

An Album of Painted School Stage Curtains  
 Gillespie County Country Schools  
 Fredericksburg, Texas



Photo Credit: Chris Hadsel, Curtains without Borders

Friends Mission: "Preserving the past to enrich the future"

## *The Historic Country School Painted Stage Curtains of Gillespie County, Texas*

Friends of Gillespie County Country Schools was established in 1999 and has been a 501(c)3 group since 2004. They initiated a painted school stage curtain project to document and protect six known surviving stage curtains in 2014. Limited knowledge and the desire to preserve these curtains inspired Friends to treat them as artifacts. These painted drop-roll stage curtains were the least expensive ones made of canvas or muslin and decorated with water-based paint. They commonly had a central scene surrounded by local advertisements. They might last up to 20 years.

In 2015, Friends conserved the Willow City School stage curtain with Anne Zanikos, Art Conservator, and about 60 community volunteers. As a result, friends found additional painted school curtains. In 2018, Friends partnered with Curtains Without Borders of Vermont to survey 13 country school-painted curtains and wrapped and placed three in protective storage. In addition, friends documented 20 Gillespie County painted curtains.

Past students reported “everything happened at the 44 schools”: school closings, BBQs, dances, dominoes and card games, calf and goat roping, 4-H clubs, plays, choral singing and music, sewing club, home economics club, the Saengerfest, the Schuetzenfest, polling place, baseball, volleyball, track, and served as a church. All contributed to a sense of community with good neighbors and unity. This album shows the curtains as they are today, not fancy theater curtains but simple curtains for rugged use in schools or halls where school events were held. They are large, colorful historic artifacts telling their story now and tomorrow.

## *The Friends and the Curtains*

The 1847 Vereins Kirche served as the first schoolhouse, and by the 20th century, as many as 44 rural schools operated in Gillespie County, Texas. Families donated land, labor, and materials for rural schools on the land. Of these 44 main buildings, 42 are still standing. The 1949 Gilmer-Aikin Law consolidated most rural schools by 1964, concluding an era of rural schools. School/community clubs began forming in the 1970s to provide school funds and equipment. They continue to operate. Friends of Gillespie County Country Schools was formed in 1999 to initiate a statewide Proposition 13 vote to save country schoolhouses and place them in the care of the County Commissioner's Court. Since 2002, Friends has leased 12 historic schools. Friends continue to provide funding and upkeep, protect school artifacts outside and inside the schools, and preserve our county school history. Unfortunately, the painted school stage curtains were not well documented. Little was known about how they were purchased, how much they cost, who made them, how many existed, or how to preserve these artifacts for the future. The objective of the Friends Curtain Project was to answer some of these questions, thereby learning to conserve and protect our historic school stage curtains. Our research led to a knowledge of how they were used in rural education and rural communities. It produced this album of uncommon Gillespie County-painted school stage curtains.

## *What Did the Friends Do?*

Friends of Gillespie County Country Schools viewed the painted stage curtains as very large country school artifacts after assessment by Art Conservator, Anne Zanikos, in the Fall of 2013. Time to take our “Cinderellas” out of the attics. These architectural artifacts had history almost unknown to us, and a future we wanted to provide. Research said “painted stage curtains were not meant to last”. They were less expensive than a fabric stage curtain, quicker to produce with water-based paints on prepared muslin or canvas as a drop-roll curtain, and provided a focus and dramatic door for the stage with a scene that took you to another place. In America, painted stage curtains were produced between 1890 and 1950 by scenic artists/studios for use in opera houses, theaters, town halls, grange halls, and sometimes in country schools. Ads were sold to local businesses to fund the curtains. The community was the audience. The many local newspaper ads for school BBQ’s, plays, 4-H club meetings, and annual school closings from the 1930’s to the end of the country school era are evidence of community use. The stage was part of rural education and community in Gillespie County, Texas.



## *Doss School No.1/Doss Community/Improvement Club Hall Curtain*

**Curtain title:** “Evening”

**Maker:** Dallas Scenic Studio

**Dated:** 1930

**Size:** 18 ft. x 8 ft.

**Number of ads:** 23

**Estimated total ad cost:** \$1,435, based on Ron Hill Scenic Company 1940-1950 price list, Loveland, CO.



**Photo credit:** Jane Woellhof

Members of the Doss Community Improvement Club found this painted stage curtain stored in the attic and brought out to be mounted with a frame for display in the Community Hall located next to the Doss School. There was damage to the water-based paint, but its overall appearance was good, with much detail intact. In September 2018, the Friends and Curtains Without Borders Partnership Project surveyed this curtain. Having the complete information of the maker and date on the curtain has assisted Friends’ study of other painted school curtains in Gillespie County. The Doss School and Doss Community utilize the Community Hall today. Their 1930 curtain is displayed in the school, while their c. 1947-1948 painted stage curtain (included in this album) continues to be used on the Hall stage for school plays and community events. The Doss School is the only Gillespie County country school still functioning as a public school in Gillespie County.

## *Doss Curtain Advertisements*

1. Baethge & Nixon, Doss, general merchandise
2. Citizens Bank, Fredericksburg, UNINC
3. City Café, for the best, exclusively
4. Coca Cola Bottling Co., every bottle drink orange crush distillery
5. Compliments of Doss Community Club
6. Everready Motor Co., open day & night, phone 177
7. H.C. Maier, Proprietor/Piggly-Wiggly, home owned, where thrifty housewives shop
8. Henke Bros, choice meats of all kinds, phones 42 & 43
9. John Knopp, dealer in general merchandise, cotton, wool, hides and all other country products
10. Knopp & Metzger, general merchandise
11. Max Beckmann, ambulance service, ours is white
12. Oscar Krauskopf, farm implement, water supplies
13. Saenger & Ochs/Grovers Cleaning, the store for you, outfitters for men
14. Schandua & Richenau, sheet metal and radiator shop
15. Schneiders Produce, phone 152, poultry, pecan, wool
16. Standard Motors Co., Inc., sales & service, phone 187
17. Stein Lumber Co., headquarters for building materials
18. The Music Palace, Fredericksburg, the best in music, pianos, radios, band instruments, musical accessories
19. Trade with Stehling Bros., the store for men & boys, cleaning & pressing
20. W.H. Rosenbusch, Doss, gin
21. Walter Jewelry Store, Fredericksburg, gifts that last
22. Woerner & Durst, groceries & dry goods, farm produces bought and sold, phones 395 & 398

