

# **BLOOMINGTON**

## **THE FIRST 50 YEARS**

By Jimmy Skarda

(Many thanks to Melvin Rush Crum, Vernon H. Drewa Jr., and Barbara Ballard for permission to use the CD of this book on our TXGenWeb site.)

Bloomington, the First 50 Years is the story of Jim Skarda, the father of the author, Jimmy Skarda, as well as the story of Bloomington. It also contains a very good history of Victoria County before the settlement of Bloomington was established in 1907. There are stories from Jim Skarda (which are italicized) as well as documented facts. Some of the names will be recognized as being found in the city of Victoria as well as in Bloomington. This should be interesting reading for anyone from Victoria County. We are pleased to be able to offer this information for our readers.

## Preface

"Human beings instinctively record experience. Consciously and unintentionally, we have always left marks of our passing and our perceptions. This impulse to converse, to narrate, to relate, and to represent our presence is nearly as fundamental as our need for air, light, food, and water. Indeed, one of humanity's most ardently pursued activities is the steady improvement of our ability to transmit and preserve knowledge.

It is through our collective memory that we recognize ourselves - our journey from past to present, and our trajectory toward the future. Because we make records, that memory endures..." New York City Public Library, "The Global Library" (<http://www.nypl.org>)

*Bloomington, the First Fifty Years* is Jim Skarda's story. He came to Bloomington when he was five years old and lived the rest of his life there, serving as Postmaster for 36 years. His stories of growing up and living in Bloomington are the basis for this book.

In 1986, Jim's son, Jimmy, began the process of writing down his father's stories in order to preserve them for posterity. He spent the next five years, until his death in 1991, working on the book in his spare time.

The first chapter of the book, "The Bloomington Area before 1907," sets the stage for the narrative that follows with a brief overview of the activities in the area before the establishment of the town of Bloomington.

The subsequent chapters are primarily Jim Skarda's stories. (His narrative is indicated by italics.) Some of the information included in these chapters comes from long time residents of Bloomington and some from published sources on the history of the area and from legal records such as land deeds, tax rolls, etc. Whenever possible, these documents have been included in the Appendix.

We have made every effort to document and verify the information included in Jimmy Skarda's notes, however, because much of the text of this book is his father's narrative, it is not subject to verification. We hope, as did Jimmy, that the final text is "interesting and enjoyable reading."

*Cora Faye Covington Cadmus  
Joyce Kocian Covington*

## INDEX

The Bloomington Area before 1907 (1528-1906)	pp.8-21
Early Settlers of Bloomington	p. 18
Bloomington's Pioneer Era (1907-1919)	pp.22-67
The Roaring Twenties (1920-1929)	pp. 68-81
The Hard Times (1930-1945)	pp. 82-94
The Second Boom (1946-1957)	pp.95-109
Bibliography	p. 110

Use your back button to return to the Victoria County TXGenWeb site.

# Timeline

## The Bloomington Area Before 1907 (1528-1906)

- 1528 Survivors of the Narvaez Expedition, Cabeza de Vaca
- 1685 Sieur de la Salle establishes Ft. St. Louis on Garcitas Creek
- 1682 Spanish Missionaries in the area
- 1689 Spanish Expedition of Alonzo de Leon to destroy Ft. St. Louis
- 1690 Alonzo de Leon returns to Ft. St. Louis and burns the remains
- 1714 Mission of our Lady of Guadalupe founded at Mission Valley
- 1720 Another French Expedition Bernard de la Harpe
- 1722 Spanish establish missions at LaBahia & Esperitu Santa de Zunigo
- 1821 MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE FROM SPAIN
- 1824 Martin de Leon Leon establishes city of Victoria
- 1836 TEXAS INDEPENDENCE FROM MEXICO
- 1840 The Great Commanche Raid
- 1844 Indianola founded and the first German immigrants arrive
- 1845 TEXAS BECOMES A STATE
- 1845 The Final Battle of the Karankawas
- 1848 THE TREATY OF HIDALGO BETWEEN THE US & MEXICO
- 1852 Yellow Fever at Indianola
- 1860-65 CIVIL WAR/USA
- 1861-62 Federal Blockage at Indianola
- 1883 Victor Rose's *History of Victoria County*
- 1887 Post Office at Indianola closes
- 1906 Japanese Farmers at DaCosta

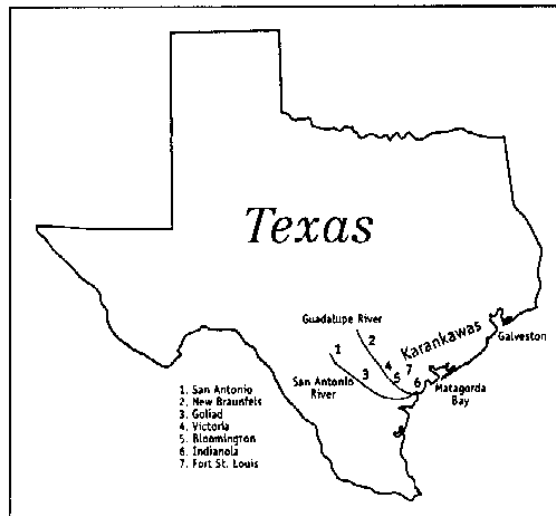
Chapter One

## The Bloomington Area Before 1907 (1528-1906)

Bloomington is located in the Central Coastal Prairie area of Texas on the east bank of the Guadalupe River about ten miles north of where the Guadalupe and the San Antonio Rivers merge before flowing into San Antonio Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. This section of the Texas coast is mostly flat grassland with some wooded regions along the streams and on scattered sandy ridges. The earliest known inhabitants were the Karankawa Indians. The Bloomington area was the site of early exploration by the Spanish in the 1500s and the French in the 1600s. During the 1700s Spanish missionaries from Mexico established missions and then in the 1800s the first colonists from Mexico, Europe, and the United States came into the area.

### The Karankawas

Spaniard Alonzo Alvarez de Pineda mapped the Texas Gulf Coast in 1519, but recorded history of the Bloomington area really begins with the journals of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, the treasurer of the ill-fated Narvaez Expedition which was sent from Spain in 1528 to capture and colonize a vast area between Florida and Mexico. Cabeza de Vaca and eighty men were shipwrecked on Galveston Island in November 1528. The following spring only fifteen men remained, the rest having perished from



*The Karankawa Indians inhabited the Texas Coast during the mid-1500s.*

disease or starvation. Cabeza de Vaca and three others set out in search of Vera Cruz, Mexico and spent the next six years on the coast of Texas living among the Karankawa Indians. The Spaniards were captured by the Indians but after a time survived by becoming shamen and traders for the Karankawas. Because they were outsiders, they were able to trade with the inland tribes who were not friendly with the Karankawas. Cabeza de Vaca's journals describe in vivid detail his life among the nomadic Karankawas.

The Karankawas lived in small bands of thirty or forty people foraging for water and food. Their movements were based on the food supply and the climate. In the summer months they camped in the lagoons and islands eating fish, alligators, oysters, turtles, birds, and underwater plants. During the winter months they moved to the warmer inland areas, hunted deer, antelope and javalinas and ate nuts, fruits and berries. Cabeza de Vaca describes the Karankawas as very tall, over six feet, muscular, and very strong. They had tattooed bodies and pieces of cane were thrust through perforations in their lower lips and nipples. The men were naked but the women wore breechcloths made of grass.

Their nomadic existence was made possible by their skill in using dugout canoes and the bow and arrow. Their housing consisted of huts made of will-

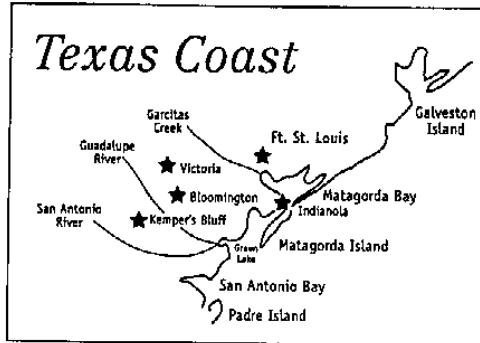
ow poles covered with skins or woven mats. These were easily disassembled and relocated as needed.

According to Cabeza de Vaca, the Karankawas were generous, trusting, friendly, and not particularly war-like, with their fear of inland tribes keeping them near the coast. However, by the nineteenth century they had become a dangerous and tenacious foe, attacking with no obvious provocation. There are numerous accounts of the Karankawas stealing from, kidnapping, and murdering white settlers.

