, but also the transmission line industry.

"People are coming here and patronizing our businesses and some are buying homes, renting homes and apartments and mobile home spaces," he said. "But while the trend looks good right now, we really need to be careful how we interpret those numbers. Just like the oil and gas industry, the transmission line workers could be here one week and gone the next."

Purple Heart found



Photos by Hanaba Munn Welch

The image of Mary Jane Young, Wichita Brazos Museum curator, reflects in the polished red granite of the Knox County Veterans Memorial. The monument carries the name of Robert Alvin Bates, a Knox County serviceman who died in World War II. Bates' name made the news recently when his Purple Heart medal turned up on a street in Bakersfield, Calif., and researchers subsequently located his niece in Texas.

Once-lost Purple Heart is reuniting family

By Hanaba Munn Welch
The Knox County News-Courier

A lost and found Purple Heart earned by a Knox County serviceman is putting some members of his family in touch with each other decades after his death. It's a story that's still unfolding.

Robert Alvin Bates, pharmacist mate third class in the U.S. Navy, died on the USS Arizona in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. Posthumously, Bates earned the Purple Heart, a medal that would have been given by the military to his family.

A story last week in the Wichita Falls Times Record News told how Bates' medal had been found recently along a street in Bakersfield, Calif., and turned over to a Veterans of Foreign Wars post.

The VFW post with the medal contacted Ken Hooper, a Bakersfield historian, teacher

and archivist. Hooper worked with his students to track down Bates' history and existing family.

Military records listed L. Griffin of Kama as Bates' next of kin. Hooper, noting the location, called the Times Record News. In pursuit of the story, the newspaper engaged a local genealogist, Julie Coley, to learn more about Bates and to locate relatives.

Ultimately, Coley found Kris Wilson, resident of Edom, and a daughter of the late Herbert Bates, Robert Alvin Bates' younger brother. Wilson said her father had idolized his older brother and had followed in his steps by joining the Navy.

The Bakersfield connection would seem to be via Herbert Bates, whose military service led him to Bakersfield. It was there Herbert Bates met his future wife.

Questions remain unanswered and perhaps

See PURPLE HEART, Page 2



Wayne Hodgin/The Knox County News-Courier

Workers with Banner Well Service of Rule and Reliable Well Service of Wichita Falls measure pipe at a rig site in Haskell County recently. According to U.S. Census officials, the oil and gas boom in West Texas has led to a population increase in certain areas.

Local Catholics pray for new pope

By Wayne Hodgin
The Knox County News-Courier

Catholics in and around Knox County rejoiced with the estimated 1.2 billion other members of the Catholic Church throughout the world last week as Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected the 266th pope and took the name Francis.

The election March 13 came on the second day and fifth ballot of the conclave.

The 76-year-old pontiff is the first pope in history to come from the Western Hemisphere, the first non-European to be elected in almost 1,300 years and the first from a Latin American country, just to name a few.

Monsignor Stephen Berg, who is serving as interim leader for the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth, which oversees the Catholic churches in both Knox City and Rhineland, called on all people within the diocese to pray for the new pontiff.

"I ask all people within the Diocese of Fort Worth to join me in a prayer of thanksgiving for God's goodness in giving us Pope Francis," Berg said. "We ask the Holy Spirit pour out his blessing and assistance upon him and us, for the good of the entire Church."

The Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth is composed of 710,000 Catholics in 89 parishes in the 28 counties of North Texas.

Francis' humble background surely will resonate not only

with Hispanic parishioners around the world, but also those in the Fort Worth diocese, Berg said.

"We look forward to Pope Francis leading all Catholics and people of good will, in celebration of God's greatest gift to mankind, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ his son, during the Easter observances to come," Berg said.

The Most Rev. Placido Rodriguez, bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lubbock, which oversees a 62-county area as far east as Haskell, said the symbolism surrounding the new pontiff choosing to take the name Francis, after St. Francis of Assisi, also was not going un-