## *Luckenbach School/Engel's Halle/Luckenbach Dance Hall Curtain*

**Curtain title:** The Abandoned Mill"

**Maker:** Unknown

**Dated:** 1934 on curtain (see Trustee Banner)

**Size:** 20 ft. 2 in. x 8 ft.

**Number of ads:** 30, mostly legible

**Estimated total ad cost:** \$1,070, based on Ron Hill Scenic Company 1940-1950 price list, Loveland, CO.



**Aerial photo credit:** Alex Cortez Cortez

The Luckenbach curtain had been stored in the Engel's Halle/Luckenbach Dance Hall attic for many years. The water-based paints were damaged. The curtain was fragile and prone to tear, making it impossible to mount for a complete photograph. Aerial Photographer, Alex Cortez, volunteered to photograph it to assist with Friends' documentation. Many employees of the town of Luckenbach, Texas, helped the Friends. A matching painted border covers the base of the stage. It appears to have aged but has had over-painted ads. It is unknown if the border was original and part of the curtain border/valance or added later to match the curtain. In September 2018, the Friends and Curtains Without Borders Partnership Project surveyed and wrapped the curtain for safe storage. The Luckenbach School Record Book 1890-1908 stated that rent was paid to Luckenbach Hall for school closings and plays. The book's pages after 1908 are missing.

## *Luckenbach School Curtain Ads (Pg 1)*

Not all ads were legible due to water damage. If an ad was recognized as the same as on other Gillespie County painted stage curtains, it is included as being on this curtain to the best of our ability. Some ads were mostly destroyed and covered with mud from wasp nests. A total of 30 ads are mostly legible.

This appears to be the only painted stage curtain in this study, with several businesses placing more than one ad. For example, City Furniture had three ads, and Knopp Metzger had two ads.

1. Advance Motor Co./Ford service
2. Central Drug Co.
3. City Furniture (3 ads)/buy it/costs less at/new & used/repair/refinishing
4. Coca Cola/drink Coca Cola
5. FBG Coop Creamery
6. Gulf Refining Co./AW Stahl distributor
7. H. Welge Lewis/independent dealer/gas & oil/phone 22
8. Hill Country Service Station/Ed. A Loth
9. Humble/F.C. Schmidt/agent
10. Juenke Schoenewolf
11. Kallenbergs Pharmacy/prescription druggist/Your Friend in Need
12. Keidel Drug Store, prescription service, phone 25
13. Knopp Metzger (2 ads), yard goods, shoes, ready to wear
14. Mutual Lumber
15. Palace Theater, where the best pictures play
16. Patronize Wm. Engel, Luckenbach
17. Piggly Wiggly, turn to quality and economy
18. Riley Grain Co. (E. H. Riley, Proprietor)
19. Saenger & Ochs (the store for you and pressing)
20. Schaetter's Funeral Home (ambulance service, phone 23)
21. Schandua and Reichenau (sheet metal, radiator shop)
22. Schmidt's (one-stop shopping)
23. Sinclair Refining Co. (We build good will with good oils & service.)



*Luckenbach School Curtain Ads (Pg. 2)*

24. Stehling Bros (The friendly men's store,  
clothiers-cleaners-hatters.)
25. Stein Lumber
26. Stucke's Bakery
27. Trustees 1934 Alf. Metzger, Hugo C. Petsch, H.Y. Petsch  
(Luckenbach School Trustees)
28. Woerner Grocery Co. (quality service, price)

## *Lower South Grape Creek School/Weinheimer Hall Curtain*

**Curtain title, maker, and date:** not legible due to water damage sustained in past

**Size:** 20 ft. x 9 ft.

**Number of ads:** 25

**Estimated total ad cost:** \$800-\$900, based on Ron Hill Scenic Company 1940-1950 price list, Loveland, CO.



**Photo credit:** Bernice Weinheimer

This curtain has been in storage for many years. It hung in the Weinheimer Hall, built in 1936 in Stonewall, Texas. Bernice Weinheimer of Weinheimer Hall assisted in studying this curtain and reported that it was added to the Hall in 1938. She said the Lower South Grape School used its stage and curtain for all their important school events. The only known photos were taken while in use at the Hall. The design of this curtain is consistent with other Dallas Scenic Studio 1930s curtains in Gillespie County. In September 2018, this curtain was surveyed by the Friends and Curtains Without Borders Partnership Project. The curtain was very fragile, with tears and holes. The curtain was wrapped for safe storage during the partnership project.

## *Wrede School Curtain*

**Title:** “The Old Swimm’n Hole”

**Maker:** Unknown

**Date:** Reported 1930-1939

**Size:** 22 ft. x 9 ft.

**Number of ads:** 25

**Estimated total ad cost:** \$800-\$900, based on Ron Hill Scenic Company 1940-1950 price list, Loveland, CO.)



**Photo credit: Gloria Hawkins**

This curtain was documented in the Wrede School application to the National Register for Historic Places. Former students agree that the curtain most likely dates from the 1930s. The condition of the curtain is fragile due to tears and water damage. The curtain was stored in the school attic for many years. School use included loading the curtain into a grain truck and driving it to the Cain City/Tatsch Hall for Wrede School closing events. Students also reported that the curtain was tied to the porch posts and used for plays and events on their 1896 schoolhouse porch. Former student Jeanette Conn, and daughter Kathy Conn-Saucier, photographed this curtain in three parts to produce their only full photo. This photo is displayed for viewing inside the Wrede School. Attempts to repair and stabilize the curtain are evident. Former students, using safe wrapping techniques, wrapped it for storage. Kansas photographer, Gloria Hawkins, drove 800 miles in 2010 to photograph Wrede and other Gillespie County painted school curtains for her country school collection and to share with Friends.