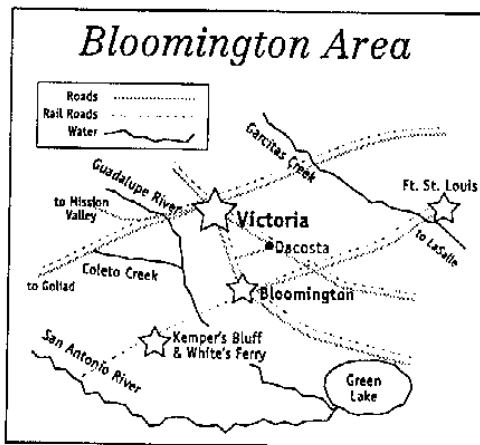
The allegation that the Karankawas were cannibals has been refuted both by the Texas naturalist, Roy Bedichek, and by the Anthropologist W.W. Newcomb, Jr. in his *The Indians of Texas*. Cabeza de Vaca never mentioned cannibalism in his journals and none of the recorded accusations are first hand accounts. The Karankawas, as well as many other American Indians, in religious ceremonies, ate pieces of their enemies to gain their courage or bravery and to destroy their souls. Both Bedichek and Newcomb suggest that the explanation for branding these Indians cannibals is to justify the policy of extermination by the Europeans who explored and settled the Texas coast. The Karankawas resisted all efforts to civilize and Christianize them and by 1827 had been reduced from a population of ten thousand to less than a hundred.

The final battle of the Karankawas took place at Kemper's Bluff near Bloomington and is described by Victor Rose in his *History of Victoria County*. Captain John Kemper came to Texas from Tennessee, in 1836, bringing volunteers for the Texas War for Independence from Mexico, and after the war he settled at Kemper's Bluff on the Guadalupe River. One afternoon in November 1845, Captain Kemper saw Karankawas trying to steal his milk cows so he stepped outside with his gun in hand and motioned for them to stop. He was fatally shot in the shoulder with an arrow. After dark, his wife, mother-in-law, and two small children left the house and walked twelve miles to the home of Mr. A. Bass on Coletto Creek. The next day, the party that went to inter the remains of Captain Kemper found the house robbed and Captain Kemper branded with fire on the chest. In the meantime, according to Reid's *History of McCullough's Rangers*, the Karankawas had fled down the Guadalupe in their canoes and escaped the party that went in pursuit of them. They proceeded south along the coast to the mouth of the Rio Grande and took up residence on Padre Island. Driven to desperation by their sufferings, the warriors resolved to put an end to their name and race forever and they murdered their women and children and sought this uninhabited island where they could wait patiently for the death which was to forever destroy all trace of their tribe. (Appendix A)

In 1928, Zachery Construction Company bought sand



The area of the final battle of the Karankawa Indians in America was waged near Bloomington at Kemper's Bluff.



This detailed map indicates many of the places described in the final battle and retreat of the Karankawa Indians.

from the Skarda farm which was in the vicinity of Kemper's Bluff. They used the sand to put on the floors of railroad cattle cars. In the process of digging the sand, they unearthed thirteen Indian women skeletons which had been buried in a single row six feet deep. According to an article by Henry Wolff, Jr. in the *Victoria Advocate* on June 1, 1990, there are conflicting accounts of what actually happened to the Karankawas, one being that the "angry settlers caught up with and killed all but one of the 'Kronks' soon afterwards near the mouth of the Guadalupe River on a small island." The Karankawas left no written records and have been extinct for over a hundred years.

In 1919, an archeologist named John L. Jarratt, Sr., while inquiring in Bloomington about a prehistoric Indian mound near Kemper's Bluff, was told that an old Indian named Peaches lived on the mound and that it was named Peach Knoll. Jarratt suggests that Peaches might have been befriended by whites after the killing of Captain Kemper because he was too old to participate in the escape down the Guadalupe. He died around 1850.

### **The French Settlement At Fort St. Louis**

In 1682, The Frenchman Rene Robert Cavalier, the Sieur de la Salle, and

a party of explorers descended the Mississippi river from Canada and claimed all of the land in the Mississippi river basin, everything between the Allegheny Mountains and the Rocky Mountains including Texas, for France. La Salle then returned to France and after extensive provisioning, set sail again in 1685 with four ships to secure his claim in the New World. However, he missed the mouth of the Mississippi River and sailed into Matagorda Bay, landing in the area later to be known as Indianola. La Salle built Fort St. Louis on the west bank of Garcitas Creek, approximately eighteen miles east of Bloomington. LaSalle's Second in Command was Henri Joutel, the chronicler of the expedition and the person responsible for the fort while LaSalle was away trying to find a route to Canada. By Christmas Eve of 1688, the original four hundred settlers had dwindled to twenty, including seven women. The Karankawa Indians had received word that LaSalle was dead and in keeping with their belief that the people should die with their leader, they attacked the fort and killed the settlers. (*Appendix B, Recent Discoveries*)

### **Spanish Explorers & Missions**

The Spanish, fearing French intrusion into the territory of New Spain,



which they called 'la Provincia de los Tejas y las Huevas Filipinas' (the Provincia of Texas and the New Philippines) sent several expeditions into this area to seek out and destroy the French. However, when the first expedition, led by Alonzo de Leon in 1689, arrived at Fort Saint Louis, they found the fort destroyed and the people dead, except for two men, three boys, and one girl held prisoner by the Karankawas. They were able to negotiate for the return of the children with a sack of tobacco and two years later the men were purchased for three horses, some tobacco and other gifts.

In 1690, Alonzo de Leon returned to Fort Saint Louis and burned the remains. However, the church bell with the inscription Maria Immaculada de Luz (Mary Immaculate of Light) was saved, used by the Spanish in their missions, and eventually ended up in Bloomington, in 1942, at the Sacred Heart Mission which was to become St. Patrick's Catholic Church.

In 1720, another French Expedition, under Bernard de la Harpe, explored the central coast of Texas, and in response to this intrusion by the French, the Spanish in 1722 established a presidio, or fort, known as 'Nuestra Senora de Loreto de la Bahia del Espiritu Santo' (Our Lady of Loreto on the Bay of the Holy Spirit) and a mission, Mission Nuestro Senora del Espiritu Santo de Zuniga, on the site of Fort St.

Louis. Because the Karankawa Indians vigorously resisted the efforts of the Spanish to Christianize them, in 1726 the padres moved the presidio and the mission to a location on the Guadalupe River among the Aranama Indians. This location became known as Mission Valley. Then in 1749, the mission was again moved, this time to Goliad on the San Antonio River.

In 1793, the Spanish padres established 'Nuestra Senora del Refugio' (Our Lady of Refuge) and it remained active until 1829.

## **The Empresarios**

The Spanish authority in Mexico and the new Mexican government, after the independence of Mexico in 1821, in an effort to control their northern territories, offered land grants to empresarios who would establish colonies in the territory. (*Appendix C, Colonization Requirements*)

Stephen F. Austin was the most successful of the empresarios in attracting American colonists to Texas.

The Empresario Don Martin de Leon sought permission from the Mexican Government to establish a colony of forty Mexican families on the east bank of the Guadalupe River. His petition was approved on April 13, 1824, and the colony was named in honor of de Leon's good friend Don Guadalupe Victoria, the president of Mexico.

Martin de Leon's parents were

Spanish aristocrats who had immigrated to Mexico from the city of Burgos in one of the Castilian provinces of Spain. He was an expert businessman and the colony on the Guadalupe flourished. Between 1824 and 1836, the principal business of the de Leon family was cattle and horse ranching on their 30,000 acre ranch. Great numbers of Texas Longhorns roamed freely in the Victoria area grazing the tall grass on the coastal prairies and in the river bottoms where they came to water. They rounded up these wild cattle and they also corralled and broke wild horses. The de Leon family grew rich. They built St. Mary's Church and sent their children to the capital cities in Europe to be educated. Victoria was considered the center of culture in Texas. In 1836, just prior to Santa Ana's march into Texas, one of the empresario's sons, Don Fernando, was appointed aide-de-camp by the Spanish governor with authorization to organize the militia.

On March 23, 1835, one league of land, 4,428 acres, within the de Leon colony, south of the Victoria townsite on the east side of the Guadalupe River was granted to Francisco Perez. It was on the F. Perez land grant that Bloomington would later be built.

Juan Moya, a European, was given a land grant in 1832 around the Blanca area in the vicinity of Beeville and Refugio. Moya brought settlers from

the Canary Islands and Prussia as well as other European countries. Some of these immigrants eventually relocated to Bloomington. (*See Chapter 2, Page 44*)

Within a few years, Mexican land grants covered the region between the Sabine River and the Nueces River. But the continuing large migration of Anglo immigrants from the United States to Texas became alarming to the Mexican government. (*Appendix D, Letter from the Alcalde at Goliad to the Governor*) In 1830, Mexico passed a decree severely limiting American immigration to Texas. The situation was aggravated by the Americans' dislike for the Mexican form of government, the official status of the Catholic Church, the language barrier, and tax reforms imposed on all empresarios in Texas.

