

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

A THESIS

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Lee Nesbitt

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

A THESIS

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By

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PREFACE

The purpose in preparing this thesis has been to collect and preserve in permanent form authentic data concerning the historical, economic, and social development of Fort Bend County, one of the oldest counties of our State. It has been interesting to investigate the development the county has achieved and the relation of its pioneers,--many of whose descendants still live on original land grants,--to that progress.

The sources from which the material for this thesis has been obtained are many and varied. Much of the data has been secured from early histories of the State, Gammel's Laws of Texas, the United States Census Reports, county and state newspapers, county records, records in the Texas Archives of the State, and correspondence and interviews with professional and business men and other citizens of the county.

It is the hope that this study will assist in creating a keener interest in the writing of local history, and that others may undertake a similar task in recording the story of the progress of their counties.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	
PREFACE	
I. GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS OF FORT BEND COUNTY	1
Location	1
Climate	1
Drainage	2
Physiography	3
Character of Population	4
Towns	8
II. EARLY HISTORY	21
Pre-Colonial Period	21
The First Colony	22
Indian Relations	28
The Mexican Invasion	29
III. LEGAL AND JUDICIAL HISTORY	37
County Jails	43
Courthouses	45
The Jaybird Democratic Association	58
IV. FORT BEND COUNTY AND NATIONAL DEFENSE	66
The Meir Expedition	66
Mexican War	68
Civil War	68
Economic Conditions in the County in 1860	69
Secession	72
County Relief During the Civil War	77
Conditions after the War	82
Spanish American War	84
World War I	85
Armistice Celebration	92
American Legion Post	93
American Legion Auxiliary	94

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
V. DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	95
River Navigation	95
Freighting and Highways	98
Railroads	104
Automobile Traffic	113
VI. DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRIES	115
Corn	115
Cotton	118
Sugar Cane	126
Potatoes	133
Rice	134
Other Crops	137
Pecans	138
Beef Cattle	140
Dairying	148
Poultry	153
Turkeys	155
Oil	155
Sulphur	158
Banking	159
VII. SOCIAL AND CIVIC DEVELOPMENT	167
Barbecues, Contests, Fairs	167
The County Fair	176
Societies, Theatricals, Marriages	177
Political and Patriotic Activities	182
Fraternal Orders	186
Professional and Civic Agencies	193
VIII. EDUCATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT	207
Schools	207
Churches	216

CHAPTER I

GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS OF FORT BEND COUNTY

Fort Bend County was named for an old fort built by a group of Austin's colonists in 1821 in the bend of the Brazos River at the present site of Richmond, the county seat. This "fort" and the circumstance of its location were the origin of the name Fort Bend Settlement, by which the locality was known up to the time of the Texas Revolution.¹

Location. Fort Bend County is located in the coastal prairie of Southeast Texas. It lies on both sides of the Brazos River, only one county removed from the Gulf of Mexico. It is more exactly located as lying between parallels twenty-nine and thirty degrees, and longitude ninety-five and ninety-six degrees.²

Climate. The climate is very suitable to various industries and is pleasant to live in. The temperature seldom rises above 100 degrees or falls below thirty degrees Fahrenheit. There is usually a cooling breeze from the Gulf in summer, and in winter extreme cold is unknown, except for an occa-

1 Frances White Johnson, A History of Texas and Texans, (ed) Eugene C. Barker and Ernest William Winkler, vol. II, pp. 650-651.

2 The Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, "Counties and Cities of Texas", 1936, p. 408.

sional blast of short duration from the north. The rainfall of the county averages forty-one inches per year. It is well distributed throughout the year, but is heaviest in the winter and spring. Droughts of short periods occur in the summer and fall. Heavy dews added to the rainfall provide sufficient moisture for abundant plant life. The extra water supply needed for irrigating rice is provided by the deep wells in the county.³

Drainage: The general slope of the land is in a southeasterly direction. The Brazos River and its tributaries afford the principal drainage. The San Bernard River is the western boundary of the county--a small stream until it reaches Brazoria County to the South. Big Creek, a tributary to the Brazos, flows through the county between the Brazos and the San Bernard. On the east side Jones Creek empties into the Brazos one mile above Richmond, the county seat. Oyster Creek rises in the northeastern part of the county, and pursuing a course parallel with the Brazos, empties into the bay west of Galveston. Clear Creek, Cedar Creek, Snake Creek, Sebring Creek, Mound Creek, Cow Creek, Bee Creek, and Robb Bayou are well distributed throughout the county and supply excellent drainage facilities.⁴

3 Alex Deussen, Geology and Underground Waters of Southwestern Part of the Texas Coastal Plain, p. 149

4 Valuable assistance in this phase of the study was obtained from Davis Crow, an experienced surveyor of Fort Bend County.

Physiography. Fort Bend County, with an area of 792 square miles, has a large variety of soil, much of which compares favorably with the richest in the world. There are fields along the Brazos that have been in use for more than a century, yet they continue to produce profitable crops as if their fertility were inexhaustible. Therefore fertilizers are not yet needed for general crops on the red lands along the Brazos. More than ninety per cent of the county area is covered by soils belonging to the following groups: red bottom lands, black sticky clay, light sandy loams, and clay loams.⁵ In areas appropriate to their growth, the soil produces ash, elm, hackberry, cottonwood, mesquite, pecan and both live oak and post oak. The mineral resources consist of oil, gas, sulphur, salt and asphalt.⁶

As a part of a state which produces oil in a favorable proportion to its immense size, Fort Bend County ranks twenty-fourth with the other 253 counties. Her six million barrels answer for one-fourth per cent of the total flow of 470,000,000 barrels which Texas was able to market in 1933.⁷

5 S. A. McMillan, The Book of Fort Bend County, Texas, pp. 25-29.

6 The Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, "Counties and cities of Texas", p. 413.

7 Ibid., pp. 218-219.

Natural gas, which has a large percentage of waste due to poison and lack of market, is found in large and highly concentrated quantities. This gives a source of energy which may in the near future prove itself a means of support for this area.

The sulphur industry has favored the county by placing a field at Orchard. It is at present young in the point of development, but is destined to become a prominent factor in the financial advancement of the county.

Salt deposits are also found in several locations in this area, and one, about ten miles north, has been operating as a paying enterprise.

The Texas Coaster, October 22, 1922, gives the following account of the discovery of asphalt in Fort Bend County:

A discovery was accidentally made a few days ago on Oswald Volka's place about one mile west of Needville. Volka's children were burning weeds when they found a large crevice. Upon investigating it, it was seen that some combustible substance in the earth was burning. It was extinguished and Volka bored down a few feet into the earth and found a ten foot strata of pure asphalt. He bored into a number of places and the substance was found in every hole.⁸

Character of the Population. During the colonial period when people in the old states were seeking new lands of opportunity, the first settlers of Fort Bend County were the Anglo-Americans who came from the region across the Mississippi River. Behind them were the traditions of a proud and

⁸ News item, "Asphalt Deposit Found", The Texas Coaster, vol. XIX, (October 22, 1922), p. 1.

dominating race, to whom constitutional government was an inherited right. Bearing this fact in mind it is easy to understand and to appreciate that it was their intense patriotism that caused them to participate in throwing off the Mexican rule.

When the State was a Republic and its doors were still open, some German families came to Fort Bend County and helped bear the hardships of that time. They were a humble people of somewhat heterogenous description, a great part of whom were farmers and mechanics who had a desire for improving their condition.⁹

As time passed, many German families and others from the States joined the early settlers in the development of the fertile soil of the county and in the establishment of its institutions. Today the descendants of these pioneer German families are among the county's leading and most substantial citizens.

Following the Germans came the Bohemian people from Austria. These two elements early identified themselves with the welfare of the county, taking part in all public affairs.¹⁰ After 1890 many Czechs began to come to the prairies of Fort Bend County from the prairie regions of the Middle Western States. Each year friends and relatives

9 Frederick Law Olmstead, A Journey Through Texas, p. 428.

10 Francis White Johnson, op. cit., pp. 659-660.

increased the number of these two groups. At the same time many Bohemian settlers came from Fayette, Washington, and Williamson Counties, Texas. The Bohemians, like the Germans, have contributed much to the economic wealth of the county. Laboring at first as wage earners, many of them rapidly acquired their own farms and soon became prosperous.¹¹

In 1930 there were 5,231 Mexicans in Fort Bend County.¹² They first came to the county in appreciable numbers about 1905. After the Mexican Revolution of 1910, they came in greater numbers. Their purpose was to secure work temporarily, and to return to their native land at a future date. Because of their strongly marked racial characteristics, the Mexicans are easily noticed, and they continue a separate class in the population.

Polish settlers located in the southeastern part of the agricultural districts of Fort Bend County about 1910. They are only an extension of the thickly settled territory of Chapel Hill, Washington County, Texas, and now number about two hundred and fifty families.¹³

The Negro population dates back to the time of the early settlers for many Negroes were brought to the county as slaves by their owners. Randall Jones, one of the first settlers,

11 Interview, F. A. Schawe, Realtor of Rosenberg, Texas, July 20, 1941.

12 Fifteenth Census of the United States, vol. III, (1930), p. 1,014.

13 F. A. Schawe, op. cit.

"returned to Louisiana in 1832 and traded Negroes for sixty head of cattle."¹⁴ Because of early and frequent marriages and large families, the Negro population outnumbered the whites until 1920. There are now 9,110 Negroes in the County.¹⁵ The Sixteenth Census of the United States gave Fort Bend County a population of 32,963 people. They were listed thus:

Native white	18,759
Foreign born white	2,314
Negroes	8,425
Other groups	3,465 ¹⁶

There are over twelve hundred other people living in Fort Bend County, who are not enumerated on the census for the county. These are the convicts living on the State Penal farms. With the vast area of the State from which to choose locations for the prison farms, it is complimentary to the soil and climate of this section that eighty per cent of the State's farming ventures are located in Fort Bend County. Data on these farms are as follows:

Name	Year Purchased	Acreage	Cultivated	Uncultivated
Harlem Farm	1885	5,600	5,005	595
Central Farm	1908	5,227	4,500	727 ¹⁷
Blue Ridge Farm	1916	4,416	3,954	462

14 A. J. Sowell, A History of Fort Bend County, p. 65.

15 Sixteenth Census of the United States, vol. II, (1940), p. 194.

16 Sixteenth Census of the United States, Tables 26-27, pp. 157; 173.

17 Interview, R. J. Flanagan, Manager of the Central and Harlem State Penal Farms, Sugar Land, Texas, March 3, 1942.

Since the population of the county is chiefly rural, towns such as Beasley, Fulshear, Kendleton, Needville, Orchard, Richmond, Rosenberg, Stafford and Sugar Land act as commercial and trading centers. As a matter of fact, there were no permanently located towns in Fort Bend County beside Richmond, the county seat, which was established in 1837, until many years later. All other places were only known as neighborhood centers. Today Fort Bend County has towns, villages and communities. For convenience, the trading centers are alphabetically arranged and described on the pages which follow.

Beasley. The town of Beasley was named for Cecil A. Beasley, who came to Richmond to live as Santa Fe Railway agent, and who in 1899 was the local banker and an outstanding citizen. He owned a tract of land on the lower line of the Southern Pacific half way between Rosenberg and the Bernard River and conceived an idea of locating a village and procuring for it railway facilities. The town was promoted and was to be named for Miss Isabel Dyer of Richmond whom Beasley afterwards married. The name Dyer had been given to another village in the county so the new town was called Beasley.

Twelve years later Stern and Stern Land Company of Kansas City held a great auction sale of lots. Beasley then became a boom town. It was the nearest railroad trading point of that time for the Needville territory and its volume of business during the period the prairie was settled was enormous. The farming section surrounding the town is highly

developed and prosperous. It is but fair to the farmers of the community to say that they have developed faster than the town. Consequently much of the Beasley trade goes elsewhere and the town has developed but little since the extension of the railroad to Needville.

The first man to live in Beasley, Charlie Harmon, moved there in 1899. He still lives near his original farm. The first Negro to live in the town was Bush Leigh, who now lives in Richmond.

Beasley has excellent schools and school buildings. Buses bring pupils from Cottonwood, Modena, and Tavenner. The school joined five others in 1938 to form the first six-man football district in Texas.

In February, 1938, Beasley received much attention in the magazine, Houston, because of the fact that the six churches there are supported by over 600 members, while the population of the town is 360. The churches are Lutheran, Evangelical Reformed Church, Baptist, Church of Christ, Catholic, and Christian Scientist.¹⁸

Fulshear. This homey place is located on the land granted by the Mexican Government in 1824 to Churchill Fulshear, Senior, one of Austin's 300. In 1880 he gave a right of way across his lands to the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway. Surveyors rattled chains and set posts--the town of

¹⁸ Letter, James L. Boone, Superintendent of Schools, Beasley, Texas, June 27, 1942.

Fulshear was laid out.

Fulshear was a rich man and his hobby was horse racing. He bought and raised thoroughbreds and for years maintained a race course, Churchill Downs, where races, famous in their day, 1850-1870, were run and racing history was made.

The location of the town fits it admirably for stock raising and plantation farming. Recently this community has made some progress in the development of improved pecan orchards.

There are five stores, a cotton gin, a garage, a blacksmith shop and a drug store. The Fulshear school district shows an enrollment of white, Mexican and Negro children and separate schools are provided for each group.

Fulshear was the home of John Huggins, the world's greatest trainer of race horses. After training for Pierre Lorillard he returned to the United States and early in the century he retired and came home to Fulshear where he died in 1914.¹⁹

Kendleton. This stop station and post office is on the Victoria division of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The town derived its name from W. E. Kendle, who subdivided the McCormick League and sold it to the ex-slaves from Colorado and Washington counties about 1870. This explains why Kendleton is largely a Negro community.

19 Kelly Elisha Warfield, "Our Horses and Jockeys Abroad", Munsey's Magazine, vol. XXIV, (March, 1901), p. 361.

About two miles from town is the Elizabeth Powell home-site where Elizabeth Powell conducted a tavern for travelers between the lower Austin Colony and the upper colony around San Felipe. This site is indicated by a Centennial marker.²⁰

Needville. This town is a fine example of a rural community that has faith in itself. The only thing wrong with the place is its name. In 1887 the State of Texas offered to sell twenty sections of school land in Fort Bend County. Poor people from different parts of the country rushed in.

In 1895 August Schendel built his residence and a small store on the high prairie at a place which was for a time called Schendelville. Because the people were poor and always in need of something, Schendel changed the name to Needmore. When he petitioned for a post office the names Needville and Needmore were suggested. Postal authorities accepted Needville. It was not until 1917 that the railroad came through the place.

Needville has a good school, four churches, a bank, a drug store, twelve general stores, four garages, and six filling stations. There are four gins and an electric light plant.

For a place its size, Needville has exceptional community spirit. There is an active Parent-Teachers Association

²⁰ Interview, C. M. Howard, Kendleton, Texas, March 7, 1941.

and a local organization of the Farm Bureau Association.²¹

Orchard. North of Rosenberg, the little community of Orchard, first called Fruitland, was built on lands owned by S. K. Cross of Galveston who had a ranch covering a large portion of the Gail Borden and Sarah Kennedy leagues. He sold tracts for settlement in the late 1880's to men from Missouri.

The Santa Fe Railroad had been built sometime before and the townsite laid out. Some of the early settlers were Dr. Ed Cheneweth, Frank Cheneweth, H. H. Aylor, Mrs. Malinda Aylor, Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Wall, T. W. Oyler, E. J. Walger, a Mr. Zogg, and a Mrs. Young, and a Geoah family.

In 1894, a group of twenty-seven emigrants came from Ohio to Orchard. Among them were J. H. Greenwales, Peter Hetzel, Mr. and Mrs. Walters and family, Mr. and Mrs. Blume and family, Mr. and Mrs. Valentine and baby.

About 1904 Czech and Polish immigrants settled on farms and raised cotton, corn, hay, and poultry.

The first postmaster was Doctor Ed. Cheneweth, and the office was located in his residence, which is still standing. The trains did not stop unless they were flagged or had a passenger for Orchard, and there was no mail crane. Dr. Cheneweth just rolled the mail pouch tightly and tossed it into the open door of the mail coach as the train passed the station.

²¹ Letter, Chas. T. Zich, June 20, 1941.

The first school building was erected in 1894 where the present hundred thousand dollar building stands. Mr. Aylor furnished the materials and it was erected with the help of volunteer workers. This building was used until 1911, when it was replaced by a two-room building which was replaced by a larger building in 1924. In 1940 the present building was completed. It is conceded to be the most modern and best equipped school in the county.

The first teacher was Miss Josie Gooch, whose family was among the early settlers. She moved to East Bernard and Miss Bessie Hahn from Alvin took her place. Will Gray who now lives in Houston was the third teacher in the community.

The schoolhouse was used as a place of worship until 1935 when a Baptist Church was erected. Before the erection of the church, there were a number of weddings as well as funerals held in the schoolhouse.

The first cotton gin was built by Aylor and Oyler about 1895. The present gin is located on the same spot and is operated as a Cooperative Gin.

In 1926 the Gulf Oil Company drilled and discovered oil on the John M. Moore ranch just east of Orchard. C. A. Canfield was the field foreman and driller in charge. In 1938 sulphur production was begun by the Duval Texas Sulphur Company on the same ranch.²²

²² Interview, Mrs. Mary Sager, September 13, 1938, and Sam Aylor, Orchard, Texas, June 6, 1941.

Stafford. This community, first known as Stafford Point, was named for William M. Stafford, a large land owner. It was one of the county's first settlements. Indians came there to sell buffalo, bear and deer skins, blankets, and bead work. It was there, too, that people came from all around to celebrate holidays. July fourth meant to the people of Stafford a big barbecue and a ball at night.

In 1858, the settlement was the terminus for the Buffalo, Brazos, and Colorado Railroad and a post office was established in 1860.²³

Richmond. This town was established by the firm Handy and Lusk on the land granted to Mrs. Jane Long and became the county seat of Fort Bend County. It is located on the west bank of the Brazos River, thirty miles from Houston.

The first enterprise was a general store owned by Handy and Lusk. Clement C. Dyer was licensed to keep a public inn and retail wines and liquors for one year from July 22, 1839. This was probably Richmond's first hotel.²⁴

In 1840 Richmond was described by Edward Stiff in The Texas Emigrant. He wrote:

. . . The site is handsome but the traffic is inconsiderable. There is, however, a prospect of improvement, and the inhabitants merit success;

23 News item, "Stafford", The Houston Press, vol. XXXII, (April 21, 1936), p. 8.

24 License Record, Book A, p. 1, Fort Bend County.

some few of whom have already been remarkably fortunate in matrimonial engagements so far as wealth is good fortune. . . .25

Today Richmond has a population of 1500 people. It is served by the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads and the Greyhound Bus line. There are two banks, a weekly newspaper, two hotels, two gins, an oil mill and a bottling works, besides fifty other business enterprises.

The town supports a Methodist, a Baptist, an Episcopal, and a Catholic Church.

Until recently, the chief interests of the town have centered about ranching and plantation farming. There is a growing interest in livestock improvement, dairying, truck crops and the development of improved pecan orchards. The rapid development of oil fields in the county has contributed to the town's prosperity.

Richmond people never let a visitor forget that it figured prominently in early history and is the final resting place of at least three illustrious characters who contributed much to the building of Texas. These are Mrs. Long, the "Mother of Texas"; M. B. Lamar, the "Father of Education"; and "Deaf" Smith, the "Scout of San Jacinto."

Mrs. Carry Nation, the woman who smashed the saloon in the literal sense of the word and prepared the way for the eighteenth Amendment, lived in Richmond from 1881 to 1884.

She was engaged in the hotel business.

Rosenberg. This town was platted in 1883 by George Sealy, president of the Santa Fe Railroad. He named it for Henry Rosenberg, a Swiss Jew, banker, and philanthropist of Galveston. The first enterprise was a general store owned by D. K. Brown. It was in this building that the first post office was established and the first telephone was installed. Mr. and Mrs. John Ebell built the first hotel in 1883. A board walk led from the station to the hotel and many are the tales told about the citizens who are said to have fallen off the walk into the deep mud while "in their cups." Mrs. Ebel who is now Mrs. J. A. Carter is the oldest resident of Rosenberg. The first school building was erected in 1893. Several citizens, among whom R. T. Mulcahy was prominent, donated money with which to build. It was a one room frame building and the teacher was Miss Anna Stapleton who taught ten grades. The first year the enrollment was only fourteen pupils.

In 1895 Rosenberg had a newspaper which was called The Silver X-Ray, whose editor was George B. Long. This paper is now The Rosenberg Herald.

The rapid growth of the town started with the development of the rich railroad and school lands on the prairie. This movement, beginning about 1905, reached its highest peak about 1912. Having grown with the prairie farm section of the county, Rosenberg is the trading center for this prosperous area. A large trade also comes from the fertile Brazos bottom planta-

tion region which lies across the river from town. Within recent years the oil development of the Big Creek Field and the sulphur development of the Orchard Field have contributed in an important way to the prosperity and prospects of the community.

In 1930, a building containing the City Hall, fire station and jail was erected. At that time the city officers were George Huntington, Mayor; M. E. Parrott, Water Commissioner; Tom Talasek, Sr., Street Commissioner; W. F. Fink, City Secretary; T. N. Thornton, City Marshall.

According to the 1940 census, a population of 3,457 people are served by the Houston Lighting and Power Company, The United Gas Corporation, and the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. There are three gins, two banks, two weekly newspapers, four hotels, six apartment houses, a poultry and produce house, and a hatchery, besides some sixty other business houses. Rosenberg had two schools, two gymnasiums, a Little Theater, one hospital, and two clinics. There are ten churches. The only Federal Building in the county is the Rosenberg Post Office.

Rosenberg is very proud of its park which is fully equipped for the entertainment of young and old. It is open day and night with a custodian in attendance at all times.²⁶

²⁶ Interview, M. E. Parrott, Rosenberg, Texas, April 3, 1942.

Sugar Land. This little city stands as a monument to the industry of the New South. Situated on the Southern Pacific and the Missouri Pacific lines, twenty-three miles west of Houston, practically the entire population obtains its livelihood through the activities of the Sugarland Industries and the Imperial Sugar Company.

The land on which Sugar Land is located was originally granted to Samuel M. Williams by the Mexican Government in 1828. Nearby are the ruins of the beautiful old Nibbs Place. It was at this historic old mansion that Sam Houston used to stop overnight as he traveled from Houston to San Antonio, and legend has it that it was here that he obtained the beautiful white horse that was shot from beneath him in the Battle of San Jacinto.

Prior to 1914 there was scarcely the semblance of a town, but today there can be seen row on row of well constructed dwellings, provided with every convenience. All industrial and mercantile buildings are protected with a 100% sprinkler system, which has connected with it twenty-two hydrants and a 100,000 gallon elevated tank.

Twin semi-circle buildings of separate rooms located on the banks of Oyster Creek, give an ideal atmosphere for the ever-growing school enrollment. Sugar Land is one of three schools in the United States that has the separate room plan for each grade or class. Pueblo, Colorado and San Diego, California, are the other two schools. The Sugar Land School is

the only one in the county that is a member of the Southern Association of Schools.

Sugar Land supports three churches: the Methodist, the Presbyterian and the Catholic.

The civic and social activities are represented by a Masonic Lodge, a Lion's Club, the Garden Club, the Parent-Teacher Association, the Boy Scouts, and the Chamber of Commerce.²⁷

Near Sugar Land is the Central Prison Farm, model unit of the State prison system. A large meat packing plant, pickling vats, canning plant, laundry, new cell block and all the equipment necessary for an independent prison were erected on the prison lands in 1933. These lands are used to grow enough meat and vegetables to supply the other prison farms and send a surplus to other state institutions.

Fort Bend County is a strange mixture of traditions. There is still faint evidence of the old plantation tradition and the old time Negro; there is still a small remnant of the glamour that belonged to the days of the cattle kingdom; and mixed with those earlier influences, is the new element, brought by the "foreign" nationalities that have come to make their claim to this land. All have contributed something of their own culture.

²⁷ Interview, Mrs. F. C. Bracewell, Sugar Land, Texas. March 5, 1942.

Fort Bend County today presents a scene of prosperous homes, good schools, substantial public buildings, and excellent highways. These evidences of progress are in large measure derived from or supported by sources of wealth of which the pioneer never dreamed--oil and sulphur.

CHAPTER II

EARLY HISTORY

Pre-Colonial Period. As all things have a beginning, so it was with the county of Fort Bend. Many centuries passed after the coming of the Red Man before white settlers arrived in sufficient numbers to organize a government in this territory. The first white men found that Karankawa Indians had for a long time made their home in the Texas coastal country in which Fort Bend County lies. These nomadic and semi-aquatic Indians were tall and powerful, the height of the adults averaging more than six feet.

Fray Antonio Solis, a Spanish missionary, came in contact with tribes of the Karankawa Indians while he was on an exploring expedition along the Texas Coast in 1767. He recorded in his diary a report of these Indians and their barbaric customs as he saw them. An excerpt from his account says:

They (the Karankawas) drive a stake in the ground. Then they kindle a huge fire and bind to the stake the victim whom they are going to make dance or whom they are going to sacrifice. All of them gather together and as soon as the discordant notes of the cayman are heard, they begin to dance and jump about the fire--Dancing and leaping and with sharp knives in their hands, they draw near to the victim, or cut off a piece of his flesh, come to the fire and half roast it, and within sight of the victim himself, devour

it ravenously. . . .¹

Early Texas pioneers accused the Karankawas of great savagery and even cannibalism which appears to be corroborated by the statement of Solis. Another account of their barbarism has been left by Noah Smithwick, a blacksmith, who escaped from them.²

Atkinson tells us that by the early nineteenth century the Karankawas hated the white men because of the treatment received by the Indians at the hands of Jean Lafitte and Mrs. Jane Long. Lafitte stole the Indian women, while Mrs. Long turned cannon upon them from her camp at Bolivar Point.³

The First Colony. The hostile Indians and the invasions of filibusters such as Long had greatly retarded successful colonization. In 1820, Moses Austin, a citizen of Missouri, resolved to attempt to found a colony in Texas. He went to San Antonio to make application to the Spanish authorities for a land grant. His request was granted, but upon his return home, he became ill and died. When his son, Stephen F. Austin, learned that it was his father's desire that he carry out the colonization project, he left New Orleans and went to San Antonio to claim the right to his father's grant. Accompanying Austin on this trip in June, 1821, were several men,

1 Chris Emmet, quoting Fray Antonio Solis in Texas As it Was Then, p. 2.

2 Noah Smithwick, The Evolution of a State, p. 38.

3 Mary Jordan Atkinson, The Texas Indians, p. 191.

among whom were Edward Lovelace, William Little and James Beard who were later to be prominent in the development of the Fort Bend Settlement. After leaving San Antonio, Austin and his friends inspected the country and he selected the rich lands of the lower Colorado and Brazos Rivers for his colony. They returned to New Orleans and prepared to send colonists to Texas.⁴

On November 22, 1821, a group of emigrants entered into an agreement with Austin whereby each colonist was to receive free a section of land providing that he place himself under the direction of Austin. The emigrants were expected to sail on the Lively and after landing they were to erect necessary buildings, to cultivate corn and to gather the crop into a common storehouse.⁵

On November 20, 1821, the Lively sailed from New Orleans with approximately twenty colonists and all of the provisions for the colony. Due to a stormy sea the schooner was unable to make port at the mouth of the river.⁶ It was on December 23, 1821, that the vessel landed its passengers and a portion of the provisions for the colony on the West end of Galveston Bay.

4 J. H. Brown, History of Texas, pp. 86-93.

5 E. C. Barker (ed.), "Agreement with Emigrants", The Austin Papers, vol. I, pp. 432-433.

6 Ibid., vol I, p. 526.

Among the members of this vanguard unloaded on the Gulf Coast were William Little, James Beard, a man named Thompson, who was a carpenter, and William S. Lewis. Lewis related at a later date that there were others besides those listed whose names he could not recall.⁷

These men formed the nucleus for the beginning of that section later to become known as Fort Bend County. They were left stranded with only a small part of the original cargo consisting of various types of farm implements, ample quantities of food, and the necessary seed for crops as was carried by the Lively.⁸

After several days of exploring the west end of Galveston Bay, the group moved up to the mouth of the Brazos River on January 2, 1822.⁹ Here these men were divided into two groups, one of which remained with the supplies at the coast, and the other headed by William Little, started up the Brazos for the purpose of communicating with the group of immigrants traveling overland from New Orleans. They also wished to notify Austin of their arrival in Texas. After six days the men returned to the camp at the mouth of the Brazos.¹⁰

7 William S. Lewis, "Adventures of the Lively Immigrants", Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, vol. III, July, 1899, p. 14.

8 Ibid., pp. 14-84.

9 Ibid., p. 76.

10 Ibid., p. 82.

Little and his men, after making the exploratory trip up the Brazos, were not only unable to find Austin, but were also unable to locate the settlers who were supposed to be in Texas. They realized that they were stranded in a territory inhabited by Indians. That they were without adequate provisions was an even more serious circumstance. They decided, however, to make the best of the situation. They would ascend the river, build a stockade, and clear the land as they promised in their contract with Austin.¹¹

While trying to locate Austin and his group, Little and the men accompanying him had seen a location on the Brazos River which they considered suitable for settlement. Recalling this fact, the men constructed rafts, loaded their supplies, and moved up the river in order to establish themselves at this favorable site.¹²

After several days of travel on the river, the group came to the site for which they were seeking, a pleasing location on the west bank of the Brazos River. The description of the site selected by these men is a rather accurate picture of the location of the present town of Richmond, the county seat of Fort Bend County.

Concerning this early settlement of Fort Bend County, Homer S. Thrall says:

William Little who accompanied Austin on his first trip to Texas, selected the site of the

11 Ibid., p. 83.

12 Ibid., p. 87.

town of Richmond. In 1822, four young men built a block house there in the bend of the river. William Morton settled on the east side of the river. During the same and following year, Randall and Henry Jones, William Styles, Jesse Thompson, Churchill Fulshear, Thomas Barnet, C. C. Dyer, Elijah Roark, Thomas H. and Paschal Borden, C. C. William, Archibald and Robert Hodge, and James Frisbee settled in the county. Randolph Foster obtained a league of land for supplying meat, as a hunter, to Austin and his party. Probably a larger no. (sic.) of the survivors of Austin's first 300 colonists live in Fort Bend than in any other county in the State.¹³

There seems to be some doubt, however, about the circumstances of the erection of the "Fort", as indicated by at least one early settler. When Dr. George Feris was an old man, he wrote the following recollections of old Fort Bend, as follows:

What About the Old Fort?

By whom constructed and against whom intended.

The writer never met a person who could even remember a tradition of its builders, or at what time it was built.

All is involved in obscurity and left to conjecture.

The first mention about it is by General Pike in 1804 when it was in ruins--and the next by an old Cushatta chief who said:

"It was built by pale faces long time ago, who had big gun". Continuing, Feris relates, "History says that La Salle, a Frenchman, took possession of the whole county from the Mississippi westward as early as 1685 but, per contra, Spanish historians affirm that De Soto, as far back as 1544, took possession of all the country lying west of the "Father of Waters" in the name of his Catholic majesty the King of Spain. . . in 1637.

13 Homer S. Thrall, A Pictorial History of Texas, p. 660.

It (the Fort) was nearly level with the ground around, but a close inspection disclosed the fact that it was merely a rectilinear earth work with one entrance looking to the west and an embrasure presenting eastward doubtless to enable the Indians "big gun" to command the river ford, which it overlooked.

The inference drawn from this is that it was intended to repel aggression from the East. It was situated on the west bank of the river and is at present inclosed in the garden of the Blakely place.

The first settlers said that there was a plain trail from the opposite side leading through the forests and cane breaks and emerging thence into the Hunter place, thence east to San Augustine. So much for the pre-historic period of our country all of which seems to favor the presumption of Spanish occupancy antedating the advent of all others of the white race.¹⁴

Early in October, 1823, the work of allotting land to the settlers was begun. Austin employed Horation Chriesman as surveyor. New settlers began arriving, and by July, 1824, the issuance of titles was begun by Baron de Bastrop. Thirty-nine titles were obtained by settlers living in the vicinity of the Fort settlement, that were later included in Fort Bend County. Most of these titles were for land along the Brazos River.

A list of the members of the "Old Three Hundred" who were issued land titles in Fort Bend County is given in Appendix A.

14 Feris, George, "What About the Old Fort?", South Texas, November 12, 1891, printed in the Texas Coaster, vol. XLI, (June 15, 1936) p. 3.

Indian Relations. From the beginning of colonization of the region and the settlement at the Fort, the colonists had been disturbed by the Indians. They had little patience with the "Craunks," as the Karankawa Indians were called, and hunted them down at any provocation. The Tonkawa Indians, a peaceful tribe living in central Texas, remained more friendly to the white people than did any other tribe. However, they liked to steal from the colonists and often came or ventured near the Fort Settlement. One incident is told which occurred in the late summer of 1823 when some of the Tonkawa Indians ventured as far north as New Year's Creek, stole some horses and returned to an encampment on Big Creek near the Fort Settlement. Requested by the Kuykendalls, who had followed the Indians, Austin gathered some volunteers, who were joined by others at the Fort Settlement and went in search of the thieves. They were found on Big Creek whereupon Chief Carita offered to return the horses and to punish the offenders. Five Indians were selected to be given fifty lashes, twenty-five by Carita and twenty-five by Austin, after which each culprit should have his head shaved. Carita's lashes only produced imitation cries of pain, but the lashes as given by Abner Kuykendall, acting for Austin, afflicted real pain and the Indians yelled promises never again to molest the settlers' horses or cattle.¹⁵

15 J. H. Kuykendall, "Reminiscences of Early Texas", Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, vol. VII, (July, 1899), pp. 31-32.