## *Wrede School Curtain Ads*

*Due to water damage, not all advertisements are legible. This listing includes those that are legible as they appear.*

1. A.W. Maier (Saddle-Harness Shop Made Boots)
2. CITY FURNITURE Co. (Furniture-New & Used Repairing-Refinishing Paint Varnish-Wall Paper)
3. Fredericksburg Produce
4. Fredericksburg Station Tires & Tubes
5. Fredericksburg Imp. Co. FORD TRACTOR Machinery Pumps - \_\_\_\_\_ Works
6. GROCERIES Groceries-Feed-Seeds Glad to serve you Ph 35
7. HANDY ANDY GROCERIES
8. Magnolia Petroleum Co. Joe A. Weidenfeller Phone 30
9. Not legible
10. Not legible
11. Not legible
12. Not legible
13. Oehler & Weber Auto Parts Gillet \_\_\_\_\_ Tires & Tubes
14. Paul Pfister, Distributor of Grande Prize-Falstaff-Budweiser Beer
15. Pearl Lager Beer
16. Quality Cash Grocery
17. RED & WHITE Store, Lange & Nebgen, You Save When You Buy Here
18. RIVERSIDE SERVICE STATION, Gasoline-Oils-Groceries Rubin Leyendecker, Owner
19. Robert Blum
20. Schroeder Bros., Largest Exclusive Dry Goods Store
21. Shaetter Funeral Home, Day & Night Ambulance Service
22. Shandua and Reichenau, Sheet Metal and Radiator Work
23. Sinclair Refining Co, Gasoline-Feeds-Seeds, Phone
24. Stein Lumber
25. Woerner Warehouse, Wool Mohair, Ph 57
26. Woerner Grocery Co., Service PH 395-397

## *Grapetown School/Grapetown Hall Curtain*

**Curtain title and date:** Not legible due to water damage

**Size:** Requested, but not available

**Number of ads:** Appears to be 15 on curtain and 9 on the border/valance

**Estimated date:** 1930-1940's, not able to examine total curtain, worked from photo



**Photo credit: Myra Klinksiek**

Friends did not view this curtain since it was stored. All information was taken from photos provided by former Grapetown students. The border/valance portion hanging in Grapetown Schoolhouse was viewed but unable to measure. Former students reported the curtain dates 1935-36, which is locally attributed to J.E. Gordon Studio of Austin, Texas. Julia E. Gordon is known to have traveled to work for Dallas and Waco scenic companies. Perhaps a connection existed between Dallas Scenic, Waco Scenic, and Gordon's Austin Studio in the 1930-1940s. If so, using the same cartouche and design elements in many 1930s painted stage curtains suggested common dates and studios. German words: "Eintracht, Grapetown Schuetzen Verein, and Saenger Verein" on this curtain suggested use by the Grapetown School, the shooting club, the singing club, and the Grapetown Community. Reportedly, this curtain was surveyed by Curtains Without Borders in the past, but no records are available.



## *Nebo School Curtain*

**Curtain title:** No title or date on curtain

**Size:** 20 ft. x 9 ft. 8 in.

**Number of ads:** Largest number of advertisers on any curtain in this study. 62 advertisers shared the 24 ads.

**Estimated total ad cost:** \$565, based on Ron Hill Scenic Company 1940-1950 price list, Loveland, CO.



**Photo credit:** Mable Wilke

Nebo School was built in 1927 with a stage room. Their School/Community Pavilion with the stage was built in 1938. From memory in later years, a former student drew floor plans for both and placed a stage in both structures. The pavilion stage would have been larger and more likely to have utilized a 20 ft. x 9 ft. 8 in. painted curtain. Unknown when the curtain was acquired. The design elements are consistent with the Pecan Creek School stage curtain. Pecan Creek Pavilion/Stage was built in 1940, and a former student reported stage was across one corner before the stage was constructed. These two curtains are almost identical in design and ads, possibly between 1927 and 1940. Nebo consolidated with Willow City School in 1950 and moved the curtain with the students. The condition is fragile. This curtain was displayed at Gillespie County Fair in August 2000 to publicize Proposition 13, known as Friends' Bill, to save historic country schools. This Bill passed the Texas Legislature, and voters approved the Texas Constitutional Amendment in 2001. In September 2018, the Friends and Curtains Without Borders Partnership Project surveyed and wrapped the Nebo curtain for safe storage. The curtain remains at Willow City Schoolhouse.

## *Nebo School Curtain Ads (Pg 1)*

1. Agricultural Chemicals, Inc. Llano, insecticides for farm & ranch
2. Allen Grocery, Bluffton
3. Behrends Garage, Fredericksburg, Studebaker Sales
4. Ben Franklin Store, Llano
5. Blue Bonnet Oil Corp., Fredericksburg, Cosden
6. Boeing Implement Co., Fredericksburg
7. Buchanan Club Fine Foods
8. Cash Produce, Fredericksburg
9. City Mattress Factory, Fredericksburg
10. Crenwelge Plymouth & Desota, Fredericksburg
11. Delux Service Station, Llano, Ford Templeton/Walter Janner
12. Drink Coca Cola
13. Drive-In Theater, Fredericksburg
14. Ell Kramer Welding Shop, Fredericksburg
15. Enderlin Feed Store, Fredericksburg
16. Farmers Grain Co., Fredericksburg
17. Fredericksburg Implement Co. (M&M Tractors)
18. Fredericksburg Machine Shop
19. Hartmann's Inc. Shoe Store, Fredericksburg
20. Hein Motors Auto Repairs & Painting, Crosley, Home Appliance, Dodge, Plymouth, Fredericksburg
21. Hill Country Implement Co. International, Fredericksburg
22. Hill Country Service Station Conoco Gas & Oil, Fredericksburg
23. Humble Oil Co., Llano (J.E. Smith Agent)
24. Juenke & Schoenewolf, Fredericksburg, general merchandise
25. John Cummings Butane, Llano
26. Kendall Hodges Department Store
27. Killenberg's Pharmacy, Fredericksburg
28. Kilman Studio, Fredericksburg
29. Krauskope Bros. John Deere Co. Fredericksburg,
30. Lake View Inn, Buchanan Dam
31. Lochte Storage & Comm. Co., Fredericksburg
32. Loitz Mill & Feed, Fredericksburg
33. Ludwig Flower Shop, Fredericksburg
34. Magnolia Petroleum Co., Fredericksburg
35. Magnolia Service Station, Llano (O.R. Kurkendoll)
36. Max H. Beckman, Fredericksburg, Furniture & Undertaking
37. Mutual Lumber Co.
38. National Home & Auto Store, Fredericksburg
39. O & A Store & Trailer Park, Buchanan Dam

