



GREGG COUNTY HISTORICAL
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* Member of State Historical Commission



DEDICATION

OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER

LOU DELLA CRIM HOME

1920 - 1981

KILGORE, TEXAS

SPONSORED BY

GREGG COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

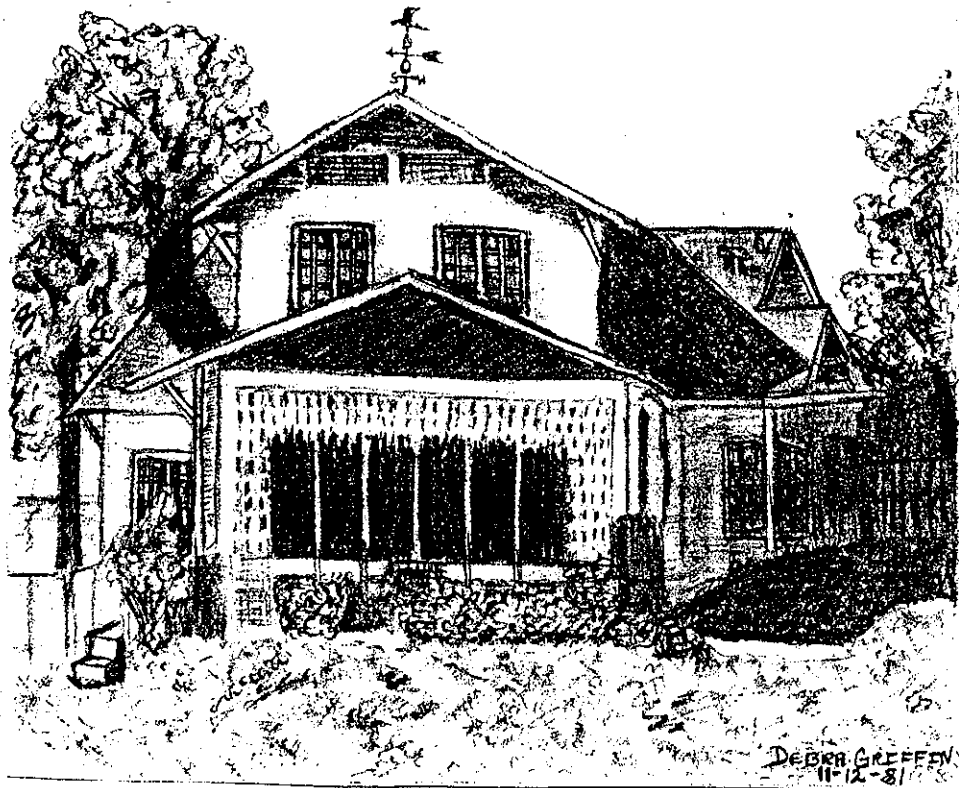
AND

JOHN ROBERT FLORENCE, JR.

*Please come!
H. Griffin*

Sunday, November 22, 1981
3:00 p. m.

201 N. Longview St.
Kilgore, Texas



LOU DELLA CRIM HOME

THIS BUNGALOW STYLE RESIDENCE WAS CONSTRUCTED IN 1920 FOR LOU DELLA (THOMPSON) CRIM (b. 1868) ON THE FORMER SITE OF THE HEARNE HOTEL. THE FARM SHE OWNED AT LAIRD HILL (4 MI. S) WAS PART OF AN OIL EXPLORATION PROJECT HEADED BY HER SON, MALCOLM, LATER THE FIRST KILGORE MAYOR, AND LOCAL FINANCIER, ED BATEMAN. HER PROPERTY GAINED NATIONAL ATTENTION ON DEC. 28, 1930, WHEN THE BATEMAN-CRIM WILDCAT WELL NO. 1, THE DISCOVERY WELL FOR THIS AREA OF THE SIGNIFICANT EAST TEXAS OIL FIELD, BLEW IN THERE. AREA RANGERS, INCLUDING THE CELEBRATED CAPT. M. T. (LONE WOLF) GONZAULLAS, WERE HOUSED HERE.