See POPE, Page 2

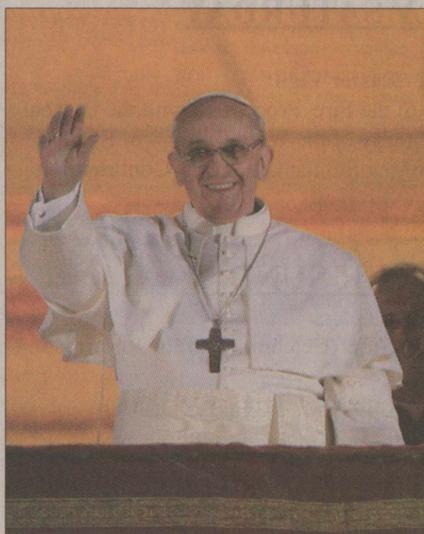
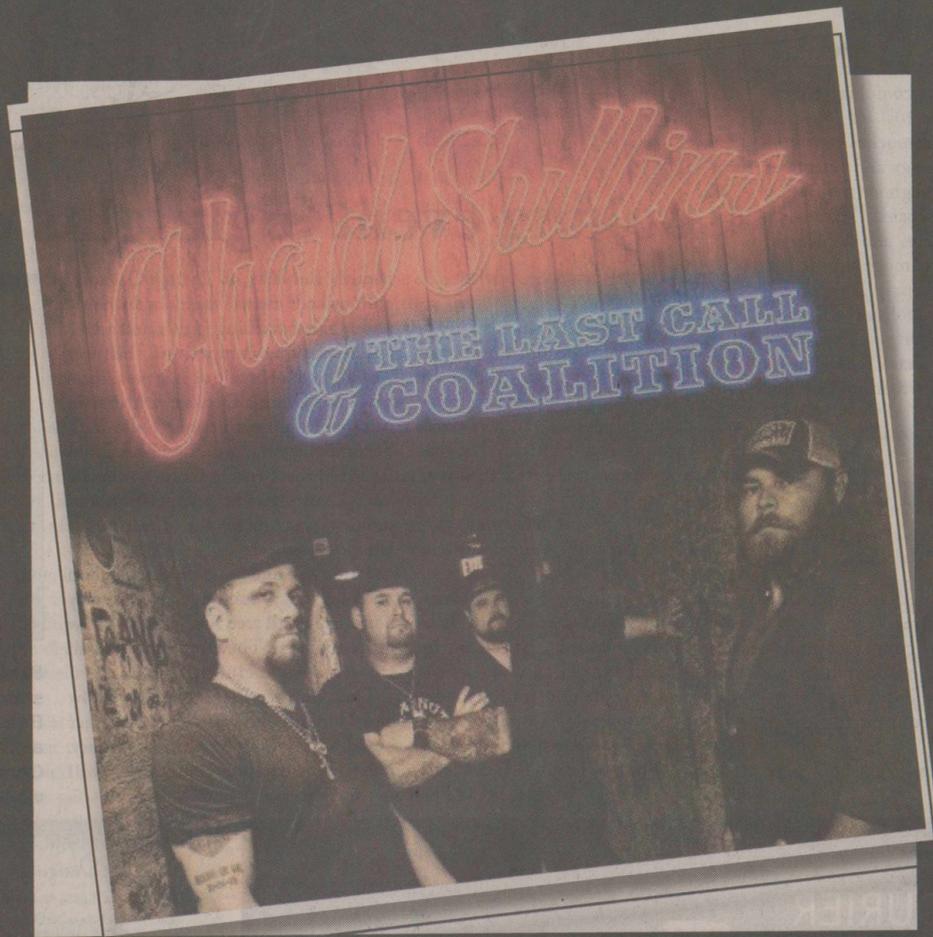


Photo courtesy of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth
Pope Francis I greets well-wishers gathered in Vatican Square after the announcement he had been named successor to Pope Benedict XVI.

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The Knox County News-Courier

Honest Johns

Book Signing



Wayne Hodgins/The Knox County News-Courier

Abilene-based author Bill Neal signs a copy of one of his books for Nelwyn Beakley of Rule on Sunday at the Haskell County Library in Haskell as Neal's wife Gayla, center, looks on. One of Neal's tomes, "Getting Away With Murder on the Texas Frontier," includes stories about Knox County included in a chapter called, "Murder and Mayhem at the Knox County Courthouse." Neal, a longtime prosecutor and defense attorney for

both the 46th and 50th Judicial Districts, spent countless hours combing through court records for research. The book touches on notorious killings and celebrates trials throughout the Baylor, Cottle, Foard, Hardeman, King, Knox and Wilbarger counties throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This book and others are available for purchase online from the Texas Tech University Press website at ttupress.org.

County burn ban lifted

The Knox County News-Courier

County Judge Travis Floyd has issued an order that lifts the countywide ban on outdoor fires.

The order to rescind the ban notes county commissioners adopted an order prohibiting outdoor burning Dec. 10 and states "the Knox County Judge has determined that the circumstances that required the order no longer exist."

The order lifting the ban went into effect at 2 p.m. Feb. 28.

SALES TAX

From Page 1

collections for December were \$2.17 billion, up 9.4 percent compared to December 2011.

"Sales tax revenues con-

tinue to grow, but at a more moderate pace compared to recent months," State Comptroller Susan Combs said. "The latest increase was led by receipts from the construction and restaurant sectors. Collections from other major sectors such as

oil and natural gas-related businesses and manufacturing remain at high levels."

Local sales tax allocations totaling \$531.3 million will be sent out this month to cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts — an in-

crease of about 12.2 percent compared to last year, according to the comptroller's office.

On the web

For details of local sales tax allocations, visit the state comptroller's website at window.state.tx.us.

LOCAL SALES TAX ALLOCATIONS

Local sales tax allocations for the month of February 2013 compared with the same month last year.