## **The War For Texas Independence**

Tensions grew between the Americans and the Mexicans and on October 2, 1835, war broke out at the Battle of Gonzales. General Santa Ana, in a move designed to quell the insurrection in Texas, decided to march his army from Mexico in a show of force to subdue the few radicals he thought were raising the idea of a separate nation. Santa Ana underestimated the determination of the Anglo Texans to be free of Spanish rule. History records that Santa Ana and his government lost

control of Texas at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836, and Texas became an independent nation.

Don Martin de Leon died in 1833. Like their father, de Leon's sons and sons-in-law were loyal to the Texas cause for independence from Mexico. They gave freely of their horses, mules, cattle and other commodities to feed the Texas soldiers. They also risked their lives by bringing contraband arms and ammunitions for the Texas army into the Texas seaports from New Orleans and by fighting side by side with the Anglo Texans. Some of the Hispanic people in Texas in 1835 were not from Mexico originally, but were from South and Central America, the Canary Islands, and Hispaniola and they had no allegiance to Mexico. The Anglos, if they lost the war, could go back across the Sabine River and be in the United States. The Hispanic immigrants were further from their homelands and may not have been able to return.

After the defeat of Santa Ana, the de Leons and the other original colonists, "were stripped of the greater part of their possessions, falsely accused and falsely put upon in the civil courts, treated as aliens in a country where their homes and ranches had been the first." (Roy Grimes' *300 Years in Victoria County*) Most abandoned their homes and left the area. Those that stayed were often viewed as second class citizens.

## **The Great Commanche Raid**

In 1840 the great Commanche raid probably came through the Bloomington area. The raid began when the Commanche chief Maguara and twelve of his warriors went into the courthouse in San Antonio for a meeting with the Texas Government officials to talk about peace and to trade prisoners of war. Because they only brought one prisoner to exchange, the officials decided to take prisoners of Maguara and his men. A battle ensued during which Indians and white people were killed including Maguara. To avenge the death of the chief, 400 to 500 Comanches attacked white settlements between San Antonio and the coast, including Victoria and the community of Linnville near Port Lavaca. Hundreds of horses and cattle were stolen, many settlers were killed and buildings were plundered and burned. Most of the citizens of Linnville saved themselves by fleeing to boats in the harbor but after the raid they did not rebuild their town.

## **The Civil War**

In March 1861, 500 Federal soldiers were camped at Green Lake, south of Bloomington, awaiting transport from Indianola. Earl Van Dorn, a colonel in the Confederate Army, was instructed to intercept and prevent the departure of these troops. Van Dorn led several successful operations against the

troops including the capture of four Yankee ships in Matagorda Bay. He then demanded a meeting with the Yankee officers and the Yankee troops were declared prisoners of war. Some of them joined the Confederacy and others returned north, but most were back in service within a short time.

In October 1862, Federal gunships shelled Port Lavaca and an embargo was imposed that put a stranglehold on commerce through Indianola and Port Lavaca. Federal Troops occupied the area until March 1864, when they were ordered back to New Orleans. After the war, the 51st Volunteer Infantry of Ohio (Yankees) marched to Victoria from Indianola via Green Lake, a route that took them through the Bloomington area.

### **Indianola**

In 1844, Prince Solms-Braunfels from Germany selected the site of Indian Point as the port through which he would lead over a thousand German immigrants into his settlement of New Braunfels. He selected that site because the water was of sufficient depth for ships to anchor near the beach and then passengers and goods could be loaded onto wagons for the trip north. The route to New Braunfels led through the Bloomington area to the Guadalupe River and up the high ground on the east side of the river toward Victoria. Not all of the passengers who arrived

from Germany made the trip from Indian Point to New Braunfels; some stayed in the vicinity and settled in the area that was to become Bloomington.

When the first German immigrants landed at Indianola in 1844, there were no facilities for accomodating them or transporting them to their new homes three hundred miles away. In 1846, when war broke out between the United States and Mexico, the United States commandeered every wagon and team for the war effort and thousands of German immigrants were stranded at Indianola and forced to camp on the beaches with no protection from the inclement weather. Many immigrants died in Indianola and enroute to New Braunfels.

By 1849, Indian Point had become Indianola, a thriving port rivaling Galveston and forming the eastern terminus of the shortest overland route to California. By 1875 its population stood at an estimated 6,000 (over twice that of Victoria), and its citizens saw no limit to its potential. Camels were brought into Indianola by the Army in 1856/57 and herded west through Victoria County to serve as beast-of-burden in the Great American Southwest. The U.S. War Department imported the camels to provide transportation of supplies over trails where vegetation would not sustain other pack animals. Initially, they were to be used between Camp Kerr (Kerrville) in the Texas Hill

Country and California. The Civil War terminated the camel experiment and the expanding railroad system eliminated their need after the war.

Near Kemper's Bluff on the Guadalupe there is a clearing on both sides of the river just below the railroad bridge known as 'the Ferry Landing.' According to Roy Grimes' *300 Years in Victoria County*, "A new road was built from Indianola to Green Lake, connecting at the Guadalupe at White's Ferry, just below Kemper City. All of these improvements accommodated the wagon trade which was thriving by 1852." Victoria was located on the most convenient route from Matagorda Bay at Indianola to points west. After leaving the Bay, most wagon trains and stage lines came directly north to Victoria. However, goods being taken over land from Indianola to Goliad crossed the Guadalupe River at White's Ferry near present day Bloomington. Warehouses for storage were built at Kemper's Bluff and this was also the mail route. Also, all indications are that a great deal of the commerce between Matagorda Bay/Indianola and Victoria moved over land on the east side of the Guadalupe. Immigrants' livestock and possessions, cattle shipped into Indianola, Texas cattle shipped to New Orleans via Indianola, barbed wire for fencing, lumber, and

New England ice - all moved through the Bloomington area prior to the completion of the railroad from Port Lavaca and Indianola to Victoria in the early 1860s. Also, regular freight and passenger service was provided by the steamer, *The Lizzie Lake*, which ran from Indianola to Kemper's Bluff and Victoria via the Guadalupe River.

"In 1866 the country south of Victoria toward Indianola has been referred to as having no roads. This remark leaves room for clarification. During the early 1860s, the wagon roads had probably been abandoned in favor of the recently constructed San Antonio and Mexican Gulf Railroad that linked Victoria and the Bay. Also, the use of riverboats from the Bay to Victoria probably supplanted a good deal of the wagon traffic. The land south of Victoria was flat and the grass grew abundantly. In the course of a very short time, a wagon road that was infrequently used could disappear from casual view. Thus there is no identifiable trail through the Bloomington area known as the 'Indianola Trail' or the 'Victoria Trail'." (Rose's *History of Victoria County*)

Hurricanes in 1875 and again in 1886 destroyed the town of Indianola and in 1887 the Post Office was officially closed.

## **Early Settlers In Bloomington**

### **Winn Traylor**

"Winn Traylor, born in Georgia in 1807, settled in Victoria County in 1840 from Alabama and became a successful ranchman. Traylor was a poor man when he first came to Victoria County, but industrious. He slowly, but steadily increased his fortune. His ranch was located in the Bloomington area about 15 miles south of Victoria, long familiarly known as Old Man Traylor's. He was the father of William B., Henry and Pascal Traylor, Mrs. Alabama (John) Hunt and Mrs. Eliza (Patrick) Hughes. Pascal was killed in battle during the Civil War, and William B. Traylor succeeded his father in the ranching business with equal success. Winn Traylor died in 1883." (Roy Grimes' *300 Years in Victoria County*) The Traylor Ranch was established on the Perez Land Grant.

### **William B. Traylor**

William B. Traylor came to Texas with his parents in 1840, where his father, Winn Traylor, engaged in ranching and farming in Victoria and Calhoun counties and from a small beginning became one of the largest and wealthiest cattlemen of his day. William B. Traylor fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War and died in 1913. It was on the Traylor Ranch that

the Bloomington townsite was laid out in 1907.

### **Gus Black**

After the Indians left the Bloomington area, an Anglo family named Black lived in the live oak motte on the bayou which is located between Bloomington and the Guadalupe River. Black Bayou is named for this family. Gus Black was orphaned when his parents died in Galveston after immigrating from Germany. He was adopted by the Black family who had no other children.

### **Dr. Thomas Cooke**

Dr. Thomas R. Cooke came to Victoria County in 1846 and practiced mainly in Crescent Valley and the "Traylor neighborhood." His home was six miles south of Victoria. He died in the late 1860s. Dr. Ben T. Davis practiced in the Traylor and Green Lake communities from about 1853 to 1900.

