



Eagle Lake Headlight

VOLUME 73

P. O. BOX 67

EAGLE LAKE, TEXAS 77434 THURSDAY, JULY 1, 1976

AC 713 234-2783

NUMBER 11

Eagle Lake Had Colorful Past, And Has A Bright Future!!

[The following is a brief summary of the history of Eagle Lake that was written by Mrs. Wm. H. Harrison, who has spent countless hours along with other citizens of the community in researching the history of Eagle Lake for a future comprehensive report.]

William Little and Charles Beard, two of Stephen F. Austin's colonists who helped build the Fort settlement on the Brazos River, camped on the shores of the lake now known as "Eagle Lake" in 1821. They killed an eagle there, and from that time referred to the spot as Eagle Lake.

In a letter from Austin to James Cummins, Alcalde of the Colorado District, dated May 4, 1824, Austin referred to the "Colorado District above Eagle Lake."

Eagle Lake's history stretches back to the time when the vast prairies were covered by tall grasses, wild flowers and wild game in abundance. The Karankawa Indians were known to have roamed here, fishing in the lake, and both eating the alligators, and using the grease from them to afford a repellent from the mosquitoes. Legends have grown up around the presence of the Indians, and the earliest known version of "The Legend of the Lake" was printed in the "Morning Star", Houston, June 13, 1839, which in turn was reprinted by the "Richmond Telescope". It is a romantic tale of two ill-fated lovers beside the waters of the lake.

The original Austin Land Grant was approved April 23, 1823, and in 1824 lands along the east side of the Colorado River were quickly claimed. The original grantees were

Rawson Alley, Gabriel Straw Snider, A. W. McLain and J. W. McNair, James J. Ross, James Nelson, C. C. Dyer, Thomas Cartwright and Andrew Rabb. In 1831, Patrick Reels was granted land on the lake.

In 1836 the Montgomery and Thatcher families arrived and settled on the Cartwright and Dyer Leagues. John Matthews claimed the James Nelson League in 1828. Angus McNeill bought the Ross League in 1844, and C. C. Herbert purchased the land of James S. McNair in 1845. These families all prospered on the fertile river bottom land. The principle crops were cotton, corn and some sugar cane.

Gamaliel Good, his wife and his three sons were the first known settlers in the community of Eagle Lake. By 1855 he had built a store and a half log cabin near the lake. He owned a stage coach which was driven by his son, James B. Good, from Houston to San Antonio. The Harmon Tracy family settled here at this early time also.

In 1856 Gamaliel Good purchased 2300 acres out of the Patrick Reels lands, and with D. W. C. Harris, a part-purchaser, a townsite was designated. In 1859 Texas' first railroad, the Buffalo, Brazos, and Colorado Railway reached Eagle Lake from Harrisburg. The Post Coach was extended from Eagle Lake to Matagorda. Judge J. J. Mansfield, distinguished congressman from Texas, began his law practice here and edited a small newspaper "The Canoe". He was elected County Judge of Colorado county in 1888 and issued the order of incorporation of Eagle Lake September 13, 1888. Capt. J.

W. McCarty was the first mayor, and W. T. Eldridge, later founder of Sugar Land Industries was the first city marshal. Capt. William Dunovant, a cotton planter and grower and miller of sugar cane, introduced rice growing into the area in the lower lake in 1898. Thereafter shallow wells, and a system that employs water pumped from the Colorado River to the lake and then into canals, irrigated the rice.

The Lake has been a recreation spot for many years. At one time a pavilion was built over the lake where "balls" were held. In 1920 the Lake was leased by the Eagle Lake Rod and Gun Club with a membership of very prominent Houston men that continues to the present time. In 1918 and 1919 the lake was a training point for airmen from Ellington Air Force Base, the lake serving as a bombing target.

Eagle Lake has long been a shipping center. At one time there were three rail lines serving the area. Today, oil, cattle, rice and sand and gravel shipments make Eagle Lake the second largest point of tonnage shipped on the Southern Pacific between San Francisco and New Orleans.

Amateur theatrics began here in 1923 with the Komus Klub. Out of this grew the Little Theater, the second after Dallas, organized in Texas.

Women's Study groups have been active since 1909. In 1919 the present Study Club organized and supported a library that only recently received city and county aid. In 1975 a new \$150,000.00 library, the Eula and David

(Continued on page 19)



1776 1976

200 YEARS OF FREEDOM

Let Us Rejoice---

On this 200th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America, let us rejoice as we recall the events which brought about the turbulent beginning of our history—the story of the greatest system of freedom that mankind has ever known. The very emblem of the eagle stands for freedom, as well as the strength, courage and will to defend it whenever necessary; for freedom is a fragile thing and the price of it can come high. Nevertheless, despite the many problems which have beset us, we have managed to preserve it for two hundred years.

Let Us Resolve---

Let us now look ahead, and resolve to keep America free through all the centuries yet to come.

D. R. Wintermann Warehouse

PHONE 234-2695 - EAGLE LAKE, TEXAS

Downtown Eagle Lake In 1913



This is the way the downtown Eagle Lake city square looked in the early 1900's with its hitching posts instead of parking meters. Crowds gathered there on cool summer evenings to hear the band play a concert in the circular band stand and to pass the time of day.