The stolen horses were returned to the fort according to the promises made by Carita.

In 1824, the Karankawa Indians attacked some of the colonists, and a company was organized by Captain Randall Jones to march against them. At least one white man, William S. Spencer, was killed in the battle that ensued.¹⁶

As a rule the people of Fort Bend County had less molestation from Indians than those elsewhere in the colonies. However, during the entire Colonial Period the men of Fort Bend County were in the militia or ranger service and were often called to pursue and punish Indians on the Colorado, the Lavaca and farther north and west.¹⁷

Several locations of Indian camps in the county are known. Some existed along Big Creek, one of which was on the south bank just north of the Brown community road. There was a camp on Clear Creek, by the Duke station on the Santa Fe. While the systematic blasting was under way in the summer of 1925, in connection with the search for salt domes, a charge set in a mound-like island in Moore's Lake is reported to have uncovered shells, crude pottery and arrow heads.¹⁸

The Mexican Invasion. Relative peace, industry and progress prevailed in the Fort Settlement for a period. But by 1835,

16 A. J. Sowell, History of Fort Bend County, p. 78.

17 Clarence R. Wharton, A History of Fort Bend County, pp. 29-30.

18 S. A. McMillan, The Book of Fort Bend County, Texas, pp. 53-55.

the unsettled conditions in Mexico began to be reflected above the Rio Grande.

In the fourteen years that had elapsed from the starting of the American settlements in 1821 to the beginning of trouble with Mexico the colonies grew rapidly. From all the older states settlers flocked to Texas, "The Land of Opportunity." It is estimated that in five years from 1831 to 1836 the population increased from about 20,000 to over 50,000.¹⁹ Santa Anna, the dictator of Mexico, was shrewd enough to see that unless drastic steps were taken to drive out the Americans, Texas would be a lost province. His acts show that his purpose was to get people to revolt and then by the force of overwhelming numbers to exterminate their armed forces, burn their homes, and drive the settlers from the country.²⁰

During the fall and winter of 1834-1835, Santa Anna conquered the Mexican states south of the Rio Grande and began the destruction of Coahuila-Texas. To bring this about, Viesca, the governor of Coahuila-Texas, was deposed in June, 1835. This event alarmed the Fort Bend citizens and other colonists who were undecided as to the course of action that should be followed in the absence of Austin, who was at that time in Mexico City.

19 H. Yoakum, History of Texas, vol. 1, pp. 274, 327.

20 Ibid., pp. 351-353.

It was not until the return of Stephen Austin in September, 1835, that uncertainty was quieted. He told his people that a consultation was necessary to unite the colony and to decide upon the action to be followed.²¹ A call for the election of delegates to a convention to be held at San Felipe on October 16, was issued by a committee on correspondence. One of the polls in the Fort vicinity was Stafford's Point. As a result of the election, several Fort Bend people were elected as delegates. They were Thomas Barnett, Wyly Martin, Randall Jones, and C. C. Dyer.²²

When the settlers of Fort Bend learned that General Martin Perfecto de Cos had taken San Antonio, nearly every man and boy who owned a gun left home to join the army which was to attack Cos at San Antonio. Women and children were left to gather the crops.²³

Among the Fort Bend men actively engaged in the campaign of 1835 were Thomas H. Borden, E. H. Dorst, Levy Scott, T. J. Smith, J. R. and Daniel Shipman and Hiram M. Thompson.²⁴

21 Eugene C. Barker, The Life of Stephen F. Austin, pp. 479-480.

22 Telegraph and Texas Register, vol. I, (October 10, 1835), p. 2, William C. Binkley (ed.), The Official Correspondence of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836, vol I, p.39.

23 Mrs. Dilue Harris, "The Reminiscences of Mrs. Dilue Harris," Quarterly of the Texas Historical Association, vol. IV, (July, 1899), p. 160.

24 D. W. C. Baker, A Texas Scrap Book, pp. 585-632.

The General Council, which had been left in charge of the administration of Texas affairs by Austin on December 10, 1835, appointed Randall Jones as an assistant to Col. Fannin in collecting supplies for the volunteer army. All donations were to be given Jones at the settlement.²⁵ During the third convention held at San Felipe, the Consultation of November 1-14, 1835, the colonists had agreed to establish a provisional form of government of one member from each municipality. Wyly Martin, Randall Jones and Thomas Barnett from the Fort Settlement at various times served on this council for the municipality of San Felipe. The settlers at Fort Bend petitioned the council to grant a separate municipality due to remoteness from San Felipe, but the request was refused.²⁶

After the return of some of the men from the storming of San Antonio, the colonists felt easier. Then in February, 1836, news reached Fort Bend that Santa Anna was marching with a large army towards San Antonio. Many of the men again left their families to join the Texans under command of Sam Houston. A Convention had been called to meet at San Felipe on March 1, 1836, and on the following day the convention assembled at Washington on the Brazos. Thomas Barnett of

25 William C. Binkley, op. cit., pp. 75-77.

26 Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 227-228; H. N. P. Gammel, Laws of Texas, vol. 1, pp. 551, 813.

Fort Bend was a member of this convention and a signer of the declaration.²⁷

When news came that Santa Anna had crossed the Colorado River on his eastward march from San Antonio, the people living in the Fort Bend vicinity joined in the "Runaway Scrape". Ox carts and pack horses were loaded and the Fort Bend families began their travels toward Lynch's Ferry on the San Jacinto River. After crossing the ferry, many of the families made their way toward the town of Liberty.²⁸

Houston's army, retreating before the Mexicans, crossed the Brazos above San Felipe with the aid of the steamboat "Yellowstone". He left at San Felipe a small force to check the pursuing Mexicans and sent a similar force to guard Thompson's Ferry, at the old Fort on the big bend near what is now Richmond. He then marched his army to "Groce's Retreat" near the present town of Hempstead where he made camp.

Santa Anna in pursuit of Houston's army had crossed the Colorado. When he reached San Felipe he found the town had been burned. Abandoning his plan to capture Houston at Groce's Ferry, Santa Anna turned south toward Harrisburg. On the way he drove back Wyly Martin at Thompson's Ferry, near

27 William C. Binkley, op. cit., pp. 465-467.

28 Mrs. Dilue Harris, op. cit., p. 165.

Fort Bend, and crossed the Brazos. From this point he headed for the confluence of the San Jacinto River and Buffalo Bayou.²⁹

When Houston learned of Santa Anna's movements he marched his army southward to a place opposite Harrisburg. At three o'clock the next day the Mexican army that had spread terror and destruction through Fort Bend had been defeated.

Many Fort Bend men had part in the successful fight staged by the Texans for independence. Randolph Foster aided the cause by helping to keep Houston's army supplied with meat. M. B. Lamar was commander of a cavalry troop. Among others from the Fort Settlement to serve during the campaign of 1836 were Andrew J. Beard, John P. Borden, Churchill Fulshear, John V. Morton, Patrick B. O'Connor, Robert Neel, Levy P. Scott, Thomas J. Smith, John Shipman, Jesse Thompson, S. I. Wheeler, Cyrus Wickson, Emory Edmund, Patrick, Richard and John Darst. Others engaged in the campaign were Captain Wylie Martin, Lieutenant Randall Jones and William T. Austin, the last one named serving as Houston's aid-de-camp.³⁰

The San Jacinto Veterans who are buried in Fort Bend County are John A. Barkley, died in 1844; Andrew Jackson

29 Henderson Yoakum, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 115, 120.

30 D. W. C. Baker, A Texas Scrapbook, p. 632, passim; A. J. Sowell, A History of Fort Bend County, pp. 15, 181; Homer S. Thrall, A Pictorial History of Texas, pp. 550-620; S. H. Dixon and I. W. Kemp, The Heroes of San Jacinto, pp. 102-379.

Beard, died in 1866; Thomas Belknap, died in 1840; Paschal Pavola Borden, died at Stafford's Point in 1864; Captain Robert James Calder, died August 28, 1885; Edmund C. Darst, died prior to 1838; Patrick E. Darst, died in 1858; Major Robert Eden Handy, died in 1838; Colonel Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar, died in 1859; Wilson T. Lightfoot, died in 1858; Daniel Perry, died in 1868; Erasmus Smith, died in 1837; William W. Sumers, died in 1856.³¹

There were great expectations of boom developments in Fort Bend County at the close of the Texas Revolution and ambitious promoters laid off and advertised townsites far and wide. Robert Eden Handy and William Lusk, merchants at Brazoria, advertised in the Telegraph and Texas Register at Columbia that they had gone to Richmond in Fort Bend County.³²

In the August 1, 1837, issue of the Telegraph and Texas Register appears the first advertisement of the town. While there were a number of well known persons signed as proprietors of the town, only Handy and Lusk had any interest in the enterprise, the lands purchased for the township being wholly in their names. It is said that Lusk was from Richmond, Virginia, and hence gave the town that name.³³

31 L. W. Kemp, "Graves of 526 Soldiers of San Jacinto Found in Eighty-One Counties", San Antonio Express, vol. LXX, (September 8, 1935), p. 25.

32 Advertisement, "Take Notice", Telegraph and Texas Register, vol. II, (April 11, 1837), p. 4.

33 Advertisement, "The Town of Richmond", Telegraph and Texas Register, vol. II, (August 1, 1837), p. 1.

During the second session of the Congress of the Republic which met in Houston in May, 1837, a Mr. Arnold, member from Nacogdoches, offered a bill to incorporate Nacogdoches, which bill provided for a board of eight trustees and conferred general municipal powers upon them. Amendments required every citizen to keep a bucket, hook, and ladder for use in case of fire.³⁴

Other members, impressed with Mr. Arnold's bill, added towns until the act, when finally passed, actually listed nineteen towns, among them the town of Richmond, which was therefore incorporated before it was inhabited. It was surveyed by Moses Lapham, a hero of San Jacinto.³⁵

Another Act of Incorporation was passed at the next session of Congress, November 18, 1837, creating Richmond a body corporate. In that act the boundaries of Richmond were fixed in the following words: "All that tract of county known as the city of Richmond shall be known as the limits and boundaries of said city."³⁶

Three years later, on December 10, 1841, the citizens of Richmond petitioned the Congress to repeal the Acts of Incorporation, which was done, and for many years the city remained unincorporated.³⁷

34 H. P. N. Gammel, Laws of Texas, vol. I, pp.238-239.

35 C. R. Wharton, History of Fort Bend County, p. 86.

36 H. P. N. Gammel, op. cit., vol. II, p. 21.

37 Ibid., p. 17.

CHAPTER III

LEGAL AND JUDICIAL HISTORY

As settlements increased in adjacent country, the promoters of the city of Richmond soon felt the need of an organized county. A petition was therefore prepared asking the Congress then in session at Houston to create the county of Fort Bend. There were one hundred and twenty-eight signers. The name of Randall Jones headed the list. Thirteen of the original grantees of Mexican grants appear on the list. They were: Randall, John and Henry Jones, Launcelot Smither, Joseph Kuykendall, John and Randolph Foster, Wylie Martin, Philo Fairchild, John and William Little, Thos. Barnett and Andrew Northington.

President Houston signed the Act incorporating the county December 29, 1837,¹

President Houston appointed Wylie Martin as Chief Justice of the County of Fort Bend in December, 1837. Martin at once issued an election proclamation that all qualified voters of the new county should meet at Richmond on January 13, 1838, for the purpose of choosing a county seat, and of electing the County and District Clerks and a Sheriff.

1 H. P. N. Gammel, The Laws of Texas, vol. II, pp. 118-119, Minutes County Court, Book A, p. 1, Fort Bend County Records.

The Judges of the election were Randal Jones, Hiram M. Thompson and Daniel Perry, while Robert Dickerson, S. Thomas and R. Stiff were Clerks. The results were that Richmond received eighty-three votes, Fort Bend, sixty-seven votes, and Fayetteville twenty votes. Richmond was therefore declared the county seat.

The first county officers were: John V. Morton, Sheriff; Wylie Martin, Chief Justice, William H. Pool, District Clerk; Joseph H. Barnard County Clerk and E. R. Rector, Assessor and Collector.²

John V. Morton was appointed County Clerk pro tem and as such signed his name to the first marriage license issued in Fort Bend County on December 31, 1837. It authorized the marriage of Adam Coble and Miss Mary Metcalf. The ceremony was performed the following day by Chief Justice Wylie Martin.³

Adam Coble came to Fort Bend County in 1836. He was issued Donation Certificate No. 120 for 640 acres of land for participating in the storming of Bexar in December, 1835, and Bounty Certificate No. 1430 for 320 acres of land for his service in the army in 1836. Coble and his wife were living in Lavaca County in 1850.⁴

2 Minutes of the County Court, Book A, p. 1, Fort Bend County Records.

3 Marriage Records, Book A, p. 21, Fort Bend County Records.

4 Sam Houston Dixon and Louis W. Kemp, Heroes of San Jacinto, p. 416.

It is interesting to know that it was not until October 4, 1844, that the first divorce was granted in the county. At that time the court "relieved Mrs. Martha Armstrong from the matrimonial fetters that chained her to L. M. Armstrong."⁵

As time passed other county officers were named. The first ones so to serve were Commissioners of County Land Board, 1839, Daniel Perry, President, J. F. Payne and Andrew J. Bonds, Associate Commissioners; Montgomery Galbraith, Clerk; Commissioners for Inspection of Land Office, 1840, J. H. Barnard, A. W. Jones and John V. Morton; County Attorney, H. I. Parkerson, 1847; County Coroner,, James Perry, 1842; County Surveyor, Nathaniel Peck, 1839; County Treasurer, Randall Jones, 1844.⁶

On January 29, 1838, the County officials drew the first county court jury. Those who had the honor of serving on this jury were: Charles P. Edwards, Emory Darst, J. F. L. Parrott, Gustave A. Parker, Daniel Shipman, Wylie Powell, William Bartlett, William Bridges, Adam Stafford, Michael Young, Samuel Pharr, Aaron C. Dodd, Samuel Damon, John Claiborne Foster, Samuel Flint and Edward Johnson.

The first term of the county court convened on April 9, 1838, with Wylie Martin, Chief Justice, and C. C. Dyer and I. F. Johnson, Associate Justices. The first cause called for trial was styled Moses Lopham vs. Gustave A. Parker. Judgment

5 Minutes of the District Court Record, Book B, p. 112, Fort Bend County.

6 Election Register, No. 255 (1836-1842), pp. 331-332; No. 256 (1842-1846), pp. 30-31; No. 257 (1846-1854), pp. 33-34, Archives, Texas State Library.

in this case was rendered for \$126 with five per cent interest. No particulars are given in the records.

The first jury case tried by this court was that of Robert H. Kuykendall vs. Joseph H. Woods. The jury in that case consisted of Gustave A. Parker, Emory H. Darst, Samuel H. Pharr, Samuel Damon, Edward Johnson, Charles O. Edwards, Andrew Bonds, Eren C. Dodd, George W. Long, William Bridges, Wylie Powell and John Goodman. They returned a verdict for the plaintiff for \$155 with five per cent interest. The records give no particulars about this case.⁷

Of this group of jurymen, information could not be found about any except Emory H. Darst. He came to Texas in 1829 from Missouri and participated in the battle at Velasco and was with Edward Burleson in the fight at Concepcion. Later he was a member of the detail which guarded Santa Anna while he was held prisoner on Dr. J. A. E. Phelps' plantation. Darst died in 1880 in the home of George W. Pleasants in Richmond.⁸

On page three in Book A of the County Records is found this entry:

It is ordered by the court that H. E. Hudson and James W. Smith be appointed a committee of examination during the present term to examine the claims of all applicants to plead and practice law in the several courts of this Republic.

7 Minutes County Court, Book A, pp. 1-2, Fort Bend County Records.

8 Information from Homer Darst, Richmond, Texas, January 10, 1943.

We have examined the claims of Wylie Martin to plead and practice law in the several courts of this Republic, and find that he is entitled to all the privileges of a member of the bar, and recommend his admission.

The foregoing report appearing, it is ordered by the court that the clerk of this court issue such a license to the said Wylie Martin as is usual, and the court adjourn until tomorrow, 9 o'clock.⁹

The first term of the district court of Fort Bend County convened on February 27, 1838, with Benjamin C. Franklin, Judge of the Second Judicial District, presiding. The first grand jury consisted of William Walker, foreman, John Goodman, Ignatius Johnson, William L. Little, Eli Fenn, Henry Jones, G. B. Tinsley, J. Coble, William Beard, Barney Wickson, David Austin, and A. J. Bonds.

The first case tried by the county was styled John Calvin vs. James Wilson. The record states: "The defendant, not appearing when called, it is ordered by the court that James W. Smith, Esq., be appointed curator ad hoc letum, and that the case proceed as though the defendant had appeared." The case was nonsuited on the grounds that it was a bet and unlawful. Whereupon it was ordered, considered and adjudged that the defendant recover of the plaintiff the sum of the costs of the suit.¹⁰

Of the above group of jurymen, information could be found only about Eli Fenn. Fenn was a native of Georgia who came

9 Ibid., County Record Book A, p. 3.

10 Minutes of the District Court, Book A, pp. 1-2; 12, Fort Bend County.

to Texas in 1826. He carried his share of the burdens in freeing Texas from Mexico's rule when he joined Wylie Martin's company which was guarding Thompson's Ferry. He was not in the battle of San Jacinto, for he was one of forty-six men under Martin who was sent to Nacogdoches to protect that place against the Indians. His death occurred in Richmond in 1837.¹¹

The first bill of indictment found by the grand jury is in these words:

The grand jurors came into court; their names being called, all answering to their names; they made the following presentment to wit:

Republic of Texas
County of Fort Bend

We, the grand jury in and for said county, on our oaths do present V. Banks and John Moore for a violation of the laws of the Republic in a case of battery committed in said county against the peace and dignity of this Republic.

February 28, 1838
William Walker, Chairman.¹²

As early as 1836 Fort Bend had a representative to serve in the First Congress of the Republic when Jesse H. Cartwright was elected. He had come to Texas with fifty slaves and obtained a league of land in Austin's abandoned reservation. About 1830 he bought land at the head of Oyster Creek where he was living when elected to Congress from the

11 Information given by F. M. O. Fenn to Homer Darst, Richmond, Texas, and transmitted through personal interview, January 10, 1942.

12 Ibid., Minutes, Book A, p. 5.

Harrisburg District which included the Oyster Creek settlement.¹³ Cartwright was followed by Thomas Barnett who served in the Third and Fourth Congresses which met in Houston in 1838 and in Austin in 1839. Barnett was really the first representative after the county was organized. He came to Texas in 1822 and settled on the east side of the Brazos River in Austin's colony. He served as president of the Ayuntamiento from 1830 to 1832 and was a member of the 1835 consultation and of the 1836 Convention. He signed the Texas Declaration of Independence. Barnett is buried in a private cemetery near Dyer, six miles west of Rosenberg.

County Jails. It seems that the county had a jail before it had a court house for the records show that Samuel Jones was awarded the contract for building the first jail and was paid \$250 by Sheriff John V. Morton from subscription funds. The Richmond Telescope and Literary Register of October 30, 1839, describes the jail as being . . . "a safe and comfortable building". On November 18, 1850, the court decided that this old jail would be sold to the highest bidder on February 24, 1851.

Available records did not indicate to whom the old jail building was sold or how much was received. At the meeting of the county court on August 17, 1852, J. H. Herndon, Ben

13 Louis J. Wortham, A History of Texas, vol. I, pp. 314, 364.

T. Atkins, J. S. Sullivan and T. H. McMahon were appointed as a committee to furnish the court with a plan and dimensions of the new jail which was to be built on the court house square. This committee failed to report and was discharged from its duties at a meeting on November 15, 1852. A new committee consisting of Mills M. Battle, A. F. Luts, T. H. McMahon and William Ryan was appointed. On December 20, 1852, the committee reported and the court announced that it would let bids in February 1853. The two story jail was completed during the year 1855 at a cost of \$4550.¹⁴

This building served the county as a jail until 1896 when the present jail was constructed. The proposition to build the new jail was decided upon by the commissioners court which met July 17, 1896. Elgin brick and McNeal Stone were materials used by contractor L. T. Noyes for the \$18,000 building. On September 23, 1896, I. McFarlane was authorized to pay \$390.00 to J. P. Jones and wife for lots upon which to build the jail. Bonds were issued by order of the court for \$20,000 to build and furnish the house. The new building was examined by the court with the aid of John F. Hart, Superintendent in the employ of the company, and was accepted April 5, 1896.¹⁵

14 Minutes County Court, Book A, pp. 67, 75, 78, 84, 180-181.

15 Ibid., pp. 105, 136, 144, 150-151, 162.

Courthouses. On June 10, 1842, an order of the court was entered confirming the purchase of a house in Richmond for a court house, from the estate of William Lusk at \$800 on credit of twelve months, by J. B. Miller, then Chief Justice of the County.

In February, 1849, C. C. Dyer, Chief Justice, M. M. Battle, County Clerk and J. H. Herndon were appointed a committee to investigate the repairing of the old court house which had been bought from the Lusk estate, or to take such steps toward the building of a new court house as might be deemed expedient. At the May term of court, following, this committee reported that the house then occupied as a court house could not be well repaired, and recommended the sale thereof and that a new court house be built at a cost not to exceed \$2500.

This same committee with the addition of J. S. Sullivan was appointed to make plans and estimates for the court house. In June, the commissioners court ordered that a court house be built in accordance with plans and specifications made by the committee. At the August term, 1849, J. H. Herndon proposed to build the new court house for \$2500 and to take the old court house property at \$600 as part payment. He also promised to furnish a house to hold court in if the new court house was not finished for the fall term of court. Herndon's proposal was accepted.

On August 27, 1849, J. S. Sullivan, M. M. Battle and John P. Borden, county surveyor, were directed to designate

on the public square the spot on which the new court house should be built.

On January 28, 1850, the court directed the county and district clerks to remove the archives of their respective offices to the house known as the Parkinson house in Richmond, which had been prepared by J. H. Herndon for the purpose. In addition Herndon was requested to furnish a stove and put a lock on the door and fastenings on the windows. The new court house built by Herndon was examined and approved on April 29, 1850.¹⁶

The third court house of Fort Bend County was located where the present Davis Building stands. The original property was a three story brick building which was purchased by the county from C. H. Kendall on June 6, 1871, for \$7500. The county occupied only the two lower stories of the building and the Masons used the upper story. This building remained the court house until January 10, 1887 when it was destroyed by fire. The commissioners court ordered that the Kendall Building on Morton Street be declared the court house, and it continued to be so used until the construction of a new one in 1888.

It seems that the commissioners court had in mind the construction of a new court house before the old one was destroyed, as the minutes of the court show that on September,

16 Ibid., pp. 14, 54-56, 58-59, 62.

1886, the commissioners court ordered the county judge to employ an architect to draw plans for a new court house, and in October, 1887, the contract was let to B. F. Trestler of Dearborn County, Indiana, for \$24,700.00, the architect being George Dickey whose address is not given in the records.

This building was accepted by the commissioners court in June, 1888, and continued to be the court house until the present building was erected in 1909.¹⁷

The first county officers to occupy the new court house in 1888 were: R. M. Ernest, County Judge; J. M. Garvey, Sheriff and Collector; J. J. Dickerson, County Clerk; Henry Furguson, (Negro) County Assessor; and Jim Roberts, (Negro) County Treasurer.¹⁸

In 1908 the commissioners court, consisting of D. R. Pearson, J. R. Farmer, W. J. Bertrand, R. B. Marshall and J. C. Hunken, after purchasing Block 99, in the city of Richmond, commenced the erection of the present court house and same was completed in January, 1909, at which time that building was designated as the court house of Fort Bend County.¹⁹

In 1935 the commissioners court, then consisting of John M. Moore, J. M. Kovar, Ed Stern, I. G. Wirtz and Hunter Harris,

17 Minutes Commissioners Court, Book C, pp. 175-176, 186, 191, 198, 210, Fort Bend County.

18 Ibid., Book C, p. 292.

19 Ibid., Book J, pp. 163, 173, 176, 274.

constructed the extension to the court house, greatly adding to the convenience thereof.²⁰

In the meantime, before the second court house was built, the citizens of Fort Bend County were interested in the question of the annexation of Texas to the United States. In March, 1845, the United States Congress approved a bill providing for the admission of Texas to statehood. At a public meeting held at Richmond early in April, 1845, a number of the "old settlers" met from the various sections of the county and proudly raised the "Stars and Stripes". This first meeting must have been principally for general discussion of annexation since the newspaper account does not mention any definite action.²¹

At a more general meeting which was held at the court house in Richmond on April 21, 1845, the question of annexation was again considered. James B. Miller was elected chairman of the meeting with Mills M. Battle as secretary. R. C. Campbell gave an explanation of the purpose of the meeting which as stated in The Telegraph, was: "for purpose of taking the sense of the citizens of county on the subject of annexation to the United States." A committee was appointed to draft the preamble and resolutions to express the feelings

20 Ibid., Book R., pp. 502, 598.

21 News item, "Richmond", Telegraph and Texas Register, vol. X, (April 16, 1845), p. 2.

of Fort Bend County citizens in regard to annexation.

After a twenty minute recess, the committee composed of R. C. Campbell, F. M. Gibson, and J. H. Barnard, reported their work, which was adopted as follows:

Whereas, the citizens of the county of Fort Bend have always manifested, and still cherish, a deep and abiding interest in the welfare, and prospects of their country; and whereas, in the opinion of this meeting, nothing can tend more to the advancement of the wealth of Texas and the security and happiness of her people, than the proposed measure of annexation.

Be it therefore resolved, 1st; That, like the prodigal who had sojourned long in foreign lands, we will return with pleasure to our Father's house.
²²

Miller's popularity and valuable service to the Republic resulted in his nomination for the first governorship of Texas at a meeting of citizens from Washington and surrounding counties in Brenham on July 8, 1845. A similar meeting was held in the home of Hudson Gaston, in Fort Bend County November 22, 1845. David Randon served as Chairman and James M. Briscoe was appointed Secretary for the meeting. Plans were made for a campaign in Miller's behalf. His announcement was not approved by at least one leading newspaper the Telegraph and Texas Register because the editor said that he had ". . . deviated from his ordinary prudence and yielded too hastily to the solicitation of his friends." Miller lost to J. Pinckney Henderson.²³

²² Ibid., vol. X, (May 7, 1845), p. 3.

²³ Ibid., vol. X, (November 19, and 26, 1845), p. 2.

In accordance with the proclamation issued by President Anson Jones, Fort Bend County held the election on October 13, 1845, to secure the opinion of the citizens of the county relative to the adoption of the new State Constitution and the approval or disapproval on the question of annexation. The results of the voting in Fort Bend County were: for the Constitution, 165 votes, against it, one vote; for annexation 166 votes, against it one vote.²⁴

An enactment by the Second Session of the Legislature caused the first dissatisfaction of Fort Bend County citizens with the policies of the State. It was the apportionment act passed by the Legislature in March, 1848.²⁵ This act made them feel that they would not have fair representation at the next session of the legislature.

A Mass meeting was held at Richmond on September 9, 1848, in protest against this Act and against a previous decision of the State Supreme Court concerning the land titles of some of the citizens.

Dr. James B. Miller presided, and William Craft and T. G. Collins served as Secretaries for the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was explained by J. S. Sullivan.

24 C. C. Dyer, Chief Justice of Fort Bend County, to the Secretary of State, Ashbel Smith, October 27, 1845, in Special Election Returns, Archives, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas

25 H. P. N. Gammel, Laws of Texas, Vol. III, pp. 312-314.

Then William S. Raynor, Fort Bend County Representative, explained how the apportionment Act was passed and how it became a law. A committee consisting of William Chambers, J. K. Waters, E. Brush, James Knight and J. S. Sullivan was appointed to draft resolutions which were unanimously accepted by the group. The resolutions were as follows:

"Be it resolved, by the people of Fort Bend County in mass meeting assembled, that the land titles of Texas, by a late decision of the Supreme Court of the State, and the numerous relocations lately made as a consequence of such decision, upon lands held by the oldest and most unquestionable titles in the country, is a serious and most alarming public calamity, and one which calls most imperatively upon those in authority, for the most prompt and effective relief in their power to apply.

"Resolved that a due regard to the wishes and welfare of the people at large, should prompt his Excellency the Governor of the State to convene the Legislature as early as possible, so that what ever relief can be afforded by that department of the government, under the Constitution may be speedily had.

"Resolved, that taxation without representation is a grievance to which the descendants of '76 dislike to submit; yet, did not the people of this county believe that anomaly which they find on the statue book styled an apportionment bill, approved some time? In March, 1848, bore a strong resemblance to a handwriting on the wall, which, when properly interpreted, will read, "Your land titles have been weighed in our balances, and are found wanting", they would, without a murmur, acquiesce in this Legislature disfranchisement. But this comes to us in such a questionable shape that we feel constrained to urge most respectfully upon His Excellency the Governor of the State, the propriety of calling an extra session of the Legislature, so that an apportionment bill may be passed in conformity with the requirements of the Constitution,

before Fort Bend is entirely deprived of a voice in the councils of the State."²⁶

Randal Jones, J. D. Waters, William Chambers, C. C. Dyer, William S. Raynor, E. Brush, James Knight, E. Cheney, John Perkins, Henry Jones, George Pleasants, and J. M. Cook were appointed as a committee to call upon I. S. Peck, the County Surveyor, and request his resignation. This committee visited the surveyor that afternoon and secured along with the surveyor's resignation all his field notes taken in making surveys.²⁷ The legislative evils pertaining to land titles and to representation were remedied by acts approved by the subsequent session of the State Legislature.²⁸

On March 4, 1850, Fort Bend citizens participated in the election provided for in the Constitution of 1845 to determine the location of the capital of the State. The result of the vote taken in Fort Bend County is as follows: Washington received 67 votes; Austin, 26; Huntsville, 2; Palestine, 2; and Tehuacana Hills, 3.²⁹

26 "A Protest," Democratic Telegraph and Texas Register, vol. XIII, (September 21, 1848), p. 2.

27 Ibid., vol. XIII, (September 21, 1848), p. 2.

28 H. P. N. Gammel, Laws of Texas, vol. IV, pp. 469-470; 473-483.

29 C. C. Dyer, Chief Justice, to James B. Webb, Secretary of State, March 15, 1850, in Special Election Returns on Location of the Seat of Government, Archives, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas

This vote clearly indicates the wish of the Fort Bend County citizens to locate the capital in their part of the State.

On August 6, 1855, the citizens voted on the question of accepting or rejecting the Texas Debt Act as passed by the United States Congress on February 24, 1855. Fifty-nine votes were cast in opposition to the proposal by the United States Government to settle the State's debt and boundary question. One hundred and fifty-seven votes were cast by Fort Bend County favoring the acceptance of the proposal.³⁰

Many miscellaneous matters of interest came before officials of Fort Bend County. The record of some of them are here given. In the early days of Fort Bend County foreigners applied for citizen's papers to the district court and the pages of the minutes of the court are full of grants of citizen's papers in those days. The first papers were granted by the court to A. F. Lutz, a German who appeared in open court on November 29, 1851.³¹

In 1863, the Legislature passed a law according to which physicians had to secure from the commissioners' court a certificate to practice medicine. In accordance with this law, the first certificate issued in Fort Bend County was

30 C. C. Dyer, Chief Justice, to Edward Clark, Secretary of State, August 23, 1855, Special Election Returns, Archives, Texas State Library.

31 Minutes of the District Court, vol. C, pl 30, Fort Bend County Records.

obtained by Dr. Z. L. Sherrard, on January 4, 1864.³²

In August, 1865, in the first county election after the Civil War, the following men were elected to office: R. J. Calder, County Judge; Robert Hodges, County Clerk; W. P. Duff, District Clerk; J. W. Miles, Sheriff and Tax Collector; W. L. Davidson, County Attorney; C. C. Boss, Assessor; David Ferguson, Justice of the Peace, precinct No. 1; J. H. Bailey, Constable. They were all removed from office by military authority except W. P. Duff who took the amnesty oath. The others refused to do so.³³

In pursuance of the Act of Congress of April 10, 1869, Major General J. J. Reynolds in command of the Fifth Military District composed of Texas and Louisiana issued an election order designating Tuesday, November 30, 1869, as the date for submitting the constitution drawn up in the Constitutional Convention of 1868-1869 to all registered voters at an election to be held in each county.³⁴

At this election state and county officers, as well as a United States Senators and Representatives, were to be elected. By order of H. Clay Wood, Assistant Adjutant

32 Minutes County Court, Book A, (page not numbered) Fort Bend County Records

33 A. J. Sowell, History of Fort Bend County, p. 154.

34 Charles William Ramsdell, Reconstruction in Texas, p. 230.

General of the Fifth Military District, fifteen men from the military post at Galveston were ordered to Fort Bend County to arrive by November the fifteenth. These troops were not to be allowed at the polling place, but were to be quartered near by and were to keep order in case of trouble, remaining on duty through the election. As a result of this order Captain Red came to Richmond with a detachment of Negro troops. Whether there was any disturbance is not known. The troops did not stay away from the polls. They stood with bayonets while the white men marched between them to vote.³⁵

In this election John Cobbin and Henry Phelps were elected to places on the board of appeals and Walter Burton was elected Sheriff for two consecutive terms, (1869-1874).