### **Peter Byrne**

*Peter Byrne, a native of Ireland, stowed away on a boat of colonists going to Texas. He landed in Texas in 1846 at the age of 13. He was allotted 660 acres in what is now Calhoun County. This land he traded with another colonist for land in Victoria County. The Byrne farm was near the intersection of the roads now named Old Bloomington Road and McCoy Road about a mile from town toward*

*the DuPont Plant. Peter married and he and his wife, Christine, had four children; Eugene 'Toady', Ida, Walter and Robert. The 'Toady' Byrne family lived on the Byrne farm and attended Mass in Bloomington as it was closer than going to St. Mary's in Victoria.*

#### **William Randolph**

*William Duvall Randolph was ranch foreman on the Traylor Ranch. In about 1885, he married Mary Louisa Erwin who was from around Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and was teaching college in Goliad. Mary moved onto the ranch where she was a governess to the Traylor children. They were probably married in Calhoun County. They had five children all born on the ranch. William died around the turn of the century and Mary lived in Bloomington until her death in 1937. Four children survived to adulthood: Mary, William C., Elizabeth and Eston. Mary married Ed Hatch, a cowboy on the ranch, and lived in Bloomington for many years. Their two daughters are Gwendolyn and Mary. Eston married Clara Stevenson of Bloomington and they also lived in Bloomington until shortly before their deaths. They had two daughters, Norma and Marion.*

#### **Jim Pettus**

*Jim Pettus, his wife 'Aunt Rena', and their daughter Annie lived in a section house next to the railroad on Black Bayou.*

## **The Black Settlement**

At the turn of the century, there was a settlement of Black people in a live oak motte on the Traylor Ranch. The residents worked on the ranch and were descendants of families who had worked on the ranch before the Civil War. The 'Old Bloomington Road' continued straight at Commerce Street, crossed the railroad and lead directly into the settlement. All of the houses were painted red as was the little one room school house. Mr. Traylor provided the school and a teacher who was called 'Miss Rose.' Some of the families living in the settlement included Henry Harvey, Sanders Marshall, William King, Sr., and Dan Coleman. The railroad in 1906 came within a few hundred yards of the settlement and the first trains to travel the new rails were frightening experiences for the settlement residents. The settlement was there for over a hundred years.

## **The Japanese Rice Farmers**

Prior to the DaCosta rice farm, which was known as Deepwater, the Japanese made thirty separate attempts at rice farming in scattered areas along the Texas Gulf Coast. In 1906, the Nippon Farming Company bought or leased 5,200 acres of land between Bloomington and DaCosta. With mules and slips they dug a canal from the Guadalupe River to their fields. The 'Canal Road', about three



*Japanese-Texas farm laborers near DuCosta in 1906, wear rice-straw rainwear and bundle young rice plants for transplanting.*

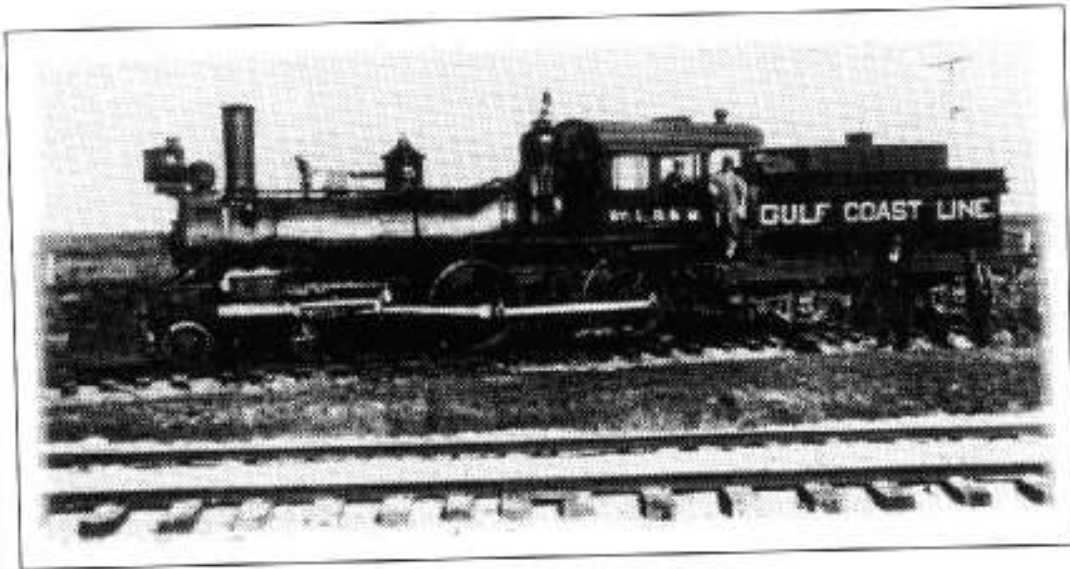
miles north of town toward Victoria, parallels the old canal from the River to the Da Costa area. They built a pumping station on the River. After the canals were dug and their fields terraced and irrigated, the Japanese farmed rice one year, 1907, and had a bad season. One month before the harvest, they were forced to sell their assets when the oil companies supplying fuel for their irrigation pumps demanded payment of all past debts.

### **The Railroad**

There would have been no Bloomington if it had not been for the railroad. The St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway Company was chartered in June 1903 by B.F. Yoakum who envisioned it as a part of a grand railroad connecting North America through Mexico and Central America to South America. Construction began in Brownsville and the line was completed 142 miles to Robstown by July 1904. It was completed to Sinton and on to Refugio in 1905. Refugio is thirty miles southwest of Bloomington.

The railroad was a boom to Refugio County. It brought





several hundred families who settled on the site of the old mission. In addition to the town of Refugio, promoters subdivided several ranches and attracted settlers from the north. Other communities laid out for development included Woodsboro, Bonnie View, Bayside, Tivoli and Austwell. Lots in these towns were sold to investors across the nation and many were resold by the county for back taxes.

In 1906, 68.05 miles of rail was laid from Refugio, through what is now Bloomington, and on to a point 31 miles west of Bay City. By Spring 1907, the line was completed to Algoa on the Santa Fe Line between Houston and Galveston.

The railroad was called the "Gulf Coast Lines", and later was the Missouri Pacific and now is the Union Pacific. The right-of-way for the railroad was donated by the property owners. With the completion of the railroad through the area, land purchased from the Traylor Ranch was offered for sale by land promoters and the Bloomington area experienced the same influx of people as the other towns growing up alongside the railroad.

*The Gulf Coast Line Railroad was an important factor in the growth and development of Bloomington.*

# Timeline

## Bloomington's Pioneer Years (1907-1919)

- 1907 Bloomington Founded
- 1909 Railroad Depot built  
First Baseball Team organized
- 1912 Second Railroad built through Bloomington  
Woman's Civic Club organized  
Bank of Bloomington opened  
First Newspaper, *The Bloomington Breeze*
- 1913 Bloomington Incorporated; W.J. Manning, Mayor  
First State Bank opened
- 1914 First brick building built
- 1915 Hurricane
- 1916 US/Mexican War  
First Student graduated from Bloomington
- 1917-19 WORLD WAR I
- 1919 Hurricane

*(A reminder: Jim Skarda's narratives are italicized.)*

## Chapter Two

# Bloomington's Pioneer Years (1907-1919)

In 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt sent the 'Great White Fleet' of sixteen battleships around the world to show American naval power. The trip took two years.

Also:

- Oklahoma became the 46th state.
- The 'Ziegfield Follies' opened in New York.
- The first daily comic strip 'Mr. Mutt' (later 'Mutt and Jeff') was published in San Francisco.
- The Marconi system of wireless telegraph (radio) opened between the U.S. and Europe.
- The Panic of 1907, New York stock market crash, caused a run on the banks.
- R.J. Reynolds Co. introduced Prince Albert Tobacco in a can.
- Sears, Roebuck mailed more than 3,000,000 copies of its fall catalog.

In Texas:

- The population was 3,500,000.
- Thomas M. Campbell was governor.
- Gulf Oil Corporation was formed.
- The Texas Branch of the Anti-Saloon League was organized, and...
- BLOOMINGTON WAS FOUNDED!

The Bloomington area, at the turn of the twentieth century, was a sparsely

populated flat coastal grassland prairie. This part of Victoria county, between Victoria and Green Lake, was referred to as the Traylor Neighborhood because the land was owned by the family of Winn Traylor. William B. Traylor had succeeded his father Winn in the ranching business. Other than the settlement of Black families and a few scattered ranch houses, there was nothing in the area but vast grazing lands.

With the building and completion of the railroad through the area in 1906, the ranch built stock pens adjacent to the rails for the purpose of holding and loading cattle. The stock pens were just across the tracks and a few hundred yards north of the present depot. The location of the stock pens was known as 'Shepley.' Until the depot was built in 1909, trains stopped at the stock pens when there were passengers to board. Wooden steps, which were left sitting between the tracks and a ditch, were pulled up to the train by the conductor for passengers to board.