City	Rate	Net Payment This Period	Comperable Payment Prior Year	% Change	2013 Payments to Date	2012 Payments to Date	% Change
Benjamin	1.500%	889.58	997.12	-10.78%	3,600.94	3,976.90	-9.45%
Goree	2.000%	1,308.62	439.02	198.07%	3,978.58	4,766.46	-16.52%
Knox City	2.000%	20,691.09	19,110.17	8.27%	71,793.82	64,051.77	12.08%
Munday	2.000%	12,323.53	11,704.34	5.29%	44,708.41	41,752.41	7.07%
County Total		35,212.82	32,250.65	9.18%	124,081.75	114,547.54	8.32%

Cooking event highlights quilt show

Special to the News-Courier

GOREE — The 2013 Knox County Cotton Pickin' Quilt Show and Cookin' Show was Feb. 23 at the Knox Prairie Events Center. Visitors were present from as far away as San Antonio and El Paso. Ninety-nine quilts were presented this year at the quilt show.

About 200 people attended this year. There were 29 vendors present this year.

The Best of Show for quilts was awarded to Carol Dickson from Benjamin. This award is voted on by the visitors at the quilt show.

The cooking demonstrations were a big hit this year as County Agent Lorrie Coop prepared and demonstrated "Dinner Tonight" and H&R Organic Farms presented "The

Health Benefits of Eating Organic" and talked about their hydroponic and organic farming in Rhineland.

The cooking competition this year was homemade fruit or nut pies. First place was Glenna Decker with a raisin rum apple pie with toasted almonds. Second place was won by 17-year-old Kelsie Hobert with a German chocolate pecan pie. The competition and judging was under the direction of Coop.

Three Gringos and a Wood Shop of Knox City donated a beautifully handmade hall tree for the quilt show raffle this year. The winner of the hall tree was Vickie Huffman.

The Cotton Pickin' Quilt Show and Cookin' Show is held each year on the last Saturday in February. Next year's cooking competition will be cupcakes.



Submitted photo

Benjamin resident Carol Dickson stands with the quilt that won Best of Show during the annual Cotton Pickin' Quilt Show in Goree. The award is voted on by visitors to the annual event.

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- Off MVP- Madison Templeton, Jr Harrold
- Def MVP – Kaitlyn Riddle, Sr, Crowell
- Newcomer- Makaylie Steele, Fr, Knox City
- 1st Team
- Kaney Rhodes, Sr, Crowell
- Chasity Tolson, Sr, Knox City
- Destiny Marsh, Sr, Crowell
- Amber Nutter, Sr Chillicothe
- Leighen Pepper, So, Knox City
- 2nd Team
- Kinsey Rhodes, So, Crowell
- Bree McKay, Jr Harrold
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Munday CISD to add assistant band director

By Hanaba Munn Welch

The Knox County News-Courier
An assistant band director will join the staff of Munday Consolidated Independent School District next year.

Trustees acted on the recommendation of Superintendent Robert Dillard and the request of band director Trey Singleton to add the position. The board made the decision unanimously after meeting in an executive session to discuss personnel matters. No other personnel action followed the closed session.

"Thank you very much for adding that position," Singleton told the board. "It's going to help the program tremendously."

Singleton reported the Purple Cloud Band received a Division One rating for its concert performance in recent competition.

"We got a three in sight reading," he said.

Singleton distributed recordings of the band to board members and told the board that band members in the fifth, sixth and seventh grades would be attending a music festival in Cisco this week.

A band trip to Austin for the state wind ensemble festival is tentative.

"We submitted a letter of interest in July," Singleton said. "We're just waiting to get the invite from them."

The board cancelled the May 11 election, noting that two terms are expiring

and only incumbent Jason Redwine filed, leaving John Myers' place to be filled by appointment.

In other action, trustees

- Approved an update for the school policy regarding employee leave.
- Discussed training opportunities for trustees.

- Accepted a financial and investment review and report.
- Discussed the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

In a response to a question from the board about usefulness and importance of STAAR, Dillard did not give the tests a wholehearted endorsement.

"Let it be a piece of the puzzle," he said. "Give our kids the tools they need to be successful when they leave our school. That's what we need to do."

Dillard noted that eliminating or otherwise changing the way the tests are set up would be a challenge to the state.

"Robert Scott (former Texas Commissioner of Education) finally stepped up and said it's out of hand," Dillard said. "It will be interesting to see where that goes. I'm anxious to see how they stop that \$94 million contract," he said.

The shorter-than-average meeting started at 6 p.m. and ended about 7:30 p.m. Bob Moore presided. Other trustees present were Sam Hunter, Bill Longan, Redwine and Myers.

The Paperboy

Which memories will last a lifetime?

Which memories will last a lifetime? Think of your childhood. Specifically, think of a loved one and remember something specific.