In the census of 1880 Fort Bend County had 9380 people, 7508 of them being Negroes. It can be readily understood from these figures why with enfranchisement the Negro freedmen were able to send members of their race to the Legislature. Mac McCabe of Fort Bend County was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention called by Governor Richard Coke to provide the State of Texas with a Constitution more in keeping with the principles of the Democratic Party and to

35 Information obtained from F. M. O. Fenn as related to him by his father, John R. Fenn of Richmond and transmitted through personal interview, June 26, 1938.

change some of the articles in the Constitution of 1869. McCabe was given a place on the Education Committee. In the Sixteenth Legislature, B. F. Williams represented Fort Bend County. Among the Negro members of the Eighteenth Legislature was George Wyatt who was sent from Fort Bend and Waller Counties. W. M. Burton of Richmond was elected State Senator from District 17 composed of Fort Bend, Waller, and Wharton Counties. He served from 1874 to 1882 and was concerned about the future welfare of the free Negro. On March 21, 1879, he introduced in the Senate a bill entitled "An Act to Better Establish the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas for the Benefit of the Colored Youth."³⁶

A paraphrase of a little song well established the time of Walter Burton as an officeholder of Fort Bend County in the minds of the people. The song is as follows:

Mother, mother, may I go to swim?
 Yes, my darling son,
 If you hang your clothes on a hickory limb
 And vote for Walter Burton.³⁷

Henry and Charley Ferguson were Negroes who were politically prominent during this period. Henry, the leader of the Negroes, was respected by both whites and blacks. He was Sheriff from 1874 to 1876 and then held the office of Tax Assessor for the next twelve years. While he was Tax Assessor, Henry Ferguson received three hundred dollars

36 J. Mason Brewer, Negro Legislators of Texas, pp. 69-80.

37 F. M. O. Fenn, Richmond, Texas, interview, June 26, 1938.

for building a bridge, and \$918.75 for fifty acres of land sold to the county for a poor farm. These were violations of the law.³⁸

Charley Ferguson was district clerk from 1882-1888. Other Negroes who were office holders during this time were: Tom Taylor, William Eaton, J. B. Roberts, J. P. Dillard, H. E. Ganaway, and Londen Branch, who could neither read nor write.³⁹

When Negroes were elected to office the offices were usually run by white deputies. However, this was not true in the case of Burton and the Fergusons.

It has been rather difficult to get unprejudiced information concerning the type of officials that these Negroes made. Naturally the white citizens that were interviewed had little to say in favor of the Negro office holders, and they usually turned it off by saying that it was a disgrace to Fort Bend County.

After the passage of the Terrell Election Law of 1903, which among other things provided for a party primary in each county, the Negro vote in Fort Bend County has not been a controlling factor. The Negroes had never belonged to the Democratic party and therefore they were excluded from the Democratic primaries.

38 Minutes of the Commissioners Court, Book C, pp. 71, 95, Fort Bend County.

39 Election Registers number 264-271; (1870-1888), pp. 248, 448, 462; 290, 302, 325; 184, 303. Archives, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas.

Probably the worst thing connected with the Negro in politics in the county was the fact that it divided the white people into two factions, each one bidding for the support of the Negro votes.

It is said by old citizens that up to 1868, it was impossible to be elected to a county office in Fort Bend County without the support of at least a part of the Negro vote.

The Jaybird Democratic Association. For forty years after the Negro had been freed and given the right to vote, there were more Negroes than whites in Fort Bend County. The result was that prior to the organization of the Jaybird Association, the affairs of the county had been dominated by those who could control the Negro vote. Negro officials had been holding offices, or white officials who relied on the Negro vote managed county affairs. So corrupt a system of county government as this was resulted in waste and mismanagement and increased the burden of taxation on the people, the chief tax payers being among the whites. Finding protests in vain, a group of young white tax payers who belonged to the Rosebud Club organized to protest early in 1868 and gradually gained members from all portions of the county. The Rosebud Club finally became the Young Men's Democratic Club. Its aim was to correct the existing evils and to establish and maintain a pure government by the white people. Conferences of this club's representatives with leaders of the faction in power were held without results.

In due time each side nominated a full county ticket, and after a heated canvass the candidates of the white people were defeated. During this canvass the term "Jaybird" was applied to the defeated party and "Woodpecker" to the others, and the name stuck to each.

Feelings were intensified, families were divided and personal altercations occurred which ended in shooting affrays. Finally on August 16, 1889, a deadly combat between the two factions took place in the streets of Richmond.⁴⁰

J. M. Weston, the County Judge, telegraphed to L. B. Ross, Governor of Texas, for troops. Ross wired Captain R. A. Reichardt, commander of the Houston Light Guard, to take his company to Richmond at once.⁴¹ The troops under Reichardt arrived at twelve o'clock that night and took charge. Governor Ross arrived the next day, August 17, 1889, with the Brenham Light Guard consisting of forty men commanded by Captain J. M. Byrne.

Governor Ross remained in Richmond several days, and took upon himself the role of mediator. The "Jaybirds" were very determined to get control of the government as they paid all the taxes and represented nearly all the white people. They were determined that Negro supremacy should cease. The

⁴⁰ Information obtained from F. M. O. Fenn, Richmond, Texas, June 10, 1938.

⁴¹ News item, "Blood Flows Freely", The Dallas Morning News, vol. IV (August 17, 1889), p. 1

county government was completely disorganized. The sheriff was dead.

In the process of reorganization, the commissioners court, consisting of County Judge J. M. Weston and commissioners Alex Phelps and Wade Robinson, had the right to make the appointments, but the "Jaybirds" held the power, in that they alone had sufficient wealth to make bonds for the officials who were to be selected. As a result of conferences between Governor Ross and the leaders of both sides, an agreement was reached on August 20, 1889, that Ira Aten, Sergeant of the rangers be appointed Sheriff.⁴²

On August 22, 1889, the old commissioners court had ceased to exist. Judge J. M. Weston tried to open court, but only Wade Robertson was present. By August 24, the Jaybirds had things in their hands. H. R. Farmer, J. H. P. Davis, and F. McLaughlin had been appointed commissioners. On September 3, this commissioners court accepted the resignation of J. M. Weston and appointed M. J. Hickey to fill his term of office. This new court required that new bonds be made by all those officers still in office; namely; J. V. Meek, County Attorney; J. K. Terry, Tax Assessor; Frank Bell, Public Weigher; J. C. Mayfield, County Treasurer; and W. R. Gayle, District Clerk. Only one of the old Woodpecker crowd was left in office, W. R. Gayle, District Clerk. His bond was rejected November, 1889, and, as he failed to make another, he was removed from office,

42 Ibid., (August 21, 1889), p. 1.

and H. R. Farmer was appointed to that office.⁴³

By this time, the prominent "Woodpeckers" had left the county. On October 3, 1889, the organization that is now in existence was formed with 141 members. It is known as the Jaybird Democratic Organization of Fort Bend County. Clem Bassett was its first president and F. M. O. Fenn was the first secretary.

Each year the Jaybird Association votes to receive the entire white pool list as members. A white citizen therefore automatically becomes a member.⁴⁴

Nomination for county office in the Jaybird primaries is the equivalent of election because there has never been any opposition to the Jaybird ticket in either the state primaries or the general election. The association has no bearing on state or national politics. It is opposed to any official remaining in office longer than two consecutive terms. The Negroes are fully satisfied to leave the county affairs in the hands of the white people.

A substantial monument was erected in the old courthouse yard in memory of the three whose lives had been sacrificed in the Jaybird cause and to commemorate the principles for

43 Minutes Commissioners Court, Book C., pp. 395, 399, 400-401, 420, 437, Fort Bend County Records.

44 Minutes of the Jaybird Democratic Association of Fort Bend County in possession of the District Clerk at Richmond, (no page numbers given).

which they fought and died.

A noted Brazoria County wag came to Richmond when feeling was at its height and a partisan immediately approached him with the question, "Are you a Jaybird or a Woodpecker?"

Not knowing his questioner's affiliations, according to District Judge M. S. Munson, who told the story, the Brazoria County man finally declared, "Stranger, I don't belong to either party--I'm a mocking bird."⁴⁶

John M. Moore, Sr. is the only Fort Bend County citizen who was ever elected to the National Congress. He served the Eighth District from 1905 to 1913. His election gave a strong and influential factor to national waterways improvement, and he worked for the water commerce of Texas both in and out of Congress. He was a member of the Emigration and Naturalization Committee and of the Post Office Expenditures and Banking and Currency Committee.⁴⁷

Fort Bend County took a place among the progressive counties of the State on April 9, 1911. After being hampered for years with a convention form of government and a two-thirds rule," she at last freed herself from the grip of

45 Information given by F. M. O. Fenn, Richmond, Texas, June 10, 1938.

46 Related by W. L. Nesbitt.

47 L. E. Daniel, Texas, The County and Its Men, p. 516, This information is corroborated by Clem Myers of Richmond, Texas.

a "stagnation party" and adopted the primary method, which insures equal rights to all and a true expression of the wishes of the people.⁴⁸

During the World War, the need of protecting the military camps from the influence of liquor aided the cause of prohibition. An amendment to the State Constitution, Section 20, Article 16, was submitted to the legislature in an election on May 24, 1919, in which Fort Bend County voted 485 for prohibition and 639 against. The Eighteenth Amendment was adopted.

On August 26, 1933, Fort Bend County voted 1661 votes for the legislation of 3.2 beer in the county and 301 votes against. On the repeal of State Wide Prohibition on August 24, 1935, Fort Bend County voted 384 votes against repeal and 1400 for repeal.⁴⁹

Concerning the interest of Fort Bend County in providing free text-books for any child of scholastic age attending the public schools of Texas, the citizens voted in the general election held November 7, 1918, for free texts, 285; against, 91.

48 Next item, "Fort Bend County Adopts Primary Method", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XVII, (April 14, 1911), p. 1.

49 Election Record Book 2, pp. 45; 144; 152. Fort Bend County Records.

In the Special Election held August 24, 1935, when amendment seven was asked to be voted upon whether to permit furnishing free text-books to every child of scholastic age attending any school within the state the vote in Fort Bend County was 1,199 for the amendment and 914 against.⁵⁰

On the day for women to register that they might be entitled to vote, a number of them were awaiting the opening of the tax collector's office at Richmond. Mrs. Bessie Urana of Guy, the thirty-six year old mother of eight children, had the distinction of being the first woman in the county to register that she might cast her vote for democracy.⁵¹

The ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States which gave to women the right to vote was submitted to the voters of Fort Bend County in a special election on May 24, 1919. The vote was 410 for, and 712 against ratification.⁵²

The first woman to hold a public office in Fort Bend County was Miss Minnie Mayes of Rosenberg. She was elected to the office of County Superintendent of Schools in 1921 and served until 1923. Many other women have held office in the county.

50 Election Record Book 2, pp. 42; 152. Fort Bend County Records.

51 Anonymous, "First to Register," The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XXIV, (June 28, 1918), p. 1.

52 Election Record Book 2, p. 45, Fort Bend County Records.

Women Who Have Held Office in Fort Bend County⁵³

According to "Jaybird" rules, none held office more than two consecutive terms, but many were subsequently reelected.

NAME	OFFICE
Miss Imogene Mullinex	District Clerk
Miss Jane Elsdell	School Superintendent
Miss Kate Mitchell	County Clerk
Mrs. Aline C. Roane	District Clerk
Mrs. Imogene Chance	County Clerk
Mrs. B. C. Smith	District Clerk
Mrs. Aileen E. Mitchell	County Treasurer
Miss Mattye Schulz	School Superintendent
Mrs. Nannie Lehmann	County Clerk
Mrs. Minnie Brown	County Treasurer
Mrs. Fannie Chadil	County Treasurer
Miss Mabel Schulz	District Clerk
Miss Ella Macek	County Clerk
Miss Minnette Griffith	County Treasurer

For the first time in ninety-six years the Fort Bend County grand jury adjourned in December, 1933, without returning a murder indictment.⁵⁴

53 Election Record Books 2 and 3 and Bond Record, Fort Bend County, vol. V, County Clerk's Office.

54 Anonymous, "Ninety-six Year Old Record broken", The San Benito Light, (December 20, 1933.)

CHAPTER IV

FORT BEND COUNTY AND NATIONAL DEFENSE

The citizens of Fort Bend County participated in the Texas Revolution. They were active also in the affairs of the Republic, and continued their interest in public matters after joining the Union. In fact, there have been Fort Bend County men in every war in which our country was involved since 1836.

The Meir Expedition. During the ten years after the Battle of San Jacinto, Mexico claimed Texas, but did little to assert the claim. In 1842, after the Santa Fe Expedition which prompted an invasion by Mexico into Texas, the people of Fort Bend County were disturbed by hearing of a Mexican Army under General Adrian Woll which occupied San Antonio. Texans hastened to San Antonio. Volunteer companies began forming. One, recruited in Fort Bend County and led by Captain William Ryon, hastened to the conflict. Joining other detachments of the Texas Army, the men marched to the Rio Grande, following the invaders who recrossed and escaped in the hills of Mexico.

At the river the Texas Army disbanded; some returned home while others decided to lay siege to the town of Mier. Captain Ryon's company formed a part of the expedition to

Mier. The story of their desperate fight in the town, their surrender to overwhelming numbers, their weary march to the interior, the drawing of the beans where a white bean meant life and a black bean meant death, Castle Perote and its horrors of filth, fever and starvation is too well known to be repeated here.

On the way to Perote the Texans were joined by the survivors of the Santa Fe Expedition. John McNabb of Fort Bend County was one of them.¹

That there was considerable interest in the fate of the Mier prisoners is evidenced by a public meeting held in Richmond on March 4, 1843, to devise a plan for securing their release. James B. Miller acted as chairman of the meeting. The Fort Bend County citizens were in favor of any plan to obtain the release of the Texans, even an offensive war.²

The Mier men with the Santa Fe prisoners were kept in Perote for more than a year. In spite of their condition, the Texans were able to remain rather cheerful, believing that they would soon be released. Captain William Ryon was able to borrow money from a friend of his father, and with

1 A. J. Sowell, History of Fort Bend County, p. 218.

2 News item, "For the Telegraph", Telegraph and Texas Register, vol. VIII, (March 15, 1843), p. 2.

this money he made prison life more comfortable for his men.³

There were so many men from Fort Bend County that the citizenry presented a petition in December, 1843, to the Texas Congress asking that a law be passed for the relief of these men. Dr. Joseph E. Burnard, then a Representative, aided in getting the act passed January, 1844, and the Fort Bend County men were released by the general order September 16, 1844.⁴

Mexican War. After Texas was annexed to the United States and the Nation became involved in a war with Mexico, (1846-1848), the people of Fort Bend County were still interested in keeping the Mexicans out of the state. Several Fort Bend County men joined the army attacking the Mexicans. Andrew Jackson Roark was in charge of a company of Texans and participated in the capture of Mexico City. Gilbert R. Brush joined General Taylor's army and was wounded at the Battle of Monterrey.⁵

The Civil War. The people of Fort Bend County went to war with those of all the other counties in Texas. The incidents

3 Captain Ryon to Abner Harris, Castle Perote, Mexico, June 27, 1844, in Houston Wade's Notes and Fragments of the Mier Expedition, pp. 11, 51-55.

4 H. N. P. Cammell, Laws of Texas, vol. 11, p. 856.

5 Clarence R. Wharton, A History of Fort Bend County, p. 223.

preceding this conflict have been frequently told, hence it is not necessary to repeat them here.

Economic Conditions in the County in 1860. In 1860, the county was in every way self-supporting. Livestock, such as horses, mules, cattle, and swine, was raised in abundance, though mules figured less prominently in the working scheme at that time. Oxen were used extensively in farming and occupied a much more important place than mules or horses. The number of mules was 784 while work oxen numbered 2,680.⁶

Cotton, corn, cane, peas, beans, and sweet potatoes were grown in great abundance, while oats and Irish potatoes made a large contribution to the country's food supply. Further contributions to self-sufficiency were wool, honey, butter, orchard products, some tobacco and some manufactures, the last named consisting of brick, sawed lumber, ginned cotton, cloth, sugar, and meal.⁷

At the outbreak of the war, there were two hundred and sixty slaveholders, ninety of whom operated extensive holdings, seventy-four of them containing between 100 and 500 acres each; fifteen, between 500 and 1,000 acres, and one of more than 1,000 acres.⁸ Such plantations required many slaves.

6 The United States Census, 1860, p. 140.

7 Ibid., pp. 141-143, 583.

8 Ibid., p. 216.

Often the value of the slaves ran into several figures. Edward M. Branch of Richmond was one of the slave owners, and an appraisement of his large estate as early as 1838, shows the value of slaves. Of course sex and age often determined the price. For example, a Negro girl of fifteen years was valued as high as \$700.00 and a Negro boy of twenty-three, as high as \$1000.⁹

It is impossible to know the scale of prices for the purchase of slaves during the war. Most of the sales were made in cotton and land. There was considerable activity, however. Some planters rid themselves of their slaves to their more optimistic fellow citizens. Refugees from other states brought in slaves and disposed of them.¹⁰

The assessments in 1860 were land, \$3,250,000; slaves, \$3,140,000; horses and cattle, \$670,000--a total of over \$7,000,000.¹¹

At this late period, it is difficult to get a picture of the days of slavery in Fort Bend. Most of the legends which come down to us are colored by the traditionally kind master and obedient slave. Only now and then are authentic facts found.

9 Probate Record, Book A of Fort Bend County, p. 55.

10 Abner J. Strobel, The Old Plantations and Their Owners of Brazoria County Texas, p. 13.

11 United States Census for 1860, p. 129.

A March, 1844, issue of the Telegraph of Houston, tells of two slave disturbances. Ten slaves attacked B. F. Terry, but he stood them off with a pistol and a whip, shot one in the leg to disable him and broke the arm of another with the whip. The account also tells that the overseer on the Burdick plantation near Richmond was killed by a Negro in the field.¹²

Further evidence of dissatisfaction among the slaves is found in the newspapers' advertisements offering rewards for the delivery of runaway Negroes. It appears that the customary reward was \$50. J. D. Waters of Fort Bend County was a frequent advertiser. In December, 1843, he advertised for his mulatto man "Isaac" who was thirty years old, about five feet ten inches high and "wore generally a pair of large black whiskers."¹³

The Legislature took a hand in affairs in 1846 by enacting a bill providing for patrols in each precinct of a county. They were to be appointed by the County Court and consist of a captain and assistants to serve three months. Half of them were to be slave owners. Patrols were required to go over their districts at least once every month and visit the Negro quarters where it was suspected slaves were improperly or unlawfully assembled. When a patrol found any slaves

12 News item, "Negro Disturbances", Telegraph, vol. IX, (March 13, 1844), p. 2.

13 Advertisement, "Reward", Telegraph, vol. VIII, Dec. 30, 1843, p. 4.

"off their plantations without a pass;" the patrol was to give the offending slave not more than twenty-five lashes.¹⁴

This law was probably responsible for the ditty that has been handed down to the old-timers of today:

"Run, nigger, run, Patrol'll git you, hit you,
twenty-five 'fore he ever quit you."

In 1879, after A. E. Sweet and J. A. Knox toured Texas, they told of interviewing an old Negro who had been a slave on the Water's plantation. According to their story, the old Negro spoke of his "ole massa" with affection and said, "I know it's better fur de young folks dat dey am free; but as fur me, I'd rather be getting my vittles in old massa's kitchen dan be skirmishing 'round for grub like we has ter do now".¹⁵

Secession. Fort Bend County in 1861 faced the problem of remaining loyal to the Union or embracing the doctrine of secession. Slavery, the great economic institution of the South, an integral part of the agricultural life of the county, had developed rapidly; in 1860, there were 4,127 slaves in the county which ranked it eighth in the State.¹⁶ This indicates that the Fort Bend folk believed in the justice and the

14 H. P. N. Cammel, Laws of the State of Texas, vol. II, 1846, p. 195.

15 Alex E. Sweet and J. Armoy Knox, On a Mexican Mustang, pp. 77-78.

16 United States Census, 1860, p. 240.

value of African slavery. They then considered the election of Lincoln to the presidency as being directly antagonistic to the continuation of the institution of slavery.

November 21, 1860, in response to the call for a county convention, Fort Bend citizens gathered at Richmond to select delegates to the State Convention which had been called. At the County Convention a resolution was adopted which read in part:

"That all laws prohibiting the free importation of slaves were a standing reproach and an offensive stigma on the institution of slavery which in the South is regarded as a great and signal good both to the white and Negro races and clearly defensible on moral, social and religious grounds."¹⁷

January 8, 1861, an election was held throughout Texas for the election of delegates to the Secession Convention to be held in Austin. Frank Terry of Fort Bend County was elected with opposition.¹⁸

The State Convention assembled in Austin and adopted resolutions providing for secession, subject to the ratification by popular vote on February 23, 1861. The vote of Fort Bend County was 486 for secession to 0 against it.¹⁹

17 C. R. Wharton, History of Texas, vol. II, p. 71.

18 George P. Foster, Chief Justice of Fort Bend County, to the Secretary of State, January 27, 1861, in Special Election Returns, Archives, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas,

19 Ibid., (February 26, 1861).

Once the decision was made, there was no hesitancy. Fort Bend County men in large numbers donned the gray of the Confederacy.

Two days after the vote on secession, B. F. Terry and others petitioned the Commissioner's Court to appropriate money for the purchase of arms and equipment for the various companies of "Minute Men" to be organized in the county. The organization of "Minute Men" was one of the first demonstrations by Fort Bend people to protect their property. The Court appropriated \$3,500 and appointed Smith Darnell to purchase the following equipment:

- 75 improved Colt army pistols
- 50 muskets
- 400 pounds powder
- 300 pounds No. 1 buckshot
- 1,000 pounds lead
- 30,000 Colt's pistol caps
- 500 musket caps
- 75 powder flasks.²⁰

Five months later, July 15, the court gave additional aid out of county funds and purchased horses, guns, pistols, and articles of clothing for the soldiers leaving the county for the seat of war. Fifteen of the horses purchased for use of the volunteers were returned as of no use to the Confederacy and were sold for cash at public sales "with saddles and guns to be returned".²¹

20 Minutes, County Court, Book A, pp. 217-218.

21 Ibid., Book A, p. 227.

Further aid was given by the County Court to Terry's "Texas Rangers", especially to Captain J. T. Holt's company which was composed mostly of Fort Bend County men. On September 12, 1861, the Court appropriated \$500 toward the support and maintenance of Captain Holt's "Terry Guards". S. A. Stone and 203 other citizens petitioned the Court on October 20, 1861, to make an appropriation of \$10,000 for the benefit of companies from Fort Bend County to enter services of the Confederate States. This assistance was not given immediately, but several months later the Court again appropriated \$3,000 out of county funds for the purpose of defending the coast of Texas against Federal invasion.²²

During the special term of the Court, July 11, 1861, \$2,000 was appropriated as the county's share in meeting the expense of a military encampment established by Harris, Brazoria and Fort Bend Counties.²³

From county funds, Captain Holt's company was granted \$5000 for the purchase of winter clothing, shoes, and other needed equipment. The company had recently left the county to engage in the war. A committee composed of A. Moore, H. Kyle, and G. P. Foster, was appointed to secure the necessary articles and have them made into "pants, drawers, etc." to be shipped to the Fort Bend soldiers. An additional \$142 was appropriated December 20, 1861, to pay for shipping the guns

22 Ibid., Book A, p. 225.

23 Ibid., Book A, p. 226.

and clothing to Captain Holt.²⁴

At a meeting of the Court, October 31, 1862, S. M. Frost handed in \$827 which had been collected, stating that the amount was contributed to purchase clothing for Fort Bend County soldiers then in Arkansas. The Court appropriated an additional \$3,000 for the same cause. J. W. Miller was appointed purchasing agent to secure the clothing.²⁵

The next mention of the Court's action pertaining to the soldiers was in the minutes of December 5, 1864, when the sum of \$500 was appropriated out of county funds for the purpose of defraying expenses of packages sent by citizens to their friends in the army east of the Mississippi River.²⁶

The county records contain no other items concerning the soldiers until the Court met May 13, 1865. At that time, on petition of C. W. Buckely and other citizens and tax payers, it was ordered that Fort Bend County support a soldier home by supplying M. A. Bestwick, proprietor of Verandah Hotel, with a sufficient amount of provisions to reimburse him for meals and lodgings furnished soldiers at twenty-five cents each. He was required to keep a register of names, commands, and other records of the soldiers, each of whom

24 op. cit., Book A, pp. 232-233; 236.

25 Ibid., (October 31, 1862), pages not numbered.

26 Ibid., (December 5, 1864), pages not numbered.

was required to secure a ticket from the county treasurer for meals and lodgings. D. K. Kinkle was authorized to feed horses belonging to soldiers charging them twenty-five cents for each feed, to be paid in corn at forty cents per bushel. He was ordered to keep a register and make a formal report.²⁷

County Relief During the Civil War. As volunteer enlistments and conscriptions continued to decrease the number of men in the county, it became increasingly harder for some families to secure a living. Relief committees were organized and money was advanced for the provisions of needy families. May 22, 1862, W. K. Davis was appointed as the county's agent to solicit and distribute contributions for that purpose. The county contributed \$1,000 to the fund.²⁸

In giving aid to soldiers' families, the Court was governed by the following rules:

First, Court will obtain the number of members in each family, age, and sex.

Second, amount of means which each family has who is seeking aid from county.

Third, an allowance per month in cash to provide necessities of life and in case of sickness further sum as just and proper.

Fourth, definition of family means mother, wife, and children of soldiers too young to earn support, not hirelings or persons who may stay at home.²⁹

27 Ibid., (May 13, 1865), pages not numbered.

28 Minutes, County Court, Book A, p. 228.

29 Ibid., (September 2, 1862), pages not numbered.

The County Court gave each month to every family a sum of money not less than eight or more than forty dollars, depending upon the number of children in the family. The State, supplementing the efforts of the county, gave cotton and wool cards to the families who were unable to pay for them.

When the Court met July 25, 1863, it authorized the county relief committee, with R. I. Colder as agent, to purchase clothing made in the Texas penitentiary with which to supply the families of the soldiers. Colder's purchases amounted to \$1,929.20. The clothing was delivered to Chief Justice C. H. Kendall for distribution.³⁰

In September I. H. Handle was appointed by the County Court to superintend collections from planters of Fort Bend County for families of the soldiers. The county treasurer was authorized to pay for services rendered.³¹

The Court procured 2250 pounds of sugar in 1864 for the same purpose. Half of this sugar was purchased by the county for fifty cents a pound. One barrel of molasses was donated by Kyle and Terry and was distributed, one-half gallon to each family.³²

30 Ibid., (July 25, 1863), pages not numbered.

31 Ibid., (September 30, 1863), pages not numbered.

32 Ibid., (March 28, 1864), pages not numbered.

In order to obtain meat for the soldiers' families, the County Court agreed to pay \$50 per head in Confederate State Notes for a sufficient number of beeves from stock raisers of the county, the beeves to be butchered by Pleasants and Davis who were to keep records of beeves so slaughtered. All stockmen cheerfully signed the agreement, except W. S. Jones who refused upon the grounds that he was unwilling to allow any person to take his beeves unless he was along to point them out.³³

This relief policy was continued throughout the war. January 1, 1865, the County Court ordered Chief Justice C. H. Kendall to contract for and receive from tax payers a sufficient amount of wood, corn, meal, and potatoes, and other produce for support of soldiers' families and to receipt for same in payment of the special county tax. The following rates were allowed:

Corn per bushel-----	\$.40
Pork on foot-----	.05
Pork per pound-----	.06
Bacon-----	.12 $\frac{1}{2}$
Beef on foot perhead-----	10.00
Beef per pound-----	.03
Wood per cord-----	3.00 ³⁴

It was in this manner that Fort Bend County supported the families of her men who enlisted in military service.

The records of the Adjutant General's office of Texas, which contained the original muster rolls, were destroyed

33 Ibid., (April 29, 1864), pages not numbered.

34 Ibid., (January 1, 1865), pages not numbered.

in the burning of the Capitol in 1888. There are therefore no available records to show how many men from Fort Bend went to the Civil War. It has been estimated, however, that ninety per cent of those between sixteen and fifty were either in the actual service or some auxiliary war work.

One of the most distinguished of the Texas regiments was the Eightieth Texas, better known as "Terry's Texas Rangers". Its first colonel, Benjamin F. Terry of Fort Bend County, was killed at Woodsonville, near Bowling Green, Kentucky, in the fall of 1861.

While their husbands went to serve in the army, the women of Fort Bend County took charge of all affairs both in the home and on the farm. With the assistance of the slaves, life continued much as usual. Crops were raised and gathered, and both Negroes and whites were fed and clothed. In addition, the women knitted, made garments, and filled boxes to be sent to the soldiers.³⁵

In a communication to Mrs. T. J. Hunter, President of the Ladies Aid Society of Fort Bend County, dated January 26, 1863, the Second Regiment of Texas Volunteers give thanks for forty-four pairs of woolen socks and three woolen neckties. Other contributions were requested to be left at J. W. House's store to be forwarded.³⁶

35 United Daughters of the Confederacy, Texas Division, Directory, 1922, p. 118.

36 H. E. Bolton and E. C. Barker, With the Makers of Texas, p. 306, quoting from the Tri-Weekly Telegraph.

Responding to this spirit of loyalty, on March 16, 1864, in Richmond, the Fort Bend County soldiers pledged that as members of Company A, Pyron's Regiment, they would reënlist for the war, "regardless of the duration or consequences", and that "they would never lay down arms while a foe found shelter within the Southern Border". . . but would protect the country for "the good that may result to unborn generations and for liberty and freedom all over the world".³⁷

When news came of Lee's capitulation in April, 1865, the people of Fort Bend were in favor of fighting on. A mass meeting was held at Richmond in which resolutions were passed, in substance as follows: That under no circumstances, and in no event would the people submit to their dominating and perfidious enemies, who have "placed an ocean of blood between us which can never be crossed or dried". They called upon the 80,000 soldiers west of the Mississippi to stand firm, and offered to equip 30,000 Negroes "who", the resolution said, "with the aid of God, Kirby Smith and General Magruder, would hold Texas".³⁸

37 News Story, "Fort Bend County Letter", The Houston Tri-weekly News, vol. XXII, (March 23, 1864), p. 4.

38 C. R. Wharton, History of Fort Bend County, p. 173, quoted from the Weekly Constitution, Augusta, Georgia, (June 7, 1865).

The gallant soldiers of Fort Bend County had fought for the "Lost Cause". Many of them lived to see the day, however, when they were glad they could take "Old Glory" to their hearts again. Again on the field of battle, Fort Bend County boys are today proving their right to the inheritance of "honor and valor".

Conditions after the War. The Southern Confederacy had gone down in defeat. General Gordon Granger landed in Galveston with a Federal Army June 19, 1865. On that day he issued a proclamation freeing the slaves in Texas. The Federal occupation of the State was at last a reality, and a company of Union soldiers was stationed at Richmond. The Negroes, no longer under restraint, appeared in crowds on the streets at the county seat singing:

Lincoln rode the big black horse;
Davis rode the mule.
Lincoln wuz de nobleman,
And Davis wuz de fool!³⁹

Fort Bend County was bankrupt. She faced an overturning of her economic system. Unfortunately the slaves were freed prior to the beginning of the cotton picking season. This fact created a new labor problem for the plantation owners who had depended entirely upon slave labor for the production of their crops. Whenever they could get them,

39 Recalled by Miss Lavinia Feris of Richmond, Texas, who was interviewed June 17, 1942.

former masters continued to use the Negroes either as day laborers or as sharecroppers.⁴⁰

However, the newly freed Negroes were not as industrious as they had been in slavery times. Dr. George Feris describes the new system of labor thus:

In a great majority of instances the Negroes have worked listlessly and to kill time instead of grass and weeds. . . . The experiment of white labor has not been tried here. Great dissatisfaction is expressed by the planters and but few would try the Negroes another year if they could do otherwise.⁴¹

The liberated slaves continued under the protection of the Freedmen's Bureau. The people of the county, although defeated in battle, had not lost their spirits and the clashes between the Federal officers and the citizens only ended when the Bureau's Commissioner was forced to leave the county. William H. Rock, Sub-Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, lived in the county about two and one-half years, during which time he was regarded with favor by nearly all the citizens. In their judgment, he had made a better officer than they had expected. It was regretted that his official duties compelled him to associate with freedmen to the exclusion of

40 Mason J. Brewer, Negro Legislators of Texas, pp. 3-10.

41 George Feris, "Fort Bend County", Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1865, p. 108.

whites. When the Bureau collapsed, however, Rock got into an altercation with Tom Sherard, a Negro, following which he quietly left the community, leaving many debts due both whites and blacks.⁴²

Trouble with the Freedmen's Bureau, clashes between the federal offices and county officials, and the activities of the Ku Klux Klan after the war, would constitute a separate chapter. It is enough to say that the county government was under the control of the Negro vote until the "Jay-bird Association" was formed in 1888.

Though recovery came slowly, former slave holders adjusted themselves eventually to free labor, and the Negro acquired some notion of responsibility.

The Spanish American War. When, in 1898, the United States declared war against Spain, Fort Bend County again sustained her reputation for going to the defense of the country. When President William McKinley issued a call for volunteers, numerous young men of Fort Bend County proved their loyalty to the American flag and joined the companies being formed in Houston. They became members of the First Texas Volunteer Cavalry and trained at Fort Mabry and Fort Sam Houston. Among them were Major A. E. Peareson, Sargeant Major

42 C. H. Kendall, "A True History of the Last Ku Klux Outrage at Richmond", Houston Daily Times, vol. IV, (January 14, 1869), p. 2.