*South of the stock pens, and adjacent to the tracks was the old abandoned bunkhouse, now the location of the Bloomington Cemetery.*

With the construction of the railroad,

---

three Christian preachers, Charles A. Burton, of Morgan County, Illinois; Homer T. Wilson, of Bexar County, Texas; and W.W. Wharton of Morgan County, Illinois; purchased seven thousand acres of the Winn Traylor Ranch for the purpose of building a town. The acreage was purchased from C.S.E. Holland, Theodor Buhler and J.J. Welder, trustees for H.C. Traylor, Sue C. Traylor & Winn Traylor, and from W.B. Traylor. The deeds are dated January 26, 1907, and April 26, 1907. The purchase price was \$25 per acre plus the preachers agreed to build a fence between their purchase and the remaining Traylor Ranch. The three preachers, Brother Wharton, Brother Burton and Brother Wilson were said to have been amateur land promoters. They would lay out a townsite and promote their new town, which they called Ocean Park, to families living in the Midwest. (*Appendix E*)

*Brother Wilson went to preach at the North Salem Christian Church in North Salem, Indiana. Grant Page went to hear him and became interested in this new land, Texas. In December 1906, Grant Page took a 'home seeker' train to Texas to see the land. He looked at the land the preachers owned and went on to the Rio Grande Valley to look at the land down there. He preferred the land in Ocean Park and purchased two hundred and eighty acres.*

*Page sold most of his possessions.*

*He loaded the rest, including chickens, two sows (one died on the trip down), a bird dog named Jack and a German shepherd named Tim, a plow, a few pieces of furniture and a large stock of canned fruit on an 'immigrant car' and sent it to Texas. Coy Dowdy, who worked for Page, rode in the freight car on the eleven day trip. Grant Page, his wife, Emma Bell, and their daughters, Cordelia and Lois, took a faster passenger train to Victoria. They stayed the first night in a rooming house in Victoria, then the next day, March 23, 1907, Page hired a man with a hack to drive the family to Ocean Park. The family lodged those first few weeks in the old bunkhouse.*

*Their first night in Ocean Park, four men showed up about sunset. The Page family was surprised to learn that they were also staying at the bunkhouse. These men were surveyors who were laying out the townsite.*

*Juan Nunez, who was a cowboy on the Traylor Ranch, and his family lived about a mile north of the stock pens. They had the nearest water well. Juan could speak good English and was very happy to have new neighbors. His daughter Juanita married Louis Garcia. (For years and years, Juanita Garcia lived in a little house in the motte of Black Bayou. She was 120 years old when she died.)*

*Jim Pettus, his wife Rena, and daughter Annie, lived a little way in*

*the other direction down the tracks. Annie married Elijah Coleman in 1907. The Page family was invited to the wedding and Cordelia (Delia) attended. They became good friends and 'Aunt Rena' later gave Delia a side saddle which she used to ride on her father's mule, Jack.*

*There was a fence across the Ranch land, dividing the Traylor ranch from the land which had been sold to the preachers. There was a large gate in the fence supported by guy wires attached to a center pole. When the gate was opened, the wire would wrap around the pole and when released, the gate would close automatically. There were several similar gates on the trail to Victoria.*

*Mud boats were used to move items across the prairie. A mud boat looked like a large door lying flat with wooden runners attached to the bottom and pulled by a horse.*

A certificate of Survey of Town of Bloomington was filed May 22, 1907. The survey was made by I.E. Radcliffe, County Surveyors, of Victoria County. (*Appendix F*)

A townsite of one hundred blocks, ten blocks by ten blocks square; bounded by the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexican Railroad, Texas Avenue, and Port O'Connor Railroad and the Old Victoria Road, was drawn up by the surveyors. Fourteen blocks were designated for business purposes in the

southwest quadrant of the plot. The business area was at the intersection of St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railroad, (the Gulf Coast Lines) and the right-of-way for the Port O'Connor, Rio Grande & Northern Railroad. Business lots were 25' by 140'. Eight city blocks were designated as city parks; one large park, Central Park, 580'X 580' four blocks square, in the center of town and four parks 300'X 300' in each quarter of town, one block in each quadrant. Currently the Lions Club Building is located on one of these blocks. Two blocks, 660' x 300', in the center of town were to be used for a school. The school property, located on Guadalupe Street, was used from 1913 until 1967 for city schools. The last school located on this property was E.E.Hatchett School.

The remaining 76 blocks were to be allocated for residential purposes. The residential blocks were laid out in lots 50' by 140'. All alleys were 20' wide and all streets and avenues were 60' wide. This plan for the Bloomington townsite was recorded with the County Clerk on June 8, 1907.

The preachers were rather optimistic in their one hundred block townsite considering that the Allen Brothers laid out an original townsite for the city of Houston of only sixty-two blocks.

Sixty of the planned one hundred city blocks were all that were ever developed. Walter Kelly graded many of

these streets and planted trees. He blasted tree holes with small charges of dynamite.

In April 1907, the preachers conducted their first town lot sale called "Promotion Day". Many people came in on excursion trains to look at the townsite. Most stayed only one day, returning to Houston by train in the evening. Others spent several days in the area, some going to Victoria to spend the nights while others slept on the ground under wagons. Treat Walker and Joe Strod stayed several days, sleeping at night under a wagon.

Several of these "Promotion Days" were held. They included barbecues, a band and the auctioning of lots. On some occasions, several hundred people would attend.

Wilson Smith from Waverly, Illinois, purchased his land during this town lot sale on April 23, 1907. He returned to Illinois. On May 5, 1907 he returned to Texas with a carpenter to build his General Store/Rooming House. He had the first business establishment in the new town and the only source of supplies/rooms outside of Victoria. Smith's store was located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Nueces Street and the railroad tracks just across the



*Wilson Smith owned the first business in Bloomington, which he built in 1907. The grocery store/rooming house was the only source of supplies outside Victoria.*

tracks from the present Hodde residence. Victoria was three to four hours away by horse drawn wagon. The first person that Wilson Smith met in Bloomington was Hughry Coleman who worked on the Traylor Ranch. Hughry lived in Bloomington until his death in 1955.

*My dad and two of his friends came down on a home seeker's train in March of 1907 to look at this new land. He returned to Minnesota ready to move but my moth-*

*er did not want to leave the north. It was over a year, May 1908, before he bought his farm.*

*There was a watermelon party at the Page home in mid-1907. Everyone from the area attended including a number of cowboys from the ranch. The conversation turned to the name of the town. There was no ocean anywhere around. The name Ocean Park was probably selected to make the area sound attractive to prospective buyers. With these first settlers being from Indiana and Illinois, they agreed Bloomington was a better name than Ocean Park. There is a Bloomington, Indiana, and a Bloomington, Illinois, near their old homes. Wilson Smith wrote to the preachers and they agreed to the name change.*

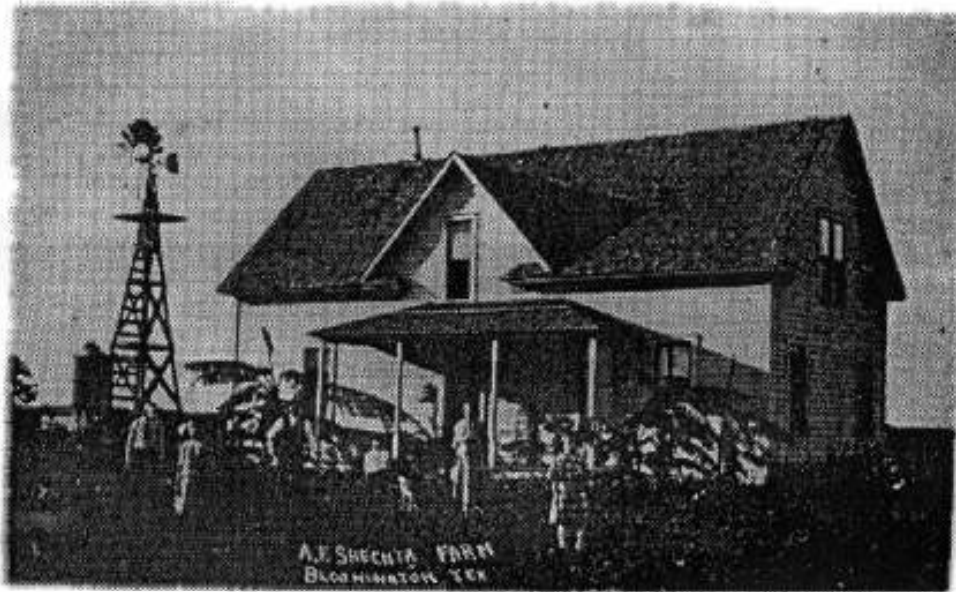
A petition was circulated and the Post Office Department approved the name of Bloomington in the summer of 1907. A short time later, Jeff A. Miller of the St. Louis, Brownsville, & Mexico Railroad had the name revoked and the name of the community became Shepley. Mabel Wyatt, in her thesis *Use of Community Resources in Social Studies*, gives the following account of how the name was revoked and then reinstated - "According to the story, Shepley was a 'cattle stop' on the St. Louis, Brownsville, & Mexico Railroad about one mile from Bloomington. The Railroad refused to stop at Bloomington, since the promoters were

working in conjunction with the Port O'Conner, Rio Grande, and Northern Railroad. Jeff A. Miller, working for 'Shepley', had the name of Bloomington revoked. Mr. Wilson Smith made a trip to Corpus Christi to talk with Miller. The difficulties were ironed out, whereupon Miller communicated with authorities in Washington and had the name of Bloomington approved again."

