

Legend of Eagle Lake

This is reprinted from a Chamber of Commerce pamphlet, which reprinted it from the Morning Star, Houston, 1936 Vol. 1, no. 56.

Eagle Lake is a beautiful sheet of water, about seven miles in circumference, and is connected by a bayou bearing the same name — a kind of outlet with the Colorado. The body of land through which Eagle Lake passes may be said to be without exception the most fertile in the world. Besides its qualities of unsurpassed fruitfulness there is no part of the known western hemisphere where the common grape grows so abundantly or abounds so spontaneously.

A large sycamore tree is shown on the west shore of the lake where a large eagle, the "Palo Washington," built her

nest. The remains of the nest are there, consisting of the branches of trees and tufts of grass, which hang fully 110 feet from the surface of the earth below. The bird was the king eagle, and its nest was considered inaccessible. The "king eagle's nest" and "eagle's water" were proverbial phrases with the various tribes of Indians in western Texas.

The daughter of an Indian chief — a beautiful dark-eyed girl — was wooed by two young warriors of equal pretensions to consider among the Indians. Each was anxious to obtain the hand of the fawn-like damsel of the woods, and each was determined to win her by force. The proposition was accepted, and the rival lovers sent out to procure, if possible, the young

of the forest. To say which should become the husband of his daughter was a great perplexity to the mind of the maiden's father. He had his political interests to strengthen and his views to carry out as have greater men in greater nations. After many cogitations he resolved upon the following plan by which the suitors were to be tested.

It was in the summer season and the "great eagle" had hatched her young. The old chief's plan was no more nor less than that the young man of the two in question who could bring him the young eaglets alive, by a certain time, without cutting down the trees, should have his wish. The proposition was accepted, and the rival lovers sent out to procure, if possible, the young

eaglets. Each prepared himself with a rawhide rope to throw over some limbs of the tree, which could be fastened and facilitate the ascent. They both arrived about the same time and the last of the two lovers breathed his last. Frantic with frenzy and despair, she plunged the lance into her breast and died as she had always lived, in the language of the Indians who related the story, "the wife of no one."

Ever afterwards, the spot was regarded with superstitious veneration by every tribe of Indians to whom was related the tale of the hapless story. One in every seven months the young men and maidens assembled to consecrate the spot and each time they erected a cenotaph of flowers to their memory.

Thus Eagle Lake took its name by which it is known and will ever be.

When the Hotel Dallas was completed it was the epitome of everything great that one could expect to find in rural Texas. Designed by architect A.E. Barnes of the firm of Sanguinet, Stutz & Barnes of Houston, it was hailed by many as the finest small town hotel in the state. The hotel flourished until the depression of the 1890's. At the decades marched on the large brick hotel on the town square declined until it was in a state of pitiful disrepair.

During the early years of the 20th century, Eagle Lake enjoyed a rare small town advantage because three railroad lines converged within the town's limits, thus creating an abundance of travelers and

drummers (peddlers) causing the hotel business to boom. As many as eight hotels vied for the patronage of these travelers. Today only the Farris remains to carry on the country inn tradition of welcoming the travel weary with warm hospitality, bed and board.

William and Helen Farris purchased the old hotel in December 1917. The structure was re-christened "The Farris 1912" because the hotel corner where Eagle Lake began had traditionally carried the name of the proprietor and because 1912 was indeed Eagle Lake's golden era.

The Farris family era, carefully completed the interior restoration over a period of several years with overnight guests finally being welcomed into the building late in 1977.

Today the old hotel sparkles by day and glows by night. Its gardens, public rooms and parlors afford large and comfortable areas for dining, relaxing and shopping. The second floor accommodates sixteen char-

ming bedrooms as well as a huge mezzanine. Throughout the Farris 1912 the charm of Victorian and turn-of-the-century antiques make every room, nook and cranny a point of interest. Livable, comfortable furnishings coupled with dramatic use of color create a warm, hospitable atmosphere throughout the guest rooms.

The 1920's vintage guest house, located within the hotel courtyard, provides a motor unit for those guests who prefer to door parking or ground floor rooms. The Farris 1912 and the stories of its restoration, furnishings, food, hospitality, proprietors and notable guests have been featured in numerous publications, newspapers, books and television nationwide, regional, national and international coverage.

A registered-Texas historical landmark, the Farris 1912 is one of the earliest country inn restoration projects to take place in the state.

Site of Farris 1912 has hotel history

The present structure was erected as The Hotel Dallas in 1912 on the town square corner where Eagle Lake began in 1857. It was built on the site of an earlier cowboy-stage stop hotel known as The Good Hotel. Thus Eagle Lake has had a hotel on the present site since the late 1850's.

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First Picture Show

Reprinted from The Headlight of Nov. 2, 1929

Eagle Lake's first picture show was in the building lately occupied by the L.A. Solomon store. Picture shows in Eagle Lake of the earlier days, remained but comparatively short durations under the same managements — they came and they went.