R. L. Ranson, Privates Henry Ranson, Donald Robinson, J. Irving Nichols and W. H. Davis. The Fort Bend County men, with the exception of Henry Ranson, did not reach the scene of war due to its short duration. W. H. Davis is the only living veteran. He recalls that there were other Fort Bend County men who joined the First and Second Texas Infantry, but no county records were kept and no data are available.⁴³

The World War I. When the war began in 1914, most of the Fort Bend County people were neutral in sentiment. They only hoped it would not last long. Gradually, popular feeling began to turn against the Central Powers, especially Germany, and this feeling grew so intense that by the beginning of 1917 the greater part of the people were in favor of our entrance into the war. The citizens of Fort Bend County were never indifferent to the general demands made upon them by the conflict after the United States became directly involved. They did their part in contributing men and money. In addition to the many called into service through the selective draft, several hundred voluntarily joined the navy, the army, or the air corps. No separate companies were formed of Fort Bend County soldiers; they were scattered among regiments and divisions. Their military records are available at any time and will become more complete year

⁴³ Information or letter, W. H. Davis, Big Springs, Texas, (June 28, 1942).

after year. Quite the opposite is true of the records of the work done at home by those who did not enter the armed forces. Records have been destroyed, and newspapers are incomplete, so that it is impossible to prepare a complete account of any of the war time activities. However, from the day that war was declared, Fort Bend County began to organize for work.

In accordance with the Selective Draft Act, Fort Bend County's draft board was set up, composed of G. C. Baker, Jr., John M. Moore, and Dr. J. R. Lay, all of Richmond.⁴⁴ Moore resigned and R. A. Hogan took his place; Dr. Lay resigned and Dr. J. S. Yates of Rosenberg took his place. Dr. J. C. Johnson of Richmond was very cooperative in assisting with examinations of the draftees.⁴⁵

The Fort Bend County Council of Defense was organized, July 23, 1917, at a meeting held at the courthouse. Members chosen were: D. R. Peareson, A. P. George, And J. M. Kovar, Richmond; Sam Poorman, Katy; C. A. Chernoskey and C. K. Lee, Rosenberg; E. M. Huggins, Fulshear; Ida. Robinson, Missouri City.⁴⁶

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44 News item, "Texas Exemption Board Announced", The Houston Post, vol. XXXI, (June 28, 1917), p. 5.

45 Interview, G. C. Baker of Richmond, March 3, 1942.

46 Interview, D. R. Peareson, Richmond, March 3, 1942.

On February 12, 1918, a Military Committee of the Council of Defense composed of C. K. Lea, B. J. Winston, D. R. Peareson, and A. F. George appeared before the Commissioner's Court to obtain funds for county protection. The Court set aside \$2,500 of the general fund to buy 100 Winchester Rifles, 30-30 model, 1894, together with belts and 15,000 rounds of ammunition.⁴⁷

September 8, 1918, fourteen women of the county responded to the call sent out by the County Chairman of the Council of Defense at the request of the governor, inviting the patriotic women of the county to meet at the courthouse. At the meeting which ensued, an auxiliary organization was perfected to work in conjunction with the Fort Bend County Council of Defense. The following members were elected to office:

Mrs. F. W. McKay of Rosenberg, Chairman
 Mrs. J. C. Johnson of Richmond, Vice Chairman
 Mrs. Will Wade of Fulshear, Second Vice Chairman
 Mrs. G. Cloeckner of Rosenberg, Secretary-Treasurer⁴⁸

At this time, under instructions from the State Council of Defense, the Fort Bend County Council of Defense organized a Community Council of Defense in every school district. It was determined, said those responsible for the meeting,

47 Minutes, Commissioners' Court, Book M, p. 387.

48 News item, "Women's Committee has Been Organized", The Rosenberg Herald, Vol VI, (September 18, 1918), p. 5.

"to do what the Kaiser had insisted could not be done in this country, to so thoroughly organize the people that they would be just as efficient in war work as the militia and that each individual will realize the importance of each one's part as a war worker."⁴⁹ Thereafter all kinds of war work was carried on through the cooperation of the Community Councils of Defense. They automatically dissolved when the war ended.

By September, 1918, Legal Advisory Boards were established who assisted registrants to answer their questionnaires. They were composed of the following citizens:

At Richmond: W. L. Davidson, F. M. C. Fenn, C. Minkwitz, E. D. Bell, J. D. Newell, T. Hannan, E. C. Farmer, Tom Darst, J. M. Gibson, W. J. McFarlane, H. P. Darst, Dr. R. Peareson.
 At Simonton: H. M. Mitchell, T. L. Mullins, T. J. Hicks.
 At Rosenberg: E. E. Chernosky, H. O. Schulz, F. X. Joerger, Alvin Downen, Lee Meyer, G. T. Snedecor, A. E. Pleak.
 At Sugar Land: A. M. Waugh, S. G. Deatheridge, C. A. Dirks, W. T. Eldrige, Jr.
 At Missouri City: E. R. Robinson, A. J. Adams.
 At Beasley: M. L. Speed, George B. Hutchings.
 At Katy: J. E. Cobiness, M. C. Roberts, B. A. Everts.
 At Orchard: Fred Kemp, Andrew Quinn, Will Wooster.
 At Needville: Rudolph Baca, Ed Reisinger, Ben Geick, C. F. Zick, W. J. Otto.
 At Fairchilds: Frank Walenta, Stephen Vacek.

⁴⁹ News item, "Community Councils of Defense Formed", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. VI, (September 13, 1918), p. 4.

At Guy: A. J. Horton, S. E. Beard. At Thompson: J. W. Hampil, W. H. Herzog. At Clodine: Joe Ternus. At Booth: T. G. Speed, F. I. Booth. At Fulshear: E. M. Huggins, John Mayes, W. J. Wade. At Krasna: B. J. Dusek, Joe Grigar.⁵⁰

The Fort Bend County chapter of the American Red Cross was organized on May 2, 1917, by Wm. M. Baxter, Manager of the Midwestern Division. The following officers were elected: Judge C. H. Chernosky, Chairman; Mrs. J. C. Johnson, Vice-Chairman; Mrs. W. H. Hinson, Secretary; T. A. Wessendorff, Treasurer; D. R. Peareson, Finance Chairman; Mrs. Jennie Wessendorff, Chairman of Production; Mrs. Helen Farmer, Chairman of Surgical Dressings; Mrs. F. M. O. Fenn, Chairman of Publicity.⁵¹

The Fort Bend County Red Cross Chapter secured the services of Miss Jane Blaisdell as Secretary of the Social Service work in September, 1919. She held this position for over a year.⁵²

E. A. Peden of Houston, Food Administrator for Texas, perfected his permanent organization in January, 1918 with county food administrators in each county in the State. W.

50 Announcement, "Legal Advisory Board", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. VI, (September 27, 1918), p. 1.

51 Interview, Mrs. W. H. Hinson, Richmond, (April 11, 1941).

52 News item, "Red Cross News", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. VII, (September 19, 1919), p. 6.

J. Meininger of Rosenberg was appointed for Fort Bend County. Through his efforts the county was said to have been the first in the United States to give up the use of flour when the country was called upon to save food for the soldiers.

"Liberty Day" in 1918 was not observed as a holiday in Rosenberg. Business was pushed with the usual vigor until 5:30 P. M., when without any speech making, a car which was decorated with various appropriate mottoes was loaded with flour by the Rosenberg high school boys. Two days later the car reached Camp Logan at Houston and was received by Lieutenant Chas. Stalsburg in charge of Bakery Company Number 34. It was estimated that 150,000 barrels of flour was sent to army camps that day from Fort Bend County.⁵³

When Food Administrator Peden called for assistance in probing the high cost of living in 1919, he received his first response from Fort Bend County. W. J. Meininger of Rosenberg, County Food Administrator, sent in the names of his price determining committee which became the first to be announced in the state. It was composed of R. F. Ransom and Mrs. T. B. Wessendorff of Richmond; W. J. Otto of Needville; J. L. Zuber, Abe Daily, Chas. Hollman, Tom Coleman,

⁵³ News item, "Fort Bend Sends Flour", The Rosenberg Herald, Vol. V, (May 3, 1918), p. 1.

A. A. Chernosky, and Mrs. Lee H. Meyer of Rosenberg.⁵⁴

The people of Fort Bend County met all financial demands placed upon them because of the war. Five Liberty Loan Drives were conducted in Fort Bend County during the war years and in each instance the quota assigned the county was over-subscribed. Chas. Lee was County Chairman.⁵⁵ When asked to subscribe \$337,160 in War Saving Stamps, they subscribed \$420,000.⁵⁶

During the war there were many semi-official organizations engaged in providing comforts and conveniences for the soldiers in the camps in the United States and abroad. In the fall of 1918, Tom B. Darst was County Chairman of the Salvation Army work in Fort Bend County. He raised the county's quota of \$500.⁵⁷

When the call went out in 1919 for money to support French orphans, Fort Bend County collected \$703. This was sent to the authorities by Mrs. D. R. Pearson, County Chairman for that work.⁵⁸

54 Announcement, "Fort Bend Again First in State to Answer Call", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. VII, (August 22, 1919), p. 1.

55 News item, "Reports of the Fifth Liberty Loan", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. VI, (May 16, 1919), p. 5.

56 News item, "Over the Top Again", Ibid., (July 5, 1919), p. 1.

57 News item, "About that Salvation Army Quota", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. VII, (July 11, 1919), p. 2.

58 News item, "French Orphans", The Houston Post, vol. XXXIII, (January 5, 1919), p. 5.

Armistice Celebration. November 11, 1918, was a red-letter day in Fort Bend County. When word of the Armistice was received W. C. Czigan of the Rosenberg Ice and Light Company immediately touched the siren fire whistle and patriotic citizens caught the whistle's meaning and rushed to Main Street. Flags were unfurled, a holiday was declared. Every place of business was closed and the people assembled around a quickly improvised speaker's stand occupied by Mayor Taylor Ray, Reverend John Garret, Judge J. C. Chernosky, County Attorney F. X. Joerger, and Charles Lea. Each made short talks. School children attended in a body and opened the exercises by singing "America". The Rosenberg band played patriotic numbers. The day was given to appropriate recognition of the close of the long period of war.⁵⁹

The citizens in Richmond likewise celebrated the day. Every store closed, a big patriotic parade headed by white and Negro school children followed by autos with horns blowing, marched through the streets to the shrill cry of whistles and the ringing of bells. The people gathered at the high school auditorium where a patriotic meeting was held. Judge D. R. Peareson and Reverend F. T. Clark were speakers. The Ladies Auxiliary of the Episcopal Church held a prayer

⁵⁹ News story, "The Dawn of Peace", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. VI, (November 15, 1918), p. 1.

service at Calvary Church and at night a thanksgiving prayer service of all creeds was held at the Methodist Church.⁶⁰

American Legion Post. On Friday night, January 23, 1931, at the courthouse in Richmond, there was a meeting of Legionaires of Fort Bend County for the purpose of electing officers for the newly organized Post known as the Fort Bend County Post, Number 271. Twenty-nine men became charter members. Sam Nordhousen of Richmond was unanimously elected as Commander. Other officers elected were: A. Reynolds, Adjutant; H. W. Gabitsch, Service Officer; H. T. Morgan, Chaplain; E. O. Bender, Liaison; A. Kohutek, Sargeant-at-Arms; T. Strempel, Historian. In 1919 there was a Legion Post in the county named for Quentin Roosevelt, but it disbanded due to lack of interest.⁶¹

The Post now has a membership of eighty-six men. In 1936 land was leased from the State and a \$1,000 "Legion Hut" was built on a triangular piece of ground west of Rosenberg where the three highways meet. The building is a twenty-four foot by thirty-six foot log cabin. The Legionaires furnished the labor and Ted Strempel acted as foreman.⁶²

60 News story, "Richmond Celebrates All Day", The Houston Post, vol. XXXII, (November 12, 1918), p. 15.

61 News item, "American Legion Post Is Organized", The Texas Coaster, vol. XXXVI, (January 30, 1931), p. 1.

62 News item, "New Home of American Post to Be Dedicated", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XLIII, (September 3, 1936), p. 1.

American Legion Auxiliary. In May, 1931, Mrs. Martha Woods of Houston assisted in organizing a Legion Auxiliary of fourteen charter members when the following officers were elected: Mrs. E. O. Bender, President; Mrs. H. Y. Roddy, Secretary-Treasurer; Mrs. Ted Strempel, Sargeant-at-Arms; Mrs. H. W. Gabitzsch, First Vice President; Mrs. W. Danklefs, Chaplain; Miss Marie Schultze, Historian.⁶³ The auxiliary is active in all civic and war work and stresses rehabilitation. It gives an honor medal to the outstanding students in the affiliated schools of the county each year.

63 News item, "Auxiliary to American Legion Is Organized", The Texas Coaster, vol. XXXVI, (May 1, 1931), p. 1.

CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

A major problem during the early history of Fort Bend County was that of transportation. The people had the alternative of a water route by way of the Brazos River to Brazoria and Galveston or an overland trip to Houston.

River Navigation. Mrs. Dilue Harris tells that in June, 1836, her father and other men who had cotton on the banks of the Brazos built a flat-boat to ship their cotton to Brazoria. She also writes how planters on both sides of the river assembled cotton at William Little's plantation where the steamboat, "Yellowstone," would come for it, and how on other occasions cotton was taken on rafts to Brazoria.¹

By 1840 much interest was being taken in establishing regular steamboat trips on the Brazos. The Telescope of April 4, 1840, prints the following:

Representatives of owners of the British ship "Ironsides" now lying at Galveston visited Richmond on Thursday to establish a steamboat to run from Galveston to Groce's Retreat on the Brazos. The boat is to be made of iron, to draw only two

1 Mrs. Dilue Harris, "Reminiscences", The Quarterly, Texas State Historical Association, Vol. IV, (January, 1901), p. 179.

feet of water with a full cargo--200 bales of cotton. Mr. Powell will own one-half himself; the other one-half to be disposed of in shares of \$500 each, limited to fifteen.²

In 1843 a Houston paper states:

The steamboat "Mustang" is now running as a regular packet between Washington and Galveston, and makes trips twice a month.³

Several months later this same paper cited the advantages of a direct road from Houston to the Brazos River. It pointed out that in wet weather the produce had to be sent to Galveston by steamboat at a cost of from one to two dollars per hundred pounds. The increased freight charge resulted in an increased cost for the commodities delivered in Houston. The price of butter was increased from seven and ten cents a pound to thirty-five and forty cents, a pound; corn that had been selling for thirty cents a bushel was raised to a dollar; potatoes that were thirty cents were seventy-five cents per bushel; beef that formerly sold for two cents per pound was four cents.⁴

Since this newspaper article seemed to have little effect on the trade to Galveston further criticism was continued in 1848. Houston merchants sent dilapidated steamboats into the Brazos River and allowed them to sink in order

2 News item, Telescope, Vol. II, (April 4, 1840), p. 2.

3 News item, The Telegraph, Vol. VIII, (March 29, 1843), p.3.

4 News item, "New Road", Telegraph and Texas Register, Vol. VIII, (November 1, 1843), p. 2.

to prevent navigation of the river. A unanimous declaration against such abuses was published in the paper at Washington, Texas, and was signed by citizens of thirteen counties bordering the Brazos. Fort Bend County was a signer of this declaration.⁵

The trade which had been carried on by steamboat to Galveston suffered with the low stage of the river in 1851. A communication from an unknown Richmond correspondent stated that for two months the steamers, "Brazos" and "Washington", were laid up and that Richmond was cut off from all water communication for the present.⁶

The State Legislature took matters in hand and passed acts approved on August 1, and 23, 1856, which appropriated the sum of \$50,000 for improving the navigation of the Brazos River.⁷ On November 19, 1856, Thomas B. Howard and 249 other Fort Bend citizens petitioned the Commissioners Court to appropriate its pro rata share of \$3125 which would be added to the State's appropriation in cleaning out the Brazos. The court granted the request and work began in 1857.⁸

5 "A Declaration of Protest", The Texas Ranger and Brazos Guard, vol. II, (January 16, 1849), p. 21

6 News item, "Richmond", Galveston Weekly News, vol. VIII, (September 2, 1851), p. 2.

7 H. N. P. Gammel, Laws of Texas, vol. IV, pp. 427-431; 464-466.

8 Minutes, Commissioners Court, Book A, pp. 124-125.

The boat landings in Fort Bend County were given in 1857 as Big Creek, Waters, Richmond, Gaston, and Randon. Most of these were plantation landings.⁹

The use of steamboats must have been discontinued by 1895, according to a Richmond reporter who stated:

There is enough water to float a steamboat, but there is no boat. The "Belle Sulphur", Major Cartwel's boat, is still up the river never having made a trip. These attempts to prove the Brazos susceptible to profitable navigation are likely to result only in great cost to the experimenters. Brazos navigation has obviously got the nightmare.¹⁰

Freighting and Highways. While many citizens were using the water route to Brazoria and Galveston, other citizens were "waggoning" and "freighting" overland to Houston. This business of freighting began in early colonial days and reached considerable proportions during the period of the Republic and early statehood. Regular routes were traversed by ox-teams periodically. Ferries were used instead of bridges. John V. Morton, James M. Thompson and Pascal P. Borden were licensed to keep the first ferries at Richmond, Thompson Crossing, and Bordentown, respectively. The license fee was fifteen dollars for a year.¹¹

9 D. E. E. Braman, Information about Texas, p. 164.

10 Editorials, "Richmond", Tri-Weekly Telegraph, vol. IV, (February 9, 1895), p. 3.

11 Information obtained from License Record, Book A., (1838), p. 1, County Clerk's office.

The ferries were probably cable affairs, since that was the kind usually operated in those days. The following schedule of prices was used in Fort Bend County in 1838:

For each 4 wheel carriage, laden, 50¢ per wheel.
 For each 2 wheel carriage, laden, 50¢ per wheel.
 For each 4 wheel carriage, unladen, 25¢ per wheel.
 For each 4 wheel pleasure carriage, 25¢ per wheel.
 For each 2 wheel pleasure carriage, 25¢ per wheel.
 For each 4 wheel Dearborn wagon, loaded, 25¢ per wheel.
 For each 4 wheel Dearborn wagon, unloaded, 12½¢ per wheel.
 For each man and horse, 25¢.
 For each lone man, 12¢.
 For each separate horse or ox, 12¢.
 For all unbroken cattle, 6¼¢ per head.
 For all sheep, hogs, goats, 2¢ per head.

It was the duty of the ferryman to cross all persons applying to him at all times between daylight and nine o'clock in the evening, or between daylight and dark when driftwood was running. When he crossed after dark, the price was "conventional", which usually meant double ferrriage between dark and nine o'clock.¹²

The Old Richmond Road which turned off from South Main Street of that town carried the traffic of Fort Bend County and the Brazos "bottoms" across the Colorado River to San Antonio and other points on the frontier.

Roads were kept in repair by overseers who were appointed by the County Court. Every man between the ages of twenty-one and sixty years was required to do his share of work or hire a substitute.¹³

12 Minutes, County Court, Book A, p. 3.

13 Interview, W. L. Nesbitt, Columbus, Texas, May 2, 1942.

To meet the needs of the State farms of Fort Bend County, Captain R. J. (Buck) Flanagan, the manager of Central-Halem State Farm, built a bridge across the Brazos River at a cost of only fifty cents in money. This small amount was spent for bailing wire. Convicts cut the timber for the bridge and the wire was used to tie it together. The bridge was used to haul fire wood from the forest on the west bank of the river to the treeless prison farm on the east bank.¹⁴

The produce of Fort Bend County found a ready market with the Houston merchants. Ox wagons wended their toilsome way to its marts. Jesse Ziegler describes the scenes which changed only slightly until wagon freighting gave way to railroads:

They came in great caravans, winding into the city like a long snake, composed not infrequently of a hundred or more wagons drawn by long teams of huge, unwieldy oxen, or multi-spans of mules. The wagons were loaded according to the product of the given community: cotton, hides, beeswax, plantation molasses, sugar cane, etc. The old Kentucky rifle was a fixture across the knee of the driver; the men who tramped alongside the oxen carried their pistols and bowie knives for hunting along the way. By the time the wagons arrived in Houston, they were festooned with wild turkeys, squirrels, rabbits, venison, and occasionally a black bear. Always there trailed along the inevitable long eared hound.¹⁵

14 Dick Vaughn, "The Land of Sugar", The Houston Post, Vol. XXIII, (November 21, 1933), p. 16.

15 Jesse Ziegler, Wave of the Gulf, pp. 10-11.

Every town had its "wagon yard" where travelers might leave their covered wagons and live stock to be cared for, or if they preferred they might make camp on the open prairie.

During the last years of the Republic and the first years of early statehood, stage coaches ran with some regularity between the most important cities. The stage left Houston for Richmond every Monday morning and for the return trip it left Richmond every Saturday morning. The fare each way was \$7.00, all baggage over twenty-five pounds being charged for at the rate of five cents per pound.

As far back as 1836, the Congress of the Republic of Texas passed a law making it the duty of the Commissioners Courts to open public roads, designating them as first, second, or third class. These county roads were kept up by the men who lived near them, an overseer being appointed to supervise such work. The early roads in Fort Bend County were laid out by the Commissioners in each precinct, and "worked" by the citizens.¹⁶ This plan was continued until 1909 when an act by a special session of the Legislature permitted subdivisions of the State to issue bonds for highway building and road improvement.¹⁷ Under this law road precincts were laid out in Fort Bend County. Practically

16 Minutes of the County Court, Book A, p. 8.

17 Revised Civil Statutes of State of Texas, vol. 1, 1925, p. 233.

all of the roads were of what was known as sand-clay construction. This type of road became impossible during wet weather. The increase in the use of the motor vehicle, however, caused the building of good highways and roads in Fort Bend County. Four designated State highways cross the county. Highway Number 343, known as the "Old Spanish Trail", running from the Harris County line at Missouri City to the Wharton County line at East Bernard, is an eighteen foot concrete road.

Highway Number 36, running from Rosenberg to the Austin County line following the Santa Fe Railroad through Orchard to the Brazos River is a hard surface road of asphalt. This road which also runs south from Rosenberg to Needville and the Brazoria County line at Damon is a paved road.

Highway Number 59, running from Rosenberg to the Wharton County line through Beasley and Kendleton is a paved road.

Highway Number 19, running from Alameda, Harris County, to Arcola in Fort Bend County, parallels the International-Great Northern-Columbia Tap-Railroad through Juliff, continuing into Brazoria County.

Highway Number 6, beginning at Galveston enters Fort Bend County at Arcola and connects with Highway Number 343 one mile above Sugar Land. This is a paved road.

In addition to these highways the county has an elaborate system of all-weather roads, rendering accessible almost any populated portion of the county. Among them are the following:

Richmond-Thompson-----	30 miles, paved
Richmond-Fulshear-----	13 miles, semi-hard surface
Richmond-Clodine-----	14 miles, hard surface
Richmond-Gaston-----	12 miles, well graded
Richmond-Simonton-----	20 miles, semi-hard surface
Rosenberg-Fulshear-----	12 miles, gravel
Simonton-Orchard-----	4 miles, semi-hard surface
Stafford-DeWalt-----	5 miles, hard surface ¹⁸

The bus routes through Fort Bend County follow, in most cases, the designated highways. The Greyhound Buses from Houston to San Antonio pass through the county on Highway Number 343. The Bowen Bus line from Rosenberg to Corpus Christi uses Highway 36 in the county.

A permit to operate a bus line from Rosenberg to Thompson was granted to K. L. Copeland on March 26, 1942, in order that defense workmen who live in Rosenberg would have safe transportation to Thompson. This line began operation April 5, 1942.¹⁹

As the population increased and there was more farm produce to market and more materials were needed in the interior, the building of the railroads largely solved the

18 Information was obtained from a large road map made for the County by Haile and McClendon, Houston, Texas.

19 News item, "R. R. Com. Report on Bus Line", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XLVIII, (April 3, 1942), p. 1.

problem of transportation of that day.

Railroads. To understand the development of the railroads in Fort Bend County it is necessary to review the early history of this industry in the state.

The railroad history of Texas began with the history of the Republic. The first Congress, which met in the fall of 1836, launched the Texas Railroad, Navigation and Banking Company, but the stock for this company was never sold. Four years later the Harrisburg and Brazos Railroad was started by Andrew Briscoe, who let a contract for three thousand ties and advertised for laborers in an issue of a Houston paper.²⁰ Briscoe continued to work at the project until March, 1841, when he had to abandon it on account of the threatened Mexican invasion.

The first successful attempt at railroad construction was made by Sidney Sherman, who obtained a charter for the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railroad in February, 1850, and began construction in the spring of 1851.²¹ The contract for grading the section to the Brazos River was awarded to W. J. Kyle and Frank Terry, sugar and cotton planters of Oyster Creek in Fort Bend County.²² This road,

20 Advertisement, "Wanted to Hire", Morning Star, vol. 1, (May 16, 1840), p. 1.

21 P. Briscoe, "The First Railroad in Texas", Southwestern Historical Quarterly, vol. VII, (April, 1904), p. 281.

22 S. G. Reed, The History of Texas Railroads, p. 57.

extending westward from Harrisburg, reached Stafford's Point in Fort Bend County in 1853. On the day of the arrival of the first train, hundreds of people gathered there for a barbecue and celebration. The "General Sherman", a small locomotive, made its first scheduled run September 7, 1853.²³ Passenger cars were street cars that had seen service in Boston prior to 1852 and which were adapted to the new service on this frontier railroad. Each car had but four wheels and seated about twenty persons.

Service was inaugurated on September 7, 1853. The service was not as regular as that of today, but the company advertised the following schedule:

New Route from Galveston to Fort Bend, Wharton and Colorado Counties via Steamer., Railway, and Stage. On and after Wednesday, September 7, 1853, and each succeeding Wednesday and Saturday until further notice cars with passengers and freight will leave Harrisburg for Stafford's Point, Fort Bend County at 9 o'clock and returning leave Stafford's Point at 12 o'clock. Passengers for the west leaving Galveston by steamers Tuesday and Friday evenings reach Harrisburg at 10 o'clock p. m., stop overnight and reach Richmond in time for dinner next day. Passengers for Houston and Galveston leaving Richmond at 3 a.m. reach Harrisburg in season for dinner and Galveston Steamer.²⁴

23 P. Briscoe, op. cit., p. 282.

24 Advertisement, "Railroad Notice", The Galveston News, vol. X, (September 2, 1853), p. 4.

By the last of 1855 the D. B. B. and C. Railroad had reached the east bank of the Brazos River, opposite Richmond, a total distance of thirty-two miles. The Company built a low pile bridge over the stream, just six feet above the low water level. This bridge was probably one of the most unique in the history of railroad building. A fifty foot opening was left to allow steamboats to pass through the bridge. This opening was covered by a span which rested on a flat boat, anchored to the rest of the bridge by log chains, so that the span could be floated to one side when it was desired to open the bridge. The officials believed that in case of high water, driftwood would float over the low bridge.

Because the bridge was lower than the river bank, it was approached on either side by a steep incline. For a train to succeed in crossing the bridge under its own power it was necessary for it to hit the bridge at high speed so as to be able to get up the hill on the opposite side. The general practice was to run the train up to the beginning of the incline and then offer the passengers the privilege of staying with the train or getting out and being ferried across. This makeshift bridge was replaced in 1870 by a more substantial structure.²⁵

25 News story, "West's Railroad History Began at Harrisburg Late in 1852", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XXXVI, (April 19, 1936), p. 30.

Sometimes the cars "took a stampede, rushed down the inclined plane, and plunged into the river". This happened once when two cars were loaded with thirty bales of cotton and a large number of hides. The cotton was recovered but the hides were lost.²⁶

In addition to having the first railroad, the first train wreck in Texas occurred in Fort Bend County on December 15, 1856, when, as it was stated:

The cars on the Harrisburg Road failed to connect with the Houston train Monday for the first time. It appears that by some accident, the cars were thrown off the track at Kyle and Terry's place and were detained there until yesterday evening only arriving at Harrisburg after dark.²⁷

On November 17, 1858, the B. B. B. and C. Railroad crossed the Brazos River and astonished the natives and wild animals for a distance of about four miles west of Richmond, reported J. S. Sullivan. He also stated that at half-past eight o'clock in the morning, the train reached Richmond from Harrisburg, having two passengers who left Virginia Point that same morning! This was the first time that passengers had come through from Harrisburg to Richmond in time for breakfast.²⁸

26 Galveston Weekly News, vol. XV, (April 27, 1858), p. 2.

27 News item, Houston Telegraph, vol. XXXI, (December 17, 1856), p. 2.

28 J. S. Sullivan, "A New Era", Galveston Weekly News, vol. XV, (November 18, 1858), p. 3.

After the Civil War when the B. B. B. and C. Railway line was extended to Columbus the road changed hands and was sold to Thomas W. Pierce and his associates. Under the authority of the Twelfth Legislature, the corporate name was changed to the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway Company, finally becoming a link in the present Southern Pacific System.

Another road that proved of importance to Fort Bend County was the one built from Houston to Brazoria. On September 1, 1856, a charter was granted for the Houston Tap and Brazoria Railway Company. The object was an extension of the Houston Tap Railroad into the rich plantation district of Brazoria County. A company was organized under the charter in July, 1857, the first president being J. D. Waters of Fort Bend County. This road was constructed by the enterprise of Houston merchants and the planters along the route. It was called the "sugar road", from the fact that a chief object of its construction was the transportation of sugar to Houston.

This railroad was discontinued after the Civil war and in 1871, the property was sold to the Houston and Great Northern, and after being improved was again operated as a part of the International and Great Northern Railroad System.²⁹ There are ten and three-tenths miles of this road in

²⁹ B. B. Paddock, A History of Central and Western Texas, pp. 240-247.

the county today.

After successfully helping to promote the building of the Houston Tap and Brazoria Railway the citizens of Fort Bend County resolved to relieve that section of the county from inconveniences under which it labored, owing to lack of means of transit for its produce. A meeting was held and it was decided to construct a railroad, to be operated by horse power, the lower terminus to be Richmond, extending toward Pittsville through the bottom until it reached the prairie and thence to be extended from time to time until it reached Pittsville.³⁰

After the Civil War railroad building again claimed the interest of the public. The Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe line was chartered in May, 1873, as a Galveston enterprise. Construction was commenced at Virginia Point in May, 1875, and the road was opened for traffic as far as Richmond, October 10, 1878. By that time the funds were exhausted and construction work was necessarily halted. In 1880 it was built from Richmond to Brenham.³¹

When the Santa Fe was being built through Fort Bend County, Richmond had one railroad, the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad. The Santa Fe asked for a right

30 News item, "Richmond News", Galveston News, vol. XVII, (March 19, 1859), p. 5.

31 News item, "Texas Railroads First Met Sea Here, Opened up Empire of Southwest", Galveston News, vol. LXXVII, (August 15, 1939), p. 37.

of way and land in the town for a station. The citizens did not offer it at a satisfactory price, so the Santa Fe skirted the edge of the town where a station was built, and crossed the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio tracks three miles westward at the present site of Rosenberg. This company operates nearly thirty-nine miles in the county today.³²

The construction of the New York, Texas, and Mexican Railroad, the third to cross the county is particularly interesting. This railroad was begun in 1880 by Count Joseph Telfener, a member of the Italian nobility. He had made quite a neat fortune speculating in South America, and was very confident that this venture would prove equally successful. Besides Telfener, his father-in-law, David Hungerford, two Frenchmen and an Italian were interested in the railroad. The original plan was that the road should serve between Richmond and Brownsville, but in reality it only served Fort Bend, Wharton, Jackson and Victoria counties. This railroad was called the "Macaroni". It went into the hands of a receiver shortly after its construction and was taken over by the Southern Pacific in 1905.³³

32 Dick Vaughn, "Texas Twin Cities: Near Yet Far", The Houston Press, vol. XXIII, (November 22, 1933), p. 19.

33 Article, "Brilliant Era in Texas Sugar Bowl Lives Again", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XXXVI, (June 18, 1936), p. 36; J. H. Allhand, Gringo Builders, p. 75.

Another railroad that aided the citizens in several small towns in the Northern part of the county was the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad built by Cononel Uriah Lott of Albany, New York. He came to Texas in 1868 and settled at Corpus Christi. In 1885, he undertook the promotion of the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway which was called the "Sap" by citizens of Fort Bend County. The following undated extract from Globe Democrat is entitled:

How Lott Built the S. A. P.

South Texas is full of strange things. From South Texas came a man who built 600 miles of rail road from a five dollar bill and faith and the bill was a borrowed one. He got a charter to build a railroad from San Antonio to Aransas Pass . . . The receiver of another road loaned him enough old rails for a mile of track. In a distant part of the state was purchased an engine which had been condemned six years before . . . Two old cars were picked up some where at a bargain and that old engine drawing those old cars steamed into San Antonio. On this engine and cars, in bold lettering, was printed in lamp black "S. A. & A. P."³⁴

This railroad passed through the Northern part of the county from San Antonio to Houston. In 1932 it became a part of the Southern Pacific System.

In September, 1942, there was still living in San Antonio an old lady, Mrs. Georgina Kendall Fellows, the daughter of George W. Kendall, the noted editor of the New Orleans Picayune and author of The Santa Fe Expedition. She has his diary which records an account of a trip from

34 James L. Allhands, quoting the Globe Democrat in Gringo Builders, p. 200.

New Braunfels to Galveston in December, 1853. A part of it, dated December 13, reads:

Remained in Richmond until after dinner . . .
crossed the Brazos on the ferry; did not want
to risk the bridge.

Mrs. Fellowes accompanied her father on this trip.

