

Transportation, Railroads led in EL's Development

Mrs. James G. Hopkins, chairman of the County Historical Commission, recently gave this interesting report on "Transportation and Railroads of Colorado County."

Stephen F. Austin chose the land along the Colorado River not only because of the fertility of the soil, but also because he expected settlers to be able to use the river to transport goods. This did not prove satisfactory because of sandbars, snags and accumulated drift timber in the river.

Goods had to be transported over primitive roads which in some instances were little more than trails and were often impassable in rainy weather. It was not until 1824 that the state assumed any financial support of roads and highways.

Seven years after statehood, the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railroad began operation. Traffic on the first 20 miles from Harrisburg to San Antonio was completed in 1859. By 1859, the railroad reached Eagle Lake and a year later it was completed to Alton. Stage lines and wagon masters met the trains in Alton and it developed into a thriving town with a hotel, stores, a doctor and drug stores.

A group of businessmen from Columbus organized the Columbus Twp. Railway Company which received its charter in 1860. This charter gave the railroad permission to build a bridge across the Colorado River to Columbus.

Before the bridge was built in 1867, a ferry was used to cross the river.

The B&C began to move west. Weimar, Glidden and Borden were settled. The railroad was completed to San Antonio in 1877. The B&C bought the Columbus Twp. Railroad and renamed the company the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad.

Later it was renamed the Texas and Pacific. The railroad was completed to San Antonio in 1885 and four years later it reached Eagle Lake, coming through Yonkers, Hallettsville and Rock Island.

In 1886, a group of businessmen in Eagle Lake received a charter for the Cane Belt Railroad. It was to run from Eagle Lake to Bonita to reach the large sugar plantations. After the track was laid, the owners decided to make a real railroad out of it and had their

History Of Post Offices

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Settlement was named by Dr. Samuel Davies McLeary, Postmaster, for the luxurious growth of bois d'arc or osage oaks in the vicinity. The Osage Post Office operated from 1860 to 1869.

PROVIDENT CITY
This community was founded in 1909 and named for the Provident Land Company which owned much of the land in this area. The mail was transferred from the Goldenrod Post Office in 1910.

OTHERS DISCONTINUED
Other discontinued post offices in Colorado County included: Egypt, Cuba, New Mainz, Cheatham and Shiner.

Garwood Post Office
A. C. Abell of Garwood tells something of its early history. He says an Abell family has lived there since the days when the cows came home from the pasture with Indian arrows in their hides.

The mail was brought, once a week, to Vox Populi from Columbus. Mr. Abell's son, Phoebe Bartlett, was postmistress and kept the mail in a box in her sewing machine drawer in the 1870's.

The S&P built a right of way through the country in 1884 and after that mail came from Alton.

The Lahay, Schoellmann and Shaw families were among the first settlers, coming sometime in the 1870's. William Schoellmann put up the first gin and it took a whole day to gin 2 bales of cotton.

Garwood used to get freight by boat, a river steamer coming through. One was the "Moccasin Belle," the anchor of which is now on the front walk of the R. E. Tait home in Columbus.

The Priesmeyer store has been in Garwood since 1917, moving there from Rock Island where it was first known as the Priesmeyer - Weimar company, opening about 1910.

H. F. Priesmeyer, founder, came to the United States from Germany when he was 16, first locating at St. Louis. He was a shoe salesman, traveling over the entire country, before he settled at Rock Island.

After the store was moved to Garwood, Mr. Priesmeyer became postmaster, retiring in 1953. His son, W. X. became postmaster but later became rural route carrier and Herbert Popp was named postmaster and still resides in that office.

Another son, F. B. Priesmeyer manages the Priesmeyer Stores in Garwood, Gaze, Somerville and Seewy.

Ben and Mollie Fields built a hotel later operated by the L. R. Brates and later it was known as the Chapman hotel. The Chapman hotel was opened in 1910. Directors were: J. J. Pinchback, president; Frank Arnold, vice president; W. S. Griffiths, vice president; J. L. Chapman, cashier; M. Griffiths and Ed R. Franks.

Two weekly papers were published in Garwood from about 1909 to around 1912. They were the Garwood Progress and the Garwood Express. The latter was published by Charles Mrazek.