*It is also said that the Postal Department refused to accept the name Ocean Park saying it was misleading.*

*The Louis A. Cameron family arrived from Illinois in December 1907, as did Ancel Dunseth. Cameron built the first private residence in Bloomington. The few other residences at the time were combined with the owners' place of business. Mrs. Sara Dunseth Timm can remember only two houses when she arrived with her mother and brother and sister in January, 1908. Mr. Dunseth cleared the land and built a little single wall house on his farm just south of the Bloomington town site (now the Charlie Hilscher farm). In 1912 he moved his family to their new home in town, located on Third Street at Rail Street. Miss Sara lived in the house until her death. Web Coffey arrived in January, 1908.*

*Coy Dowdy was one on the area's first farmers. He had the best crop of anyone the first year because he planted deep like they did in Indiana. Other farmers moving into the area were not*



*The Al Sleetha family came to Bloomington in 1908 in hopes of becoming rich in Texas.*

*accustomed to tilling the heavy moist soil. The next year the other farmers planted the same way to achieve better crops. Coy was also the town's first barber, giving hair cuts on Sunday afternoons for ten cents a head.*

*Mrs. Grant Page and Hattie Adair (Hattie's husband was Postmaster in New Salem) offered the first meals for sale, serving lunch from the Adair kitchen to local residents and cowboys. The Adair home was located next to Wilson Smith's store.*

*Coy Dowdy married Delia Page in Port Lavaca in 1907. Their son, Honor Dowdy, born on May 8, 1908, was the town's first baby. He was delivered by*

*Dr. DeTar in Victoria. The first girl born in Bloomington was Lourana Stubblefield, born to Kelly and Beulah Stubblefield the same year.*

*The town's second social function was in about February 1908, at the Cameron home. Homemade fudge and hot chocolate were served. During the course of the party a cold 'blue norther' blew in. And they said it never got cold in Texas!*

*The promoters advertised in the midwest to entice settlers to this "beautiful prairie land of abundant rainfall, healthy climate, good soil and pure water fanned continually by soft Gulf breezes". Many of these midwest-*



erners moving to Texas seeking the "cool ocean breezes" must have been looking for those land promoters in the summer of 1909 when temperatures reached a record 108 degrees. (Appendices G and H)

*The Frank Skarda family, Al Slectha family and Joe Janoczek family arrived September 3, 1908. There were twenty of us. Al Slectha was a tailor, Joe Janoczek was a cobbler and my dad was a groceryman. They were convinced that they could become rich in Texas and return to Minnesota in three to four years.*

*Our personal belongings came several days later in an 'immigrant car' from St. Paul. We stayed for several weeks at Smith's Rooming House until our homes were built. By now there was a lumber yard and probably eight to ten houses in Bloomington.*

*While we were staying at Smith's Rooming House, there was a family living in a covered wagon near what is now called Black Bayou Road #1 and Edna Lane. The man and woman were wood cutters. They would take the wagon bed off the wagon and use the wagon frame to haul cord wood out of the river bottom. They would leave their two young sons in the covered wagon bed during the day. One day while their parents were in the bottom chopping wood the kids began playing with matches and set the wagon frame afire. There were shotgun shells in the wagon and they*

*began going off, exploding in every direction. No one could go to the children because of the exploding shells and they burned to death.*

There are several famous Texas ranches in the immediate vicinity of Bloomington. West across the Guadalupe River is the McFaddin Ranch and just beyond that is the vast O'Connor Ranch. South of Bloomington is the Welder Ranch and east is the Traylor Ranch and the Keeran Ranch. These ranches were some of the first in Texas to fence the open range, breed improved breeds of livestock and institute tick eradication. The question of fencing the open range was settled twenty to thirty years before Bloomington was founded.

*I remember our trips to Victoria in those early years; the trails followed the fence lines. There were two gates to open along the way. The twelve mile trip took three to four hours by wagon.*

*The land around Bloomington proved to be very fertile for farming. My dad paid \$30 an acre for our first farm in 1908. Settlers were moving in great numbers.*

Among the earlier settlers in Bloomington were Earl and Lena Rydolph who owned and operated a grocery store from 1914 to 1939. The store was located at the corner of Cuero and Franklin Streets. The Rydolph family lived in the back of the store.

In 1916 the Rydolph family donat-



*Earl and Lena Rydolph owned and operated a general store from 1914 to 1939, located at the corner of Cuero and Franklin streets. In 1916, they donated land across the street from the store to the Morning Star Baptist Church.*

ed the land across the street from their grocery store to the Morning Star Baptist Church. Mrs. Lena Rydolph taught Sunday School at this location for many years. Earl was the brother of Pete Rydolph.

Pete Rydolph trapped and bought hides along the river from Bloomington to Seadrift. He would then sell the hides in Cuero. With the moneys from the sale of the hides he was able to purchase land on the edge of Bloomington. In time Rydolph quit trapping and became a full-time rancher.

The depot was built in 1909. The depot had a telegraph machine and an operator. When the railroad built the depot, they did not build it on the new townsite, but rather up the tracks near the stock pens. Trains coming out of the

river bottom could not stop at the townsite because it was too near the grade going down into the river bottom. North bound trains would have to stop and start on an inclined grade. Thus the depot was located at its present location. This decision to locate the depot up the tracks from the townsite had a major impact on the town in that businesses wanted to be located near the depot and they began building away from the designated business district in the townsite and began building near the new depot.

*In January 1909, "Night riders" frightened Cornelius Jones of the H.C. Traylor Ranch where he was a squatter. The Northern riders were farmers from the area north of Bloomington.*

*Page Stubblefield, at age 16, came from New Concord, Calloway County, Kentucky, to Victoria County in 1900. He worked for his brother-in-law, F.P. Marberry's mercantile store on the bluff of the San Antonio River at a point where presently Highway 77 crosses both the river and the Railroad. The nearest station stop was Inari, just north of Vidauri. Stubblefield worked*



*for Marberry until about 1903 when he returned to New Concord. In 1907, Page, his brother Kelly Stubblefield and F.P. Marberry established a mercantile store in Marianna, Texas (now McFaddin). In 1910, Page and Kelly bought out Marberry's interest and moved their inventory to Bloomington, combining it with that purchased from Wilson Smith and operated a store known as Stubblefield Bros. General Merchandise.*

*Page returned to New Concord in 1912 to marry Vinnye Leal Kindred. They journeyed to St. Louis, Missouri, for their honeymoon, thence to Bloomington, Texas. While their home was being built, they lived with Page's parents, Mr. and Mrs. W.L. Stubblefield. Vinnye was innovative and purposeful and drew her house plans on a shoebox top. The story was that she wanted to buy an earthen tank location from W.J. Manning, just off Fourth Street, fill it in with dirt, and build her home on it. She had lived on a hill all her life and Bloomington was so flat! Though the house was not built on a hill, it was built nearby on the corner of Shepley and Fourth Streets. Tom Gaunt was the contractor-carpenter. The house still stands today.*

By 1910, a rail line was completed from Bloomington-

*The train depot evolved into the focal point of Bloomington. It was a gathering place for citizens and at one time had four trains going through the town.*

ton to Port O'Connor and on May 1, 1912, the line was completed from Bloomington to Victoria. This put Bloomington at the intersection of two major rail lines.

*Around 1908/10 a Black neighborhood grew on the north end of the townsite around where Rio Grande Street, Nueces Street and San Antonio Street intersect Texas Avenue (now called Black Bayou Road #1). In about 1910 the school on the Traylor Ranch was closed and a school was opened at the southeast corner of Guadalupe Street and Texas Avenue. The ground was low here and every time it rained the school building became surrounded by water. Students had to walk wooden planks to get to class. It became known as 'the school in the pond.' Families living in this neighborhood included Jacob Brown, Dave Smith, William Johnson, Dennis Coleman, Elijah Coleman, Jeff Barnefield, Dennis Smith, Dan White, Mathis Brown and Cornelius Jones. This area grew until eventually Blacks occupied most of the original townsite.*

Bessie Brown, Bloomington's midwife, assisted at the birth of many of the babies born in the early 1900s.