## *Nebo School Curtain Ads (Pg 2)*

40. O.K. Grocery, Tow
41. Olen Morris, Llano
42. Otto Kolmeier Co., Fredericksburg
43. Pioneer Village Restaurant, Fredericksburg
44. Processors of Shelled Peanuts, Fredericksburg, Peanut Meal cake & Oil
45. Red & Gray Granite, Fredericksburg
46. Nagel Memorials
47. Riley Supply Co., Fredericksburg, Texas Products
48. Schaeffer Funeral Home, Fredericksburg
49. Scheper Tractor & Implement Co., Fredericksburg, Allis Chalmers
50. Schroeder Brothers, Fredericksburg
51. Sinclair Refining Co., Fredericksburg
52. Stein Lumber Co., Fredericksburg
53. The Willis Store, Tow, Texas
54. Toney s Place, Llano
55. Tungkind Electric Service, Llano
56. Walter Ottmers, Fredericksburg, Gulf Oil Corp.
57. Wanes Service Station, Llano
58. Warner Auto Electric Starter & Generator, Fredericksburg
59. Weber Lumber Co., Llano
60. Western Iron Works, Fredericksburg, One West
61. Wirthaven, Buchanan Dam
62. Wootan Motors & Theaters, Llano

## *Pecan Creek School/Pecan Creek School Pavilion Curtain*

**Curtain:** Untitled, undated, unsigned

**Size:** 18 ft. x 8 ft.

**Number of ads:** 22

**Estimated total ad cost:** \$510, based on Ron Hill Scenic Company 1940-1950 price list, Loveland, CO.



**Photo credit: Jane Woellhof**

The condition of the Pecan Creek curtain is very fragile, as noted in the Friends and Curtains Without Borders Survey in September 2018. It is recommended that this curtain be wrapped for safe storage as a first conservation step when it is no longer used. Curtain is used on the Pecan Creek School Pavilion's large stage, constructed in 1940, with a lumber cost of \$40. Pecan Creek School painted stage curtain is most like the Nebo School curtain in ad design and overall design elements, suggesting similar dates between 1927-1940. Pecan School/Community Club and Pecan Creek community use and enjoy this pavilion with stage and originally painted school curtain. Their pavilion was built around the early school to protect it and provide an indoor playground or extra classroom space in bad weather. Their archives include stage and play photos.

## *Pecan Creek School Curtain Ads*

1. AHB FOOD STORE, 712 WEST MAIN ST, FREDERICKSBURG
2. COCA COLA Bottling Co, first line illegible, Paul A Kraus
3. Compliments of 290 COURTS, Singles, Doubles, FREDERICKSBURG, TEX
4. Compliments of STEIN LUMBER CO., Fredericksburg, TEX
5. Compliments of SUNNY SIDE TAVERN, Fredericksburg
6. Compliments of THE COUNTRY DINER, Mason Highway, FREDERICKSBURG
7. Courtesy of BECKMANN'S, PHO WY 7-2131
8. ENDERLIN Feed Store, PHO WY 7-2452, Fredericksburg. TEX
9. FARMERS GRAIN CO. INC., Wool-Mohair-Feed. WY 7-2256
10. Fredericksburg NATIONAL BANK, (next line and part of last line illegible), Service
11. GOODYEAR Service Stores, 205 E. MAIN, PHO 85, Fredericksburg
12. H.B. Bennett D.C., GOOD HEALTH DOESN'T COST IT PAYS, 407 Sandstone, PHO 627, Llano TEX
13. HEIN, -Chevrolet-Pontiac, Where Service Makes A Good Deal Better, Fredericksburg
14. HILL COUNTRY IMPLEMENT COL. INC, Farmall Tractors-Parts, IH LOGO, INTERNATIONAL TRUCKS, BUICK AUTOMOBILES
15. KRAUSKOPF BROS. JOHN DEERE, Plumbing. Gas Fittings & Piping, AERMOTOR, FREDERICKSBURG
16. LOCHTE Storage 7 Commission Co., Wool-Mohair-Feed, WY 7-2256
17. OAK'S CHICKEN SHACK, Fredericksburg TX
18. PIONEER SERVICE STA., -OPEN DAY & NIGHT-, Ed. A Loth Owner
19. SCHAEFFER'S, Exclusive Funeral Service, Fredericksburg, TEXAS
20. SECURITY STATE BANK, Look to the Future with Security, FDLS, FR, FREDERICKSBURG
21. STROEHER & SON, Wholesale for Sinclair & Goodyear Products, PHO WY 7-3247, FREDERICKSBURG
22. the TOWER, Eat for Less, GOOD FOOD, COLD DRINKS



## *Pilot Knob School/Klein's Hall/Reeh Hall Curtain*

The 1936 Old Teamsters reunion photo is the only known photo of this school/hall-painted stage curtain. The curtain was reportedly lost over the years. Pilot Knob School, as well as Squaw Creek, Morris Ranch, Hayden, and White Oak Schools, used this Hall for some of their large school events. Some have reported that this Hall originally went by Spring Hall, after nearby Spring Creek. The Pilot Knob School history described how they provided a temporary stage at school: "First, when they had plays, the porch was used as a stage; they would add to it on the north side with lumber. Then, pupils built their stage. They would chop pegs to place boards as benches. They used lanterns for light. They had German plays. School closings were held in Mecklenberg Hermann Sons Hall." After it was torn down, the school closings were held at Klein's Hall/Reeh Hall. This Hall is between Fredericksburg and Harper and is part of El Gallo's Mexican Restaurant site. The Pilot Knob Home Demonstration Club is still active today.



