

1993
HISTORY OF REDWATER, TEXAS
By
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Little could Daniel Morris have known, that on October 8, 1844, when he received a patent from the Republic of Texas to 2,381 acres of the piney woods, that within 35 years, the main settlement in this land of tall pines, fertile bottom-lands, and free flowing streams, would be a sawmill community known as Ingersoll. In about 1875, lumbermen Daniels and Spence so named the new frontier village, composed of tents and shanties, after the agnostic writer Robert Green Ingersoll (1833-1899), because the rough and rowdy sawmill workers and woods hands never observed Sunday and found fighting to be their favorite form of recreation.

Prior to the time of the establishment of the sawmill by Daniels and Spence, the center of the life of the community was about 2 miles east of the present town and was called Mooresville. The Moores family had settled here in May, 1840. Charles Moores was born April 4, 1776, in Lincoln County, North Carolina; and his wife, Mary, was born July 29, 1792, in Fairfield District, South Carolina. At one time, two famous Texans made their home near Mooresville. They were Benjamin R. Milam and General Tarrant; each made headright surveys in this vicinity. The old cemetery is the only remains of the community. It was awarded a TSHSC Marker in 1968.

Ingersoll was established about 5 miles northeast of the Sulphur River Old Trammel's Trace; one of the earliest known routes into Texas that passed through this area, it undoubtedly influenced the settlement. The Texas & St. Louis Railway Co. was organized May 17, 1879 to ship cotton to St. Louis. This railroad, now known as the Cotton Belt Route of the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad, runs through the middle of the original town site.

As the rough and wild timber community began to settle down, families came to this area to make a permanent home. The town site of Ingersoll (Redwater) was never officially plotted. Roads are believed to have developed along property lines with the owner giving the land.

Mr. Earnest Thomas (East Texas) Page (1860-1937), born and educated in London, England, came to Ingersoll as a school teacher in the late 1870's. Mr. Page had an eye for business and soon opened a general store which also housed the first post office. "Page's Store", as it was called, was the center of the community business activities; here one could buy everything from candy to caskets. The store was a real service to the sawmill families as well as the numerous farm families in the surrounding area.

Sawmills dominated the early business scene with William Thomas Fagan, who had migrated from Alabama by way of Broken Bow, OK and Texarkana, TX, to Ingersoll in the early 1880's, establishing two sawmills on the western edge of the community.

In 1882, a Methodist Church was organized by Rev. D. F. Fuller, pastor of a Texarkana Methodist Church. The first meetings were held at "McWhirter's Schoolhouse", a small one-room wooden structure built northwest of the Daniels and Spence sawmill. The first church building, First Methodist Church, was built in 1892 on land previously owned by Mr. E. T. Page. The location was just southwest of the center of the town, on what is now Church Street.

There had probably been some disenchantment with the name of "Ingersoll" by the community's permanent settlers from the very beginning. In 1886 the name Redwater (because of the color of the water in the wells and springs) was suggested by Mr. Burch, manager of the Western Union Telegraph Co. Mr. E. T. Page, postmaster and a deeply religious man, decided that it was morally wrong and worse still, disadvantageous from a Chamber of Commerce viewpoint to have the handsome village in the pine forest of Bowie County named for the nation's noisiest infidel. There was much discussion about renaming, but the scales finally tipped in favor of the renaming when a revival was held at the Methodist Church in the early 1890's. One hundred ten people were converted at that revival and there was, again, much talk about changing the town name, and Redwater seemed to be the favorite name. There was a town vote; consequently, on December 13, 1894, the town name was officially changed to Redwater.

On January 8, 1890, quadruplet girls were born to Earnest T. Page and Nannie E. Page (1855-1940). Mr. Page was the postmaster but was about to lose his job because he was a Democrat. The Republican President, Benjamin Harrison, was appointing Republicans to government positions. When the President heard about the United States' first quadruplets, he proclaimed that E. T. Page could remain postmaster. Shortly after the birth of the quadruplets, Mr. Clem Studebaker was travelling through Ingersoll by train. He ordered the train to stop so he could see the girls. After he arrived home in Detroit, MI, he sent the Page family a Studebaker wagon. Mr. Page emerged as the town's leader and as an outstanding civic and business personality. He remained so until his death.

Many of the early settlers had served in the Civil War and came to this area to make a new start. In addition to Mr. E. T. Page, Redwater has had many interesting citizens. J. H. McWhirter (1856-1911) came from Tennessee to become a land owner and farmer; W. T. Fagan, Alabama, came to be one of the area's largest land owners and timber sawmill operators; Jack J. Nettles, a farmer from Alabama, also added to the long list of prosperous and respected citizens of Redwater. Earl Fagan (1872-1935) and Clarence Edward (Bud) Fagan (1868-1948) followed in their father's, W. T. Fagan, footsteps as sawmill operators, farmers, merchants, and traders.