CHRIS BLACKBURN

I remember two things regarding those experiences: How bored I was at the time and how much I've come to appreciate the memory of picking up pecans with my loved ones.

Back then I could think of a million things I'd rather be doing. I can also think of specific conversations I had with late family members that I now hold precious.

As Jack sat there kneeled over - looking like the little boy he's always been but quickly becoming his own man - I thought to myself that he may be bored silly, but this is special to me. Something as mundane as picking up pecans was now both a fond old memory and a fond new memory.

I can tell you, that's what life is all about! Those minutes shared doing something meaningful with your kids, parents or grandparents and listening to or giving advice about life ... does it get any better?

When it's just you and there is no competi-

tion from television, video games or phones, you can get real with someone.

I honestly don't know if Jack is going to remember our time picking up pecans anytime soon. But someday - perhaps 30 years from now when he's picking up pecans with his son - he'll look back and smile thinking about a sunny day when he picked up pecans with his dad.

And dear reader, please don't think I'm ignoring my other son. He simply decided to vacate the yard in the middle of my reminiscing. I'm not sure what he'll remember in the future outside of the boredom.

I'm pretty sure my days of helping with homework are quickly coming to an end.

I'm what you would call an older father. Actually, for small towns, I'm what you would call an ancient father. That does not bode well for helping a child with homework.

I can still handle basic math, science, history, etc... but the day of more advanced math is coming soon. At that point, I'm afraid the child is on their own.

It's not that I can't come up with the right answer, it's the fact that I can't solve the problem as instructed.

American society sometimes places public schools in a bad light. We frequently talk negatively on the standardized testing or the lack of history in the curriculum. What we fail to mention is that in many areas, our children are learning it earlier and better than we ever did.

At the same time I tip my hat to those educating my children, I must concede that what they are teaching them has passed me by. I've yet to discover if that's a good thing or a bad thing.

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Munday City Council Trash, water, derelict buildings top concerns

By Hanaba Munn Welch
The Knox County News-Courier

Trash and recycling, abandoned buildings and water concerns were topics March 12 in a regular session of Munday City Council.

Things are changing at Lake Creek Golf Course, City Manager Rick Ake reported to the council.

"Their intentions are to use the water from City Lake to water the golf course," he said. "The third (city water) meter to the east will still be used. It's the only way to water the number two green. We read the meter; we charge them for what goes through."

The arrangement would replace an existing water agreement between the city and Lake Creek Golf Course and would make the course subject to the same water costs and restrictions as other commercial entities.

"Maybe we can write that and pass that at the next meeting," said Mayor Robert Bowen.

A \$16,500 matching grant for a forklift and a machine to bale cardboard is available to Munday, Ake said. The city's match is \$1,650.

"I know where we can purchase the stuff — a used baler and a used forklift," Ake said. "We've put it off because we do not really have a place to locate the baler."

"If we can get it, I hate to see you lose it," said Councilman Keith Kuehler.

The council and Ake discussed the difficulty of finding a suitable building to house the equipment.

"Before we tell them (notify the council of government that the city is in position to take advantage of the grant) definitely, we need to ail down some places," Ake said.

He suggested the item be considered for discussion or action at the next council session.

Questions about the old Moore Ag Building came from the council when Ake reported that the city will be able to deal with abandoned buildings by utilizing a "monofill" for their disposal — an approved system for dealing with such structures.

Styrofoam in the Moore Ag Building is a problem.

"We can't put that Styrofoam in that monofill," Ake said. "It won't go away."

But the building is targeted for demolition despite the problem and other aspects of the building that make it difficult to demolish, particularly its attachment to another building.

"We can't afford to take that thing down and have it pull the end off the Rec Center," Ake said. "It's going to have to be cut loose from that. If we get to pushing and pull-

ing, it's going to implode on itself pretty well."

An ever-diminishing amount of water in the Millers Creek Reservoir, barring good rains, means stricter water conservation measures could come into play soon, a situation that will mean less revenue for the city from water sales.

"If nothing changes in 30 to 45 days, we're going to Stage Four," Ake said.

At Stage Four of water rationing, no outside watering will be allowed and the city itself will take special steps to keep trees alive at City Hall, Ake said.

"We're going to use effluent water that we're putting out on coastal (bermuda at the sewer plant)," he said.

Regarding property for sale adjacent to city property — lots with hookups for recreational vehicles — Ake told the council that other buyers besides the city are interested in acquiring the property. Ake suggested that the city could buy the property and lease it to local entrepreneurs so that it could be used as a trailer park while construction workers are in the area. Eventually the city could utilize the property as needed to accommodate city operations.

In a discussion of the current budget, Ake said that a decrease in sales of water has



Hanaba Munn Welch/The Knox County News-Courier

A piece of Styrofoam lies in the grass near the old Moore Ag Building at the edge of Munday. Other pieces are visible in the distance. The Styrofoam components of the building complicate its demolition.

meant less revenue for the city.