In the San Antonio Express for February 20, 1938, she gives an account of this trip which she made when about eight years old. Mrs. Fellowes is possibly the one person still alive who could recall being a passenger on the first railroad in Texas. She stated that the train had four or five little box cars and on the end was a passenger car. The seats were along the side of the car and not uncomfortable.³⁵

The Sugar Land Railroad Company had its origin as private industrial trackage built by E. H. Cunningham back in the '80's to afford means of transporting the cane grown on his plantation to his sugar mill at Sugar Land. It was chartered on April 14, 1893, as the Sugar Land Railroad. Later it extended to Arcolo, connecting with the Santa Fe, giving Cunningham fourteen miles of trackage. W. T. Eldridge acquired this railroad in 1908. He extended it to Rotchford in 1912 and in the same year acquired from Cunningham twelve miles of trackage extending from Sugar Land to Cabell, known as the Imperial Valley Railroad Company, which

35 Article, "Ride on First Railroad in Texas Recalled by San Antonio Woman, Now 98 Years Old", San Antonio Express, vol. LXXIII, (February 20, 1938), p. 31.

had been chartered May 30, 1907.³⁶

There are now 15,790 miles of railroad in Fort Bend distributed as follows: Southern Pacific and branches 87.47, Santa Fe 37.87, Sugar Land 21.46, Illinois and Great National 10.46, Missouri, Kansas and Texas .64. Old maps show the Texas Western Narrow Grange Railway that crossed the northern portion of the county. This railroad extended from Sealy to Houston. After the M. K. and T. and the S. A. and A. P. were built it ceased operation.³⁷

In 1925 the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway Company applied to the Interstate Commerce Commission for a permit to construct a six mile track in Fort Bend County to be used in moving sulphur and crude oil. The application was not granted.³⁸

Automobile Traffic. Automobile traffic was inaugurated in 1908 when F. I. Booth drove his one cylinder, two seated red Ford into Richmond. Needless to say the new horseless carriage was a source of much curiosity. It had neither top nor fenders, windshield nor doors, and made the breathtaking speed of fifteen miles per hour. Tires were inflated

36 S. G. Reed, A History of the Texas Railroads, p. 344.

37 S. A. McMillan, The Book of Fort Bend County Texas, p. 11.

38 News item, "S. P. Wants Spur in Fort Bend County", Rosenberg Herald, vol. XIII, (July 31, 1925), p. 1.

by a hand pump, and there were no inner tubes. Thus began the first motor transportation. No county license was issued at that time, but the cars carried numbered plates.

Among others who owned the first cars in Fort Bend County were J. Mark O'Farrell, of Richmond, R. H. Mulcahy and Henry Myer of Rosenberg. Their cars carried plates numbered two, three, and four, respectively.

Many homeseekers who came by train had their first rides in an automobile when real estate agents whisked them from the station to lands far out in the county where they purchased farms, little dreaming of the distance from town of the lands they were buying.³⁹

Many farmers now employ trucks to convey their products to markets in Houston, Galveston, and other more distant cities. Cotton, cotton seed, hogs, cattle, and vegetables are hauled as far as Oklahoma in twenty-four hours.

Since the climate of the county does not necessitate the land being cultivated quickly, tractors have not been used extensively to replace the horse and mule.

39 Information given by A. E. Myers of Richmond, (June 10, 1942), and Mrs. Joe Catron of Rosenberg, (April 3, 1942).

CHAPTER VI

DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRIES

The industrial growth of a county is determined by many factors. The topography, soil, climate, and transportation facilities of Fort Bend County have encouraged the development of farming, livestock, mineral resources, and other industries. Many of these factors have also been an influence for better public utilities throughout the county.

The approximate land area of the county is 506,880 acres, of which 10,892 acres were in farms in 1850 as compared with 212,612 acres in 1930.¹

Farming has always been the most significant industry in Fort Bend County. First, with corn, cotton and sugar cane; later, with cattle; now with oil and sulphur, Fort Bend County continues to fulfill the promises of prosperity which Stephen F. Austin's colonists envisioned when they glimpsed the fertile valley of the Brazos River more than one hundred years ago.

Corn. Since most of the early settlers of Fort Bend County were from the Southern States, they knew from experience that

1 United States Census for years indicated.

they would need corn as one of their chief sources of food; hence they brought seed corn with them. It is said that some of these pioneer settlers did not even plow the land for their first crop of corn, but made small holes in the ground with a sharpened stick. Into these holes they dropped the grains of corn, covering them with soil.

The primary importance of corn in the life of these early colonists is well illustrated in the following quotation:

We ate nothing but corn bread at first . . . we grated our corn until father hollowed out a log, and we ground it as in a mortar. We had no cooking stoves of course, and baked our bread in the only skillet we possessed.²

The early records do not show how much corn was raised in Fort Bend County, but part of every farm was devoted to corn raising in the pioneer days. That these early settlers were always deeply concerned about its production is shown in such reports as the following:

The corn crop in all of the counties between the Brazos and Colorado Rivers, from the frontier to the coast, is reported to be good.³

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- 2 Caroline Von Hinueber, "Life of German Pioneers in Texas", told to Rudolph Kleberg, Jr. in Quarterly of the State Historical Association, vol. II, (January, 1899), p.229.
- 3 News item, "Take Particular Notice", The Red-Lander, vol. I, (September 16, 1854), p. 2.

The corn crop must have continued to be good according to reports of 1858:

The Houston Telegraph of the 11th says that it has heard that Messers Kyle and Terry whose plantation is on Cyster Creek will make over 100 bushels of corn to the acre and that a bet was offered a day or two since, of \$500 that 100 acres could be selected in a body that would average 120 bushels.⁴

The corn crop for 1860 was reported to be 200,405 bushels of corn as compared with 135,205 bushels in 1850.⁵

It is true that most of the corn was raised for use on the plantation or farm, but at the same time there were local markets which purchased all the surplus. The price varied with the demand; however, the average price of corn ranged from forty to fifty cents per bushel, as shown by the records of various years. "Corn which is now about ready to harvest", it was reported, "is yielding finely. I do not think the price of corn during the coming year will be above fifty cents per bushel, and perhaps not that", said one writer.⁶ Following the reports still farther, we find the price does not vary in any great degree, even at a much later date. "Corn is selling from forty to fifty cents a bushel and meal at fifty cents a bushel, and not

4 News item, "Houston", Galveston News, vol. XV, (June 12, 1858), p. 4.

5 "Agriculture of the United States in 1860", Eighth Census, p. 141.

6 News report, "Crops-Fort Bend County", The Red-Lander, vol. 1, (August 12, 1854), p. 3.

much in demand", said the reporter in 1880.⁷

A thorough research into the market price of corn in recent years shows a wide variation in the price per bushel for the years 1932 to 1942, inclusive. The lowest market price was in 1932 when it sold for 23 cents per bushel; the peak was reached in 1934 when it sold for 83 cents per bushel. In 1935 the price of 50 cents was just about on a par with the selling price in 1861. In 1938 the price per bushel had fallen to 45 cents. By 1942 the price was 60 cents a bushel.⁸

During the last few years there has been an intensive effort on the part of the farmers of the county to produce their living at home, which has resulted in an increase in the corn acreage. This is shown by the following table:

Year	Acres	Bushels
1920	36,088	696,551
1925	34,457	635,184
1929	32,645	568,330
1935	53,835	660,140
1939	49,201	894,193 ⁹

Cotton. The raising of cotton in Texas began around the Spanish missions under the supervision of the priests. With

7 News report, "Agricultural Notes", The Colorado Citizen, vol. XXIII, (December 2, 1880), p. 3.

8 "Crop-Prices", The Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1936, p. 242; 1939-40, p. 172.

9 "Crop Acreage and Production", The Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1929, p. 107; 1936, p. 144; 1939-40, p. 177, United States Census for 1940.

the establishment of Austin's colony in 1821, the Anglo-American farmers who came to Texas in the days before railroads, raised enough cotton about their door yards to supply their own spinning wheels.¹⁰

Colonel Jared E. Groce, one of the early colonists, brought cotton seed with him to the Brazos River in 1821, and in 1825 erected the first cotton gin built in Texas. During the next year Austin built one on the west side of the Brazos River.¹¹

In 1829 Randall and James Jones of Fort Bend County built a keel boat and took cotton in the seed down to Austin's gin near Columbia. The cotton was exchanged for family supplies of coffee worth one dollar a pint, sugar, fifty cents a pound, and calico seventy-five cents a yard.¹²

As early as 1832, Austin offered a silver pitcher to the planter who raised the best crop of seventy-five bales in his colony; and a silver cup for the best crop of ten bales. Cup and pitcher are on exhibit in the Samuel May Williams Collection, Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas. As they left no names, they were probably never awarded.

10 "The Book of Texas", The Book of Knowledge, vol. XXI, p. 92.

11 Homer S. Thrall, A Pictorial History of Texas, p. 727.

12 News item, "Captain Randal Jones", Houston Daily Telegraph, vol. X, (June 10, 1873), p. 2.

In 1833 Austin reported thirty gins in the municipality of San Felipe de Austin of which Fort Bend County was then a part.¹³

Though agricultural societies were formed in Texas by 1843, it is rather uncertain how much influence they exerted. In that year the planters of Brazoria organized a society to promote agricultural interests and invited the planters of Fort Bend, Matagorda and Colorado to join them. James F. Perry was president. The other officers were John Sweeney, John Adriansce, and Mathew Hopkins. The organization planned quarterly meetings, but nothing is known of the work accomplished.¹⁴

In March, 1840, a market for "planters, cotton brokers, and the public general" was established for the sale of cotton, corn, hides, et cetera. Market was open each Friday from nine A. M. to four P. M. Cotton brokers, and corn factors' stalls were for hire at \$5.00 a year. A Mr. McMahon and a Mr. Brooks, George A. Feris, G. A. Parker, John V. Morton and Nicholas Maillard were on the managing committee. John Levering was clerk of the market.¹⁵

13 Eugene C. Barker, (Editor), Readings in Texas History, Part I, p. 132.

14 News item, "Agricultural Society", Telegraph and Texas Register, vol. VIII, (August 23, 1843), p. 3.

15 News item, "Cotton Market Opened", Richmond Telescope and Literary Register, vol. II, (March 17, 1840), p. 2.

The census for 1849 shows that Texas produced 46,458 bales of cotton, mainly in two sections: Northeast Texas which was but an extension westward of the Louisiana fields, and the Lower Brazos area in which are now Colorado, Wharton, Fayette, Fort Bend, Austin, Waller, and Washington counties.¹⁶

Starting in 1849, there was a decade in which the price of cotton was higher than that of any previous year, and this increase in value provided an important stimulus to the planting of more cotton in Fort Bend County.

Although some of the cotton exported by the planters brought a fancy price, nevertheless, most of the cotton was sold for the regular market price and all of the early papers printed the cotton market quotations. This enabled the farmer in all communities to know the basis on which the cotton would be bought.

A specimen quotation follows:

Cotton Markets

Liverpool Classifications
Daily True Delta Office
Friday Night, July 7, 1854.

Ordinary $6\frac{1}{4}$ -7
Low Middling $7\frac{1}{4}$ - $7\frac{1}{2}$
Middling 8- $8\frac{1}{2}$
Good Middling 9- $9\frac{1}{4}$
Middling Fair $9\frac{1}{2}$ -10
Fair $10\frac{1}{2}$ ¹⁷

16 The University of Texas Bulletin Number 3309, (March 1, 1933), pp. 71-72.

17 Market reports, "Cotton Markets", The Red-Lander, vol. 1, (July 22, 1854), p. 2.

To produce this cotton the planters experimented with various seeds, some common to the whole South and some selected from particularly good plants in the fields. "Mastodon" cotton was advertised, as were also "Willow", "Golden Chaff", "Banana", and "Twin Cotton Seed". The "Petit Gulf", "Prolific", and "Dean" were favorite varieties in the fifties. At various times the planters were troubled to find fertile seed and more than once seed were lacking sufficient quantity to replant after a freeze.¹⁸

Some of the Fort Bend County planters experimented with Sea Island Cotton and silk cotton, with some success, though neither ever became generally popular in the county. In 1856 David Randon of Fort Bend County sold for twenty cents per pound five bales of silk cotton to R. and D. G. Mills of Galveston. The next season he picked thirty bales of the same variety.¹⁹ In 1859 he was still planting this variety and realizing from it a handsome income.²⁰

During the next few years while the Civil War was being fought, Texas was fortunate in disposing of her cotton, for no matter how many blockaders frowned at her, Texas was

18 Advertisements, "For Sale, The Telegraph, vol. IV, (January 12, 1839), p. 4, Vol XXII, (February 20, 1856), p. 4, Vol XXII, (February 4, 1857), p. 4.

19 News item, "For The Telegraph", Telegraph, vol. X, (May 20, 1846), p. 3.

20 News item, "Richmond", Galveston Weekly News, Vol XVI, (September 30, 1859), p. 2.

the only Confederate State having a neutral country just across her border. With the price of cotton going higher and with letters from England saying her mills were idle for the want of Texas cotton, the roads from the Fort Bend region to the border were thronged with conveyances transporting cotton to Mexico. Cotton advanced from twenty-five cents per pound to over a dollar per pound.

It was at this time that the writer for a Galveston paper described the homemade bagging used in Fort Bend County. He reported that J. S. Chambers had shown him a bale of cotton put up in bagging composed of the bark of the Linn tree woven in strips two inches wide. The bale was of the usual size, the writer said, and but for the weight of the novel bagging, it would be quite equal to the genuine "Kentucky", as it was exceedingly strong and pliable.²¹

For a decade after the Civil War labor was a problem and the cotton acreage of Fort Bend County was reduced. That accounted for a temporary decline in cotton production. From about 1876, however, as conditions improved there was an increased production, until normal crops were again reported.

In 1933 the Federal Government set up a new program for the cotton industry--the restriction of cotton production. This program was an experiment on the part of the

21 News item, "For the News", The Galveston Tri-Weekly News, vol. XX, (May 6, 1862), p. 2.

government to absorb the cotton surplus and increase the price of cotton. In order to achieve these objectives, the cotton acreage was reduced. The result of drastic cutting in cotton acreage and the lowered yield was felt in Fort Bend County in many ways. The increase in the price of cotton plus the governmental rentals and benefit payments brought prosperity to the farming industry. On the other hand, however, the many tenants and farm laborers were eliminated from the cotton industry, and this swelled the number of unemployed laborers who depended upon the old established regime of cotton raising.

When the cultivation of cotton was reduced to the minimum, the laborers of Fort Bend County felt keenly this change of program. The farm hands, having been deprived of their regular means of livelihood, were forced to go in to the towns and ask for relief.

Some idea of the result of the restricted program as it affected cotton production in Fort Bend County can be obtained from the following table:

Year	Bales Ginned	Year	Bales Ginned
1920	20,761	1935	29,261.
1925	50,416	1936	24,902
1927	49,623	1937	57,835
1929	11,811	1938	35,064
1931	75,908	1939	33,785 ²²
1933	46,084	1940	61,219 ²²
1934	35,060		

22 "Cotton Ginning by Counties", The Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1936, p. 329; 1937, p. 24; 1939-40, p. 184; 1941-42, p. 208. The small yield in 1920 was due to excessive flood waters of that year and in 1929 to prolonged drought over the entire state.

The cultivation of cotton brought not only wealth into the county, but it also created a number of other businesses economically dependent upon it. Growing out of the cotton industry are those of ginning, seed oil milling, brokerages, and storage. Each of these in its own way contributes to making wealth in the county because of the employment it offers and the value of its pay roll.

There are many cotton brokers in Fort Bend County who buy direct for the large firms in Houston, Galveston, and Dallas. These men do most of their work on the streets where they classify and buy cotton, which is shipped out of the county to larger markets.

There are no available statistics which show the number of bales of cotton produced annually in Fort Bend County during the period of the Republic of Texas, 1836-1845, nor of several years immediately following. The report of the cotton crop here given begins with the Seventh Census.

Year	Bales Ginned	Year	Bales Ginned
1850	2,464	1900	8,256
1860	13,602	1910	23,999
1870	4,017	1920	20,761
1880	6,431	1930	61,562 ²³
1890	7,108	1940	61,219 ²³

The story of cotton would not be complete without a glimpse into some of the trials of cotton raising. Fort Bend

23 United States Census, Agricultural Reports, for the years indicated.

County has been in boll weevil territory since 1898 and farmers have been working ever since that year to control the evil. The first experimental work on the boll weevil in the United States was carried on in this county. F. W. Malley, State Entomologist, experimented in boll weevil poisoning on F. I. Booth's plantation at Booth during the summer of 1900. This work indicated that boll weevils could be poisoned even with liquid arsenicals. Unfortunately, when the Galveston storm on September 8, 1900, destroyed the crops, some of the data were lost, Malley went into commercial work and nobody continued the experimentation.

Fully fifteen years before cotton dusting with powdered arsenicals was recommended by scientists, Negro farmers in the Thompson section discovered that boll weevil damage was reduced by thorough dusting with Paris Green.²⁴

Sugar Cane. The discovery that sugar cane could be grown with ease in Fort Bend County was made early. The growing season is long enough for the cane to mature sufficiently for the extraction of sugar.

J. C. Clopper in 1828 recorded in his journal that the good sugar lands of Texas lay between the coast and a point twenty miles above San Felipe. He thought there would be

24 S. A. McMillan, The Book of Fort Bend County Texas, pp. 154-156.

a sufficiency of sugar made that year to supply the colonies.²⁵ Nor were his expectations unfounded, because the crop of 1829 was reported as being 140 hogsheads. However, the product at that time was little more than crystalized molasses.²⁶ The planters studied methods of culture and were rewarded by an increase in the quantity and improvement in the quality of the crop. The next year (1830) William Morton advertised a "quantity of sugar plants for sale at reasonable terms."²⁷

In the early thirties William Stafford was engaged in planting cane. The product made from it is described by Mrs. Dilue Harris as being "black as tar", and her father, Dr. Pleasant W. Rose, found that it was impossible to carry it in a bag.²⁸ According to De Bow, Stafford's mill, built in 1834, was the first permanent one in Austin's colony. This mill ground only one or two crops before it was destroyed in 1836 by the Mexicans, along with other plantation equipment at Stafford's Point.²⁹

25 "J. C. Clopper's Journal and Book of Memorandum for 1828", Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, vol. XIII, July, 1909, pp. 58-59.

26 News item, Texas Gazette, vol. I, (May 22, 1830).

27 Advertisement, "For Sale", Ibid., (October 30, 1830), p. 2.

28 "The Reminiscences of Mrs. Dilue Harris", Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, vol. IV, October, 1900, p. 96.

29 Ibid., vol. IV, p. 173.

The second stage of the development of sugar cane planting in Fort Bend County began in the eighteen forties when the cotton planters fell on evil days. Each year an increasing number of planters turned to sugar cane thinking that it would not be affected by the uncertainties that beset cotton. The enthusiasm for cane increased as planters reckoned the cost of producing at three cents a pound and selling for seven or eight cents. In addition, the sugar cane growers obtained from thirty to fifty gallons of molasses to each hogshead of sugar. Planters, induced by these figures, were obtaining cane for seed and some were considering abandoning cotton altogether.³⁰

In 1848 a correspondent of the Telegraph in Houston was shown the sugar plantation of William McMahon near Richmond and reported that the crop would yield over a hogshead per acre and that McMahon was a pioneer sugar planter of the county.³¹

By 1849, planters were turning lower Texas into "a sugar bowl". They had become convinced that sugar was a much more certain crop than cotton, and that it was more productive, and required less labor.

The dry weather or the severe winter of 1850 caused the seed cane for the 1851 crop to be so defective that

30 The Telegraph, Vol. VIII, (December 21, 1842), p. 2; Vol. XIV, (November 15, 1843), p. 2.

31 C. A. Wharton, A History of Fort Bend County, p. 12.

many planters in some sections of the state made just enough cane to seed the 1852 crop. The reverse, however, seemed to be the case in Fort Bend County. In that year Colonel J. D. Waters, a Fort Bend planter wrote, "I have no doubt that I shall make at least 300 hogsheads, averaging 1,500 pounds to the hogshead. I am now making from eight to ten hogshead every twenty-four hours and have a sufficiency of hands to grind all the time, night and day, never stopping to clean out the boilers."³²

Sugar curing days were active ones on the plantations. Cotton was scarcely ginned and sold before the cane was ready to be stripped, cut, and windsowed, preparatory to its being hauled to the mill and fed into the press. Sometimes December came before all the sugar was made. Each year an early frost killed the cane, and the next year the sugar crop fell off.³³

According to one writer in 1858, the average yield on an acre was about 1,600 pounds.³⁴

32 J. B. Waters, "To the Editor", Lone Star, vol. I, (November 15, 1851), p. 2.

33 Francis White Johnson, A History of Texas and Texans, (ed.) Eugene C. Barker and Ernest William Winkler, vol. II, p. 652.

34 Letter, Colonel J. D. Waters, to W. Richardson, (July 13, 1858), in Texas Almanac for 1858, pp. 76-80.

By 1858 there were 690 acres planted in sugar cane in Fort Bend County, according to the Texas Almanac,³⁵ and in 1860 the census lists 450 hogshhead of 1,000 pounds for the county.

After the Civil War many of the plantations were discontinued, some of them never to produce sugar again. At first the labor and production costs played an enormous part in the decline of the industry. In 1880 when convict labor was obtained there was produced in Fort Bend County, according to the United States Census, 1,827 hogshhead of sugar and 119,079 gallons of molasses on 1,738 acres of land.³⁶

It was in 1881 that a magazine writer reported that six splendid sugar mills in Fort Bend County could be seen from the station of Walker.³⁷

Fort Bend County received much praise at the World's Exposition held in New Orleans in 1883 for producing superior refined sugar. A newspaper of that city stated that all the prizes for refined sugar were awarded to T. W. House of Houston whose crop was raised on his Arcola plantation in Fort Bend County. It had been thought, the article

35 Ibid., p. 81

36 A. W. Speight, Resources, Soil, and Climate of Texas, p. 104.

37 Laura J. Irvin, "A Sketch of Fort Bend County", The American Sketch Book, An Historical and Home Journal, pl 76.

continued, that it was impossible to make a fine quality of sugar from Texas cane, but from the success of House and other planters--notably E. C. Cunningham and T. W. Ellis--they have been able to not only equal but even excel some of the most noted Louisiana planters in quality and quantity of sugar, their lands being so rich.³⁸

The census for 1900 does not show that any sugar cane was produced in the county. Therefore, due to a disastrous Brazos River overflow and the 1900 hurricane it is surprising that in 1910 the county produced more than 90,000 tons of cane on 6,775 acres of land. Within the next ten years due to foreign competition and the invasion of insect pests the industry was almost completely driven out of existence. Only fifty-one acres were planted in 1920; the yield being 255 tons of cane and 2,553 gallons of molasses.³⁹

In 1922 on the Imperial, Harlem and Ramsey State Farms where most of the crop was raised, 4,000 acres were planted in cane--an increase of 1,500 acres from the preceding year. But due to the floods of April and May, 1922, the cane gave a much smaller yield than average. Moreover, not all of that produced was available for sugar and syrup, it was

38 News item, "All the Prizes--Arcola's Triumph at the World's Exposition", New Orleans Tribune, (March 8, 1883).

39 United States Census for years indicated.

estimated that the yield from 1500 acres would be required for replanting.⁴⁰

Sugar cane is now grown extensively on the coastal prairie farms of Fort Bend County and though not properly a sorghum, it is usually placed in that classification for commercial purposes. It is not grown for sugar making, but for syrup, largely for home consumption and local markets.⁴¹

At the present time, the sugar cane crop is usually harvested in December after the rest of the crops are gathered and when the farm accounts have been balanced. Since there is not much other work at the time, the whole neighborhood may cooperate in helping the sugar cane growers boil down the cane juice, evaporate the water and cook off the impurities to make the syrup. Sometimes the manufacturing is done by an enterprising farmer in the community, who takes part of the product as his pay. Horses and mules furnish most of the motive power for syrup making.

The greatest handicaps to successful cane growing in this section are weevils and worms which bore into the stalk and sometimes destroy the entire plant, eating out the interior and leaving only the shell.⁴²

40 News item, "Cane Grinding Time at Sugar Land", Texas Commercial News, vol. IV, (December 9, 1922), p. 17.

41 "Sweet Sorghum and Sugar Cane", The Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1939-40, p. 189.

42 News story, "Syrup-Making Time Is Happy One", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XL, (December 8, 1940), p. 2.

Potatoes. Potato growing for garden use came into Fort Bend County with the early pioneers, who planted a generous supply of the tubers for family consumption. One early writer stated that:

It has been generally supposed that the Irish potato will not thrive in this country, only in the early part of the season. This is a mistake. We have some specimens taken from the garden contiguous to our office, weighing one pound each.⁴³

The first successful attempt to grow potatoes commercially to any extent on the coastal plains of Texas was made in the Brazos Valley in Simonton, Fort Bend County in 1905, when two plucky former Kansas men, J. R. Spencer and T. L. Mullins, planted one hundred and forty acres in the spring of that year. Contrary to predictions, this first crop was a complete success, and a second crop of potatoes was planted on the same land that fall. The proceeds from these two crops paid for an 800 acre tract of land at \$25 per acre, of which the crop land was a part. Fort Bend County won fame as the leading potato section of Texas,⁴⁴ and the potato industry increased steadily. In 1909 three hundred and fifty carloads of potatoes were shipped.⁴⁵

What probably was the largest "potato patch" in the world was the 2150 acres in the potato field of Sugar Land Industries

43 News item, "Miscellaneous Items", Telegraph and Texas Register, vol. 1, (November 14, 1885), p. 2.

44 S. A. McMillan, The Book of Fort Bend County Texas, p. 178.

45 "Potatoes", The Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1910, p. 189.

at Sugar Land. It produced 200 bushels to the acre and the crop was valued at a half million dollars.⁴⁶

The peak year of production was 1934 when the yield was 135,032 bushels. About 1920 the potato industry began to be affected by a disease known as the Southern Blight, which caused a large part of the crop to decay in transit. Since that time there has been a gradual decline in potato acreage in Fort Bend County.⁴⁷

Rice. Another food crop that was cultivated by the early pioneers of the State was that of rice. This was evidently due to the undeveloped condition of the country and to the lack of suitable machinery.

According to a letter, dated October 1, 1866, addressed to J. S. Brady, president of Harris County Industrial Association, from an unknown Richmond, Texas, writer who signs his name "Eques", Fort Bend County produced a considerable quantity of rice in 1864. The correspondent returning home from the army in 1863 spent a night with a family near San Augustine and was served rice for supper. Procuring some seed, he planted them on his Fort Bend County farm in March, 1864. On account of his being away from home, the crop was neglected yet yielded a bountiful harvest. The grain was large and plump and the use of it completely "weaned his

46 Mrs. M. A. Zumwalt, Blue Scrapbook, undated clipping, p. 16

47 S. A. McMillan, op. cit., p. 178.

family from the musty store rice". All who tried the grain believed that rice culture would be profitable at five cents a pound.⁴⁸

In The Rosenberg Herald in the column "From Our Old Files" the following statement is made: "The 1901 rice crops of the Dyer farm is a success and next year will see at least 10,000 acres planted in rice in this county."⁴⁹

According to a report in 1909 which gave the acreage for the principal crops of Fort Bend County, rice was shown to have been cultivated on 6,727 acres.⁵⁰ But it was not until 1923 that the farmers of Fort Bend County came to a full realization of the importance of the rice industry. Within three years from that date the industry was worth annually approximately a million dollars. This included planting and harvesting equipment, canals and the water distribution system and the value of the annual yield.

The Richmond rice canal system was constructed in 1923. Twenty-five miles of main canals and fifty miles of lateral canals distribute water to the fields of the growers. Water for the canals is drawn from the Brazos River by two 900

48 "Eques", "Rice Culture", Weekly Telegraph, (October 8, 1868), p. 2.

49 News item, "From Our Old Files", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XII, (February 6, 1925), p. 3.

50 Frank W. Johnson, History of Texas and Texans, (ed), E. C. Barker and E. W. Winkler, vol. II, p. 660.

horse power motors and two thirty-six inch pumps. The pumping capacity is 100,000 gallons per minute.

Approximately ninety per cent of the rice is produced on a 50-50 basis, the Richmond Canal Company, owned by C. G. Jackson and T. B. Jackson of Houston, furnishing sacks, seed, water and land and the growers doing the actual work. Land utilized by the rice farmers is leased. Producing a rice crop up to the time of harvesting cost an average of \$55 to \$60 an acre in 1942. Approximately 1,000 men have been employed in the rice fields during each harvest season.⁵¹

In 1930 Fort Bend County ranked third among the ten leading counties of Texas in the production of rice. According to the census for five crop years, the rice yield for Fort Bend County was as follows:

Year	Acreage	Bushels
1920	230	12,344
1924	725	21,500
1929	12,426	630,700
1934	5,414	310,088
1939	4,697	234,026 ⁵²

51 Arthur F. Sanders, "Rice Industry Has a Rapid Growth," The Texas Coaster, vol. XXXVI, (February 13, 1931), p. 1; interview, C. G. Jackson, Houston, Texas, (December 18, 1942).

52 "Agricultural Crop Reports", The Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1927, p. 160; 1933, p. 154; 1936, p. 244; Sixteenth Census of the United States, "Agriculture", p. 140.

Other Crops. After years of emphasis placed upon cotton as the chief crop of the small farmers in Fort Bend County when they gave over their entire acreage to its cultivation and depended upon the merchants to supply their food, an attempt is now being made to remedy this evil by diversification.

Forage crops became important as the grazing began to be cultivated. Fort Bend County, however, has never produced more of these than she could use. W. P. Winner of Fulshear was first to show possibilities of hegari as a late grain and forage crop. It is widely planted now, as also is Sudan grass. In the Simonton area soy beans and alfalfa are successfully raised. Johnson grass is used as a hay crop. Oats are not raised much on account of the rust.

Truck crops offer attractive possibilities, but until 1925 the county had not yet established itself in the markets as a trucking center. On the lands of T. L. Mullins of Simonton and of the Sugarland Industries at Sugar Land as well as the various State Farms, truck crops of great variety and excellent quality have been produced. Spinach, radishes, turnips, lettuce, cabbage, cauliflower, beets, chard, beans, squash, cucumbers and pumpkins, not to mention many other kinds that have been grown, are produced in abundance.

In June, 1921, Sugar Land claimed the making of a new record for Texas when a solid carload of celery was shipped

to Kansas City. The car contained 250 crates of nine dozen bunches each, or 108 stalks to the crate. The price was 90¢ the dozen, \$8.10 the crate. The yield for 1921 was the best that Charles Valenga, celery expert, had been able to produce in seven years.⁵³ This crop was discontinued in 1923, due to increase in acreage in California and Florida during the summer months.⁵⁴

Pecans. Pecan trees were found in abundance in Fort Bend County by the first white men to settle there. True to the old adage that the human race values lightly the things that nature gives most freely, the merits of the pecan were not at first recognized. In fact, so lightly were pecan trees valued that when cowboys on their drives came upon a tree loaded with nuts, they habitually felled it in order to gather the nuts more easily, and as cotton production spread over the county, pecan trees were deadened or cut down to clear the way for more cultivable acres. But despite neglect and ill treatment in the early days, the tree was so admirably adapted to the growing conditions in the county that today pecans are an important crop. It is not unusual for an improved pecan tree to produce from 100 to 125 pounds of nuts, valued at \$20 to \$25. An acre of good pecan land will carry

53 News item, "Sugar Land Ships Carload of Celery", The Texas Coaster, Vol. XXVI, (June 3, 1921), p. 1.

54 Interview, E. O. Guehther, Treasurer of the Sugarland Industries, July 17, 1941.

nine to twelve trees. Value is immediately added to the property when the orchard is set out. By planting field crops between the trees, one is not losing the use while the orchard is growing. The principal varieties of pecans planted in the county are the Burkett, Texas Feclic, Western Schley, Altman and Nugget. The last named is favored by the cracking plants, since it has a smooth, thin shell which can be readily separated from the meat.

The largest orchards in the county are owned by Dr. R. D. Harris, F. R. Fields, R. P. James, Huggins Estate, and A. P. George.⁵⁵

Fort Bend County is realizing that the pecan is more than a State emblem. It is a money maker of the future. To the old timers who once said about 1908 that Fort Bend County was going "nutty" the reply is "money grows on trees".

In 1925, Walter Rosenbush of Foster developed a pecan shelling industry that showed interesting possibilities in providing employment for twenty-five or thirty people in spare time. When the Wage and Hour Law was passed, he closed business, as he could not pay the required wage.⁵⁶

The market price varies with production and demand. The following report was obtained on pecan production in

55 Interviews, Dr. R. D. Harris, Fulshear, Texas, January 15, 1941.

56 Interview, Walter Rosenbush, Foster, Texas, May 12, 1941.

Fort Bend County for four typical seasons:

Year	Bearing Trees	Pounds
1920	6,037	60,500
1924	8,167	816,700
1929	25,997	322,940
1940	87,240	662,400 ⁵⁷

Beef Cattle. The cattle industry of Fort Bend County has probably undergone greater evolution than any of the other industries which began with the pioneers. The cattle of the county were originally of two breeds. First, there were the Spanish cattle introduced at an early date around the missions and settlements in the southern part of Texas. These cattle increased rapidly and spread over the prairie land of Fort Bend County. They were of the original Texas Longhorn breed which existed on the range until comparatively recent times. The other variety was the "scrub" cattle, brought in by the Anglo-American colonists who came after 1821. Whereas the Spanish cattle became the early beef type, the scrub stock from the older states formed the basis for most of the dairy products found on the farms of the county until the past few years. Building up this stock into blooded beef and dairy stock has been one of the principal problems of the cattle industry considered as a whole.

