



Waxahachie: Where Cotton Reigned King (Making of America)

Kelly McMichael Stott

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The people of Waxahachie, Texas, have always been at the heart of a thriving community that was once the largest cotton-producing county in the nation. As county seat, Waxahachie burgeoned into a bustling center for business and education and carved out a unique niche in the growing landscape. But its citizens overcame significant obstacles as well, facing such challenges as a massive slave revolt during the Civil War and the economic bust of the 1930s. Reflecting both the glory and hardship of these struggles, Waxahachie today stands as a testament to Southern determination and how a town came to be defined by a crop on which America still relies-cotton.

Always with an eye on their future, the people of Waxahachie, in 1912, supported the development of an interurban electric railway system linking them to Dallas and Waco. Each July between 1900 and 1930, Texans from all over the state came to Waxahachie by covered wagon, on horseback, and later by automobile to participate in the national Chautauqua phenomenon and hear such great orators as William Jennings Bryan and Will Rogers. Waxahachie's Chautauqua Auditorium, still in use today, is one of the few national survivors of this educational movement. This tradition of community and culture survives to the present day in such events as the Scarborough Fair, the National Polka Festival, and the Gingerbread Trail of Homes. In this new historical account, Waxahachie, Texas: Where Cotton Reigns King, the town springs to life in a blend of more than 100 vintage photographs and stories that chronicle the perseverance and love of a people for their town.

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