About the same time, another Black neighborhood was growing on Lander Road toward Placedo. There was a community church. Residents included the families of Fred Watts, Doc Hubbard, Will Chapman and Richard Hubbard. The men of these families

worked on the Ranch, some moving from the settlement in the live oak motte. This neighborhood was adjacent to the Ranch and near the home of the William Randolph family. Children from this neighborhood walked the four or five miles to the 'school on the pond.'

*A telephone line ran from Victoria, through Bloomington, and to the Traylor Ranch. The line was hung atop low (about seven feet high) untreated telephone poles. When 'Uncle Billy' (William B.) Traylor went to the Ranch, he rode his horse along the route of the telephone line. He had a long white beard.*

The Johnson Addition plot was recorded with the county clerk on April 7, 1910. This addition included 12 full blocks and 8 partial blocks just across the tracks from the new depot. New streets were Goode, Johnson, Hedges, Rodgers and Sherly Street. The real estate market around Bloomington was the hottest in this part of the state and people were speculating in land hoping to become rich. Many thought Bloomington would surpass Victoria as the principal city in that area. Victoria's population at the time was only about 3,500.

- William King, Sr., bought land from Traylor just south of the Johnson Addition, out King Road. His family, as well as the families of Hayes Fisher, Sam White and Sanders Marshall, lived here.

- J.A. Linke of Jackson County, Indiana, purchased 160 acres from Barton/Wharton/Wilson on January 26, 1907, for \$4,000. His subdivision was bounded by Third Street to Seventh Street and the Port O'Connor Railroad to Leonard Street.
- E.G. Sutton of Crawfordsville, Indiana, joined Grant Page and William Smith and purchased a plot of land near the new depot north of the original townsite in February 1910. The Sutton-Page-Smith Addition was bound by the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railroad to Third Street and from the Port O'Connor, Rio Grande & Northern Railroad to Shepley Street. This subdivision, along First Street and Second Street immediately developed into the town's business district. Its major attraction was its location near the new depot.
- G.K. Riess of Cameron County, Texas, bought an area equal to a city block from J.A. Linke in March 1911. The Riess Addition I was bound by Third Street to Fourth Street and from Indiana Street to Illinois Street. Riess subdivided the area into 20 lots; 33 1/2 feet by 140 feet.
- The Riess II Addition was also purchased from J.A. Linke by G.K. Riess. This Addition is bound by Third Street to Fourth Street and the Port O'Connor Railroad to Indiana Street.
- The plot for development was filed with the county on Nov. 4, 1911.
- Mrs. F.P. Marberry, E.K. Stubblefield, E.P. Stubblefield and R.I. Stubblefield purchased 8 9/10 acres (one city block) from J.A. Linke for \$750 in June 1911. The Stubblefield Addition is bounded by Fourth Street to Sixth Street and the Port O'Connor Railroad to Indiana Street.
- L.A. Cameron of Hoopeston, Illinois, purchased from Homer Wilson the Cameron Addition in December 1907 for \$500. The Addition is bounded by First Street to Third Street and Shepley Street to Leonard Street.
- S.M. Crum purchased farm lots 2, 3 and 4 of the J.A. Linke subdivision of the Barton, Wharton & Wilson subdivision of the F. Perez League. The Crum Addition was bound by Fourth Street to Seventh Street and Shepley Street to Leonard Street.
- H.C. Kelley of Victoria County, Texas purchased from J.A. Linke 5 14/100 acres for \$325. The Kelley Addition is bound by Seventh Street to Eighth Street and the Port O'Connor Railroad to Indiana Street.
- J.W. Brown of Victoria County purchased from J.A. Linke four city blocks. He subdivided his property into four city blocks of twelve 50' X 140' each. The Brown Addition is bound by Fifth Street to Seventh Street & Indiana Street to Shepley Street.

By 1912, Grant Page and R.G. Givens had opened a Land Office to sell real estate. L.A. Cameron had a real estate firm, as did T.N. Pool.

*Grant Page donated land behind the motte on Black Bayou to be used as a community cemetery. The first burial was in 1911 when the thirteen year old daughter of John Stell was buried. One of Sheriff Flourney's twin sons, named Sambo Texas, is also buried there. Eventually, there were thirty to forty Anglos buried in this cemetery. None of these graves are marked and several of the bodies have been moved. Some years later this cemetery became the burial place for Mexican families and is now known as San Jose Cemetery.*

*In those days, when someone died, a family member would go to town and find people to be pallbearers. Citizens were asked to volunteer as grave diggers and it was considered a civic obligation to oblige. The undertaker came to the house to embalm the body. It was the job of the pallbearers to cover the grave after the funeral. Typically, the pallbearers would have on their only suit and covering a grave could be a very hot and dirty task. Mourners stayed at the cemetery until the grave was covered.*

*Other cemeteries near Bloomington include the Traylor Cemetery on Edna Lane very near our first farm. The Traylor Cemetery was in use when we*

*moved here in 1908. There are a few bodies buried by the side of the road near Black Bayou Road #2 and Edna Lane. Also, the Black community has The Bloomington Cemetery on Kitribe Street in the townsite. This land was the location of the Black school from about 1920 until the school was moved to Guadalupe Street in about 1945. There is also a cemetery near the Black settlement in the motte on the Traylor Ranch.*

*In those early days, farmers had to take their cotton to Victoria to be ginned. The dirt trail to Victoria followed fence lines; there were two gates to open along the way. When my dad took cotton to be ginned we would leave at midnight. Usually three of us would make the trip. My job was to make sure the iron rims on the wagon wheels did not come off. Pa would give me a hammer and I had to continually watch the four wagon wheels. He would stop about every two miles and I had to get off and hammer any crooked rims back on. I remember hating to get off the wagon at night because it was so dark. If the rim came off, the wheel could fall apart and that would make Pa very unhappy, especially if we had a load of cotton. The worst part of the trip was getting through the ravine at Pleasant Green. It was always a problem for wagons, particularly when it rained. When we took cotton to Victoria to be ginned the trip usual-*

*ly took 24 hours. It took 30 minutes to gin a bale of cotton and at the height of the season there would be at least 20 loads in line ahead of you waiting to be ginned. We would get home the next night about midnight.*

Articles of news from *The Victoria Weekly Advocate*:

- January 24, 1912  
Luis Martinez's son, Matt, died of pneumonia and was taken to Mariana on a hand car. All men in the gang took off and went to Mariana.
  - March 7, 1912  
New members of Bloomington W.O.W. Lodge are A.F. Rigby, Ed Lindsey and Stanford Linzy... J.R. McGuffin bought two lots from L.A. Cameron last week... Mr. Otto Hasley bought a resident city lot ... W.G. Trotter and W.T. Baldwin of Sinton purchased two lots and will move here and build... D.F. Lewis cottage about finished...
  - March 9, 1912  
James Curry is sick at the home of D.D. Rigby... Tran Treywick is sick... F.C. Beakley returned from Peneil, Texas, Friday where he took a course in theology... From Miss Rosa Cameron, correspondent; Conductor Steryl Muma, who was on work train when Port O'Connor line of Gulf Coast Railroad was built, is on work train to build line to Victoria, work to start soon... There were 28 cars of freight received in Bloomington Monday, March 4, 1912, from Port O'Connor.
  - December 9, 1912  
Missouri Pacific Railroad filed a petition with Commissioners Court to build a "Y" and railroad sidings in Bloomington.
- The first issue of *The Bloomington Breeze* was published on July 12, 1912. The publisher was R.P. Ansley, the editor was John D. Finley, and the subscription was \$1.50 per year in advance. The news included:
- The Great Creator of the Universe was very liberal with all the good qualities of the country when this section of Texas was made.
  - The Woodman of the World will give a big barbecue at Bloomington Wednesday, July 17. There will be speaking by candidates.
  - The Epsworth League gave a hay-ride Wednesday night last week in honor of Misses Minnie and Estell Briscoe of Divine, who were visiting Mrs. J.D. Motheral. The party rode to Black Bayou, after providing themselves with plenty of watermelons, where they toasted marshmallows and played games until a late hour.
  - Miss Lois Page celebrated her birthday on Tuesday of last week by