(1981)

PROGRAM

- Master of Ceremonies Mickey Smith
Mayor of Kilgore
- Invocation The Reverend Dr. Dan Goodwin
Pastor, First Presbyterian Church
Kilgore, Texas
- Welcome Mickey Smith
- Introductions and Acknowledgments Master of Ceremonies
- Address Kenneth R. Dickerson
Associate General Counsel, Atlantic Richfield Oil Co.
Dallas, Texas
- Remarks Mack Wallace
Commissioner, Railroad Commission
Austin, Texas
- Unveiling of Marker John Robert Florence, Jr.
Assisted by Lewis Wheat
- Comments, Marker Inscription Mrs. James H. Griffin, Jr.
Researcher
Member, Gregg County Historical Commission
- Dedicatory Remarks Mrs. Paul B. Belding
Chairman, Gregg County Historical Commission
- Benediction The Reverend Donald Beebe
Pastor, Grace Baptist Temple
Liberty City, Texas
- *Area Texas Rangers present, schedules permitting.

Texas Historical Commission Staff (DKU), 4/28/81, revised 6/17/81

18" x 28" Official Texas Historical Marker with post
Gregg County (Order #6184)

Location: 201 N. Longview St., Kilgore

LOU DELLA CRIM HOME*

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(1981)***

*3/4 inch lettering
**1/2 inch lettering
***1/4 inch lettering

APPROVED

Truett Latimer

by Claire Williams
9-4-81

THE LOU DELLA CRIM HOME

The Lou Della Crim home, as it is familiarly known to Kilgore and East Texas residents, is located at 201 N. Longview St. in Kilgore on Lot 4 Lou Della Crim tract, .638 acres unplatted, Mary Van Winkle Survey, City of Kilgore, being a part of Abstract 208, Gregg County, Texas. The part of the county in which this property lies became a part of Gregg County by an Act of the Legislature in April, 1874, being originally a part of Rusk County.¹ The structure is presently located on the spot where it was initially constructed in 1920.

The property was purchased for \$600 in 1900 by W. R. Crim from J. E. Hearne and wife, O. C. Hearne, the deed dated July 18, 1900 and recorded in Volume Y/416 Deed Records of Gregg County, Texas and described as 1 and 93/100 acres. In addition an affidavit by Mrs. Sam Wills stated that she knew J. E. and O. C. Hearne in 1890 as residents of Kilgore was recorded January 28, 1932 in the County Court records of Gregg County, Texas.

Following the purchase of the house, some furnishings, and acreage in July, 1900, W. R. Crim and his wife, Lou Della along with their five children, moved from their farm home, formerly the John Martin Thompson home, at Laird Hill four miles south of Kilgore, in early summer and "after they laid the crops by". Mr. Crim was a partner in Crim Brothers Grocery Store with his brother, Wiley N. Crim until his death in 1918. A son, Robert Lee, was killed while serving in France in 1918, however Mr. Crim's death came before the news of the son's death reached the family in Kilgore.

The structure, known as the Hearne Hotel and occupied by the Crim family, was dismantled immediately prior to the building of the present structure and some of the lumber was salvaged for use in the new construction. The aforementioned "Hearne Hotel" was so-called because it provided overnight lodging for railroad personnel, passengers stopping in town, and for "drummers" in the area for the

purpose of calling on local merchants as salesmen?

As mentioned before, tragedy struck the W. R. Crim family, with the following deaths occurring in the immediate family within a short number of years as determined by gravestones in the Thompson Cemetery located south of Kilgore at Laird Hill: Paul Florence, grandson of Mrs. Crim, December 1915; William Philip Crim, son of Mrs. Crim, October 1917; Robert Lee Crim, son of Mrs. Crim, October 1918; W. R. Crim, husband of Mrs. Crim, October 1918; Verner Florence, son-in-law of Mrs. Crim, May 1919; and Ellise Florence, grand-daughter of Mrs. Crim, December 1919. After several bouts with illness and pneumonia, Lou Della Crim, in a state of frail health, determined to build a modern home for more comfort in the hope of improving the condition of her health.