Shortly after 1821 William Morton brought milch cows into the region which is now Fort Bend County. In the fall

57 United States Census for years indicated.

of 1825, Randal Jones took a Negro boy to Louisiana and traded him for sixty head of cattle, everyone of which he succeeded in bringing to his place on the Brazos in Fort Bend County. This was the first herd of cattle introduced into Austin's colony.⁵⁸

According to Thrall's account, Abner Kuykendall brought to the Department of the Brazos seventy head of cattle in 1821-1822. These animals were not restricted to Fort Bend County, however.⁵⁹

In the fall of 1824 Jones and J. Kuykendall drove a head of sixty beef cattle from the Fort Settlement to San Antonio where they hired a butcher, and sold their beef for a good price.⁶⁰

The cowmen of Fort Bend County could well include almost every citizen in the county from the time of organization in 1838 to 1900. Practically every man regardless of occupation, ran a few head of cattle. This can be verified by examining the old brand record book in the county clerk's office. Preachers, lawyers, doctors, professional and non-professional men had a brand recorded. It was necessity, since thousands of cattle which belonged to many different people wandered over the county.

58 News item, "Captain Randal Jones", Houston Daily Telegraph, vol. X, (June 10, 1873), p. 4.

59 Homer S. Thrall, A Pictorial History of Texas, p. 760.

60 Houston Daily Telegraph, Ibid.

The imagination of the common found picturesque expression in the design and name of their brands. Each owner selected a letter or sign of some kind as his brand and this was stamped with a hot iron on every animal belonging to him. Brands were usually placed on record in the name of the owner in the County Brand Record Book.

Samples of "Cowhide Art" in Fort Bend County:⁶¹

Brand	Owner	Date
HL	Jane Long	1838
J	Randal Jones	1839
⊙	P. P. & J. P. Borden	1839
LM	William Morton	1843
L	M. B. Lamar	1854
L	Joseph Davis	1857
H	William Sheriff	1870
J RN	W. L. Nesbitt	1871
♥	Wilson & Jefferson	1904

The records of the number of cattle owned in each county in its early days are brief and incomplete. However, a census taken in 1850 showed the cattle population of Fort Bend County to be 29,223 head.⁶²

61 Fort Bend County Brand Records, Book A, Office of County Clerk, Richmond, Texas.

62 "Livestock Report--Fort Bend County", The Texas Almanac and Industrial Guide, 1857, p. 215.

By 1860 there was an average of ten cattle to each person in the county, and the price of beef was low. This was probably due to the great number of cattle and the lack of market demand. It is of interest to compare the price of beef in 1862 with the price of beef at a retail market in 1942. According to the published statement of a dealer in 1862, which appears below, prices were not good at that time.

Beef! Beef!

Having located myself permanently, I am prepared to furnish the citizens of Columbus and the vicinity with beef at as low price as can be afforded and in quantities to suit the purchasers. My terms are for first choice 5¢ per pound; for second choice 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per pound; for third choice 4¢ per pound; and while credit is extended to customers, the payment will be due on the first of each month.⁶³

The price of beef in 1942 kept in refrigerating coolers in the same vicinity, according to a dealer, follows:

First choice, 35 cents per pound
 Second choice, 30 cents per pound⁶⁴
 Third choice, 25 cents per pound

The Civil War provided the cattlemen with a market for their beef. But after the capture of Vicksburg by the Federal forces in 1863, this market was cut off. By that time

63 Advertisement, "Beef! Beef!" The Colorado Citizen, vol. III, (May 26, 1862), p. 4.

64 Louis Voscamp, Assistant in Struss Meat Market, Columbus, Texas, May 20, 1942.

all the able-bodied men had left Texas to join the Confederate forces and the cattle were free to roam the prairies and multiply. With no market a time came in Texas, it was said, when a man's poverty was estimated by the number of cattle he possessed.⁶⁵

In 1865-67, Fort Bend County had the fourth largest cattle assessment in Texas, reaching 78,000 head, which probably would indicate a presence of more than 100,000.⁶⁶ The assessment was only 56,000 head in 1870 because there was little or no market for cattle. An effort was made to get a profit from them by slaughtering them "for their hides and tallow". J. Frank Dobie in A Vaquero of the Brush Country, describes this phase of the cattle industry. According to that authority, splendid herds were driven from Fort Bend County to rendering plants along the coasts where they were slaughtered.⁶⁷

The struggle of the first cattle raisers of the county to find markets for their surplus cattle dates back to the early drives of the 1840's when many of them were pooling their cattle and driving them to the market at Harrisburg,

65 Joseph G. McCoy, Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest, p. 20.

66 "Agriculture of the United States in 1860", Eighth Census, p. 142.

67 Edna May Tubbs, "Hide and Tallow Factories Once Thriving Industry on Coast", San Antonio Express, vol. LXIX, (June 17, 1934), p. 27.

Galveston, or New Orleans. However, "Trail driving" did not assume proportions of economic importance until after the Civil War when the influence of northern markets began to draw the product of the Texas ranges. The cattle of Fort Bend County were then driven to the Northern markets over the Shawnee Trail and the Chisholm Trail.⁶⁸ As soon as the herds were collected, they were driven through Fayette County along the spurs of the trail in Bell County, proceeding thence due north to Tarrant County where the trail continued to Northern markets or grass lands. The cowboys of the county did not feel that their career was complete without drives to Northern markets. Thomas W. Byars, of the last of the cowboys who followed the trail, told very interesting tales of his experiences on several of the drives.⁶⁹

The Texas Almanac of 1873 prints a list of owners who had cattle driven over the Chisholm Trail, passing Caldwell, Kansas, in 1872. Among them are the following Fort Bend County cattlemen:⁷⁰

W. H. Kyle	May 28,	950
Wm. Thompson	May 29,	888
J. W. Foster	June 3,	1711
D. Dougherty	June 12,	700

68 Map, T. C. Richardson, The Texas Almanac, 1939-40, p. 210.

69 Interview, Thomas W. Byars, Columbus, Texas, (Aug. 31, 1937).

70 "Record of Texas Cattle Passing Caldwell, Kansas, Driven over the Old Chisholm Trail, for the Year 1872", Texas Almanac and Industrial Guide, 1873, p. 30.

Guthrie and Beasley	June 12,	2000
Robert Hodges	June 21,	1700
J. W. Adams	June 22,	1850
John Moore	July 2,	1520
Little & Perryman	July 6,	4500
T. P. Thompson	July 29,	930

With the introduction of railroads into the state, cattle trail-driving was interrupted. The railroad companies taking advantage of an opportunity for increasing freight made provisions to take care of this phase of business, and provided accommodations for the cattle to be shipped from various localities.

Random, a flag station ten miles from Richmond, was in 1878 an important shipping point for cattle in that section, the railroad having provided ample accommodations for that purpose by building a cattle pen.⁷¹

Late in the '80's the stockmen of Fort Bend County began to use the barbed wire that John W. Gates, a young hardware salesman, had introduced into Texas in 1871.⁷² As they fenced off their land and increased their holdings, big ranches came into existence and improved strains of cattle, raised under scientific methods, were introduced, pushing the famous Texas Longhorn into history.

Following the trend of the times, the cattle men of this section began to feed steers for market and in this way obtain a higher price for their cattle. Soon the cattle

71 James L. Rock and W. I. Smith, Southern and Western Texas Guide for 1878, p. 208.

72 L. W. Newton and H. Pl. Gambrell, A Social and Political History of Texas, p. 328.

raisers began to realize that if their cattle were to be used as feeders they must raise the improved beef type which would justify the cost of feeding. Accordingly, they entered on this phase of cattle industry which resulted in the introduction of several popular breeds of cattle. The Holstein-Friesian cattle were introduced into the county by H. B. McCrary in 1894, and in the same year the Herefords were brought in by the Ryon-Farmer Pasture Company. When the Brahma cattle of India were introduced in the coastal country by T. W. Pierce ("Shanghi"), a few of these cattle were experimented with in Fort Bend County by M. J. Frost. He had the distinction of being the second man in the United States to import Brahma bulls to this country. At one time he brought a sacred bull from India, which cost \$2000 to import. These Brahma cattle were considered "tick proof". Later the Shorthorns were introduced in the county by the Moore-Dunlavy Ranch. However, of all the different breeds which have come into the county, the Herefords are very largely the beef animal of this section.⁷³

A visitor to the ranch of A. P. George would be impressed by the efficiency of his modern stock farm which has for its only purpose the breeding of better cattle. George has had years of experience in the stock industry and

73 Interview, A. P. George, Richmond, Texas, May 15, 1942.

his herds are from the most popular and well established broodlines, comprising twenty-six well known families of the Shorthorn breed with sires of the leading herds of the United States and Canada. Besides the Shorthorns, he specializes in Herefords, Polled-Angus, Durham, and Brahmas. His show cow "Mayflower" is an undefeated class winner and a heavy milker.⁷⁴

The Bassett Blakely Ranch at Gaston attained national fame in 1926 when it was used as location for the motion picture "North of 36".

Below are data by years showing the non-dairy cattle population of Fort Bend County:

Year	Number of cattle
1850	49,840
1860	61,853
1870	48,415
1880	44,429
1890	26,860
1900	45,864
1910	40,996
1920	32,384
1930	57,062
1940	43,694 ⁷⁵

Dairying. Important adjuncts to Fort Bend County agriculture are provided by dairying and poultry raising. As of old, Fort Bend County is still a cattle producing section, but not

74 News story, "A. P. Georges Herd Takes Honors", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XLI, (March 3, 1941), p. 8.

75 United States Census for the years indicated.

alone for beef purposes. Dairying has made vast strides in recent years. Such a movement was, of course, to be expected, along with improved breeds and more attention being given to sanitary features. Prior to 1920 there was relatively little milk production for the commercial markets. Most of the dairy production consisted of butter for local trade. Since 1920 Fort Bend County farmers are increasingly engaged in the industry and there are several large dairy farms that attract considerable notice and produce profitable returns.

Probably the first dairy business in Fort Bend County was operated by Mrs. Emma Wilson on Churchill Fulshear's Lake Hill Plantation at Fulshear. Mrs. P. H. Manaker of Fulshear, a niece of Mrs. Wilson, related that Mrs. Wilson during a period of financial stress in the early '80's, became interested in the possibility of dairying as a profitable South Texas industry. With habitual energy she pressed an army of Negroes into service and gathered dozens of Longhorn cows. Negroes put the milk into tubs, which they carried on their heads to a slat-covered dairy house--a building which was still standing in 1940. Cream was skimmed into a stone churn so tall that one had to stand and reach high to operate the dasher up and down. The butter was packed into tin buckets and carried by wagon across the country seven miles to the nearest railroad, where it was shipped to Houston.

Mrs. Manaker's story continues? "When I was a very small girl Auntie took me to Richmond, where we visited some of her friends. They were highly elated over a new breed of milch cows they had bought and eagerly took her out to the barn to inspect them. They were Jerseys--so far as I know, the first to be brought into the county."⁷⁶

The best known dairy farm in the county today is the one owned by Benjamin Clayton of California located on the beautiful Sartartia Plantation which contains 2000 acres, fronting on the Old Spanish Trail between Richmond and Sugar Land. There are one hundred and sixty registered Jerseys, almost everyone of them capable of becoming a champion. All of them produce their own weight in butterfat each year, and some surpass this record.⁷⁷

The John A. Yarling herd was established by buying good Jersey calves and raising them into better cows. A firm believer in good feed for his cattle, Yarling has been doing extensive growing of the soy bean. He has found it as good a feed as alfalfa and uses it both as dry hay and as ensilage.⁷⁸

76 Interview, Mrs. P. H. Manaker, Fulshear, Texas, July 5, 1940.

77 News story, "Beautiful Sartartia Plantation Lends Charm to County", Fort Bend Reporter, vol. XIII, (September 30, 1938), p. 2.

78 David J. Morris, "John A. Yarling of Rosenberg Sells Cows to Buy Calves in Order to Build Up Fine Jersey Herd", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XII, (Aug. 24, 1941), p. 14.

Yarling's herd takes most of the honors at the Houston Fat Stock Show held each year. In 1941 when there were 208 entries in the show, his cows won four first places, two second places and placed in several other classes.⁷⁹ In 1942, at the Harris County Dairy Cow Show the Grand Champion of the entire female exhibit was Royal Design Ann Lee, four year old cow of the Yarling herd.⁸⁰

Some of the other outstanding Jersey dairy cattle owners of Fort Bend County are Sugarland Industries, Pauline Yelder-erman, W. A. Brinkman, Will Lehman, and W. A. Owen.

About 1916 a wave of silo building swept over the county. At first silos proved disappointing because the owners leaned too heavily on ensilage with too little concentrates for the fattening ration.⁸¹

E. W. Foote, a native of Breckenridge, Kentucky, came to Rosenberg in 1925 and established a dairy in 1927. He claims to have built the first trench silo in the county, which today has fourteen upright silos and thirty-eight trench silos.⁸² The outstanding dairy farms find the silo

79 News story, "John Yarling's Herd Takes Honors at Fat Stock Show", The Texas Coaster, vol. XLVI, (Feb. 20, 1941), pp. 7.

80 News story, "Dairy Cattle Win Honors in County Show", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XLII, (May 1, 1942), p. 12.

81 S. A. McMillan, The Book of Fort Bend County, pp. 162-163.

82 Interview, County Agent, H. B. Ross, Rosenberg, Texas, February 25, 1942.

a necessity. Together with soil conservation, it is making possible the feeding of more stock on a given area and consequently more Fort Bend County farmers are buying dairy herds.

Since there are no creameries in the county, cream stations have been established in the various towns to which the farmers take their milk. From the station, the milk is trucked to Houston. Thus a ready cash market has been developed for the farmers. The owners of the larger dairies send their cream to Houston daily in their own trucks.

As the dairying industry developed, need was felt for closer cooperation. This was met by the organization of the Fort Bend County Dairy Association in Richmond, January 24, 1936.⁸³

The first Dairy Show was held in Fort Bend County in 1941 and was acclaimed by dairy experts as being the largest and the best one ever held in the State of Texas. It established a precedent in the experience of dairy men throughout the State and was a demonstration of county cooperation. Over 10,000 people were attracted to Rosenberg for the two-day show which had headquarters at the county fair ground.

The first day featured the military maneuvers of the battalion of the 204th Coast Artillery of Camp Helen with

⁸³ News item, "Dairy Association Organized", The Texas Coaster, vol. XLI, (January 30, 1936), p. 1.

Lt. Col. Robert F. Kennon in charge, and the Farmer's Daughter contest. All "Daughter" contestants were required to wear costumes made from cotton. Miss Nelda Hopmann of Beasley was unanimously awarded the title of "Miss Texas Farmer's Daughter" and was presented a beautiful trophy. The National Geographic Magazine staff photographer took colored photographs of the contestants. The second day of the show featured the dairy cattle exhibit.⁸⁴

Poultry. Although poultry raising and egg production have existed in Fort Bend County since the first settlers came, very little was done for commercial advancement along this line until about 1900. At that time some families in the various communities bought incubators from mail order houses and raised chickens on a small scale principally for home use or as a means of barter at the local stores. The merchants in turn sold these chickens to the townspeople who did not care to raise chickens or they shipped them to Houston. As this was before the day of motor vehicles the shipments were usually made only for holiday trade in the city.

The privately owned oil-burning incubators had their day of service, but they soon gave way to the new phase of

84 News story, "Fort Bend County's First Dairy Show", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XLVII, (April 25, 1941), p. 1.

the industry--"hatcheries", which use electricity for heating. The first hatchery to operate in the county known as the Rosenberg Hatchery was built in Rosenberg in 1926 by E. G. Alvers of La Grange, Texas. It now has a capacity of 48,000 chicks every three weeks, with customers as far as fifty miles away bringing their eggs to be incubated. Due to great demand for chicks nearby, this hatchery does not ship chicks any great distance.⁸⁵

The only other hatchery in the county is located one mile south of Needville on Highway 36. It was established in 1929 by R. Roesler, Sr. and operated by E. A. Reisinger. The capacity was 12,000 eggs. It now has a capacity of 33,000 eggs. No chicks are shipped, the local customers coming for them as needed.⁸⁶

Fort Bend County has no large farms devoted entirely to commercial egg production. Probably the largest one is owned by J. B. Mons, who lives on the Needville Highway. It consists of two acres of well drained land. An average of 400 English White Leghorns are kept and an average of 250 eggs are gathered each day.⁸⁷ The Fort Bend County Poultry Association was organized in 1936.⁸⁸

85 Interview, Richard Petters, Rosenberg, Texas, April 3, 1942.

86 Interview, Chas. T. Zwick, Needville, Texas, June 20, 1942.

87 Interview, Stella Mons, Rosenberg, Texas, Feb. 25, 1942.

88 News item, "Poultry Association Organized", The Texas Coaster, vol. XLI, (January 30, 1936), p. 1.

Turkeys. The Fort Bend County turkey crop is growing larger every year and becoming of increasing importance as a money crop. In 1930 approximately 30,000 turkeys were marketed.

With the good markets and the standard highways in the county, the poultry raising enterprise, which is just beginning to be developed commercially is sure to go forward steadily.

Oil. A recent lucrative industry in Fort Bend County appeared with the discovery of oil at Blue Ridge in 1919.

The Texas Coaster recorded the discovery in the following terms:

Richmond was an excited town on Monday morning when the news spread that a gusher had come in on the Blue Ridge Oil Field. Quite a number of our citizens benefited by the gusher, and trading was brisk. A number owned one-acre tracts while several larger tracts were owned by groups of individuals. Most of the sales brought \$10,000 per acre, while C. D.⁸⁹ Myers received \$13,750 for his one-acre tract.

Six other fields have been opened. In 1922 field explorations were followed by the discovery of new fields at BigCreek, H. A. Meyer and A. C. So Relle of Houston attempted to develop the area about 1920, but they were unsuccessful in securing the drilling of a test well until March,

⁸⁹ News story, "Blue Ridge Gusher Enriches Richmond", The Texas Coaster, vol. XXIV, (April 8, 1919), p. 1.

1922, when they assigned 5,000 acres to the Gulf Company and the Snowden-McSweeney Company. A test well was drilled to a total depth of 800 feet. It was completed on May 10, 1922, as an 800 barrel well.⁹⁰

The Nash Field was discovered January, 1926, when the Rycade Oil Corporation completed its Number 5 Nash for an initial production of 500 barrels per day from a Miocene sand at 4,127 feet.⁹¹

Other discoveries of 1926 include the Orchard Field, which was proven for production by the completion of the Gulf Production Company Number 5 Moore, on January 18, for an initial production of 2,000 barrels daily of 34.5 gravity oil from an Oligocene sand at a depth of 3,708 feet.⁹²

The Sugar Land field was proven for production March, 1927, by the completion of the Humble Oil and Refining Company Number 1 Sugarland Industries, as an 800 barrel well at a depth of 3,561 feet.⁹³

90 News item, "Big Creek Well Flows 800 Barrels", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XXXI, (May 15, 1925), p. 1.

91 News story, "Texas Has Greatest Oil Production in Its History During 1925", Houston Post-Dispatch, vol. XLI, (January 17, 1926), p. 6.

92 News item, "Gulf Production Company Brings in Big Well at Orchard", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XXXII, (January 22, 1926), p. 1.

93 News item, "800 Barrel Well in Near Sugar Land", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XXVIII, (March 27, 1926), p. 1.

Long Point, which was discovered by the torsion balance in 1924, was listed among the producing fields of the Gulf Coast following the completion on December 15, 1928, of the Gulf Production Company Number 3 Wolf as a 50 barrel oil well at a depth of 600 feet.⁹⁴ The oil production from this dome has not proven of any great importance.

The oil prospect at Thompson had been of interest for many years because of the surface elevation of that area. On May 21, 1931, Gulf Production Company and Cullen and West completed their Lockwood and Sharp Number A-1 for an initial production of 400 barrels per day from a depth of 3,089 feet. They later secured production from sand at a depth of 3,476 feet and another at 5,150 feet. The crude oil from this field yields an excellent grade of low cold test lubricant.⁹⁵

The Clodine field located on the John Frederick survey, four miles south of the town of that name was drilled in 1929 by the Gulf Production Company, using the torsion and seismic method. Two wells gave no important indications and were abandoned. In September, 1941, the Providence Oil Company drilled their Number 1-A located on the Wing property. Since then oil production in that area has proved important.⁹⁶

94 News item, "Oil News", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XXVIII, (December 16, 1928), p. 4.

95 C. A. Warner, Texas Oil and Gas Since 1543, pp. 206-208.

96 Editorial, "Fort Bend County", The Oil Weekly, (October 3, 1930), p. 2.

The booms which followed the discovery of each oil field have increased the wealth and population of the county and, whereas the county was formerly wholly a cattle and agricultural district, its economic interests are now divided between agricultural products, cattle, and petroleum, and other minerals.

Sulphur. By 1928 Fort Bend County and other counties along the Gulf Coast of Texas produced over ninety per cent of the world's consumption of sulphur. In 1922, the Pathfinder Oil Company composed of H. A. Meyer, A. C. Sorelle, and H. T. Staiti attracted by sulphur water springs, obtained a block of leases on the west side of Big Creek about twelve miles south of Richmond. After unsuccessful drilling of several shallow wells, they subleased to the Gulf Oil Corporation. On December 15, 1924, the company drilled and proved the dome with discovery well Number 1, J. H. F. Davis. The Texas Gulf Company then acquired the sulphur rights on the leases from the Gulf Production Company, built a plant and obtained their first sulphur production in March, 1930. Sulphur mining continued until October, 1938.⁹⁷

The Orchard Dome was discovered in 1924 by the Gulf Oil Corporation while drilling for oil. The Duval Texas

⁹⁷ Interview, A. G. Wolf of the Texas Gulf Sulphur Company, Houston, June 24, 1942.

Sulphur Company erected a plant and began operation in the spring of 1938 and has operated continuously since that time. Two hundred and twenty-five men are employed at the plant. They work on eight hour shifts. The average production is approximately five hundred tons per day.⁹⁸

The Company's plant at Orchard earned a net income of \$708,535.69 in 1941. Dividends totaling \$625,000 at \$1.25 per share, were paid during the year.⁹⁹

Banking. Closely associated with the other industries of Fort Bend County is the banking business. In early days those doing extensive business kept sums on deposit with Houston and Galveston firms. Gradually citizens acquired the habit of depositing their money with local merchants and lawyers to be kept in their iron safes.

Finally, in 1882, a private bank was established in Richmond by T. R. Beard. It was located in a building across the street from the present Davis Building. As no one else was financially interested in the enterprise, there were no directors or officers. Beard's nephew, W. J. Goss, who now lives in Houston, helped in managing the business of the bank until it closed. He states that it ceased to

98 Interview, J. H. Pollard, Assistant Mine Manager, Duval Texas Sulphur Company, Houston, Texas, June 25, 1942.

99 News item, "Duval Sulphur Earns \$708,535 During 1941", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XLI, (March 7, 1941), p. 6.

operate because of lack of funds, although it is known to have paid as high as 96 per cent dividends.¹⁰⁰

J. H. P. Davis and John M. Moore established the next bank in 1890. It was located where the Richmond Pharmacy is now operating. Davis was president, Moore was vice-president and C. A. Beasley was cashier. Moore sold his interest and Beasley became vice-president of the bank, now known as the Davis-Beasley Bank. A. P. George was employed as cashier. At a later time, this bank became known as the J. H. P. Davis Bank. A branch bank was established in Rosenberg in 1905 with R. E. L. Messendorff in charge.¹⁰¹

The oldest bank in continuous service in the county is the Imperial Bank and Trust Company at Sugar Land. It was organized in 1908 by W. T. Eldridge, Sr.¹⁰²

The Rosenberg State Bank was organized in May, 1909, and opened for business on June 21. The first officials were H. R. Kimbler, President and J. F. Winston, Cashier.¹⁰³

The First National Bank of Richmond was organized in 1913. The first officials were J. R. Farmer, President; A. M. Holmes, Vice-President; J. W. E. Stephen, Cashier.¹⁰⁴

100 Interview, W. J. Goss, Houston, Texas, August 7, 1942.

101 Interview, A. P. George, Richmond, Texas, July 7, 1942.

102 Interview, E. O. Guenther, Sugar Land, Texas, July 17, 1941.

103 Interview, B. L. Johnson, Rosenberg, Texas, Feb. 25, 1941.

104 Interview, J. R. Farmer, Richmond, Texas, June 10, 1942.

The Beasley State Bank was organized in 1917. The first officials were F. J. Barchert, President; Dr. J. W. Weeks, Vice-President; W. E. Penhert, Cashier. In 1931 this bank consolidated with the First National Bank of Rosenberg.¹⁰⁵

The first bank in Needville was the Needville State Bank. It was organized in 1918. In 1925 this bank became known as the First National Bank. Later it was changed to the First State and Trust Company, and still later became the First State Bank.¹⁰⁶

The Fort Bend National Bank is located in Richmond. It was organized in 1925, The first officials were D. R. Peareson, President; Dr. J. C. Johnson, Vice-President; Dan Miller, Cashier.¹⁰⁷

The First National Bank of Rosenberg was organized in 1925. The first officials were A. W. Miller, President; Dr. J. W. Weeks, Vice-President; J. E. Junker, Cashier; E. H. Walenta, Assistant Cashier.¹⁰⁸

105 Interview, J. E. Junker, Rosenberg, Texas, May 12, 1942.

106 Interview, Chas. T. Zich, Needville, Texas, June 20, 1942.

107 Interview, Dr. E. P. Newton, Richmond, Texas

108 Interview, J. E. Junker, Rosenberg, Texas, May 12, 1942.

These banks have always been found in the front in an effort to serve the industry, convenience and advancement of their customers and the county in general.

The history of the Imperial Sugar Company dates back to 1853 when a Mr. Kyle and B. F. Terry bought the John M. Williams plantation and built a sugar house. After the death of Kyle and Terry the heirs sold the property to E. H. Cunningham in the '70's. In 1890 Cunningham installed machinery and made refined as well as raw sugar. By 1902 such was the demand for refined Fort Bend County sugar that it became necessary to import raw stock. The first cargo came from Cuba through the port of Galveston. With change of ownership in 1906, the name of Cunningham Sugar Company was changed to Imperial Sugar Company. The new owners, W. T. Eldridge of Sugar Land and I. H. Kempner of Galveston, began to increase the capacity of the plant so that today it has a daily capacity of nearly 2,000,000 pounds.

The refinery establishment embraces several units equipped with modern machinery for refining sugar through all its stages. The units include an electric plant to supply light and power, a by-products mill, and machine shops. Ample provisions are made for future expansion.

It has been estimated that since the company began to import raw sugars, it has paid in duties to the Federal Government more money than the government has spent in Texas for improvements on rivers and harbors. In addition to

paying over \$3,000,000 in import duties, this company's state taxes are more than \$150,000 a year. Its miscellaneous purchases in the state amount to over \$2,000,000, and its annual pay roll is \$1,000,000 per year.¹⁰⁹

It is claimed that sugar rationing by the Federal Government has caused a huge sugar surplus, filling the warehouses of the Company. Due to this condition, the Company's refinery was closed on June 17, 1942. It is reported that it will not be operated again until the surplus sugar begins moving in trade channels.¹¹⁰

The Richmond Cotton Oil Company, Inc., a part of the Anderson Clayton interests, has been one of the vital factors in the progress of Fort Bend County. This firm was established in 1913, under the name of the Fort Bend Cotton Oil Company.

The mill closed after a short period of operation. It was later taken over by the State and manned with convict labor. The experiment proved a failure, and again the mill closed. In 1929 the Anderson Clayton interests purchased the property and the entire plant was remodeled. It then opened a cash market for the planter and ginner of the county, saving them long shipping and hauling expenses for their

109 Pamphlet, From Cane-Brake to Sugar Bowl, Published by Imperial Sugar Company, 1937, pp. 5-6; 18.

110 News story, "Full Warehouses Force Refinery to Close Down", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XLII, (June 21, 1942), p. 13.

cotton seed. Products manufactured by the mill include cotton seed oil, cotton seed cake, cotton seed hulls, and linters.

The crush for an average year is 6,000 tons, the price of which is from \$45 to \$50 a ton. Almost all the meal and hulls from the mill are fed to cattle in the county. The lint is shipped to various places in the United States.¹¹¹

The only nursery in the county is the Teas Nursery at Sugar Land. It was established in 1934 on thirty-two acres of land. Seven men are employed and the company averages about \$10,000 worth of business each year.¹¹²

The Marshall Canning Company at Sugar Land, operating on a year round schedule, was established in 1935. It is owned by a corporation in Marshalltown, Iowa. In addition to the use of local garden products for canning, the firm brings in beans from Colorado, hominy corn from Iowa and Southwest Texas, and spaghetti from Illinois. The plant is equipped to turn out 300,000 cases of canned products per year. Between 300 and 400 people are employed at the cannery in normal times and canned foods are shipped to California, Florida, Oklahoma, and to many Texas cities.¹¹³

111 Interview, F. W. Hubbard, Richmond, Texas, May 20, 1942.

112 Interview, Earl Patterson, Manager of the Nursery, March 9, 1942.

113 Interview, Miss M. A. Burns, Office Manager of the Sugar Land Office, March 9, 1942.

The Visco Products Company, owned by the National Aluminate Company of Chicago, located in Sugar Land about thirteen years ago. It was attracted there because Sugar Land is a good shipping center and it is also near the center of the territory accommodated by the Company. The company ordinarily produces an emulsion breakage chemical for treating crude oil. It is now producing war materials. Raw material is obtained by the Company chiefly from the Dow Chemical Company at Freeport.¹¹⁴

The Andrus Abstract Company now known as the Fort Bend Abstract Company is the oldest business firm in Fort Bend County. It was founded in Richmond in 1850 by Walter Andrus, the first male child born in the town of Richmond. This institution possesses priceless documents of bygone days. Among them are the original Spanish Government grants to the various leagues of land in the county, written on sheepskin or on pigskin, on which the Spanish writing is still legible. One of these old documents was signed on July 15, 1824, by Baron de Bastrop, Stephen F. Austin, Samuel M. Williams and John Austin at San Felipe de Austin. Another original document bears the seal of the Republic of Texas and the signature Anson Jones, President. There

¹¹⁴ Interview, Dr. W. H. Kirkpatrick, Manager of the Sugar Land Branch, January 20, 1943.

is also a pardon given to David Randon, one of the original settlers of the county, signed on November 18, 1865, by Andrew Jackson, then president of the United States. Numerous letters in the files of this business dating back a hundred years speak eloquently to those privileged to read them of the heroic achievements of the men and women who laid the foundations of the culture and enterprise of Fort Bend County.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ News story, "Old Firm Moves Plant", The Texas Coaster, vol. XXVIII, (May 4, 1923).

CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL AND CIVIC DEVELOPMENT

Barbecues, Contests, Fairs. The early colonists of Fort Bend County had little opportunity for amusement and entertainment. Fourth of July celebrations, elections, and similar occasions were welcome diversions. Sometimes when the people would get together, for a barbecue, they would finish the occasion with a dance which lasted until morning. More often an election or the celebration of a holiday furnished the occasion for a barbecue and a ball.

Mrs. Dilue Harris tells in her reminiscences of the barbecue and ball that she attended on September 1, 1836, at Stafford's Point. She says:

The barbecue, ball, and election were at Mr. Dyer's near our house. The people came from different settlements . . . There was no drinking or fighting. The ladies spent the day quilting. The young people began dancing at 3 o'clock and kept it up until the next morning . . . That was my last ball at an election. After that there was too much whiskey drunk for ladies to be present.¹

In the late fifties and early sixties the people continued to enjoy horse races, dances--which they often called masquerade balls--picnics, horseback riding, barbecues and protracted meetings.

1 "Reminiscences", Mrs. Dilue Harris, Quarterly of The Texas State Historical Association, vol. IV, (October, 1900), p. 103

In regard to the barbecues, Miss Lavinia Feris says, "In those days when a barbecue was suggested, no one thought of carrying a paper around, soliciting subscriptions to defray expenses. Fat yearlings, goats, and sheep were delivered at the pit. The ladies vied with one another to furnish a menu that included every delicacy the county afforded."

The residents of Fort Bend County often traveled far for their pleasures. A celebration was held in Harrisburg on the first anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto. Many from Fort Bend attended. The young people danced and the older people reminisced. These affairs were typical for many years. Social life of the people soon included out-door sports, fairs, and plays in addition to dances. The county was not without its early-day sporting interest. One of the first horse races was announced to take place on the Richmond track on the first Monday in December, 1837. The track was described as being eighteen feet wide, one of the best in the country. Four of the finest horses had been engaged to participate, and the contest was open to all horses. The entrance fee of \$5.00 permitted the entrant to compete in the feature race which offered a purse of \$2,000.²

² John V. Morton, "Notice, Great Sport Is Expected", Telegraph and Texas Register, vol. II, (October 28, 1837), p. 3.

Several years later Churchill Fulshear became interested in racing and bought and raised thorough bred for the track. His stables became known throughout the State. For twenty years, 1850-1870, he maintained a race course, Churchill Downs, where famous races were run. Today the floor-like space of hard packed earth of the track is still suggestive of its former use when the richest planters of South Texas gathered there to bet high stakes, on their favorite horse. Tradition tells that Fulshear once owned the land where Corpus Christi now stands, but lost it on a horse race.³

As late as 1853 a match race was held on the Richmond track for a prize of \$600. The two contestants were "Zack Taylor" owned by J. Roper and "Tricken" which belonged to J. Juykendall.⁴

When races were not being held in Fort Bend County the citizens were interested in those held in Houston. The editor of a Houston paper quoted in 1868 that Dr. G. A. Feris of Richmond, president of the Houston Jockey Club, was in the city arranging for the December races which would continue for a week, beginning December 29.⁵

3 Flora Humphries, "Lake Hill Plantation at Fulshear, Home of One of Houston's Scouts", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XXVI, (July 5, 1936), p. 20.