The second permanent picture show, following the closing of the one mentioned, opened in the east half of the McCarty building, that portion of the building now occupied by the McDonald cleaning and pressing shop.

After a time it too, gave up the ghost, and it was then that the first open air picture show was started. "The Airplane," a walled enclosure without top or bottom, was erected on the corner of the McCarty building.

The proprietor of this show, as cooler weather came on and his attendance grew lighter, sold the business to W.A. Moore, who was station agent at the Southern Pacific depot.

Mrs. Moore and her sons operated the show for several years, making it of the first real successful moving picture show for the town of Eagle Lake. Instead of the open show, Mr. Moore erected a building on the lot where the C.K. Brodhead garage is now.

The interior of the show house is a dream — its decorations are of a soft blinding liveliness — costly velvet curtains — several will swing open to display an elaborate electrical effect and give beautiful

Headlines from the Headlight
Avalon will have gorgeous and spectacular opening on Monday — New Theatre's Opening to be Gala Event, with all talking feature picture, an all-talking comedy, screen sound novelties, stage novelties and music by a full pit dance orchestra.

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Strength of First National Bank mirror of community growth

The financial institutions of the area have played an important part in the growth of Eagle Lake, and the central figure since the turn of the century 80 years ago has been the First National Bank of Eagle Lake.

The strength of the bank can be measured by two factors, its personnel and its growth in deposits. Both have mirrored the strength

of the community. For instance, in 1940, the bank listed deposits at just over \$887,000, but ten years later, grew more than six times to more than \$5.2 million.

It took two more decades for the deposits to double, to more than \$10.7 million in 1970, but only another five years to double again when deposits were listed at \$20.6 million.

As a matter of fact, most real estate, business and agricultural financing in Eagle Lake is done by the First National Bank.

For instance, current and recent projects receiving bank assistance include: Trendmark Development of more than 30 residences; Kevin Court Apartments; Solar Hills Apartments; City of Eagle Lake sewage treatment plant; Little

League Park and concession facilities; Eagle Lake Community Center, and Eagle Lake Fire Department for its emergency van and jaws of life equipment.

Many of the bank's employees belong to and support many of the organizations in the community. William H. Harrison, Jr., is a member and past president of the

Rotary Club, past president of the Colorado County Fair, vice president of the United Way, and a director of the Eagle Lake Industrial Foundation and the Revitalization Committee.

Travis Wegenhoff is a member of the Eagle Lake Fire Department. As the community celebrates its first festival

organized under the auspices of the Revitalization Committee, the bank stands ready to support the committee's purpose: that of providing a central organization designed to improve the business climate here, as well as improve the physical image of the community.

Bank built its strength through city's history

The following is a history of the First National Bank of Eagle Lake, reprinted from the 75th anniversary annual report.

During the latter part of 1903 five Eagle Lake businessmen decided to apply for a charter and organize the First National Bank of Eagle Lake, Texas. Although the charter was not granted until December 30, 1904, the first public notice pertaining to the bank was an article appearing in the Eagle Lake

Headlight on December 25, 1903, reading as follows:

"The Newsome corner lot where Abe Beake's barber shop now stands was sold yesterday to W. T. Eldridge for a consideration of \$3,250 which is the highest price yet paid for Eagle Lake property. We are informed that a two story brick building which will be used for a bank will be erected on the lot as soon as the present building is removed."

The first call report by the Comptroller of the Currency came after only eleven days of operation. It

showed Capital Stock of \$25,000 and deposits of \$7,348 with total assets of \$35,872. At the end of the first year the bank showed a profit of \$2,152.56.

J. J. Whitley succeeded Green as president on October 30, 1906. Shortly after his resignation, Green and M. E. Gwynn with others, opened a state-chartered bank in Eagle Lake with which First National competed during the early years.

The famous "money panic" of 1907, which put many banks into bankruptcy, prompted First National's board to adopt a resolution refusing the payment of cash "on any check or checks of any one individual, firm, or corporation."

On January 4, 1909, the beginning of a long and illustrious banking career with The First National

began with the hiring of W. E. Lenhart as Assistant Cashier.

On December 23, 1913, the U. S. Congress approved the Federal Reserve Act and required all National Banks to join. Accordingly, on August 17, 1914, the bank requested membership in The National Association of Banks.

J. Whitley as President in January, 1916. Whitley continued to serve as President. Stephens was followed by Frank Stephens as President from 1918 to 1920, whereupon W. S. Strickland became President.

The American Rice Growers Association had its start in Eagle Lake in 1901 when the bank's board agreed to allow each farmer to allocate 5 cents per barrel from their mortgage in order to join.

Such bonds offer a small financial advantage to the farmer, because the interest rates "can" be somewhat lower since they are tax free to the purchaser.

The foundation aims to locate businesses that will move here, to provide employment for residents. As employment in the community increases, the spending power of the community increases also, financing residents and businesses here.

