

To Herb Woesner, what was mattered as much as what is

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A long chapter of Southwest Oklahoma history has concluded, but thanks to a lifetime of preservation by Herbert W. Woesner Jr. the stories will live

A Lawton native and longtime Cache resident, Woesner died Monday at the age of 83 — and today's funeral, burial and community dinner promises to bring generations of storytellers and well-wishers.

A man who collected not bottle tops or stamps

but buildings, Woesner spent nearly half a century as a fixture in the Cache community.

He is perhaps most known as the man who saved Quannah Parker's "Star House" in 1958, when expansion plans at Fort Sill meant certain destruction for the Comanche relic. But the Star House is only one of more than a dozen buildings he collected from around the region and preserved at Eagle Park, his 250-acre spread on the western outskirts of Cache.

Long-time friend Charles Ellenbrook said starting with the first building Woesner set out to move and preserve — a Fort Sill picket house built in 1869 — Herb's intentions seemed always to be about sharing history with his neighbors.

"He loved to go out and pass along some of the stories of some of these places," Ellenbrook said.

"If it wasn't for him, we probably wouldn't have a lot of the history we have today."

Ellenbrook said the story of how he became overseer and curator of the Star House perfectly describes the type of man Woesner was.

According to the story, Woesner was told of Fort Sill's plans to demolish the house by a woman named Neda Birdsong.

"She was the last Comanche to actually live in the Star House, and she knew if she could get him interested he would put everything he had into it," Ellenbrook said. "He went out and actually talked to the authorities and was able to get it delayed."

Ellenbrook said Woesner bought Birdsong a new house while they worked out the moving logistics.

SEE WOESNER, 8A



WOESNER

ATHER

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MARKETS

Dow
+60.41
 12,362.47
 See business vitals, 5C

Crude
+3.44
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an embraced history, community



PHOTO COURTESY CHARLES ELLENBROOK

bert Woesner, owner of Eagle Park, stands in front of use, the oldest historic building at Eagle Park.

special "He brought that amusement park

Colvin said. "That's where we had the Fourth of July celebration, church parties, school parties. We had the big dances down there — the park was just always available for a noteworthy event."

Ellenbrook said on nice weekends — except Sunday morning, as Woesner was a religious man — the park would be bursting with the energy of Oklahomans hard at play.

"There'd be 20, 30, 40, people out there horseback riding through the area, and they'd have this roller-skating rink going," Ellenbrook said. "Families would go out there with their children, they'd picnic, you could buy stuff — that's the way it was, and it was a big operation going on out there."

Ellenbrook said Woesner was a clean businessman.

"He hired a lot of people, it was a clean, safe place, and they had a good reputation," he said.

Skyrocketing liability insurance forced Eagle Park to close on May 14, 1986, he sold off many of the rides in 1994 and fires and vandalism over

the years ruined some of the buildings, but until his dying day Woesner continued to give tours and tell his stories at the West Cache Trading Post.

"Herbert just loved history," Ellenbrook said. "If it wasn't for Herbert we wouldn't have any of those buildings. He's got a lot of them out there, and he can tell you the history of every single one of them."

Funeral, community dinner

Funeral for Herbert W. Woesner Jr. will be at 11 a.m. this morning at the Star House in Cache, with burial following at Highland Cemetery in Lawton.

A community dinner to celebrate Woesner's legacy has been scheduled to start between 4 and 5 p.m. tonight at the Cahoma Building — a mile east of Cache on Old Cache Road, then a quarter mile south on Quannah Road.

Family members said that celebration will last into the night, and requested people bring a dish to share.