**Photo credit: Gillespie County Historical Society**

## *Williams Creek School/Pehl's Hall/Albert Hall Curtain*

**Curtain title and date:** none found on this curtain

**Maker:** attributed to J. E. Gordon Studio of Austin, Texas, in Stonewall Centennial Book, 1960

**Size:** 16ft. x 10 ft.

**Number of ads:** 30

**Estimated total ad cost:** \$940, based on Ron Hill Scenic Company 1940-1950 price list, Loveland, CO.



**Photo credit:** Nelda Roessler

In September 2018, this curtain was surveyed by Friends and Curtains Without Borders. Overall condition is excellent. Only curtain with “go to CHURCH Sunday” ad. This survey suggested a maker consistent with the Twin Sisters Dance Hall curtain signed by Don Owens & Son, Waco, Texas. Since this curtain was locally attributed to J.E. Gordon, additional research was prompted. We learned that J.E. Gordon traveled to Waco and Dallas and associated with scenic companies in both locations. In earlier times, this curtain first hung in Pehl’s Hall/ Albert Hall, after being built in 1922, located next door to Williams Creek School, then moved into Williams Creek School's Second Classroom for use by Williams Creek School/Community Club and the Albert Community. Often a country school hung a curtain toward the front of a classroom and cleared this area for programs as a temporary stage. This is how the stage curtain is hung and functions at Williams Creek School. This drop roll curtain is rolled up after use and out of the way. One photo of this curtain used during a 4-H Christmas party has survived.

## *Williams Creek School Curtain Ads (Pg 1)*

1. Bindseil's Red & White (Gen. Mdse. Store, Bindseil's Hardware, Blanco Butane)
2. Blanco Valley Cafe & Bowling Lanes (Lunches-Short Orders)
3. Blanco Locker Plant (Country Cured Pork Choice Fed Beef, H.A. Fuchs & Son)
4. City Cleaners (PH 2770-, PO Box 746, 229 E. Main, Fredericksburg)
5. Compliments of Security State Bank, Member FDIC, Fredericksburg)
6. Contributors: Hahne Liquor Store, George Croft, Fawcett Drug Store, Gillespie County Auction, Lowden Produce, Alfred Petsch
7. Cravens Drilling Co., Stonewall, Tex.
8. Croft's Funeral Home (Johnson City, Ambulance Serv., Burial Ins.)
9. Deike's Store, Dealer in Full-O-Pep Feeds) Levi A. Deike (Hye, Texas, Fredericksburg)
10. Dooley's 5-10-25C Store (Shop at Dooley's and Save the difference)
11. Drink Coca Cola, Fredericksburg Coca Cola Bottling Company
12. Farmers Grain Co, Inc. (Bus 122 & 691, Fredericksburg)
13. Farmers Implement Co. (Contractors, Blanco)
14. Food Mkt & Locker (Smoked Turkeys, Old Fashioned Home Cured Meats, Johnson City)
15. Fredericksburg Nat. Bank (Complete Bank Service-Low Interest Rates, Member F.D.I.C.)
16. FREDERICKSBURG SAVINGS & LOAN Association, Insured Savings, Home Loans
17. go to Church Sunday
18. Hall's Butane-Propane (Fuel Systems, Johnson City)
19. Lochte Storage & Commission Co (Wool-Mohair-Feed, Ph 34, Fredericksburg)
20. Maenius Groceries
21. Magnolia Petroleum Co. (Joe A Weidenfeller AGT., Fredericksburg, Off PH 30-Res PH 519W)
22. Max H. Beckmann (Fredericksburg, PH no. 1, Furniture-Undertaking)
23. National Farm Loan Ass'n A Federal Land Bank Loan SE Austin Fredericksburg
24. NOURSUND Insurance Agcy. Johnson City

*Williams Creek School Curtain Ads (Pg 2)*

25. PENICK BROS. LUMBER CO., Bldg. Materials, PH 2211,  
Johnson City
26. SINGLETON FARM & RANCH, Blanco Broad Breasted  
Bronzed Turkeys-Poults, Hatching Eggs
27. STEIN LUMBER Co., Dealers of Better Lumber, Johnson City,  
Since 1892
28. STROEHER & SON, Wholesalers Sinclair & Goodyear  
Products, Fredericksburg
29. The BLANCO NATIONAL BANK, member F.D.I.C., Est. 1906
30. WALL FUNERAL HOME, Since 1892, Blanco

## *Cherry Spring Pavilion School Curtain*

**Curtain title:** no title found

**Maker:** maker unknown

**Date:** date given as approximately 1936, as stated on National Registry of Historical Places, entered 2005

**Size:** 27 ft 6 in. x 7 ft. 6 in.; largest curtain in this study

**Number of ads:** 57; largest number of ads on any of the curtains in this study

**Estimated total ad cost:** \$1,436, based on Ron Hill Scenic Company 1940-1950 price list, Loveland, CO.



**Photo credit:** Eileen Whited

This curtain was used on the 1936 Cherry Spring School Pavilion Stage until relocated to display on a Pavilion wall between two display cases during the 2017-2018 Pavilion restoration project. The stage was designed initially with movable walls to convert to classrooms as needed. This feature has been altered. Cherry Spring curtain shares the same type of central scene, colors, and ad shapes as Willow City School No. 1 and Doss School No. 2 stage curtains. There is evidence of some ad-over-painting (one ad has red paint drip) on both curtains. Ad phone number research suggested changes most likely completed in 1947. Some former students feel this later date is what they remember. We will continue research to set a date.