During the time of the dismantling of the Hearne Hotel and the construction of the new home in 1920, the family resided in a "tent-home" located on the back portion of the lot directly north of the present location of the home. All the domestic chores were performed within the temporary facility to the delight of the grandchildren of the owner. Following the death of her husband, a son and a daughter, Mrs. Crim's only daughter, Pauline, made her home, along with her small son, John Robert, with her mother. As construction was in progress, household goods, including a suite of teakwood furniture, family pictures and personal effects were stored in a vacant residence located two streets north and belonging to a Dr. Goodwin. A tragic fire occurred completely destroying the house and all the household effects stored therein, before the completion of the new residence. Two sons of Mrs. Crim, John T. and Liggett N., established homes along with their families within the same block shortly after the completion of the new home.

In addition to lumber salvaged from the razing of the Hearne Hotel, lumber for the new structure was secured by Mrs. Crim's older brother, James Allen (Jimmy) Thompson of Taylor, Texas. A native and former resident of Rusk County,

Mr. Thompson was engaged in lumbering interests in Taylor, Texas at the time of the building of the house. Frank Culp, local railway agent and brother of a sister-in-law of Mrs. Crim, Mrs. Wiley N. Crim, and, also, a close neighbor, was the builder of the structure. James A. (Jimmy) Thompson provided the plans for an "airplane bungalow" found in a magazine and agreed upon by Mrs. Crim. Being a man of traditional tastes, Mr. Thompson disliked the height of the ceilings of the published houseplans and had the builder lift the ceilings to conform with those of earlier structures. In so doing, the exterior appearance was changed from that of the house plan in the magazine. In addition, the lifting of the windows upstairs made cross ventilation ineffective and outside viewing unhandy except for an unusually tall person. The unforeseen inconveniences and changes in the overall effect were completely unintentional on the part of Mr. Thompson in his planning for his sister's home, but have since become humorous to members of the family. Thus, it is established that the house is the airplane bungalow style typical of the 1920's era. The date of the construction was during the year 1920.

Lou Della Thompson Crim, born February 3, 1868, was the daughter of John Martin Thompson and Lucinda Adeline McCord. Her father, John Martin Thompson, attended Western Military Institute at Georgetown, Kentucky and became Captain of a Confederate Army Company formed at Bellview, Rusk County, in June 1861. Lou Della was educated at the Alexander Institute in Kilgore, which in its time was without a peer in the education of the youth of East Texas.³

Captain Thompson, father of Mrs. Crim, moved from Kilgore to Sherman in 1893. When the time came that Captain Thompson desired to divide his estate, he called his children together to give them their choice of gold, investments, or land. Some chose long-desired gold coins, others investments, but Lou Della, the oldest girl, unselfishly agreed to accept 1,200 acres of land south of Kilgore

as her portion of the inheritance. It was on this land that the 22,000 barrel-a-day Lou Della Crim # 1 "wild-cat" well was located.⁴

Malcolm Crim, a Kilgore merchant and son of Lou Della Crim, became interested in the development of drilling in the Kilgore area and obtained tentative leases on 30,000 acres of land, including the farm owned by his mother, and offered it to both independent drilling contractors as well as some of the major companies. His offer was rejected many times. Other Kilgore businessmen became interested also and finally were rewarded by an offer from Ed Bateman, a former newspaperman of Marshall, Texas⁵ The "wildcat well", Bateman Crim # 1, perched on the side of the hill near the present site of Laird Hill, Texas blew in on December 28, 1930, making 22,000 barrels of oil per day and linking the field with the Daisy Bradford No. 3 nine miles to the south. Mrs. Crim, on being informed the well might be brought in on Sunday morning, chose to take her usual place in church and was informed of the gusher in the church sanctuary.

Kilgore became an incorporated city in February 1931 and Malcolm Crim was named mayor. Problems of law and order were bound to increase with the coming of the boom.⁶ Shortly after oil was discovered, the town was policed by a constable and his deputy, a county sheriff and six to eight deputies, the Kilgore police force consisting of eight men, and five or six Rangers led by Sergeant M. T. "Lone Wolf" Gonzauillas. Stories of crimes and arrests took up much space in the local press. An example of a shooting is as follows:

"Remains of A. T. Lee, 32, who died Sunday morning as a result of being shot through the head at a local cot house Saturday morning were shipped to Dallas for interment."⁷