"We lost about 20 percent this year in revenue on water restrictions," Ake said. "We're down about 24 percent overall in expenses, which balances itself out. We've drawn the belt tight; we keep it tight."

Not all capital expenditures in the budget are necessary, Ake said, suggesting some could be eliminated if necessary to stay within the budget.

"It pencils out where there is a positive number at the

end of the year," Ake said.

Whether the city pool will be open is another water concern. Well water may be the ultimate solution if restrictions on use keep the city from using municipal water to fill the pool.

"If somebody wants to go put water in that thing from their wells, I have no problem with that, but they're going to have to supply water on a continual basis," Ake said. "Jamie Lowrance wants to run it again this year."

"I think she could find

people who would truck some water up here," said Councilman Trey Singleton.

In other business, the council tabled a proposal to lower the speed limit in the vicinity of Munday Nursing Center, renewed the existing curfew for minors — 11 p.m. weeknights and midnight on weekends — and approved an agreement to support Knox County Visioning Group.

In closed-door session, the council evaluated the city administrator.

Baylor County Ag Day slated for April 9

The 23rd annual Baylor County Ag Appreciation Day and Health Fair will be April 9 at the Cliff Styles Activity Center, 1205 Archer Road, Seymour.

"Ag Day is a time when we take the opportunity to recognize and honor the many contributions made by those in agriculture to our community," said Marcia Ligon, spokeswoman for the Seymour Ag Day Committee. "We also use the event as an opportunity to have a Health Fair, which showcases the many valuable services the Seymour Rural Hospital provides. This regional event usually attracts 1,500 plus attendees each year. Lots of activities are planned starting with blood draws from 7 to 9 a.m., which require fasting. A variety of free blood tests are offered by the hospital. A free breakfast usually coincides with this blood draw.

At 7:45 a.m. there will be a registration for an applicators training class, which will start at 8 a.m., and is worth three continuing education unit credits.

There will be 80 plus ag and health-related booths open for viewing from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Oklahoma Blood Institute will be taking blood donations in the east meeting room of the Styles Activity Center, from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

There will be a sponsored luncheon provided to those attending the Ag Day event. "The meal is served by the 4-H, and is actually their largest fund-raiser of the year," Ligon said.

Entertainment prior to the meal will be provided by Edward and Debbie Hanks of Seymour. Emcee of the event for the 23rd time will be Barry Mahler. Annual awards will be presented for: Rancher/Cattlemans of the year by the FSA's County Committee; Farmer/Conservationist of the year by the Miller-

Brazos SWCD; and Agri-business of the year by the Seymour Chamber of Commerce.

The speaker for the luncheon will be Nathan Haile of the National Resource and Conservation Service.

To encourage attendance at the luncheon door prize worth \$500 will be given away.

There will be drawings for hundreds of door prizes

and a lot of visiting taking place all day long. The many booths are always educational and entertaining. As a result of the booth sponsorships and support, the Ag Day Committee is able to offer a \$500 scholarship each year to a graduating senior student from Seymour High.

"We invite everyone to join us and support this day-long activity," Ligon said.

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PUBLIC HEARING
Grant Performance and Closeout
City of O'Brien
Contract No. 710531

The City of O'Brien will hold a public hearing at 6:00 PM, March 25, 2013, at the City Hall, for the purpose of reviewing its performance on a recently completed TxCDBG grant, Contract No. 710531. All citizens, particularly low and moderate income residents, are invited and encouraged to attend. Individuals with disabilities that wish to attend this meeting should contact the City Hall at 940/657-4263 to arrange for assistance. Written comments will also be accepted at the City Hall prior to or during the meeting.

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The USDA, Rural Utilities Service has received an application for financial assistance from the Knox County Rural Water Supply Corporation (WSC). As required by the National Environmental Policy Act and agency regulations, the Rural Utilities Service has prepared an Environmental Assessment that evaluated the potential environmental effects and consequences of the proposal. This notice announces the availability of the Environmental Assessment for public review and comment.

The proposal consists of constructing a new drinking water distribution system within rural areas of Knox, King, Haskell, and Stonewall Counties. The new system would consist of approximately 113 miles of buried waterlines, 2 standpipes, 2 pump stations, isolation valves and approximately 162 meter connections. The project would convert approximately .25 acres of prime farmland with the construction of a pump station and standpipe. The project would mitigate potential impacts by having a professional archeologist survey the project area before construction, directional boring under the Brazos River, limiting vegetation clearing to the least amount possible, and by returning disturbed land back to preconstruction form as applicable. The WSC considered available alternatives for this project, including: the no action alternative, in which the project would not be pursued, and attempting to buy treated water from Knox City. The WSC has decided to purchase water from North Central Texas Municipal Water Authority since this is more cost effective.