## *Cherry Spring School/Pavilion Advertisers (Pg 1)*

1. A-D MOTORS
2. AHB FOOD STORE
3. ALBERTO NAGEL Granite Sales
4. BEHREND'S GARAGE (24 Hr. Wrecker Service, Phone 305)
5. CITY MATTRESS FACTORY
6. CLUB 87 Station-Bar
7. COUNTRY DINER Mason Rd.
8. DUECKER ELECTRIC
9. E. L. NIXON-SONS Sheet Metal Works
10. ENDERLIN FEED STORE Phone 238
11. EVERS DAIRY
12. FARMERS GRAIN Feeds-Seeds-Groceries
13. Fredericksburg SAVINGS-LOAN ASSOC. Liberal Dividends, Accounts Ins. Up TO \$10,000
14. Fredericksburg LOCKERS Phone 125
15. Fredericksburg National Bank Member FDIS
16. GOOD YEAR Service Store, Phone 83
17. GULF Products Walter Ottmers
18. Hill Country CREAMERY
19. Houston American Life Art Koch
20. I.G.A. STORE
21. James Neffendorf Sand and Gravel
22. JOHN J. SEGNER Expert Watch Repair
23. JUENKES STORE Since 1912
24. K.H. TRACTOR SER.
25. K.W. REPAIR
26. KEIDEL'S DRUG STORE, Founded 1909
27. KILLMAN STUDIO
28. Kramer TRACTOR-IMP. CO.
29. KRAUS BOTTLING WORKS
30. Krauskopf Bros. JOHN DEERE
31. Langerhans FLORIST and Nursery
32. LANGES GROCERY
33. LOCHTE STORAGE-COMM. CO. Phone 34
34. LOITZ TRUCK LINE
35. LONE STAR GAS Compliments of a Friend
36. LONE STAR PUMP SER. Well Drilling

## *Cherry Spring School Curtain Ads (Pg 2)*

37. Ludwig FLOWER SHOP
38. Magnolia Petroleum Co. Joe Weidenfeller
39. MAX H. BECKMANN FURNITURE Phone 1
40. OAK GROVE SERV. STATION
41. RADIO POST, The
42. Schaetter FUNERAL HOME
43. SCHROEDER DRY GOODS
44. Security State Bank Member FDIC
45. South Heights Station
46. STEHLING BROS. Mens Wear
47. Stehling Electric RADIO-T.V.
48. STEIN LUMBER CO Builders of Better America
49. T. WRIGHT NEAL REALTOR-FARM BROKER
50. TEMPLE LUMBER Phone 51
51. TEXACO Products W.H. Osbourn
52. VAPO BUTAINE CO. Gene Sidlo Phone 272
53. W M CAMERON Phone 165
54. W.K. GROCERY
55. Werners AUTO ELECTRIC Auto Life Batteries
56. Western Auto Associate Store
57. Your SINCLAIR DEALERS, Stroehrer and Son

## *Doss School No. 2/Doss Community Hall Curtain*

**Curtain title:** not found

**Maker:** not found

**Size:** 22 ft. x 7 ft.

**Number of ads:** 38

**Estimated ad cost:** \$1,320, based on Ron Hill Scenic Company 1940-1950 price list, Loveland, CO.



**Photo credit:** Jane Woellhof

This curtain hangs on the Doss Community Hall stage. Two persons must raise and lower the curtain as a team effort, as this is how a drop-roll curtain operates. The central scene of deer, mountain, lake, and trees is the same color and techniques as the Willow City School No. 1 and the Cherry Spring School painted curtains. The wear on this curtain looked the same compared to Willow City No. 1 and Cherry Spring curtains, suggesting these three curtains by the same hand. Some expected damage from continual use by Doss School and the community. Some Doss Community Improvement Club members felt this curtain might have been made 1947-1948 to celebrate the Doss Centennial in 1948. Research on business ads is still active. In September 2018, the curtain was surveyed by the Friends and Curtains Without Borders Partnership Project. This curtain continues to be used for Doss School and Doss Community events.

## *Doss School No. 2 Curtain Ads*

1. A. SCHWARZ & Sons READY MIX Concrete Sand & Gravel, Phone 697 or 698 Kerrville, Texas
2. A. H. Kiefer Wallpaper & Glass Kerrville
3. BEHREND GARAGE STUDEBAKER The Hill Country's Most Complete Auto Service
4. BOLERO Drive-In Theatre Enjoy a Night Out Visit the Movies
5. Central Electric COOP Owned by you the people Fredericksburg
6. CHARLES SHREINER Co. P.O. Box 1111 Kerrville, Tex
7. Compliments of A.H.B. Feed Store
8. Enderlin Feed Store Salt Flour Feeds Worm Medicine Phone 238, Fredericksburg
9. FARMERS GRAIN Company Wool-Mohair-Grains-Greceries-Meats-Fruits-Vegetables-Eggs-Produce Fredericksburg
10. FLETCHER Electric Sales GE, Service
11. HILL COUNTRY Poultry Producers Fredericksburg Texas
12. HILL COUNTRY CREAMERIES Quality Products
13. HILL COUNTRY IMPLEMENT CO. International Harvester Fredericksburg Texas
14. KENDALL-HODGES Department Store, Fredericksburg Texas
15. KERRVILLE BUTANE CO. Maytag Appliances Kerrville Texas
16. KERRVILLE FROZEN FOOD LOCKERS
17. KRAMER IMPL. CO. Ferguson Massey Harris Fredericksburg
18. LOCHTE Storage & Commission Co. Wool-Mohair-Feed, Robin Hood Flour
19. MAGNOLIA Petroleum Co. Fredericksburg
20. MAULDIN BOOT SHOP Handmade Made to Measure
21. MAX H. BECKMANN Furniture & Undertaking Ambulance Service Phn. 1
22. MUND & ITZ General Merchants Doss, Texas Phone 1302
23. PAPE Farm Equipment Co. Sales-Service J.I. CASE
24. QUALITY OIL COMPANY Peanut Oil-Peanut Meal-Peanut Cake-Shelled Peanuts-Seed Peanuts, Fredericksburg Texas
25. Schaeffer Funeral Home Ph---- Ambulance Fredericksburg
26. SCHUCH EQUIPMENT CO. MASSEY M-H HARRIS Sales & Service Mason Texas
27. STEHLINE ELECTRIC Company 305 Main
28. STEIN Lumber Co. Builders of better homes, Since 1892 Fredericksburg, Texas

*Doss School No. 2 Curtain Ads (Pg 2)*

29. STROEHER & HOUY HC, Anti Rust Gas Specialties Service  
Motor Oil Kerosene Greases Batteries Tires Tubes
30. T.J. MOORE Lumber Yards, All Kinds building Matr., More  
for your money at Moores Junction
31. W.F. CARSON Sheet Metal & Air Conditioning Kerrville
32. W.H. OSBORN Dist. for TEXACO Prods. and B.F.  
GOODRICH. Tires & Batteries
33. Walter Ottmers GULF Products, Fredericksburg
34. Werners Auto & Electric Fredericksburg
35. Wheelus & Meek Motor Sales Kerrville
36. WM. CAMERON Home of Complete Building Service
37. Wm. E FRITZ Gro. & Station Doss
38. WUEST MOTOR SALES Oliver Farm Implements





## *Willow City School No. 1 Curtain (cont.)*

allowed six or seven workers to hover about eight inches above the curtain by moving the bridge. Other volunteers worked from the four edges. The bridge disassembles to serve other projects. The WCS No. 1 curtain moved to the lower west classroom for display between two bookcases filled with over 500 original country schoolbooks.