Arrangements were made for Ranger Sergeant Gonzauillas, who arrived in Kilgore on February 28, 1931 and Ranger Robert "Bob" Goss, who was recovering from a bullet-wound incurred in the line of duty in a Dallas hospital and arrived a few

weeks later, to live in the Lou Della Crim home. Both men were under the command of Captain Tom R. Hickman. ⁸ The dining room of the residence was converted into a bedroom for the men by Mrs. Crim. No regular meals were served, however Mrs. Crim was happy to provide shelter in exchange for the protection given by the fearless Texas Rangers. The two men remained in the Crim home for about a year. ⁹

The house contains seven rooms, two stories, one porch, one fireplace and chimney, and is of frame construction with a composition shingle roof. It is in excellent condition, having been completely restored to its original state in the past three years. The exterior paint, in the restoration plan, was matched with that of the original color. The interior restoration was done with the intent of keeping the residence as nearly as possible to the original design. Built-in cabinets, floors, and woodwork are typical of the style of the early 1920's era. Three currently-producing oil wells are located in the front yard of the residence. Mrs. Crim resided and maintained the home in its presently restored condition until her death in March of 1954.

John R. Florence, Jr., a great-grandson of Mrs. Lou Della Crim, is responsible for the restoration and upkeep of the home and grounds. The lease-keepers of the wells are meticulous about the upkeep of the three pumping units and adjacent area.

Future plans call for the establishment of a museum in the residence, a structure that has provided a family residence for four generations of the W. R. Crim family. As a museum, the home and furnishings will typify the early 1920's and oil boom era of the 1930's, of general interest to citizens of the area and throughout the state.

Commemoration of the home has come about because of its historical and architectural significance. The fact that it was the residence of the lady upon whose land the discovery well in the Kilgore area was located, that she maintained a position of high respect and reputation throughout the community for her good character and benevolent acts, that historically prominent men of the oil boom

era lived in the home providing protection to the owner and shelter for them, and that the architecture represents the era in which it was constructed deem it worthy of preservation as a historic landmark. In addition, the fact that three oil wells are actively producing in the front yard of the residence is significant in this area.

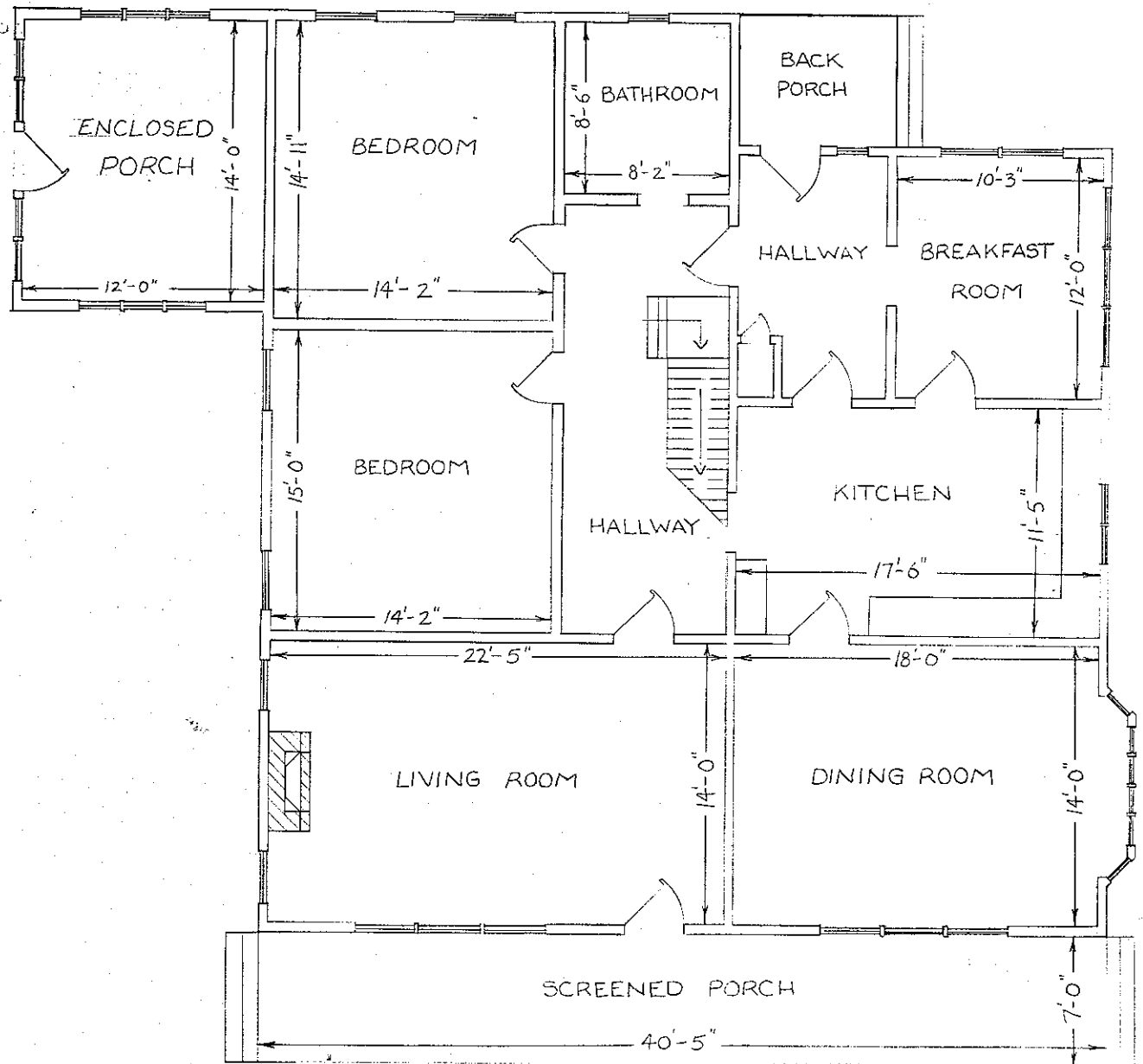
By Helen McHaney Griffin
Helen McHaney Griffin
2600 Brookview
Kilgore, Texas 75662