R. W. Hanks (1873-1944) came to Redwater about the year 1904. He started his career in Redwater as a bookkeeper for a small lumber company. Approximately two years later he married Nannie Ernestine Page, and in 1913, began taking a part in the activities of The Citizen's Bank, a private bank which later became the Guaranty Bond State Bank. He served as cashier from 1913 until he became president in 1940. He remained at this position until his death in 1944, at the age of 71.

On May 4, 1914, about 7:00 a.m., a cyclone of devastating proportions struck the Redwater community. Many of the residences, the school, the Methodist Church, the hotel, and most of the business establishments were demolished. Miraculously, no one was killed. The hardy citizens began immediately to rebuild. Plans were made the Sunday following the disaster to rebuild the Methodist Church, and most of the homes of the community were rebuilt. The hotel and several of the smaller stores were never reconstructed. The cyclone left its mark on the community and many "storm cellars" were built during the next year or so. In fact, to this very day, the older residents "rush to the cellar" when an unusually bad cloud comes up.

Ingersoll's first postmaster was William A. Atwood, appointed on June 27, 1881. Felix A. Atwood followed on October 1, 1885 and Earnest T. Page on April 26, 1886 (the year Ingersoll became Redwater). Mr. Page continued as postmaster until August 24, 1901 when Henry Munz was appointed. The following were also postmasters: Giles T. Moser, 1903; Jesse S. Jones, 1911; Areland Stricklen, 1954; followed by Mary Odom; and currently Gary Melton.

In 1913, Mr. Page established The Citizen's Bank and operated it as a private bank until December 10, 1916, at which time the bank was incorporated as a State Bank. The bank, now the Guaranty Bond State Bank, was always one of the community's strong points. Its presidents have been: E. T. Page, 1916-1937; Nannie Page, 1938-1939; R. W. Hanks (Page's son-in-law), 1940-1944; Lloyd Wilson, 1944-1966; Sidney Earl Fagan, March 1966-December 1966; and Henry Earl Fagan, December 1966 until the door was closed in July, 1982 by the F.D.I.C. and reopened as First Bank.

Redwater existed as a rural lumbering and farming community for many years. In 1941, the Red River Army Ammunition Depot and Lone Star Ordnance Plant were established just north of the town. This changed the economic base of the community in a very short while from agriculture to war-related industry. In recent years, many of the salaried individuals have begun to operate part-time stock farms and have made great strides in improving pastures where once only pine trees had grown. With the coming of the International Paper Mill to the general area in the early 1970's, a renewed interest in timber production has appeared with many land owners becoming, in fact, tree farmers.

On May 20, 1904, the citizens voted to incorporate for school purposes only. However, Redwater was incorporated as a village on October 20, 1941. On November 1 an election was held, and R. W. Hanks was elected Mayor. Aldermen were: M. W. Taylor, C. R. Nettles, H. R. Hamilton, W. O. Autrey, Eley McMichael. M. I. Walker was elected Marshal. However, interest in city government waned and became dormant until the city was reactivated with an election on May 7, 1988. Emily Leshar was elected Mayor. City Councilmembers were: John Michael Cooper, John Rooney, Darcy McCloskey, Mike Rumbo, and James B. Stokes. John Cooper was elected City Marshall. Redwater became a city ~~July 3~~ 1989. The current Mayor is John J. Rooney. Councilmembers are: James B. Stokes, Mayor pro tem, Darcy McCloskey, Margaret Turner, Tommy Strickland, and Henry Earl Fagan. City employees include: Webb Stanley, Finance Director; Sandra Stanley, Water System Bookkeeper; Ron Gerrald, Water System Superintendent; Michael

Neal with the Water System; Carrol Spencer, Meter Reader; and Debbie Purdy, City Secretary.

The Redwater Independent School District has caught the attention of people from all over the area. Humbly plodding along with as few as 200 students for many years, it now has over 1,000 students and is second to none in providing a quality educational experience for the children and youth of this area.

Redwater Public Water System was installed in 1962 and was followed by a sewer system in 1967. In the early 1970's, the water system was enlarged to serve the Echo Hills area northeast of Redwater. The system started with 55 members and is now a modern, city-owned system with 750+ customers. City Council action in July, 1993 has started a major upgrading and enlargement of the system that will provide first class service to all the city's customers for many years, including new subdivisions, individual homes, and businesses that will help people find their "American dream" in Redwater.