### **Willow City School No. 1 Curtain (before repairs)**



**Ann Zanikos assessing the curtain**  
**Photo credit: Mabel Wilke**

## *Willow City School Painted Stage Curtain Ads*

1. Chiropractor Dr. H.B. Bennett (San Saba)
2. Enderlin Feed Store
3. Ester's Shop (Llano)
4. Farmers Grain Co
5. Hasse Bros (Llano)
6. Krauskopf Bros. John Deer Farm Equipment
7. Lochte Storage & Comm Co
8. Max H.B. Beckman Ambulance Service
9. Otto Kolmeir & Co Fredricksburg, TEXAS
10. Paul's Chicken & Chips
11. Quality Peanut Co.
12. S & R Sheet Metal & Radiator Shop
13. Schaetter Funeral Home Ambulance Service
14. Saenger & Ochs Clothiers & Furnishers
15. Sengers Your Jewelers
16. Southwestern Talc Corp (Llano)
17. Stein Lumber Co Since 1892
18. Stroehler & Houy Wholesaler for Sinclair & Goodyear Products
19. Tony's Place
20. Walter Ottomers Gulf Oil Corp Products
21. VAPO Butane Co.
22. Willow City

*Note: Many name misspellings, even of Fredericksburg.*

## Willow City School Curtain No. 2

**Curtain title:** not titled

**Date:** 2002

**Artist:** Shayna Schaefer Thompson, signed and dated curtain

**Size:** 20 ft. x 9 ft.

**Number of ads:** 28

**Total ad cost:** Ads sold at \$300 each as fundraiser



**Photo credit:** Jane Woellhof

The Willow City School Community Club and Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department conserved and displayed the Willow City School No. 1, produced a newly painted curtain for Willow City School, made upstairs stage repairs, and safely housed the Nebo School curtain. College student Shayna Schaefer Thompson, whose grandfather and father were former Willow City School students, was contracted to design and make this curtain. The 2002 drop-roll curtain is still in use on the WCS stage and in good condition. This curtain has continued the tradition of painted country school stage curtains. In addition, various schools, theater companies, community clubs, and individuals continue to rent the Willow City School to use the stage and auditorium for special events.

## *Willow City School Curtain No. 2 Ads*

1. Arrowhead Bank
2. Beckmann Funeral Home Fredericksburg
3. Bruce & Wanda Woerner
4. Decorations Unlimited
5. HERBER REAL ESTATE
6. HILL COUNTRY PROPANE, INC.
7. HILL COUNTRY REFRIGERATION Wilbert Ottmers
8. HILL COUNTRY VET CLINIC
9. Hohmann's General Store Hardware Food, G85-3255
10. ITZ ELECTRIC
11. Jack & Lucille Laurence
12. Judy's Liquor Beer Wine Fredericksburg, 1978
13. Kenneth & Kathy Crenwelge
14. Lochte Storage & Comm. Co. Feed Wool Mohair Fredericksburg
15. Mark Hohmann Construction
16. Merrill Lynch
17. Michael and Pauline Cusack
18. Nancy & Sam Golden
19. Old Thyme FUNSHOP Shannon Anderson
20. Rabke's Table Ready Platters Jerky Deer Processing
21. Rick & Jennifer Dulaney
22. Schaeffer's Funeral Home Fredericksburg Five Generations of Continuous Service Since 18--
23. Segner's Jewelers
24. Selective Mechanical Auto & Truck Repair Ray Gold, Jr.
25. Stroehrer's & Son & Olfers Since 1923
26. The FAMILY of Franz L. & Marjorie Gold Pressler Honor over a century of Willow City Ancestors
27. Wallace Ottmers Chevron



## *What We Learned*

The many unanswered questions about the WCS curtains resulted in an inventory of all known Gillespie County country school painted curtains, attempting to answer the fundamental questions of date, maker, cost, and payment. We have documented 19 painted curtains and compared painted curtains in surrounding counties. We learned that the scenic companies sold curtain ads to local businesses, and these ads paid for the school curtain with no documented contribution from the school. Some of our curtains need to be marked or dated. Exceptions are those made between 1930-1939. Ad research noted the date business was established, a name change, a phone number or address match, or when the business closed. For example, Vapo Butane PH 375 in December 1947 changed to PH 272 before the December 1948 phone directory—ad on WCS No. 1 curtain PH 272, dating curtain c.1947. The remaining 21 ads had long histories beginning with Krauskopf Bros, est. 1851, up to Enderlin Feeds, est. 1947. If the curtain was made earlier than business ad research suggested, perhaps ad changes or additions occurred. We did not see much evidence of this. Grouping the curtains by similar designs/colors/ads let us date three curtains without dates. Doss No 1 and Cherry Spring School curtains were almost identical to Willow City School No. 1 in design, color, phone, and ads, c.1947-1948 curtains. Research on dating is still active by Friends.

## *What We Learned (cont.)*

The Friend's initial goal in 2014 to conserve the Willow City School painted stage curtain was the basis for this six-year project. After completing the conservation of the Willow City School painted stage curtain, many questions, without easy answers, continued to come forward. Even at the end of six years of curtain work, we have a new list of questions to drive more research and work. Identifying further questions for future research is positive, although it prevents us from writing an ending today.

We leave you with the hope of learning more. Join us in studying Texas history by inquiring about possible Texas-painted school stage curtains in your town or county. Share what you find. Submit your painted stage curtains to Curtains Without Borders Registry for a national study of painted stage curtains through their Survey Project at [www.curtainswithoutborders.org](http://www.curtainswithoutborders.org) or contact Friends of Gillespie County Country Schools at [www.historicschools.org](http://www.historicschools.org). As this small study demonstrated, comparing additional painted stage curtains added knowledge of scenic studios and their artists and assisted in dating unmarked curtains. Painted school stage curtains are now included on the Curtains Without Borders website.