Footnotes:

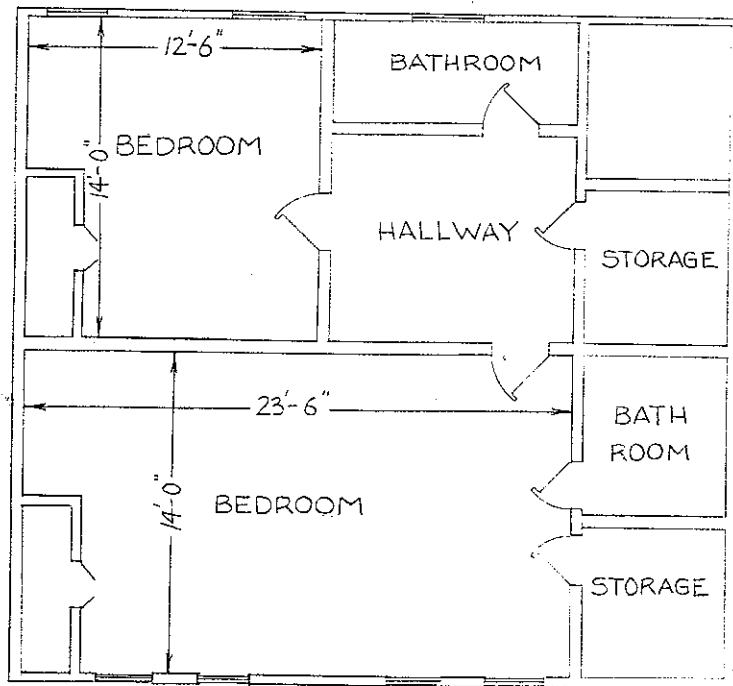
1. Levy, Richard B., The History of the Creation of Gregg County, Texas. p. 1
2. Crim, Liggett N., Personal Interview.
3. American Lumberman, "The House of Thompson".
4. Crim, John T., Sr., Personal Interview.
5. McDaniel, Ruel, Some Ran Hot, p. 16
6. McHaney, Helen Ray, The East Texas Oil Field, p. 66
7. Griffin, John P. and Cotner, Robert C., Texas Cities of the Great Depression-
Kilgore-East Texas Boom Town. p. 111
8. Eason, Al, Boom Town: Kilgore, Texas. p. 54
9. Crim, John T., Sr., op. cit.