Copies of the Environmental Assessment are available for review for review at the USDA Rural Development office located at 4400 Buffalo Gap Road, Suite 4150, Abilene, Texas 79606. For further information contact John Powell of Rural Development at: (325) 690-6162 ext. 4. Any person interested in commenting on this proposal should submit comments to the address above by Saturday, April 20, 2013.

A general location map of the proposal is shown below.

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The 501 It's never the thermostat

The 501
 It's never the thermostat. If I were going to write a vehicle repair manual, that'd be the opening line of the preface, if manuals had prefaces. Mine will.



HANABA MUNN WELCH

Last week my husband and I tackled the problem of a crazy-acting water temperature gauge on the tractor. Now the tractor has two new thermostats plus a new temperature sensor, all unnecessary. Originally, we'd meant to let our tractor mechanic determine why the temperature gauge was giving us false readings. When he went off to be a saddle-maker instead (and you know who you are), we sighed and decided to fix the thing ourselves. "It's never the thermostat," I told my husband. He didn't disagree, but that's where

we started. For the right diagnosis, you have to think like a doctor and rule things out. When my mother had an out-of-town hiatal hernia attack and ended up in a hospital emergency room, they gave her nitroglycerin. It didn't help, so they ruled out a heart attack. Yes, sometimes people do have heart attacks. I'm convinced people have heart attacks more often than vehicles need new thermostats. My opinion. Feel free to get a second opinion. But I'm right. Anyway, when we went to town for the thermostats, gasket and temperature sensor, not all the parts were in stock. That's Parts Rule No. 1, worthy of mention in my introduction, if not the preface. Two days later, Parts Rule No. 2 struck. The tardy thermostats had to be back ordered. Sigh. When all the parts finally came in, we installed them — thermostats first and temperature sensor second. Sure enough, neither procedure made any difference. I felt like the woman who heard that faith moves mountains and

prayed that very night for the mountain near her house to be gone the next day. (It was blocking her view.) The next morning when she woke up, she looked out her window and said, "Just like I thought. It's still there."

Running out of options, we called to see what it would cost to replace the entire instrument panel. A lot. We decided we'd rather put up with faulty gauges and spend the \$745 on something else. I'm not sure what my husband was thinking, but a roundtrip flight to Europe sounded good to me. Working on a tractor can make you want to get away to almost anywhere. At that point, I would have settled for another trip to town for parts. Too bad the instrument panel was so pricey. And no doubt it wasn't in stock anyway. Rats. And there you have the most important rule. It's always rats. When we looked closely at the bundle of wires to the gauges, we saw three gnawed in two. Hanaba Munn Welch is a contributor and columnist for The Knox County News-Courier.

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Survey: Fish numbers improving at Possum Kingdom Reservoir

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ATHENS — The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Inland Fisheries office in Wichita Falls recently completed fall electrofishing and spring gillnet surveys on Possum Kingdom Reservoir. Fisheries biologists use information from these surveys to develop plans for managing fish populations. Electrofishing surveys examine populations of largemouth bass and prey species such as sunfish and shad. Gillnet surveys monitor the catfish, white and striped bass populations. Possum Kingdom has periodically been affected by fish kills caused by golden alga, but the last major kill occurred in spring 2010. Surveys indicate that fish populations have done relatively well since then. While the largemouth bass catch rate for young bass 10 inches and less in length was down from 2010, the catch rate for legal length bass was up. "To help the bass population, we have developed a plan to increase habitat in the Cedar Creek area," said fisheries biologist Robert Mauk. "The plan includes sinking cedar trees along the shoreline to increase fingerling bass survival. Native vegetation plantings and sunken constructed habitat structures will aid adult bass and congregate them for anglers. We also have requested that the reservoir be stocked with Florida largemouth bass this year. The last stocking occurred in 2011."

Spring gillnetting found the catfish populations to be in good shape. Blue catfish abundance was the highest documented for the reservoir, and they ranged in length from 10 to 33 inches. The channel catfish catch rate was unchanged from the previous survey and was above the historical average for the reservoir. Catfish were found throughout the reservoir, but the biggest blue catfish were observed in the Caddo Creek area. The gillnetting survey showed low numbers of striped bass; sizes ranged from 22 to 26 inches in length. "Their catch rate was the lowest we have seen, though this is not surprising since the last stocking occurred in 2010 after a major fish kill caused by golden alga," Mauk said. "Striped bass have been requested annually, but the hatcheries have not been able to produce enough to meet the state's needs. This year we hope to get some stocked into the reservoir."

White bass numbers were up from the 2011 survey but were slightly below the historical average. "Fish ranged in size from 7 to 15 inches in length with good body condition," Mauk noted. "Most were located between the Peanut Patch and Costello Island." Currently there are only three boat ramps available for launching, those at North and South D&D (also known as BRA Areas No. 4N and No. 4S) and one lane at Possum Kingdom State Park. Shoreline access is available for anglers at all public access areas. For information on lake access, contact the Brazos River Authority at 940-779-2321. A water recreational use water permit from the BRA is required for boats.