## *Gillespie County Country School Closing*

While the school closings occurred from April to June in the early years, they consistently presented children and adult plays, BBQ, the traditional “Pruffing”, or public oral examination. This was a community event to support the school and celebrate graduation from one class to the next. Some were held in the pastures, and others on the school grounds or nearby hall. Many ads appeared in the local newspaper to invite the public to attend. School closings were held on different dates to allow family and friends to attend as many as possible. The use of make-do stages or the school stage, with a painted curtain, was an essential part of school closings. As many as a thousand people attended, as documented in early photos and school records. School Trustees organized the BBQ fundraisers. The digitized Crabapple School Trustees Record Books include many detailed entries about the school closings and BBQ. Proceeds were used to purchase needed items for the school, such as desks, maps, globes, or play equipment. Schools served the whole community as a meeting place for all. The German cultural heritage continued in the Texas Hill Country by giving land for schools, building the schools, and emphasizing education, plays, music, and singing. When the school funding ran out each year, families paid tuition for each child. Some families worked at school or delivered wood to the school as payment. This explains the school’s pride, sense of ownership, and desire to support each event, student, and need.

## *What the School Stage and Painted Curtain Taught*

Plays have served as educational tools since Roman times. Plays are visual but do not require reading. Plays teach literature, history, music, and language arts. The stage is a practical use of what you are learning in school. The teachers and parents often wrote Country School plays, and sometimes students. Plays teach us to respect the many skills needed to present a play.

A play requires:

- organization and planning of jobs;
- learning to work with all ages;
- discipline to follow the script;
- self-reliance taught by finding or making your own props and costumes, using math skills and following directions;
- memorization skills;
- strong public speaking voice, proper skills of elocution with no loudspeakers and no electricity;
- teamwork, taking your turn and partnering to raise and lower the drop-roll curtain--one on each side working in tandem;
- finding a way to provide entertainment for the community when there was little.

*Together, they developed confidence and provided practical use for learning.*

## *Gillespie County Country School Stages*

Not all painted curtains hung on a stage.

Four essential country school solutions are found here:

1. Permanent stage inside schoolhouses at Nebo, Willow City, Morris Ranch, Rocky Hill, Doss, and Palo Alto Schools. These were designated stage rooms or auditoriums and, as needed, served as classrooms.
2. Permanent stage in school pavilions at Grapetown, Rheingold, Cherry Spring, Cave Creek, Crabapple, Pecan Creek, and Cherry Mountain Schools. Rheingold School pavilion is described in National Register for Historic Places application: "Pavilion open-air built 1936. 50 ft long by 40 ft wide, a wooden stage at the back of the pavilion with dressing rooms on either side made of 1" X 6" pine boards, the floor is cement, the ceiling is open, the roof is tin, no other walls, and eight wooden posts, four on either side to support it."
3. Permanent stage in school pavilions at Grapetown, Rheingold, Cherry Spring, Cave Creek, Crabapple, Pecan Creek, and Cherry Mountain Schools. Rheingold School pavilion is described in National Register for Historic Places application: "Pavilion open-air built 1936. 50 ft long by 40 ft wide, a wooden stage at the back of the pavilion with dressing rooms on either side made of 1" X 6" pine boards, the floor is cement, the ceiling is open, the roof is tin, no other walls, and eight wooden posts, four on either side to support it."
4. Arbors with cedar post frames and fresh branches were used to protect from the sun to create a stage-like area. Wolf Creek and Crabapple Schools are examples. Wolf Creek School archives include a photo of their Arbor used at School Closing.

## *Questions for Further Study*

1. How do we continue to identify and date all painted school curtains in Gillespie County?
2. Did Gillespie County country schools ship their curtains to the Scenic Studio for changes/updates?
3. Where can we find more documentation of Gillespie County painted-school curtains?
4. Were there connections between many or all of the Texas Scenic Studios?
5. Who made the five unsigned, undated painted school curtains: Cherry Spring, Doss No. 2, Nebo, Pecan Creek, Willow City No. 1?
6. How do Friends encourage a Texas Registry of Country School Painted Stage Curtains as historical artifacts?
7. Would Country School Association of America consider an online painted school curtain registry?
8. Would a newly painted stage curtain for Fredericksburg Theater or other stages in Gillespie County be appropriate?
9. Could Friends partner with Gillespie County Historical Society to establish a Photo Collection of Gillespie County Painted Stage Curtains with school and hall-painted curtains?
10. Should we share our work with the Texas Historical Commission for direction and further study of painted school stage curtains in the Texas Hill Country?



## *Friends of Gillespie County Country Schools Affiliations*

- Country School Association of America (CSAA), [www.countryschoolassociation.org](http://www.countryschoolassociation.org)
- Fredericksburg Chamber of Commerce, [www.fredericksburg.texas.com](http://www.fredericksburg.texas.com)
- Fredericksburg Convention & Visitors Bureau, [www.visitfredericksburgtx.com](http://www.visitfredericksburgtx.com)
- National Museum of the Pacific War Museum, [www.pacificwarmuseum.org](http://www.pacificwarmuseum.org)
- National Trust for Historic Preservation, [www.savingplaces.org](http://www.savingplaces.org)
- Pioneer Museum/Gillespie County Historical Society, [www.pioneermuseum.org](http://www.pioneermuseum.org)
- Texas Hill Country Trail/Texas Historical Commission, [www.txhillcountrytrail.com](http://www.txhillcountrytrail.com)
- The Community Foundation: Friends Endowment established 2015 by Dr. Alice White, see Make a Gift at [www.communityfoundation.net](http://www.communityfoundation.net)

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*The Friends of Gillespie County Country*



Please contact Friends of Gillespie County Country Schools, Inc.  
to submit an inquiry or share information on painted school stage curtains.

Friends of Gillespie County Country Schools  
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Fredericksburg TX 78624

[www.historicschools.org](http://www.historicschools.org)  
[info@historicschools.org](mailto:info@historicschools.org)