4 News item, "State News", Galveston Weekly News, vol. X, (December 20, 1853), p. 4.

5 News item, "The Races", Houston Daily Times, Vol. VI, (November 6, 1868), p. 3.

Later, in giving an announcement of the races for the first day, the editor wrote that Churchill Fulshear had entered his horse "Temerlane" for the one mile dash as a contestant for the prize of \$125. The papers do not reveal the winners of the races.⁶

One form of amusement that has been described at length and of which the writer had never heard in any other locality was called "Gander Pulling". The following description is quoted:

Gander pulling became quite a fad in the late 1830's. Stafford's Point was the locality in which the sport found greatest favor. The weekly contests, held generally on Saturday afternoons, drew many Houstonians.

The participants mounted their horses and held them reined up at the edge of the field, waiting.
. . . .

The next step was to grease the gander's head and neck thoroughly and suspend him by his feet from an overhanging limb of a tree. With everything in readiness, the starter gave a signal, and the line of men came clattering across the field at top speed. Each contestant with arm extended would gauge the position of the wriggling gander and grab at the bird's slick neck as he came into position.

The participant lucky enough to take the gander's head with him was presented one half of the pot which had been made up before the contest opened. The remaining half went to the owner of the gander.⁷

6 Ibid., (December 29, 1868), p.2.

7 News story, "Houstonians Enjoyed Gander Pullings in Days of the Republic", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XXXVI, (August 31, 1936), p. 18.

Shooting matches were one of the favorite amusements of the early settlers. The men took much pride in their marksmanship and to make the best shot was considered a great achievement. The choice of the quarters of a beef was usually the prize offered. The hide and tallow of the animal with the lead fired into the tree to which the target was nailed made a fifth prize. It was known as a fifth quarter. Naturally this "fifth quarter" went to the poorest marksman, yet, the lead was valuable and was always carefully dug out of the tree.⁸

In 1866, one of the chief pleasures of the young people of the county were tournaments which sometimes continued for two days. Such an occasion is described by a local paper which stated that twenty-four Knights of the Richmond Tournament assembled, and under Chief Marshall C. Cook, were marched to the grounds selected by the committee. Spectators were seated under an arbor and judges were selected. At the end of the contest the first day Miss Mollie Stansbury was crowned queen by Phil Mudd. In the evening a ball was given beginning at nine o'clock in Herndon Hall; supper was served at twelve.

The second day trick riding was participated in by the Knights. The events included picking up objects from the

8 Mattie Jackson, The Rising and Setting of the Lone Star Republic, p. 70.

ground while riding at full speed, the winner on this occasion being John Brown who received a copy of Life of Stonewall Jackson; "Riding at the Huddles", which was won by J. M. Jones who received a silver, gold-lined goblet; "Follow Your Leader", which was won by G. E. Mayes who received a silver goblet. The queen was then escorted from the grounds and the tournament closed with another ball at Herndon Halls.⁹

After the War Between the States, barbecues were often an excuse to have political discussions. One is mentioned in 1868 about which the editor of the Houston Daily Times says: "The Grand Barbecue at Richmond is tomorrow, and we cannot find time to attend, but we send a representative, our hearts and the Times. We wish the barbecuers a good and glorious time. May they feast their souls on lost principles and undying hope."¹⁰

Much entertaining was done during "Court Week" when lawyers, their families, and visitors from the plantations came to Richmond to enjoy the social festivities. The earliest newspaper notice of such an occasion was a party complimenting Judge W. E. Jones, which was held at the Richmond Hotel.¹¹

9 News story, "Knights of the Richmond Tournament", Richmond Times, (October 30, 1866), p. 3.

10 News item, Houston Daily Times, (September 11, 1868), p. 2.

11 News item, Richmond Telegraph and Literary Register, vol. II, (April 11, 1840), p. 2.

Circus Day in Fort Bend County was one of recreation and excitement in the sixties and seventies, according to Miss Lavinia Feris. The circus with all its animals and painted vehicles of that time was transported overland by wagon and it was of sufficient excitement to afford topics of conversation for days prior to its arrival and weeks after its departure. Miss Feris also says that Richmond was regarded by traveling shows as an exceedingly favorable "stands". It took nothing more than a wagon, the flare of a torch and a black-faced white man with a banjo to draw a large crowd. According to a news story from Columbus, Texas, the Great Chicago Show exhibited in that town August 20, 1873, and left the next morning for Richmond.¹²

There were stock entries and miscellaneous entries consisting of every thing from pictures to plows, including fancywork and food at the first agricultural fair held in Fort Bend County. Even a sample of penmanship was exhibited by "Master" John Dillard. It was estimated that 15,000 people attended the fair the first day. The Lone Star Band from Houston furnished music. At night fireworks were displayed and a dance was enjoyed. Several Richmond belles completed for the prize offered to the best lady waltzer, Miss Kate Little winning the prize, a pair of slippers, size

12 Interview, Miss Lavinia Feris, Richmond, Texas, June 6, 1942; news item, "From Columbus", The Galveston Commercial, vol. V, (August 23, 1873), p. 3.

one and one-half. On the second day the stock was judged and the fair closed.

The reporter ended his account in the following manner: "and they folded their tents, like the Arabs, and as silently stole away . . . this morning upon the fair grounds a transformation had taken place . . . all that remained of the festive scene of the day before was ten empty beer kegs."¹³

With the approach of the 1880's, a new generation had grown up since the Civil War; yet many forms of social life still partook of the great outdoors. Below is a reproduction in part of an account of a tournament much like those of pre-Civil War days, which was held in Richmond, as published in The Richmond Democrat in 1882.

GRAND GALA DAY

Thursday, August 28, 1882, was Richmond's red letter day of the year . . .

The day's program commenced early for some of the committee were attending to their duties by dawn. About nine o'clock the committee of reception started for the Santa Fe depot to meet the day's orator. About that time the streets were astir with Knights in gorgeous costumes, who were to be the heroes of the day.

The Chicago Band, of Galveston, came by train and was provided by S. D. Wheat with wagons to parade

¹³ News story, "The Fort Bend Fair", The Weekly Telegram, vol. XXI, (June 7, 1878), p. 2.

the streets. The Knights, marshalled by Clem Bassett, followed the musicians. The ground was duly reached where a goodby number were assembled to hear Mr. Macklemore's Oration. The gentleman spoke ably for some half hour . . .

The W. K. Davis Gun Club was next in order, and the crowd moved to witness some of the best shooting of the season.

Dr. Turner, making nine balls out of ten, won the first prize. The second prize was won by J. N. Blakely; the third, by George Reading. Next in order came the barbecue for which were provided six yearlings, four hogs, eight sheep, 600 loaves of bread, coffee, ice cream and lemonade.

The barbecue was followed by a Tournament, the high places being won by Dan Ragsdale, James Bush, and W. Hamilton, in the order named.

The crowns and wreaths were placed on the heads of the recipients by C. Bassett, who presented the queen with a beautiful cake made by Mrs. S. D. Wheat for that purpose.

Marshall Bassett then presented the prized to the winners of the day and closed the day's proceedings. In the evening came the Ball, which was described as follows:

The ball started off with the Royal dance in which the winners of the prizes in the afternoon figured alone with the ladies who had accepted the trophy of their victory. Then followed waltzes, quadvilles, and polkas--but here our reporter left them, hoping that the cry would be

"On with the dance,
Let joy be unconfined."¹⁴

14 News story, "Grand Gala Day", The Richmond Democrat, August 28, 1882, copied in the Texas Coaster, vol. XLI, (June 15, 1936), p. 6.

The County Fair. The Fort Bend County Fair Association, Incorporated, sponsored by the Rosenberg Lion's Club, was organized April 27, 1933. After receiving the charter, the Association leased sixteen acres of ground half way between Richmond and Rosenberg on Highway Number 263. In 1938 twenty-seven acres including the leased land was bought. Seven buildings have been erected. A race track was constructed which was used until 1935 when, because of lack of revenue, racing was discontinued. The fair, however, is an annual event, and is usually held for three days in October. Hundreds of dollars are paid in premiums on farm products, poultry exhibits, educational exhibits, fancy work, canned food, livestock and antique exhibits. An excellent exhibition of the resources of the county is always shown to a large enthusiastic crowd.¹⁵

Not satisfied with participating in their own fairs, the citizens of Fort Bend County frequently had displays at the Houston Fair as early as 1881. In that year Miss Laura Irvin, a reporter for The American Sketch Book, a Texas pioneer magazine, wrote that the Fort Bend display was said to be the most complete and varied on exhibition and was an honor to J. W. Echman of Richmond who arranged it. It consisted of pears, apples, peaches, oranges, melons,

15 News story, "Fort Bend County Fair Association", The Fort Bend Reporter, vol. VIII, (April 28, 1933), p. 1; Interview, Miss Tillie Harper, Richmond, Texas, June 15, 1942.

(weighing 80 pounds), Irish potatoes (weighing one pound), ribbon cane, corn, tobacco, fifty varieties of timber, and nine varieties of soil. The honey display of Echman at the Houston Fair in 1882 was said to have surpassed anything of the kind made in the State up to that time. Three tons of honey were taken from seventy swarms of bees.¹⁶

Societies, Theatricals, Marriages. Other opportunities for social intercourse were found in societies, theatricals, and musical organizations established in the county. On June 16, 1845, a number of Fort Bend citizens met at Richmond and formed a Temperance Society which was founded on the principle of total abstinence. Forty-six men and women pledged their cooperation and elected officers. A committee formulated the constitution which was accepted by the organization. On the occasion of meeting, two visitors, Reverend J. Whipple and Reverend J. Wesson made eloquent speeches. The next meeting was scheduled for July 4, 1845.¹⁷

A report on the existence of a "Sons of Temperance Hall" in Richmond on September 2, 1851, indicates that the society was still active at that time.¹⁸

16 Laura J. Irvin, "A Sketch of Fort Bend County", The American Sketch Book, p. 75.

17 News item, "For the Telegraph", Telegraph and Texas Register, vol. X, (July 2, 1845), p. 3.

18 News item, "Mr. Editor, Sir", Calveston Weekly News, vol. VIII, (September 2, 1851), p.3.

Amateur theatricals were enjoyed in Fort Bend County as early as the fifties. Various accounts state that the year 1856 was active in dramatic circles. Lota M. Spell wrote that Richmond boasted the "Lone Star Histrionic Association" and the Galveston Weekly News, stated that "The Richmond Histrions" are having their own fun, and imparting not a little to the citizens. On Monday night they are to perform three farces. Admission, fifty cents. Front seats reserved for the ladies." ¹⁹

March 28, 1880, the Dramatic Club presented "The Hidden Hand". The cast of characters was composed of the leading young people of the community. Forty-six dollars and sixty-five cents was realized from the sale of tickets. In August the same year "Love's Sacrifice" was presented by the Club.

In 1880, in a letter to the editor of the Beaumont Lumberman the Richmond correspondent wrote: "We've been having gay times . . . theatricals, leap year parties, weddings, two masquerades, etc."

Later, in 1885, this correspondent wrote: "We have a skating rink in full blast here".

As late as 1886 histrionic talent of Fort Bend County was highly commended. In a letter to the Richmond paper

19 Lota M. Spell, "The Theater in Texas before the Civil War", The Texas Monthly, vol. V, (April, 1930), p. 300. News story, "Richmond", Galveston Weekly News, vol. XV, (May 2, 1857), p. 5.

a Houston citizen wrote: "The Harrisburg Amateur Dramatic Company played in Houston and they did well, but they could not hold a candle to friends in Richmond" . . . Give Mrs. J. C. M. and Mrs. J. B. the Pillot Opera House, lights and scenery with the Richmond young folks and Harrisburg talent would be non-est!"²⁰

Rosenberg has the honor of having had the only Little Theater in the county. Through the efforts of Samuel Alexander and Kathleen Joerger, a group of thirty-four young people met April 20, 1940, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. L. G. Griffin and organized a Little Theater. Since organization, three plays were given each season, the door receipts defraying expenses of the performances. On account of the war, the organization has disbanded for the duration.²¹

Weddings in the early days of the county, as now, were important events, and people from miles around were invited. The ceremony was usually followed by a wedding supper consisting of barbecued mutton, veal, and pork, with other good food filling long tables which were kept spread throughout the night for hungry guests.²² Dancing was an important

20 Tillie Harper, Mother's Looseleaf Scrapbook, March 28, 1880, March 19, 1886.

21 Interview, L. G. Griffin, Rosenberg, Texas, February 15, 1943.

22 A. J. Sowell, History of Fort Bend County, pp. 58-59.

feature of the program. To the tunes made by a fiddle, a clevis and a pin, the young folks "made the splinters fly", as one participant said many years later. Such a dance held at Jesse Cartwright's near the Fort Bend Settlement, when his daughter married Nicholas McNutt is described by an early Texan, Noah Smithwick.²³ The customs there described continued in vogue until the outbreak of the War Between the States. During the conflict, social life became very quiet. The men were gone, the women were busy managing the homes, directing the slaves, knitting and sewing for the soldiers. Even the younger boys and girls had their share of work to do.

For a while after the war, there were few entertainments as a result of the unhappy life of Reconstruction Days. The farther the people of the county got away from those days, however, the more rapidly the social intercourse grew. As in earlier days, weddings furnished an opportunity for social meetings. A certain social gesture, typical of the gracious hospitality of the picturesque days in the Old South, was known as an "enfare", meaning the reception given the bride by the family of the groom. The brilliance of such affairs was a matter of family pride and a proof of social eminence. Guests were invited from a radius of

23 Noah Smithwick, The Evolution of a State, p. 40.

fifty miles. As was customary during that period, each lady brought extra costumes to be donned for special features of the festivities.²⁴ A charivari was frequently given the newly married couple soon after they started house keeping. This was a more boisterous occasion than the infare. The young people would go to the home of the newly-weds with pans and other instruments with which to make noise. The couple was expected to open their home for an informal party.²⁵

Another form of "diversion" was the "Protracted meetings", which were often held and always well attended. When it was announced that a "meeting" was to begin, no matter what was on foorthorse race or dance, everything was called off, and everyone went to church. A minister is reported to have once said that it was no use to tell people of Fort Bend County about paradise; they wanted no better place to live than their present abode.²⁶

The celebration of Christmas with a public tree on Christmas Eve became a custom in the county in the seventies. Committees entrusted with arranging this important event were appointed long in advance. At the stated time gifts

24 Mrs. T. A. Humphries, "Home of Feudal Magnificence Now Only Brick Heap", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XXXVI, (April 19, 1836), p. 27.

25 Interview, Mrs. Rachel Davis, Richmond, Texas, July 27, 1942.

26 Interview, Miss Lavinia Feris, Richmond, Texas, June 6, 1942.

were carried to the church, ready to be hung by the tree dressing committee. Witty comments from the master of the distribution ceremonies increased the gaiety. Children and adults when names were called all marched down the aisles and back again bearing gifts.²⁷

Political and Patriotic Activities. In 1884 when Grover Cleveland was elected to the presidency, there was a celebration in Richmond which, according to one report, lasted for a day and night. Cannon were shot. Anvils were fired and "noisy sixshooters made music" during the day. Men paraded the streets at night, carrying huge "illuminated transparencies" and torches.²⁸ Legend has the story that at that time there was one man in Richmond who had made stump speeches in the North during the campaign for James Blaine, the Republican nominee. When the Richmond Democrats had finished their night of celebration, they threw into the front yard of the Republican citizen all of the cast-off paraphernalia of the celebration. Legend says also that this Republican was Dave Nation, the husband of Carrie Nation.

In 1885 the young men of Richmond and nearby communities organized a social and literary club which by 1888 had enrolled about eighty-five members. It was known as the Rosebud Club. Meetings were held over Henry Frost's saloon

27 Interview, Mrs. W. L. Nesbitt, Columbus, Texas.

28 Tillie Harper, Mother's Looseleaf Scrapbook, undated clipping, "Redeemed at Last".

and political discussions came to occupy much of the time of members. They protested against the continuance of the Negro controlled regime of county politics. Out of this social gathering came the Young Men's Democratic Club of Richmond. A meeting was called of all the Democrats in the county. This meeting resulted in the formation on July 7, 1888, of the Young Men's Democratic Club of Fort Bend County. October 3, 1889, the Democratic Club was merged into the "Jaybird Association".²⁹

In the nineties there was at least one organization in the county for men besides the lodges. It was the Deaf Smith Chapter of the Sons of the Republic of Texas organized in Richmond, April 11, 1893, in the office of Judge F. M. O. Fenn.

Representatives of the Richmond Chapter went to Houston on April 19, 1893 to participate in the celebration on April 21. They were present on April 20 when the state organization of the Sons of the Republic of Texas was perfected with W. A. Craddock as State President and P. Briscoe as Secretary.³⁰

Time passed, members died and other organizations came to fill the men's social needs. The "Sons" disbanded, some

29 Interview, F. M. O. Fenn, Richmond, Texas, June 3, 1938.

30 F. M. O. Fenn, "Sons of the Republic of Texas", The Fort Bend Reporter, vol. XIII, (September 30, 1938), p. 15.

transferring their membership to the chapter in Houston. Later another chapter, known as Mirabeau B. Lamar Chapter, No. 5 was organized. John M. Moore, Jr. is now President and H. N. Darst is Secretary-Treasurer.

On Wednesday night June 3, 1920, a camp of Sons of Confederate Veterans was organized in Richmond. This camp did not join the National organization and after a short time interest died and the members disbanded.³¹

Another club of short duration was the Young Democratic Club of Fort Bend County which was organized at the court house August 17, 1938, with representatives present from six towns. J. L. Bridges, chairman pro tem of the meeting presided. W. H. Higginbotham, state membership chairman, instructed the group in perfecting the local organization. A membership committee was appointed. A charter was presented by State President C. A. Pickett of Houston to a club of sixty-three members.³²

The club was never disbanded officially, but after one year it ceased to function and died a natural death. The original charter issued to the club is in the tax assessor's office at the court house.

31 News item, "Camp Confederate Veteran's Sons Organized Here", The Texas Coaster, vol. XXV, (September 10, 1920), p. .

32 News item, "Young Democratic Club of Fort Bend County Meets", The Texas Coaster, (August 13, 1938; September 15, 1938),

Probably not to seem less patriotic than the men, the women of Fort Bend County organized the Frank Terry Chapter No. 378 of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The chapter was chartered April 30, 1900, at Richmond.³³ During its first years great interest was shown among the women, and the chapter's membership comprised the most active and leading women of Richmond. With the passing of time and the development of new interests the organization became weakened and in 1928 the charter was cancelled. Three charter members, Mrs. Peareson, Mrs. Winston and Miss Feris, are living.

There have been several clubs organized in the county that functioned for only a short time. Sometimes its purpose was accomplished or other interests needed encouragement. An example of the former was the Woman's Submission Club for Fort Bend County which was organized March 6, 1919 by Mrs. Augusta C. Hugheston of New York City, National Field counselor. The purpose was to instruct the women in the use of suffrage. Officers for the county were elected at the meeting held at the court house.³⁴ Fort Bend County women opposed woman suffrage, nevertheless, they became voting citizens in 1919 when the Nineteenth amendment was passed.

33 Interview, Mrs. J. E. Howze, State Custodian, U. D. C., Austin, Texas, June 15, 1942.

34 News item, "Woman's Submission Club", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XXV, (March 7, 1919), p. 1.

Fraternal Orders. The dawn of the twentieth century was also the dawn of a new social order in Texas. The first quarter of the century witnessed rapid changes. The old order was passing and there was much need for spiritual and cultural advancement, as well as material development. Both men and women participated in the change by organizing lodges and clubs to broaden their views and furnish means to coordinate their efforts in civic affairs. Lodges and non-secret organizations of many kinds began to replace the older forms of entertainment. They afforded a medium which drew the people together, a means of spiritual enrichment of the lives of the members, and the pleasure of contact with friends. These advantages kept the interest high. Lack of a quorum at regular meetings was unheard of and often members traveled miles to be present.

The Masonic Lodge, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the Woodmen of the World and the women's auxiliaries of these organizations have been active at various times.

The Ancient Free and Accepted Order of Masons, Morton Lodge No. 72, was the first Masonic Lodge organized in the county. A dispensation was granted May 24, 1850. A charter bearing the date January 24, 1851, was issued at Henderson, Texas, by W. B. Ochiltree, the grand master of Texas at that time.³⁵

35 Letter, George H. Belew, Grand Secretary, A. F. and A. M. Waco, Texas, June 29, 1942.

The original charter and all the early records of the Lodge were destroyed by fire in 1887. Morton Lodge now holds regular meetings in its own two story brick building. During the Centennial celebration of the Grand Lodge of Texas, meeting in Waco in December, 1937, the work of William Morton, whose name the lodge bears, as one of the first Masons in Texas, was depicted in pageant form.³⁶

The Rosenberg Lodge, A. F. and A. M., No. 881, was granted its charter on December 3, 1903. It held its first meeting February 20, 1904. The first meeting was held in the old frame building belonging to W. A. Moers on the site now occupied by the Houston Lighting and Power Company. In 1929 the Masons bought the Beecher Cochran building and moved into it.

R. F. Mulcohy, H. D. Donat, and T. F. Graham were the first to receive degrees which were conferred February 20, 1904.³⁷

Sugar Land Lodge, A. F. and A. M., No. 1141, was chartered by the Grand Lodge of Texas in December, 1920. The first officers were: C. A. Dierks, Worshipful Master; Harry Redan, Senior Warden, A. M. Waugh, Junior Warden; I. G. Wirtz, Secretary.

36 A. B. Moses, "History of the Morton Masonic Lodge", The Fort Bend Reporter, vol. VIII, (September 30, 1938), p. 12.

36 Interview, J. H. Waddell, Rosenberg, Texas, September 3, 1942.

The Masonic Lodges of Fort Bend County are active, though their meetings are less regular and less well attended than in earlier years of their existence.³⁸

According to available records, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows was the second fraternal order organized in the county. Fort Bend Lodge, No. 61 I. O. O. F., was organized at Richmond in 1874. At the same time Naomi Lodge of the Rebekah Degree Lodge was created.³⁹ These lodges are not now active, but no record of their formal discontinuance has been found.

May, 1909, J. W. Goodrich of Houston, who was Deputy Grand Master of Texas at the time, organized an Odd Fellows Lodge in Rosenberg. This lodge disbanded in the early thirties because its members became interested in other organizations.⁴⁰

In the early 1920's a Rebekah Degree Lodge was organized in Rosenberg. The first officers were Mrs. John Yarling, Noble Grand; Mrs. Bertha Hartlage, Vice-Grand. It was active for several years but due to lack of interest it disbanded in 1930. The records were deposited with the Headquarters.⁴¹

38 Letter, George E. Belew, Grand Secretary, A. F. and A. M., Waco, Texas, June 29, 1942.

39 Anonymous, History of Odd Fellowship in Texas Embracing First Introduction of the Order in 1838 and an Account of the Several Lodges, p. 287.

40 Interview, F. L. Heard, Rosenberg, Texas, February 25, 1942.

41 Interview, Mrs. H. O. Schultz, Rosenberg, Texas.

Texas Woodmen of the World Camp 535 was granted a charter April 13, 1898, in Rosenberg. The first officers were: R. L. Mulcohy, Consul Commander; G. B. Lang, Adviser Lieutenant; A. Mitchell, Banker; G. W. Duffie, Clerk; R. G. Lee, Escort; P. A. Watson, Watchman; H. P. Ruff, Sentry; Tom Coleman, Kinch Hillyer, and L. E. Proctor, Managers; C. M. Blair, Physician. Other charter members included J. B. Cooper, G. D. Campbell, H. A. Evans, D. M. Furr, C. A. Hightower, J. B. Moore, W. B. Parott, I. E. Reynolds, H. O. Skipper, J. M. Wells, A. J. Hite, E. Givin, J. J. Thomas and W. P. Blair.⁴²

Brazos Camp No. 12545, Modern Woodman of America, was organized in 1907. This lodge was very active for years, but though never officially disbanded, it has discontinued regular meetings.⁴³

Supreme Forest Woodman Circle, Grove No. 1620, was organized February 12, 1916, by State officers, Mrs. Emma B. Manchester, Supreme Guardian, Mrs. Dora Alexander, Supreme Clerk, and State Manager Mrs. Ellen B. Patterson. The camp is active today.⁴⁴

42 Letter, Farrar Newberry, National Secretary, Woodmen of the World, Omaha, Nebraska, July 15, 1942; Interview, Chas. Vanderhider, Secretary, Rosenberg, Texas, July 20, '42

43 Interview, Charlie Seydler, Rosenberg, Texas, June 6, 1942.

44 Interview, Mrs. Maude Allwright, Rosenberg, Texas, July 16, 1942.

Richmond Chapter, No. 412, Order of the Eastern Star, was organized May 20, 1908, and received its charter October 15, 1908. The charter was signed by Mrs. Carrah Johnson, Worthy Grand-Matron; T. J. Tucker, Worthy Grand-Patron, and Mrs. Cassie C. Leonard, Grand-Secretary. After ten years of active service, the chapter demised in 1918.

The Rosenberg Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, Number 429, was organized October 2, 1908, by Mrs. Carrie B. Lane, General Deputy of Houston. The charter was granted October 14, 1908, signed by Mrs. Carrah Johnson, Worthy Matron; T. J. Tucker, Worthy Grand Patron and Mrs. Cassie Leonard, Grand Secretary. This is the only active chapter in the county today. Members of the order in the other towns have placed their membership in the Rosenberg Chapter.

Fort Bend Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star Number 650, at Rosenberg was organized September 16, 1920, and received its charter October 14, 1920. The charter was signed by Mrs. Maggie B. Moody, Worthy Grand Matron; C. P. Patrick, Worthy Grand Patron; Mrs. Cassie C. Leonard, Grand Secretary.

Sugar Land Chapter, Number 660, Order of Eastern Star, was organized January 29, 1921 and received its charter October 27, 1921, signed by Mrs. Margaret Hosey, Worthy Grand Matron; John Findlater, Worthy Grand Patron; Mrs. Cassie C. Leonard, Grand Secretary. This chapter demised

in 1931.⁴⁵

Royal Neighbors of America, Camp Number 7826, was established in Rosenberg, November 11, 1915. Of the twenty-five charter members, seven are living. The membership is now composed of ninety-six. A Juvenile Chapter was organized September 20, 1923, with twenty-two charter members.⁴⁶

Professional and Civic Agencies. The Fort Bend County Medical Association was organized in 1912 in Richmond with seven charter members. The first officers elected were Dr. J. C. Johnson, President; Dr. J. S. Yates, Vice-President and Dr. R. A. Farmer, Secretary. Two months after it organized the Association merged with the Jackson, Wharton, and Matagorda County Association. Meetings of that Association are held quarterly.⁴⁷

The Fort Bend County Medical Auxiliary was organized in 1938, with eight charter members. The first officers elected were Mrs. C. V. Nichols, President; Mrs. J. W. Weeks, Vice-President and Mrs. Frank Andrews, Secretary. In 1941 the officers decided that there was no further need for

45 Letters, Miss Cora Posey, Grand Secretary, Order of the Eastern Star, Arlington, Texas, August 11, 1941, July 9, 1942.

46 Interview, Mrs. Bertha Schawe, Rosenberg, Texas, April 3, 1942.

47 Interview, Dr. J. W. Weeks, Rosenberg, Texas, March 18, 1942.

the chapter, and it was disbanded.⁴⁸

A Fort Bend County chapter of the National Association of Postmasters was organized in August 22, 1942, at Richmond under direction of Joseph Kopecky of Hallettsville, district chairman of the national association. The Postmasters of the county became charter members. This chapter is quite active in professional and social ways.⁴⁹

Among the civic organizations of the county, the Chamber of Commerce in each of the towns of Richmond, Rosenberg and Sugar Land has filled an important place in the development of the county.

There are no available records pertaining to the first Chamber of Commerce organized in Richmond, although G. C. Baker of that city states that there was one organized in 1902 and that he was a member. He recalls that J. H. P. Davis was President and that Real Ransom was Secretary. John M. Moore and F. M. O. Fenn were among the leaders, but Baker does not recall the exact office these men held. This organization ceased functioning in a short time, to be revived in the late 1920's when oil was discovered in the county. J. R. Farmer was president for several years. This organization became inactive and when the Rotary Club was

48 Interview, Mrs. J. W. Weeks, Rosenberg, Texas, March 18, 1942.

49 News item, "Fort Bend Postmasters Form Organization", The Houston Chronicle, vol. XLII, (Aug. 23, 1942), p. 10.

organized in 1936; it took over the duties of Chamber of Commerce for the town.⁵⁰

The Sugar Land Chamber of Commerce, first organized in 1918, is one of two in Texas that differs from the usual organization, Brownsville being the other. At first Sugar Land tried the same form that all other Chambers of Commerce use, but since the Imperial Sugar Company and the Sugarland Industries owned all business concerns it was not a very successful procedure. With the present charter, obtained in 1925, the memberships are paid by the companies and all the employees of these two companies are automatically members of the Sugar Land Chamber of Commerce. There are at present over 1,500 members. The first president, G. D. Ulrich, still serves in that capacity.⁵¹

The Rosenberg Chamber of Commerce, although not organized until February 23, 1939, has filled an important place in the development of Fort Bend County. The present membership, comprising one hundred and four men, is dedicated to the advancement of the whole county while they strive to make Rosenberg more attractive in every way. Their slogan is "Rosenberg, the Hub of the Gulf Coast".⁵²

50 Interview, G. J. Baker, Richmond, Texas, March 3, 1942.

51 Interview, W. H. Stinnett, Secretary of the Sugar Land Chamber of Commerce, April 3, 1942.

52 Interview, Joe Law, Rosenberg, Texas, July 6, 1942.

The Business and Professional Women's Club of Fort Bend County was planned in November, 1934, when a group of some fifty women met at the Plaza Hotel in Rosenberg. The actual organization was effected, however, on November 22, 1934, at the courthouse in Richmond. The first officers of the club were Pauline Yelderman, President; Helene Daily, First Vice-President; Marjorie Bolton, Secretary; Johnnie M. Copeland, Treasurer; and Lois Welhausen, Parliamentarian.

Activities of the club include sponsorship of Rosenberg Girl Scouts, participation with other clubs in the County Fair, maintaining a student loan fund, available to high school graduates, and the securing of vocational guidance classes at the schools of Richmond, Rosenberg, and Sugar Land.⁵³

The Rosenberg Fire Department came into existence in 1914 when the city water system was installed. The first equipment consisted of two high wheel hose carts with ropes attached so that they could be pulled by man power. Each cart was supplied with 500 feet of hose and two long nozzles. In 1921 the old carts, as well as another cart carrying two forty gallon chemical tanks which had been acquired, were succeeded by a modern fire truck. It was a Model T

⁵³ Interview, Mrs. Vance Winner, Richmond, Texas, January 6, 1942.

Ford one ton chasis. This equipment was unsatisfactory, however, the main drawback being the lack of a pump. A real factory made fire truck with a 500 gallon pump was purchased in 1930. Three years later an eight cylinder Ford, and another 500 gallon pump were obtained. The efficiency of the Rosenberg Fire Department is reflected in the reduction of the fire insurance rate from one dollar per hundred in 1914 to thirty-four cents per hundred in 1942.⁵⁴

The Richmond Country Club was organized on February 19, 1920, by a group of enthusiastic citizens who met in the county court room. The purpose of the club was announced as social and civic. On February 25, the members bought the M. L. Woolley property south of town. Later a charter was secured and the club was incorporated for the sum of \$15,000 with a membership of seventy-five. Shares were of a par value of \$200 each. While the club was known as the Richmond Country club, citizens from many other county towns were admitted to membership. With the passing of time and the development of new interests the Country Club was discontinued.⁵⁵

54 Interview, Fire Chief Joe Catron of Rosenberg, Texas, April 3, 1942.

55 News item, "Country Club Is Born", The Texas Coaster vol. XXV, (February 27, 1920), p. 1.

August 19, 1925, A. B. Walker, District Governor, heading a delegation of Optimists from Houston, organized the Rosenberg Optimists Club of thirty-eight members at the Plaza Hotel following a banquet.⁵⁶ This club disbanded in 1931 when a Lion's Club was organized.

The Lions Club, the first one of its name in Fort Bend County, was organized in Rosenberg July 16, 1931. Among the achievements of the club are the sponsoring of an election for an additional \$8,500 bond issue to complete the high school auditorium and gymnasium, obtaining a creamery and a new telephone exchange in Rosenberg; the planting of 200 red crepe myrtle trees along the highway; sponsoring a baseball team and building a baseball park; securing a site for a high school band stand; building a band stand and sponsoring concerts; organizing a Boy Scout Troop; and securing a \$700,000 federal building for the town.⁵⁷

In June, 1940, a Lion's Club was organized in Sugar Land. The first officers were H. L. Kirkpatrick, President; C. E. McFadden, Vice-President; T. Greenwald, Second Vice-President; C. A. White, Secretary-Treasurer; E. E. Saeger, Lion Tamer. The Club has been active in the development of the Community.⁵⁸

56 News item, "Optimist Club Is Organized", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XXXI, (August 21, 1925), p. 1.