The gizzard shad catch rate matched the historical average for the reservoir, but a majority of the shad were too large for most predators to consume. Bluegill numbers were up compared to 2010 but were still below the historical average. Threadfin shad were found in low abundance.

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bids and any and/or all applications. 0321c

City of Knox City is accepting applications for the position of City Manager. If interested, please apply at City Hall 902 E. Main, Knox City, TX. Deadline is 5:00 p.m. on April 1, 2013. 0321

Brazos Valley Care Home is now accepting applications for full-time and part-time LVN and RN positions. Please apply in person at 605 S. Ave F, Knox City. 0412c

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LEGAL NOTICE

Effective March 15, 2013 the Knox City Housing Authority will be open from 9 to noon and 1 to 4 on Tuesday and Wednesday only. Phone 940-657-3612. Applications for housing may be picked up at the Knox City or Munday Housing Authority. Knox City Housing Authority is an equal opportunity employer and provider. (0331)

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The Munday and Knox City Housing Authorities each have apartments available for rent. Rental assistance may be available to eligible applicants. Call Munday Housing at 940-422-4941 or Knox City Housing Authority at 940-657-3612 for more information. Both are equal opportunity providers.



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Cemetery Series

Benjamin Cemetery chock full of colorful history

By Hanaba Munn Welch
The Knox County News-Courier

The oldest cemetery in Knox County is the Benjamin Cemetery just southeast of Benjamin. Not surprisingly, it's especially rich in history relative to the early days of the region.

The grave of William Benoit Pope, 1844-1920, is next to his wife, Blanche Williams Pope, 1863-1944. His marker isn't especially impressive, but his life was notable. The online USGenWeb project provides thumbnail information: "Pvt. 41st U.S. Infantry under Capt. Ranald S. Mackenzie, discharged at Fort Belknap, Union Veteran."

In a cemetery in the northern United States, his grave might well be marked with an extra embellishment to signify that he served in the Union forces — something like a marker showing membership in the Grand Army of the Republic. But not in Texas, where the graves of Confederate soldiers get special markers and Union loyalties and

ranks generally are not recognized.

Nor does Pope's marker indicate he served under Mackenzie, famed U.S. Cavalry foe of Quanah Parker and the Comanche. Instead, his final place in history seems to be a comfortable one with his wife's family, the Williamses. Their graves lay in line in the oldest part of the Benjamin Cemetery, the southeast portion. By 1920, Dr. Pope had likely become what counts most — a Texan.

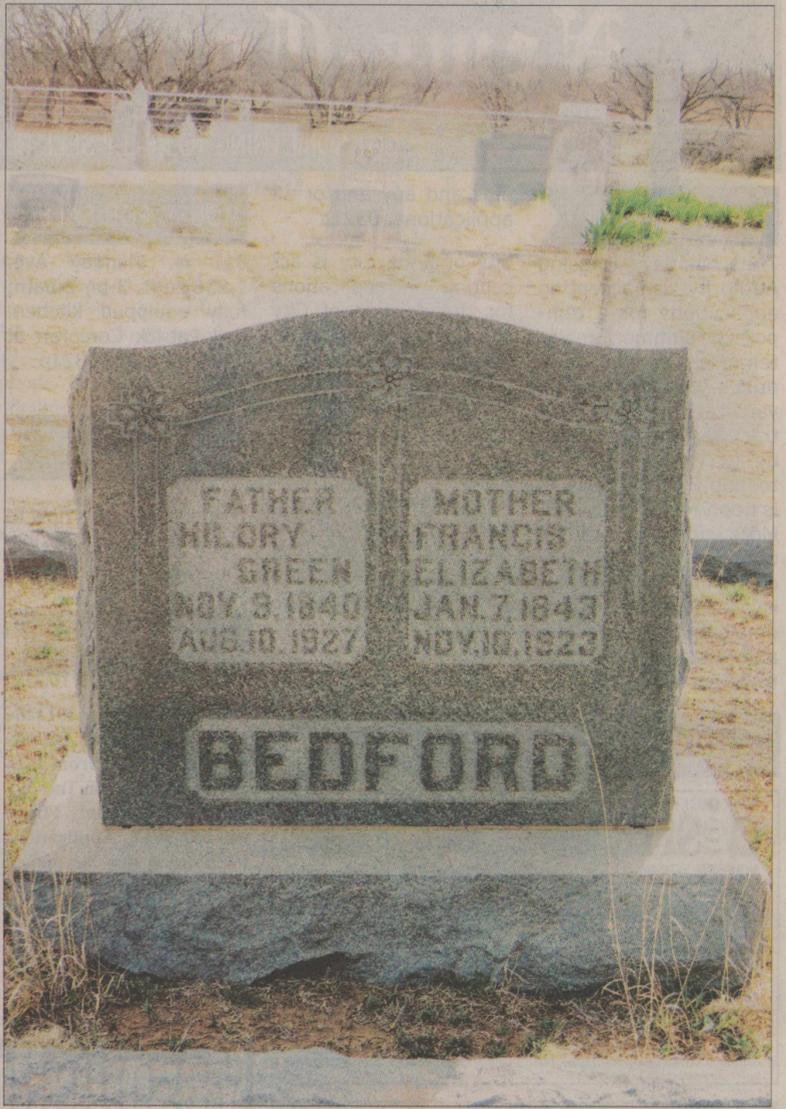
In 1963, Volume 39 of the West Texas Historical Association Yearbook contains a paper by Young County historian and archivist, the late Barbara Neal Ledbetter. The title is "Fort Belknap Doctor: Dr. William B. Pope." Recognized for her knowledge of Fort Belknap and Young County history, Ledbetter no doubt wrote a factual account of Pope's role at the frontier fort.