This week, the foundation is scheduled to have its annual membership meeting. Membership in the foundation costs \$100. According to the by laws of the foundation, "No dividend shall ever be declared or paid from the profits of the corporation, but any and all profits accruing or earned shall be placed in a surplus fund to be used in the furtherance of the purposes and objectives of the corporation."

The by laws also state that should the foundation be dissolved, the earnings, sums or property in excess of invested capital shall be distributed to such charitable or non-profit organizations as board of directors may deem proper.

With the help of a city correspondent bank, First National made its largest

loan ever in 1954 to finance the construction of the Eagle Lake Rice Dryer. The amount was \$147,000, barely enough to put in a rice crop in today's dollars.

In 1958 the "old gave way to the new" as plans were set in motion to replace and expand the bank quarters. The building to the north occupied by Epps Store was purchased and today's modern structure was built.

Expansion in 1975 took in both the drugstore and theater buildings to the east along Main St., in order to provide additional work space and drive up facilities.

The building occupied as "Jo Ann's" (formerly Epps' Department Store) was purchased by the bank in June of 1975.

George H. Crane became President following Wm. E. Lenhart. He served for three years and was replaced in 1963 by Wm. H. Harrison who retired in July 1979 after more than 17 years of service which saw the bank grow from \$7 million to \$33 million in Total Assets.

During its 75 year lifetime, The First National Bank of Eagle Lake has enjoyed varying degrees of success and prosperity. Like the majestic oaks throughout our community, the growth rings are not always the same distance apart. But hopefully our bank, as the sturdy oak symbolizes, has been a source of strength and stability to each of our customers and friends.

Congratulations
to the
Festival Committee
for a
Job Well Done!!

Rice
Industries, Inc.

Supports the efforts of all
persons involved in
Revitalize Eagle Lake, Inc.

Festival logo designed by Troy Corman



Troy Corman, son of Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Corman, was selected as the winner of the "Logo Contest" in which Mrs. Bengel's art students were asked to design a logo for the festival.

Troy is a senior at Rice High School in his third year of art and plans on majoring in advertising in college. In addition to his art Troy has been active in both football and baseball.

Troy and his family are members of the Lissie United Methodist Church. In his design Troy used a star denoting Eagle Lake Revitalize Eagle Lake, Inc. inside of Texas. He symbolized four major aspects of the community by using a tractor to represent farming, rice to represent Eagle Lake's major crop, an eagle to represent the

Legend of the Lake, and geese to represent the Chamber's claim to fame for Eagle Lake as "Goose Hunting Capital of the World."

Later the slogan "Eagle Lake, Texas — A Good Place to Live" was an idea from two other art students; but was picked by the Festival Committee judges to go along with the artistic design by Troy.

Troy received no monetary recognition for this wonderful contribution to the festival and Revitalize Eagle Lake, Inc. However, we would like to say that many people in the community are very proud of his contribution and it will be a lasting tribute to the talents and involvement of the young people of Eagle Lake, Texas.

The
American
Association
of University Women
Eagle Lake Branch

Supports
Revitalize
Eagle Lake, Inc.

MOVING AHEAD
IN '83.

Our Pledge To
Progress...

Continued strong support
of Eagle Lake and its
future efforts!

The First National Bank

Revitalization documents sent to state

After many weeks of preparation the documents which will incorporate and make the Revitalization Committee a non-profit organization have been approved by the committee and sent to State officials. These documents will make it possible for the committee to become an organization which can apply for and receive money from various funding sources to accomplish many of the goals originally set by members of the committee and citizens of the community.

Restoration of the old swimming pool and the establishing of a park system.

Restoration of the old swimming pool and the establishing of a park system.

Establishment of a low-interest loan pool to assist in refurbishing the buildings in the downtown area.

Establishment of a community museum to preserve the history and culture of Eagle Lake.

Beautification of the downtown area and the entrances to the community.

To provide a festival by which money could be raised and the citizens of Eagle Lake could celebrate the festival.

However, the committee has gone as far as it can on the original \$120 which set up a bank account and the many donations of stamps, phone, etc., which volunteers have provided, according to Paulette Klockman, coordinator for the revitalization efforts.

To accomplish the goals, funds are needed for such projects as the historical and structural surveys which are needed to apply for most grants, seed money or "match money" for grants which are available such as the Urban Development Block Grant (UDAG), and cover the costs of making application.

The "Come April Fest" scheduled this weekend, April 23 will coincide very well with the approval of the documents which will establish Revitalize Eagle Lake, Inc. as a non-profit organization.

The funds which will be earned from the festival can make a good beginning account for the committee to take the steps necessary to

apply for grants and finally see the rewards of many months of planning. Whether the first visible signs of success comes in

1931: Study Club Library

The first library in Eagle Lake was formed by the Study Club in 1931 with books the ladies had on hand at home. It has been located many places since its beginning — over the old fire station, in the Norris Building and in the small room at the end of the Community Center before being a major source of summer entertainment.

Eagle Lake should indeed be proud of the contribution the Eula and David Wintermann library makes to the community.

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