Landowners from North In those days the Garwood Land Co. was bringing landowners to Garwood from the north. The late G. M. Jackson, father of R. E. Jackson of Columbus, was local manager of the land company. He also had a construction business and later managed the pumping plant.

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An early scene in Garwood, in front of the Ed R. Franks place of business, built about 1908, one of the first in Garwood.

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Altair Was Once Known As Stafford

Altair in the early days before 1900 had a population of about 100 and did a big agriculture business, the principal shipments being cotton and cattle.

The railroad at Altair was the first in the area and was a shipping point for Garwood, Nuda and other surrounding towns; consequently, it was a busy place.

All trains, along the railroad were discontinued and it is no longer a railroad station.

Altair was first named Stafford Station for that family who were owners of many acres of land and large herds of cattle and the settlement was headquarters for the Stafford ranch. Later the name was changed to its present one because the first name conflicted with the little town side of Houston with the same name.

Oldtimers laugh when they tell one of the versions of the story about Altair's name. It seems that a gang of Irish paddys built the railroad through there and a saloon was near the track. When the track was completed, the workmen all got on a tear, thus the name, "Altair."

Stafford and Tait families were some of the first in Altair and later came the Walker families. H. Lee Johnson and Ike T. Pryor, the Cy Wrights, Dr. and Mrs. H. C. Sigler, the Werlins, the H. C. Millers and the Seaborns. The Seaborns were among early families there.

The W. C. Munn Co. once maintained a branch at Altair and earlier still, Robert and Will Tait had a saloon and dance hall there.



"Be Americans. Let there be no sectionalism, no North, South, East or West; You are all dependent one on another and should be one in union. In one word, be a nation; be Americans, and be true to yourselves." GEORGE WASHINGTON

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BICENTENNIAL REPORT

Ramsey Hotel Being Restored As The Farris 1912

William and Helen Farris purchased the Hotel Ramsey (formerly the Hotel Ramsey) from Mrs. Regie Letts Stiles of Houston. The building, erected in 1912 on the north-west corner of Post Office and McCarty Streets by W. A. Dallas, has been a landmark in Eagle Lake for many years.

Designed by Architect E. A. Barnes of Houston and constructed by contractor O. J. Howard, the erection of the hotel was quite an event for Eagle Lake throughout the year of 1912. Former Headlight editor, the late Bruce McCarty, wrote numerous articles giving reports and descriptions as work progressed on the building. Mr. and Mrs. Farris are using these very descriptive articles from the Headlight's microfilm file as a guide in the restoration of the building and furnishings.

The building has had several owners throughout its sixty-three year history with Mrs. Stiles owning and operating the hotel since 1948. It is built on the site of the former Good Hotel which dated from Eagle Lake's first days during the 1850's on the coastal prairie. The Dallas-Ramsey Hotel was the location of many socials, dinners, parties and even conventions in years past. Because it has been an integral part of the town's history for so many years Mr. and Mrs. Farris hope to preserve and restore it for Eagle Lake's people to appreciate and enjoy in future years.

Records indicate the year 1912 was a good year for Eagle Lake. The town was a bustling hub community in this area of the state served by three railroads, several other hotels and a busy town square. So with that special year from early in the twentieth century in mind the building will be named The Farris 1912.

Mrs. Stiles purchased the old hotel from Mrs. Jewel Starkey who became owner of the hotel when she purchased it from the P. P. Ramseys and the hotel was known then as the Ramsey Hotel.

The Farris family has been working hard and long to get much of the hotel restored in time for the July 4-4th Bicentennial activities. The Farris 1912 will be the setting for an arts and crafts show from 10 noon to 5:30 p.m. on both dates and they invite you to come by for a visit to the show and to see the restoration of this community landmark.

The Farris 1912 now houses the Farris' Helen's Flower Shop. The building was built by the Farris family and is being restored as The Farris 1912 by the William L. Farris family. The building now houses Helen's Flower Shop and will be the setting for the Arts and Crafts Show July 3rd and 4th.

Some of the other hotels in Eagle Lake's past were the Good Hotel, Mersfelder Hotel, Drummer's Hotel, of them, the Callison Hotel, the Brown Hotel and the Eagle Hotel and possibly others.

Possibly the world's largest pearl is the Pearl of Asia, as large as a pear and weighing about a third of a pound. Shah Hashan of India gave the jewel to his favorite wife, for whom he, also built the Taj Mahal.

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