Regarding Pope's wife, USGenWeb also offers information about Blanche Williams Pope: "Blanche Williams married Dr. Wil-

liam Benoit Pope on 9 January 1879 at Fort Belknap, Young County, Texas, daughter of Judge Henry D. and Sallie Williams."

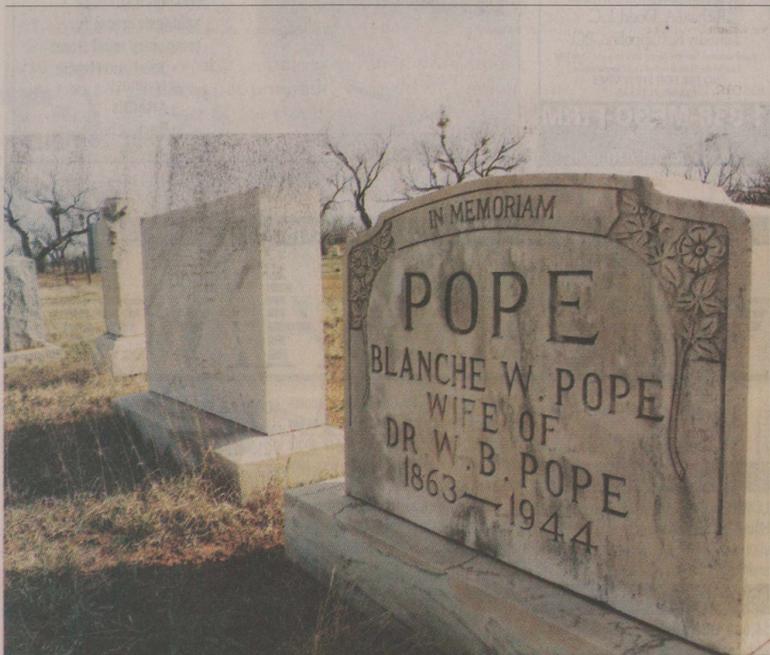
Lest it seem Dr. Pope might have led an ordinary physician's life in the years after the tumult of the Civil War and battles with the Indians, he did not. A footnote in a book titled "Life of the Marlows: A True Story of Frontier Life of Early Days" indicates Pope cared for his wife's consumptive brother William "Bee" Williams, who was on trial in 1890 in Graham in connection with events involving the Marlow Brothers. The five brothers' lives and exploits inspired the script for the 1965 John Wayne movie "The Sons of Katie Elder."

Not every grave in the Benjamin Cemetery has a John Wayne movie connection, but every grave is a story. For genealogists and historians and even casual observers, a few gentle bounces over the cattle guard at the entrance to the Benjamin Cemetery is a good way to take a trip back in time.



Photos by Hanaba Munn Welch/The Knox County News-Courier

A gray granite stone marks the grave of Hilory Green Bedford, Confederate veteran, and his wife, Francis Elizabeth Bedford. Hilory Bedford is recognized as the founder of Benjamin. The town is named for his oldest son, who was killed by a lightning strike. He wrote and published "Texas Indian Troubles" in 1905, a book that is now back in print.



In the southeast part of the Benjamin Cemetery, the grave of Blanche W. Pope is next to the grave of her husband, Dr. William Benoit Pope, a frontier physician who served under Capt. Ranald S. Mackenzie in the U.S. Cavalry.



The repair of old markers is an ongoing maintenance issue at cemeteries, especially when many of the gravestones are old and, in many cases, families no longer live in the area and monitor their condition. A double marker for two children, a baby girl who lived only two days in February 1887 and a boy born the following year who lived only two months, lies on the ground in the Benjamin Cemetery, likely a recent failure and collapse.



The gravestone of Phoenix M. Burnett, 1855-1899, is among the tallest in the Benjamin Cemetery. The "unfinished column" motif symbolizes a life unfinished, suitable for a man who lived only to age 43. Surrounding the grave and others in the family lot is an ornate metal fence. The plaque on the fence gate identifies the manufacturer as Texas Anchor Fence Co., Fort Worth.

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