57 Interview, J. E. Junker, Rosenberg, Texas, May 12, 1942.

58 Interview, O. Guenther, Sugar Land, Texas, July 17, 1941.

Sponsored by the Eagle Lake Rotary Club, the Richmond Rotarians were organized in April, 1936. The charter was presented June 16, 1936, at a large gathering of Rotarians and Rotary Annns from other towns. This club is very active and does the work usually done by a Chamber of Commerce.⁵⁹

In 1903 The Mothers' Club of Richmond was organized. Richmond, therefore, had in effect a Parent-teacher organization six years before the State organization was formed. Mrs. J. C. Florea was elected the first president and served until she lost her life in the 1915 storm. Mrs. T. B. Wessendorff was elected the first treasurer and served continuously until 1925. In 1915 the Mothers's' Club was affiliated with the State Parent-Teacher organization which was then called the Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teachers Association. Fifteen mothers have served as presidents since 1915 and the association is one of the best in the county.⁶⁰

February 1, 1910, twenty or more mothers in Rosenberg met at the school house for the purpose of perfecting an organization of a Mothers' club. The meeting was called to

59 News item, "Rotarians Organize", The Texas Coaster, vol. XLI, (April 16, 1936), p. 1.

60 Interview, Mrs. Frank Bell, Richmond, Texas, March 8, 1942.

order by Mrs. W. L. Nesbitt, chairman pro tem. The constitution was read and adopted. Seventeen members were enrolled. This organization changed its name in 1915 to the Parent-Teachers Association and now has the largest membership among similar organizations in the county.

Similar organizations came into existence in other communities. There were in 1942 eight Parent-Teacher Associations in the white schools, and three in the Mexican schools. The Mexican Association at Simonton has thirteen members.⁶¹

When the first Child Welfare Conference of Fort Bend County was held at Richmond in March, 1926, a County Council of Parent-Teachers Association was formed. This organization with a membership of 800 is very active in the welfare of the schools. Four meetings are held each year at different places in rotation.⁶²

The Boy Scout Troops of Fort Bend County now active date back to 1933, though Richmond had a troop organized in 1926 with Jacob Blasdel as scoutmaster. After two years of service, Blasdell resigned and the troop disbanded.

61 Interview, Louis Buls, President, Fort Bend County Council of P. T. A., Beasley, Texas, July 20, 1942.

62 News story, "Child Welfare Conference Held at Richmond", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XXXII, (March 12, 1926), p. 1.

The Rosenberg Boy Scout Troop No. 109, was organized in 1933, under the sponsorship of the Lion's Club. Henry Kastrop was first scoutmaster and Raymond Reede was assistant. In 1934 the troop was disbanded until March, 1937 then it was reorganized under the leadership of C. A. Burris as scoutmaster with Raymond Rude and Robert Bass as the assistants. Rosenberg now has a Boy Scout Troop, a Sea Scout Troop, a Cub Pack and one Negro Troop. Raymond Rude is the present scoutmaster.

In 1937 Jim Bridges organized Troop No. 137 of Richmond and D. W. Barnhill became scoutmaster with T. M. Morehead as assistant. A number of business men have worked successfully for the benefit of the troop.

In 1936 a Boy Scout Troop was organized in Sugar Land with Luke Browner as scoutmaster. A committee composed of Mose Norvick, J. B. Fowler and G. D. Ulrich was appointed as advisers. During this period, Camp Henry, located on the Brazos River, was given to Boy Scouts of the county by the Sugarland Industries.⁶³

The only Girl Scout Troop in the county is the one organized in Rosenberg October, 1935. Miss Hilda Wiedermann and Mrs. Frank Miller sponsored the troop and continue in

⁶³ Interview, Raymond Rude of Rosenberg, Texas, April 3, 1942; Mrs. B. F. Bracewell of Sugar Land, March 9, 1942.

the capacity of sponsors. Between twenty-five and thirty girls are active members.⁶⁴

In the fall of 1916 a choral club was organized at the home of Mrs. John M. Moore, Sr. in Richmond. It was at Mr. Moore's suggestion that the club was formed and Mrs. M. M. Newell did the telephoning to get the ladies to attend the first meeting. This organization became known as the Richmond Women's Choral Club. Due to the removal from the city of several members, the club disbanded in 1928.⁶⁵

In 1918 the ladies in Rosenberg organized a music club called the Treble Clef Club with Mrs. F. L. Heard as president and Mrs. Chas. Lea as Secretary. In 1919, the Treble Clef Club and the Rosenberg Glee Club which had previously been organized, were consolidated. No one remembers much about the Glee Club except that it was composed of men and women who sang in the various church choirs. The club was active for several years, but disbanded when the director moved to Houston.⁶⁶

64 Interview, Mrs. J. E. Junker, Rosenberg, Texas, May 12, 1942.

65 Interview, Mrs. Ivy Moore Morrison, Richmond, Texas, June 10, 1942.

66 News story, "New Music Club", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XXV, (November 28, 1919), p. 2; Interview, Mrs. Allie Ryba, Rosenberg, Texas.

About 1932 the ladies of the county became interested in flowers and gardens to such an extent that they began organizing Garden Clubs. There are now such clubs in practically every community. Some of the club activities have been the sponsoring of Flower Shows, Yard Pilgrimages, Clean Up Week, Christmas Lighting, Plant Exchange, and the general beautification of the towns. The Sugar Land Garden Club, the oldest in the county, was organized May 19, 1932, by Mrs. W. L. Friend. There are now sixty-five members of that club.

The Sugar Land Club was the only one in the county until the Richmond Garden Club was organized February 11, 1935, with seventy-one charter members. The Richmond Club has been a member of the Texas Federation of Garden Clubs since 1935 and is an associate member of the Houston Federation of Garden Clubs.

Mrs. C. O. Dickerson and Mrs. T. P. Boyett were the founders of the Rosenberg Garden Club. They asked all the ladies in town who were interested in organizing a Garden Club to meet at the home of Mrs. Dickerson on November 5, 1937. Twenty ladies responded and became the charter members. Cooperation has been the keynote of this club, one of Rosenberg's strongest organizations.⁶⁷

67 Interviews, Mrs. B. F. Bracewell of Sugar Land, March 5, 1942; Mrs. Ivy Moore Morrison of Richmond, June 10, 1942; Mrs. E. J. Schendel of Rosenberg, June 10, 1942.

As time passed the cemeteries of Fort Bend County grew larger and were often neglected. Also, storms and hurricanes caused damages. By 1902 the citizens of Richmond felt that an organization was necessary to care for, to improve, and to beautify the cemetery of that city, known as Morton Cemetery. Its work included the raising of funds to insure future care of the graveyard. Mrs. A. P. George is the president of the association at this time and Mrs. Annie Holmes continues as collector of dues. In 1910, Rosenberg organized a similar association but there are no records pertaining to it.⁶⁸

In 1913 several ladies of Fulshear decided to improve some neglected plots in Union Chapel Cemetery. Their example caused others to do likewise and when some out-of-town citizens heard of this they asked to pay dues to have their plots attended. An organization called Union Chapel Cemetery Association was formed with Mrs. E. M. Huggins, Sr., president. An iron fence was erected to enclose the entire cemetery and much landscaping was done. This association continued for a number of years, but people grew careless about paying their dues and the association finally disbanded.⁶⁹

68 Interview, Mrs. Annie Holmes, Richmond, Texas, June 10, 1942.

69 Interview, Mrs. Frank Fields, Fulshear, Texas, July 7, 1942.

One of the most recent clubs to organize in the county was the Fort Bend Flying Club. At a meeting held in the Rosenberg Chamber of Commerce Hall April 30, 1941, the Club was formed and officers were elected. The purpose of the Club was to promote interest in aviation in the county and to make flying lessons available to anyone interested in learning to fly. A sixty-five horse power Piper Club trainer plane was purchased from the J. L. Schroeder Company of Houston. The flying field is located on the Bealey highway a short distance from Rosenberg.⁷⁰

December, 1941, the members sold the airplane, and the club became inactive so far as flying is concerned. However, it still maintains its airport, and continues its meetings.

Women's Home Demonstration Clubs were first organized in Fort Bend County in September, 1932, by Mrs. Leola Cox Sides, a Home Demonstration Agent.

Since she was organizing the same work in two other counties, she did not give full time service in Fort Bend County. To help carry out the work, a County Home Demonstration Council was organized with Mrs. J. L. Boone of Beasley, chairman. In April 1933, Mrs. Sides became Home

70 News item, "Officers are Elected for County Air Club", The Texas Coaster, vol. XLVI, (May 1, 1941), p. 1.

Demonstration Agent for Matagorda County and Miss Loris Welhausen was appointed to serve Fort Bend County.

By the end of 1935 the work in the county had grown to such an extent that an assistant agent was needed and Miss Carolyn Powell was given the position. In 1936 Miss Welhausen was transferred to Nueces County and her place was taken by Miss Powell with Miss Yvonne Giesecke as Assistant. Miss Giesecke was transferred to Bastrop County in 1938 and Miss Kedron Grace took her place and is the present County Agent. Her assistant is Miss Della Blankemeyer who was appointed May 1, 1940.

Between 1932 and 1942 Home Demonstration Clubs were organized in practically every community in the county. There are thirteen women's clubs and twenty 4-H girls' Clubs active in the work today.⁷¹

While there are few clubs exclusively for women in Fort Bend County, various church organizations, too numerous to mention in this paper, women's lodges and auxiliaries, Home Demonstration Clubs, and the various social clubs, have all exercised great influence in the affairs of the county and have brought about closer ties among the women of all communities.

71 Interview, Mrs. Kedron G. Mitchell, Richmond, Texas, July 19, 1942.

CHAPTER VIII

EDUCATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

Schools. According to the available records, the first school in the territory later designated as Fort Bend County, was taught near Stafford's Point on Oyster Creek. In May, 1834, while on a business trip to Harrisburg, Dr. P. W. Rose engaged David Henson, an Irishman, "old, ugly, and red-headed", as teacher. He commenced school in a little log house, formerly a blacksmith shop, on the first of June. The first pupils of the school were William, Foster, and Harvey Dyer, three Rose children and the older boys, Leo and Jackson Roark and Harvey Stafford. The fact that the multiplication table was copied upon a piece of paste board by the teacher indicates the shortage of school equipment.¹ This school continued until the last day of August. At that time the boys in attendance were withdrawn because they were needed in the fields to help gather the crops. The following year the school was reopened in June with ten pupils. Three of the young men students lived with the teacher at the school house. On week-ends, the boys went home and the teacher visited with the patrons. The school continued until the arrest of Andrew Briscoe at Anahuac, when the boys

1 Mrs. Dilue Harris, "Reminiscences", The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, Vol. IV, (October, 1900), pp. 101-102.

left school to join Travis who was enlisting volunteers to expel the Mexicans from Texas. School was reopened in July, 1836, following the "Runaway Scrape" and the Revolution, by a Mr. Bennet who conducted the school until December. The former teacher returned to the United States.²

In 1847 Fort Bend County citizens availed themselves of the land offered by the Republic for schools. At a meeting of the County Court on August 15 of that year, a school board was organized, and the next year John H. Herndon was paid \$400 for surveying the four leagues of Fort Bend County School land in 1848.³ After this date, however, private schools were continued in the county. One such school was conducted by C. P. Heermans. It evidently was not profitable, however, as the teacher offered his services to citizens of the county as a doctor.⁴

In April J. G. McLean established another school at Richmond which he advertised would:

. . . continue a number of years in which the government will be truly parental.⁵

2 Ibid, pp. 180-185.

3 Minutes, Commissioners Court, Book A, pp. 43, 45, 51.

4 Advertisement, Richmond Telescope and Literary Register, Vol. I, (October 9, 1839), p. 4; (January 11, 1840), p. 3.

5 Ibid., (April 4) p. 3.

No other accounts appear concerning McLean's school until 1850. In that year three common schools were reported having three teachers and one hundred and twenty pupils, and one academy which had one teacher and forty pupils.⁶ The first session was held at a temporary location and seventy pupils were enrolled. The second term was to begin on September 25, 1851 with over one hundred pupils expected. An academy building was under construction during September, which when completed was to be sixty feet long, two stories high and was to contain four large rooms. It was located on a two acre tract, a part of which was to be devoted to playgrounds.⁷

The earliest legislative action of the State of Texas in reference to educational facilities in Fort Bend County was an act approved February 13, 1852, which incorporated the Richmond Male and Female Academies. A notable provision of the Act is "that said academy shall be forever free from the control of any particular denomination of Christians, but shall be ever open for use and benefit of all."⁸

6 Seventh Census, Social Statistics, Archives at Texas State Library.

7 News story, "Richmond", Galveston Weekly News, Vol. VIII, (September 2, 1851), p. 4.

8 H. N. P. Gammel, Laws of Texas, Vol. III, pp. 1,167-1,168.

The name of this institution would indicate two schools, one for girls and one for boys. According to a former pupil, however, the institution was semi-coeducational, the girls and boys having separate school rooms, but having one or more classes together.⁹ Out of town students secured board for ten to twelve dollars a month. The school continued in operation until July, 1858, when, because of financial difficulties, it was closed.¹⁰

A Legislative Act approved on August 26, 1856, incorporated another school known as Frost Institute, to be located on five acres of land donated by Dr. Johnson Hunter from the R. H. Hunter survey, approximately six miles north of Richmond.¹¹

In addition to the Richmond Male and Female Academy and Frost Institute there were other schools in the county, as shown by reference in the Commissioners Court minutes.

In compliance with the provisions of the law of 1854, the County Commissioners Court, on May 16, divided the county into eight school districts.¹² The court issued a

9 Interview, Miss Lavinia Feris, Richmond, Texas, June 6, 1942.

10 Deed Revords, Book E, p. 78.

11 H. N. P. Gammel, Laws of Texas, Vol. IV, pp. 704-705.

12 Minutes County Commissioners Court, Book A, pp. 66,
96.

call for an election of three trustees in each district on July 1, 1854. Some of the districts failed to hold the elections. The returns on the trustees who were elected are not recorded.¹³

In order to obtain qualified teachers, the Court appointed a Board of Examiners to examine and license teachers who were to serve in the county.¹⁴

In the year ending June 1, 1860, there were four schools in existence in Fort Bend County. The school at Richmond had two teachers and an enrollment of one hundred pupils. It received \$498 from public funds and \$1000 from other sources. The school at Big Creek had one teacher and thirty pupils enrolled, receiving \$290 from public funds and \$300 from other sources. The school at Stafford's Point had one teacher and twenty pupils, receiving \$190 from public funds and \$200 from other sources. The school at Union Chapel had one teacher and forty pupils enrolled, receiving \$53.00 from public funds and \$500 from other sources.¹⁵

During the War Between the States schools were temporarily closed. During Reconstruction, the people were financially hard pressed, and naturally opposed any measure that increased taxes; hence, public education suffered.

13 Ibid., p. 90.

14 Ibid., p. 154.

15 Eighty Census, Social Statistics, Archives at Texas State Library.

In 1870 the county was divided into sub-school districts and after this division a "slow but sure" progress began. It was at this time that the first extra-school affairs were started in the schools of the county. They consisted of spelling matches and Friday afternoon programs. During the play periods the boys enjoyed playing "bull-pen", "town ball" and "wolf over the river". The girls' favorite game was "jacks", often using rocks instead of "jacks". Girls and boys were never permitted to play together. In fact, even in the school room, they were always seated on different sides of the room.¹⁶

The text books used during the first years of the public school system were those found in most general use. Watson's Independent Readers were used in the first five grades. Monteith's First Lessons in Geography and Manual of Geography and McNally's Complete Geography were used by more advanced students. The other text books were Clark's First Lessons in Grammar; Quackenbo's Primary, Mental and Practical Arithmetic; Elements of Geography, Elements of Geometry, and Elements of Plane Trigonometry by Perkins; Quackenbo's First Lessons in Composition; and Barnes' History of the United States.¹⁷

16 Interview, Miss Lavinia Feris, Richmond, Texas, June 6, '42

17 First Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1871.

The public school at Richmond which was fostered by the county did not go beyond the seventh grade and for most of the children completion of that grade ended their school work. A few of them were sent to preparatory schools and college. Private schools continued popular.

The Office of County Superintendent of Schools was established in Fort Bend County on October 12, 1896, according to the Minutes of the Commissioners Court. At the general election on November 9th of that year, R. L. Morris was elected the first County Superintendent.¹⁸

During the last ten years there has been an educational awakening in Fort Bend County. The qualifications of teachers have been raised; terms have been lengthened; new schools have been built; one consolidation has been effected and a general interest in school affairs is being shown by most of the patrons. The independent schools in the county are Beasley, Needville, Orchard, Richmond, Rosenberg, Sugar Land and Taverner.

There are thirty-two schools for Negroes in the county. Twenty-five are common schools and the others are administered in connection with the town schools at Beasley, Needville, Richmond, Rosenberg, and Taverner, with one each, and

¹⁸ Minutes of the County Commissioners Court, Book H,
pp. 139, 149.

Sugar Land with two.¹⁹

In recent years separate public free schools for Mexicans have been established in the County. There are now ten such schools taught by fifteen teachers. Seven grades are taught in all schools. The enrollment for 1941-1942 was about 450. In the other communities and towns the Mexican children are given access to the regular white schools.²⁰

Fort Bend County, under the leadership of Jesse F. Ward, blazed a new trail in rural education in 1928. A radio was placed in every rural school with a broadcasting station at the county court house in Richmond. On November 11, 1928, the county board received from the Radio Commission a broadcasting permit, and on November 19, State Superintendent S. M. N. Marrs made the dedicatory address, speaking to all the school children and teachers of the county in their respective schools. For a year the radio was utilized for announcements, educational programs, weather reports, agricultural information and road conditions.²¹ Later the permit was transferred to the Houston Broadcasting Station.

19 Records in the office of Fort Bend School Superintendent.

20 Interview, Mrs. Mattye Schulze, Fort Bend County School Superintendent, December 30, 1941.

21 Mary Shipp Sanders, "The Radio in Fort Bend County Schools" The Texas Outlook, vol. XIII, (January, 1929), pp.26-27.

The Fort Bend Business College was established by Lena Mae Risinger of Rosenberg in September, 1940. The enrollment averages ten pupils. A complete business course is taught except those branches requiring expensive machines. Emphasis is placed upon purely professional courses, but a review is given of elementary and high school branches with reference to business. Night school is taught by the college three nights each week in order that employed persons may enroll. Many of the students are being enabled to pass Civil Service examinations at present.²²

Two notable teachers of the county are Miss Mary Serb and Mrs. G. W. Dayton. Miss Serb of Rosenberg is the oldest teacher in the county in point of service. She began teaching the first grade in Richmond over thirty years ago. After teaching there she taught in Rosenberg for many years. In 1940 she took advantage of the Teacher Retirement privilege.

Mrs. G. W. Dayton (nee Minnie Mayes) after serving several years as a teacher, was elected to the office of County Superintendent of Schools being the first woman in the county to hold a public office. She served from 1919 to 1922. To these and many other faithful teachers is due much credit for the high cultural development of the people of Fort Bend County.

²² Interview, Lena Mae Risinger, Rosenberg, Texas, April 3, 1942.

Churches. In 1834 when court was assembled under a live oak tree on the bank of Oyster Creek many people attended to witness the proceedings. Parson Woodruff, a Baptist preacher who had come with Ben Fort Smith, seized on the occasion to preach a sermon to the assembly. Mrs. Stafford and Mrs. Rose sang, "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand." This was the first public religious service in Fort Bend County.²³

The provision in the Mexican colonization laws which prohibited Protestant worship was fortunately removed by the establishment of the independence of Texas. After that achievement, services began to be advertised in the local papers. Said one announcement, "The Reverend Thomas Spragins will preach in the city of Richmond on the fourth Sabbath of this month."

On the same page one read the following notice: "Divine Service may be expected in the school house tomorrow at eleven o'clock, A. M. The Reverend John Patton will Officiate."²⁴

Several months later it was announced that services were held by visiting clergymen:

23 Mrs. Dilue Harris, "Reminiscences", Quarterly of the Texas Historical Association, Vol. IV, (July, 1900), p. 102

24 News item, "Notice", Richmond Telescope and Texas Literary Register, Vol. I, (September 11, 1839), p. 2.

Reverend Messrs. Allen and McCullough preached at Richmond on Sunday last. We were highly pleased with the sermons and impressive delivery of both gentlemen, and we trust that the seeds of holiness, which they have instilled into the minds of this community will not be permitted to perish for the want of their fostering care.²⁵

Settlers of Protestant faith established their churches in Fort Bend County early in its history. But the list is too long to be included in this study, only the oldest organization of each denomination is included.

The First Methodist Episcopal Church in the county was organized in Richmond with six members, January 22, 1839, at the home of a Doctor J. L. Bryant by Reverend Jesse Hord.²⁶ He was a native of Tennessee, who came to the Republic of Texas as a missionary from the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Richmond church became a part of what was known at that time as the Houston Circuit. Its affairs were administered by the Methodist Episcopal Church until 1844, when the church divided over the slavery question. From 1844 to 1940 the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had the Richmond church in the plan of appointments of the Texas Conference. The membership never has been large. In 1850 there were one hundred and sixteen white members and

25 News item, Richmond Telescope and Texas Literary Register, Vol. I, (April 4, 1840), p. 3.

26 Hord's Diary. Long extracts from this record, expanded by his recollections, were published by Jesse Hord in The Texas Christian Advocate shortly before his death, which occurred at Goliad in January, 1886.

sixty-one Negro members. In 1859 there were only forty white members and twenty-one Negro members.

The church now boasts the best physical plant of the county's churches. It consists of a large brick building, a two-story brick educational building, and a two-story parsonage. The present membership is two hundred.²⁷

In 1850 the eleventh session of the Texas Conference was held at Richmond from December 11 to 16, with Bishop James O. Andrew presiding.²⁸

In 1942 there were six Methodist Churches in the County as follows:

Location	Organizer	Year Organized
Richmond	Jesse Hord	1839
Fulshear	no record	1890
Needville	J. Ott	1890
Rosenberg	W. R. Campbell	1894
Sugar Land	F. W. St. John	1919

The only Episcopal church of Fort Bend County is located at Richmond. In 1845 after Texas had become annexed to the United States, Bishop George Washington Freeman was appointed to supervise the work in Arkansas and the Indian Territory. Notwithstanding his extensive itinerary Bishop George Freeman found time to visit Texas almost every year.

27 J. T. Moore, "Richmond Church to Celebrate Its 100th Anniversary Sunday", The Houston Chronicle, Vol. XXXIX, (January 20, 1939), p. 7.

28 M. Phelan, History of Early Methodism in Texas, p. 109.

He held services at Richmond in May, 1847, In the meantime, the Reverend Charles Gillet, Rector of Christ Church, Houston, went to Richmond at the earnest invitation of friends of the church there, and held Sunday services.

After the Reverend W. T. Dickinson Dalzell became rector of Christ Church, Houston, on May 16, 1857, he held missionary services in Richmond where he organized Calvary-Parish in 1859, and accomplished the erection of a building, largely through the hearty cooperation of William E. Kendall.²⁹ That building was destroyed by the tropical hurricane of 1875. The membership then held services in the court house until 1878 when a new building was erected. The storm of 1900 destroyed the steeple and bell of this church, but both were soon replaced. Most of the church furnishings have been presented as memorials to faithful departed members. The church's property now consists of the church and rectory which was built in 1888.³⁰

Elijah Alcorn, David Fitzgerald, John W. Moore, Gail Borden and Abner Kuykendall were some of those of the Baptist faith among the first settlers of Fort Bend County. Hiram Little and his wife, Polly, came to Texas from Cairo, Illinois, in 1834. They brought their Baptist church letters with them when they settled in Fort Bend County. Joseph Bays, a Baptist preacher, was arrested at San Felipe

29 Dubose Murphy, A Short History of the Episcopal Church in Texas, pp. 18-34.

30 Interview, Mrs. W. H. Hinson, Richmond, February 6, 1942.

for holding Protestant services in 1823. En route to San Antonio, Bays escaped from his guards and after tramping about for several days, finally reached Joe Kuykendall's home near Fort Bend.³¹ Bays remained in the settlement to preach at the homes of several Fort Bend citizens. Early in 1824 he preached to a crowd of neighbors on the east side of the Brazos and near Fort Bend.³²

According to available records, the Baptist Church was not definitely organized in the county until years after the Civil War. Services were either held at private homes or out in the open by traveling preachers and missionaries. The First Baptist Church of Richmond, the oldest in the county, was organized in the home of John M. Moore on July 19, 1835, Reverend W. Wood, officiating. The first house of worship was built in 1889 and dedicated September 18, 1892, by Reverend Rufus Barbson. The second house of worship was built in 1902 and was dedicated December 22, 1907.

The erection of the building in use at present was started in 1929. Complete with its furnishings, including the pipe organ, it cost \$30,000. Dedication services were

31 J. M. Carroll, History of Texas Baptist, pp. 21, 29, 67, 69, 71.

32 J. H. Kuykendall, "Reminiscences of Early Texas", Quarterly, Texas State Historical Association, Vol. VII, (July, 1903), p. 52.

held February 18, 1932, with Dr. George W. Truett of Dallas preaching the dedicatory sermon.³³

The five Baptist Churches in the County in 1942 included:

Location	Organizer	Year Organized
Richmond	Rev. W. Wood	1885
Rosenberg	W. P. Blair	1897
Beasley	Rev. Wm. Bumbelow	1909
Sugar Land	Rev. J. Hall	1914
Orchard	C. A. Banfield	1935

In the early history of Rosenberg there was a small group who were members of Christian Churches elsewhere, but who had no church building in their respective communities. These people attended and worked with the other churches of the town until they had enough money to start the present church home in 1907. Dr. Vernon Chew gave the lot, and labor was donated by other members.³⁴

In 1909 the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America appointed Rev. Joseph Miksovsky to care for the Evangelical people of Czechoslovak origin in Fort Bend County, who at that time were being spiritually neglected. He organized churches at Rosenberg, Fairchilds and Needville. At Fairchilds the services were held at the school house,

33 Interview, Mrs. George C. Baker, Richmond, Texas, March 8, 1942.

34 Interview, R. Warren Main, Pastor, Rosenberg, Texas, May 3, 1939.

and at Needville at the German Evangelical Church. Services in Rosenberg were held in the Gray Building until 1916 when the congregation dedicated their present brick and stone church. In 1916 a church was organized at Sugar Land.³⁵

The three Presbyterian Churches in the County in 1942 were:

Location	Organizer	Year Organized
Rosenberg	Joseph Miksovsky	1909
Needville	Joseph Miksovsky	1910
Sugar Land	T. C. Johnston	1916

The first service of the Lutheran Church held in the county was conducted by the Reverend G. Z. Zielinger of Brenham in the Rosenberg school house. As there were no hymn books, the people sang "Rock of Ages" and "Nearer My God to Thee" from memory, accompanied by Reverend Zielinger on an organ of the school. From that time services were held whenever a minister could be obtained.

In 1917, Reverend E. A. Sagebiel of Brenham effected a permanent organization which adopted as its official title, "St. Paul's Lutheran Church". Services were held twice a month in the Christian Church until 1925, when on October fourth of that year, their building was dedicated. A

35 Interview, J. R. Vilt, Rosenberg, Texas, May 3, 1939.

personage was erected in 1927.³⁶

The two Lutheran Churches in the County in 1942 are:

Location	Organizer	Year Organized
Rosenberg	E. A. Sagebiel	1917
Beasley	A. J. Apfelbach	1918

In 1903, at Granger in Williamson County, the Czechoslovak protestants of Texas organized themselves into one body which they named the Evangelical Unity of the Czech Moravian Brethren in North America. Some of these people moved to Rosenberg and by 1925 services were held several times a year. In 1929 Reverend F. H. Horak organized a church with the ten or twelve families and services were held once a month on the second floor of the Moers Building. Later services were held in the Presbyterian church and the Lutheran church. The Czech language was used at first in preaching and in teaching the Sunday School lessons. Reverend Horak remained as minister until 1936 and it was through his efforts that a church building was erected. Services are now held twice a month by Reverend H. E. Besada who comes from Caldwell. This is the only

36 Hugo Probst, "St. Paul's Lutheran Church", Fort Bend Reporter, Vol. XIII, (September 30, 1938), p. 10.

Czech Church in the county.³⁷

An evangelistic group was invited to Rosenberg in June, 1933, to conduct the first revival of the Assembly of God Church, which was held under the Farmers' Gin shed. From the beginning a Church was organized, a building was erected in February, 1935.

In the following November, Reverend Paul V. Chambles became pastor and preached in a store building on Main Street. In 1934 the congregation secured a lot on Brazos Street on which they built a brush arbor. They conducted services there until December when Reverend W. A. Marshall was called.³⁸

The development of the Protestant Churches after 1895 was retarded by the great numbers of German, Polish, and Bohemian immigrants of the Catholic faith, who bought land in the county and displaced the Anglo-American settlers. In 1906, the Catholic families living at Rosenberg felt the need of spiritual guidance and petitioned the Most Reverend N. A. Gallagher of Galveston for a director. He appointed Reverend Jacob Schnetzer of Houston and the first Catholic

37 Interview, Frank R. Chupik, Rosenberg, Texas, April 3, 1942.

38 Interview, Reverend Charles H. Miller, Pastor, Rosenberg, Texas, May 3, 1939.

service was held at the home of Mrs. W. C. Baker. Later the Gray Building was used. The first church, a wooden structure, was built in 1911 and dedicated in 1912 by Bishop Gallagher. It was given the name Holy Rosary Church. At that time the membership numbered ten families. The wooden rectory was rebuilt at a cost of \$5000. In 1924 fire damaged the church and the present building was erected of tile and stucco at a cost of \$12,000. The membership has grown to 600 people. A grötto of Lourdes was built in 1931 in commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the church.³⁹

The five Catholic Churches in the County in 1942 were:

Location	Organizer	Year Organized
Rosenberg	Jacob Schnetzer	1906
Needville	W. Demal	1911
Beasley	W. Demal	1913
Sugar Land	J. Dwan	1928
Richmond	F. Reyband	1935

The Emmanuel's Evangelical Church was organized in 1890 by the early German settlers near Needville. It was not until 1899 that the church building was erected across the road from the present Seiler school house. This building was destroyed in 1900 by a hurricane. In 1902 a church house was erected in Needville and was in use until 1924.

³⁹ Interview, Father Jerome Tydlocka, Rosenberg, Texas, May 3, 1939.

The congregation grew as many people moved in, mainly from Washington County, and the church house became too small. A new \$10,000 church was built, and August 10, 1924, it was dedicated.⁴⁰

The four Evangelical Churches in the County in 1942 were:

Location	Organizer	Year Organized
Needville	J. Settner	1890
Beasley	Karl Merkel	1912
Cottonwood	Karl Merkel	1912
Rosenberg	Wm. J. Luthé	1941

Churches of other denominations were also organized, but their development was retarded. In December, 1925, about forty Polish families of Fort Bend County quit the Roman Catholic Church and formed their own church. The fundamental reason was that those who were most nationally inclined were determined to have their old Polish traditions and mother tongue preserved from any infringement of Americanization. They organized a parish in Rosenberg, under the name of the Holy Family National Catholic Church. A house was bought for the pastor and lot on which to build a church was required. Services were held twice a month in the Presbyterian Church. A church house was never built

40 F. C. Anderson, "The Emmanuel's Evangelical Church", The Rosenberg Reporter, vol. XIII, (September 30, 1938), p. 10.

because the adherents kept dwindling and by 1938 no effort was made to continue services. ⁴¹

Ten or twelve years ago, a group of women of Simonton organized for the purpose of promoting Christian activity and the building of a church. This organization became known as the "Willing Workers." Through the years, suppers and entertainments of all kinds were given, the proceeds being saved to build a church the community hoped to have. On May 5, 1940, the hope became a reality, the church was dedicated. It is located in the southern part of town.⁴² Sunday School is held every week, but church services depend upon visiting clergymen with whom arrangements are made each month.

On February 12, 1941, a group of approximately thirty people met in the Rosenberg Chamber of Commerce room to further the plans for the beginning of an Evangelical and Reformed Church in Rosenberg. These people were the representatives of a group who had felt the need of such a church in the county. Plans were made for organizing a Sunday School. Through the kindness of the Rosenberg Christian Church, the Sunday School met in that church for

41 Edward J. Dworaczyk, Polish Colonies of America in Texas, p. 190; Anonymous, "New Church Has Been Organized," The Rosenberg Herald, Vol. XXI, (December 4, 1925), p. 8.

42 Anonymous, "Simonton to Dedicate New Church," The Texas Coaster, Vol. XLV, (May 2, 1940), p. 1.

the first time on March 2, 1941. Since 1942 all services are held in the John Huss Presbyterian Church.⁴³

A Ministerial Association was organized in Rosenberg at the First Methodist Church on September 25, 1925. It was called the Ministerial Association of Fort Bend County. Reverend H. W. Weise was elected Chairman and Reverend H. C. Ziehe was elected Secretary. Monthly meetings were held for the purpose of discussing problems that pertained to the welfare of the church.⁴⁴ No records are available stating when and why the association ceased functioning.

In September, 1939, a Pastors Alliance was organized, sponsored by the Methodist and Baptist pastors of Rosenberg. They invited other ministers to join, but due to ecclesiastical reasons, the Catholic priests and Lutheran ministers did not do so.⁴⁵ This organization has made its influence very marked by cooperating in all worthwhile activities of the communities represented.

In 1940, a number of Fort Bend County women felt the need "to unify the efforts of the church women in the task

43 Interview, Mrs. W. C. Scherer, Rosenberg, Texas, July 20, 1941.

44 News item, "Ministerial Association Organized", The Rosenberg Herald, vol. XXXI, (September 25, 1929), p. 1.

45 Interview, R. G. Commander, Rosenberg, Texas, August 12, 1942.

of establishing a Christian social order in which all areas of life shall be brought into harmony with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ". These women, with the assistance of Mesdames J. C. Reed and H. M. Harris of Houston, met at the Methodist Church in Richmond on June 13, 1940, and organized the Fort Bend Council of Church Women. Meetings are held at designated places in the afternoon on third Wednesdays of each month.⁴⁶

46 Interview, Mrs. G. C. Baker, Richmond, Texas, August 18, 1942.

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