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- American Lumberman, "The House of Thompson", Chicago, Ill. September 26, 1908
- Crim, John T., Sr. - Personal Interview, September, 1979, Kilgore, Texas
- Crim, Liggett N., Personal Interview, October 16, 1980, Kilgore, Texas
- Eason, Al, Boom Town: Kilgore, Texas, 1979
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The University of Texas at Austin, July 1973
- Levy, Richard B., A History of the Creation of Gregg County, Texas
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- McHaney, Helen Ray, The East Texas Oil Field, July 1953
- McIntosh, Pauline Crim, Notarized statements from deposition, November 8, 1973,
Tom Green County, Texas.



LOU DELLA CRIM HOME



LOU DELLA CRIM HOME

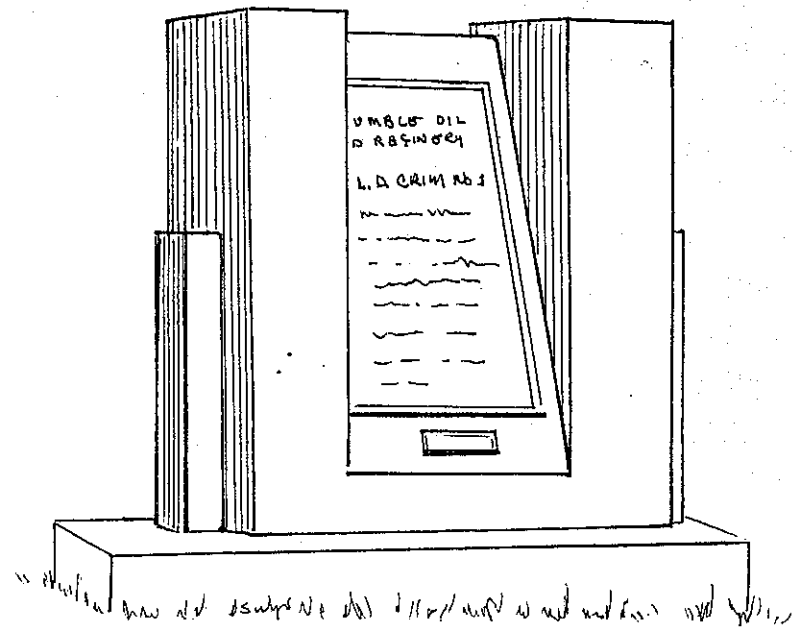
UPPER FLOOR

DEDICATION

Lou Della Crim No. 1

ART WORK

Susan Weaver



Original marker

3 P.M.

Sunday

April 17, 1988

LOU DELLA CRIM NO. 1

FOLLOWING THE DISCOVERY OF OIL
IN EAST TEXAS ON OCTOBER 3, 1930,
J. MALCOLM CRIM OF KILGORE
BELIEVED THERE WAS MORE OIL TO
BE FOUND IN THE AREA. BY OCTOBER 17
DRILLING HAD BEGUN ON LAND BELONGING
TO HIS MOTHER, LOU DELLA CRIM. THE
WELL CAME IN ON DECEMBER 28
AND WAS NAMED LOU DELLA CRIM
NO. 1. ITS DISCOVERY CAUSED THE
POPULATION OF KILGORE TO BOOM
FROM 700 to 10,000 IN THREE DAYS
AND ULTIMATELY, PROVED THAT THE
EAST TEXAS OIL FIELD WAS A
MAJOR ONE, COVERING OVER 480
SQUARE MILES. LOU DELLA NO. 1
INITIALLY PRODUCED 20,000 BARRELS
PER DAY. IT WAS PLUGGED IN 1961.

(1987)

Inscription on the marker.

P R O G R A M

PRESIDING--MRS. VIRGINIA LONG, VICE-
CHAIRMAN, TEXAS HISTORICAL
COMMISSION

INVOCATION--DR. DAN GOODMAN, JR., PASTOR,
KILGORE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

INTRODUCTION OF CRIM FAMILY AND FAMILIES
OF CREW MEMBERS--R.N. HEARNE

HISTORY OF LOU DELLA CRIM WELL--JOHN
ROBERT FLORENCE

UNVEILING OF MARKER--BILLY BOB CRIM

BENEDICTION--TALMADGE MERCER, RUSK COUNTY
COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT # 1

REFRESHMENTS: BY THE RUSK COUNTY
HISTORICAL COMMISSION