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**EL chamber proclaims Eagle Lake as 'Goose Hunting Capital of the World'**

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 on referred to the spot as Eagle Lake.

The area's history stretches back to the time when the vast prairies were covered by tall grasses, wild flowers and abundant wild game. The Karankawa Indians were known to have roamed there, 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 around the presence of the Indians, and the earliest known version of "The Legend of the Lake" was printed in the *Morning Star*, Houston, dated June 13, 1839, which in turn, was reprinted by the *Richmond Telescope*. It's the 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 families that lived there all prospered on the fertile river bottom land, and the principal crops were cotton, corn and some sugar cane.

In 1898, a new crop, rice, was introduced to the area by Capt. William Dunovant, and soon 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 prominent Houston men that continues to the present time.

In 1918 and 1919, the lake was the training point for airmen from Ellington Air Force Base, and actually 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, 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 in Eagle Lake 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 now receives city and county aid. In 1975, a new \$150 million library, the Eula and David Wintermann Library, was built and given to the city by the Wintermanns.

That same year, the citizens raised funds matched by Hill-Burton, and a modern 35-bed hospital, an expenditure of \$1,500,000 was dedicated debt-free.

The growing of rice on the prairies surrounding the town has attracted a vast number of ducks and geese, and the fine hunting prompted the chamber of commerce to proclaim Eagle Lake the "Goose Hunting Capital of the World."

Did You Know?

Eagle Lake is a rural, agricultural community, based on long-grain rice production. There are extensive sand and gravel operations, which have spawned a local trucking industry. The sand and gravel production has given Houston its needed base construction materials for its building boom, fueled by Eagle Lake Concrete Product's cement block plant in Eagle Lake, which holds a major share of the Houston block market. Colorado County oil and natural gas operations round out the economy.

Rice Medical Center

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