- entertaining some twenty of the young people of Bloomington. She was presented with a piano and a number of other handsome presents. Watermelon, ice cream and cake were served and the evening was spent playing games. All of the guests had a most enjoyable time.
- Grant Page is building a hay barn near the Victoria branch of the Brownsville Road.
  - Mr. Graf's new two story building is being painted and will soon be completed.
  - NOTICE TO FARMERS - I am completely overhauling my gin at Bloomington and will have it in first class shape at an early date, in plenty of time for the new crop. I appreciate your business as I have always done in the past and will give you prompt and accurate service. Yours truly, C.F. Reimenschneider.
  - FOR SALE - Singer sewing machine, slightly used, good as new, cheap for cash - Rosa Cameron.
  - Will Heard was up from Green Lake on business Wednesday.
  - Arthur Prichard left for San Antonio Tuesday after a visit with the family of A.W. Wynn.
  - Mrs. Maggie Bundwick of Goliad, who has been visiting her son at his place, has gone to Placedo to visit her daughter, Mrs. Fingleman.
  - Mrs. Earnest Beakley of Placedo arrived Wednesday on a visit with her husband's relatives here.
  - D.F. Lewis was in Victoria Monday.
  - The ladies of Bloomington met at the school house Monday and arranged to present the play, *The Sprinter's Convention*.
  - J.F. Grant of Galveston was here Tuesday on business. He was accompanied on his return home as far as Vanderbilt by his brother W.L. Grant of this place.
  - Edward Dale Hunt, infant child of Mr. and Mrs. Homer Hunt died Wednesday morning, July 3. The funeral was preached at the house by A.W. Dunseth of this place. Burial was at Crescent Valley. Death was from meningitis and the child had been at the verge of death for several weeks.
  - Misses Johnny and Irene Rogers and Ola Ragsdale, and Messrs. Ralph Cameron, Henry Stubblefield, Fouts Lowery, Ed Stanford, Bob Linzey, Tommy Grantland, Albert Wycaver, Ernest Davis, John Lumpkins, Guy Wynn and Melvin Palmore spent the Fourth at Guadalupe.
  - Beginning July 9th, mail is received here from both of the night trains.



- Bloomington citizens can defeat all opposition to the Drainage District. There is a strong probability of defeat by those who oppose the creation of the district if our people do not appear before Commissioner's Court on July 15th and set forth their claims and arguments of the benefits to be derived therefrom. A movement is afoot to have the railroad company to have a motor car here on the morning of the 15th so that all who are interested can be at the court house in Victoria by nine o'clock, and if we should fail this, automobiles or other means of conveyance can be procured easily. In any event, we should all be there even if there should be a few who are unfortunate enough to have to walk the entire distance.
- The Bloomington Realty Co. advertised; Fine black land farms for sale in tracts to suit purchasers. Our lands at Bloomington are adapted to the growth of Corn, Cotton, Alfalfa, Sugar Cane, Kaffir Corn, Maize, and Vegetables of all kinds. Our unimproved black lands range in price from \$35 to \$40 per acre. If you have any land to sell, list it with us. We get the buyers.
- Cameron's Confectionery, Ice Cold Soda, Candies, Chewing Gum, Watermelons, Cantaloupes, Oranges and Lemons. Other Fruits in Season. Best Grade Tablets and Envelopes.

*Saturday Evening Post, Ladies Home Journal, and Daily Papers.*

- FRISCO LINES - Going North?... We have low round trip rates to all points.

The *Breeze* stated the population of Bloomington to be 350 in 1912.

The *Woman's Civic Club* was organized in 1912. Officers were:

*President*

Mrs. J.R. McGuffin

*Vice-President*

Mrs. R.G. Givens

*Recording & Corresponding Secretary*

Mrs. O.W. Haisley

*Treasurer*

Mrs. O.H. Sears

Standing Committees were:

*Sanitation*

Mrs. O.H. Sears

*Libraries*

Mrs. O.W. Haisley

*Schools*

Mrs. W.W. Plumb

*Philanthropy*

Mrs. T.M. Gaunt

*Public Amusements*

Mrs. J.D. Motheral

*Parks and Tree Planting*

Mrs. Kelly Stubblefield

*Cemeteries*

Mrs. J.W. Brown

*Anti-Cruelty*

Miss Rosa Cameron

*Press*

Miss Rosa Cameron

*Ways and Means*

Miss Ruby Cameron

Other members were:

Mrs. T.H. Bonner, Miss Siegler,

Miss Sara Dunseth,

Mrs. D.D. Rigby, Mrs. J.E. Davis

and Mrs. H.V. Hunt

The schedule for study class was as follows:

*December 7, 1912*

Back Yards

*December 21, 1912*

Flies & Other Germ-Breeding Insects

*January 4, 1913*

Food Sanitation: Milk, Water, Food Supplies, Canned Goods, Public Food Law

*January 18, 1913*

Prevention of Disease: Home, Kitchen, Sleeping Apartment

*February 1, 1913*

Prevention of Disease: Tuberculosis, Other Infectious Diseases

*February 15, 1913*

Domestic Economy, Food Values, High Cost of Living

*March 1, 1913*

Social Economics, Eugenics, Review of Articles in *Good Housekeeping* magazine (August, September)

*March 15, 1913*

Our Girls and Boys: Conduct in Public, Companions, Ideals

*March 29, 1913*

Schools: Relation of Community to School, Relation of Teacher and Parents, Anti-Cruelty

*April 12, 1913*

Sanitary Conditions and Health: Local Sanitary Needs, Physical Condition of Child: Eyesight, Care of Teeth, Needs in Immediate Vicinity

*April 26, 1913*

Laws for Women in Texas: Review of Articles in November 1912 Delineator, Extracts from Important Laws

*May 10, 1913*

Libraries

*May 24, 1913*

Beautifying Bloomington

*The community's first baseball team was organized in about 1909. Included on this team were Coy Dowdy, Al Slectha and Grant Page. Team members on Bloomington's 1912 team included Mr. Dickey, Mgr., Ollie Hayes, John Skarda, Ross Smith, Ernest Davis, the two Sellers boys and the two Sigler boys. Games were played on a field in the Johnson Addition, on the present site of the Kenneth Marshall home. There were only two homes on that side of town. People came in buggies, wagons and on saddle horses while others walked to the games. Such games were major social outings for the community. Fans and sightseers came from all around for fun, excitement, friends and a drink of home made spirits. A sharp eye and a keen ear were needed to keep up with the game as there was no loudspeaker system, scoreboard or bleachers. There was just one umpire who stood back of the pitcher. Most of the games were with nearby towns such as Placedo, Seadrift and Da Costa. It was a big event once when Bloomington played a team all the way from San Antonio.*

There was another town lot sale on December 20, 1912. The auctioneer was Col. D.S. Smithhisler for the Bloomington Townsite Company. One hundred and seven lots were sold at an average price of \$100 per lot. About 500 people were in attendance. A fish fry and dance were given in connec-



*The Bloomington Baseball Team, 1912, included back row left to right: Mr. Dickey, Manager; \_\_\_ Reece; Ollie Hayes; \_\_\_ Sellers; John Skarda; front left to right: Ross Smith; \_\_\_ Sellers; \_\_\_ Sigler; \_\_\_ Sigler; and Ernest Davis*

tion with the sale. These sales were popular in the winter because the temperature was so much warmer than at that time of year up north.

In about 1914, the road from Victoria was graded and graveled. The graveled road followed Juan Linn Street through Victoria and on through Pleasant Green and to Crescent Valley. At Crescent Valley it crossed the tracks and followed the road to Dernal and on into Bloomington along the Coffey farm and Davis farm (now called Old Bloomington Road), up to Commerce Street, to Nueces Street, down Nueces and across the tracks to the Wilson Smith (Hodde) farm and then followed

the south side of the railroad tracks to the county line. This was a great improvement to transportation and for years was the only graveled road in this part of the county.

Mabel Wyatt in her *Use of Community Resources in Social Studies* says that "Since most of the land is a flat prairie, artificial drainage is necessary. The first drainage started about 1914, when a few engineers and surveyors came to Bloomington. They surveyed the land to establish the lowest parts in order to determine how the land drained. With this survey they found that the land drained mostly to the south and southeast. This is due to the



*In 1915 picnicking was a favorite pastime for Bloomington residents.*

fact that most of our large bodies of water lay in that direction.

There are two main drainage ditches in the Bloomington District. One goes to the Guadalupe River, while the other one leads to Lavaca Bay. The smallest ditches are about eight feet wide, with the largest ones being approximately twenty-five feet wide.

The drainage system is very important to Bloomington. It has prevented swamp lands and has improved the farming lands."

The Guadalupe River flooded the river bottom in 1913 and again in 1914. Picnicing and swimming in Black Bayou with friends and neighbors were favorite pastimes. Black Bayou and the Guadalupe River remained a place for recreation until after World War II. The Victoria Barge Canal levee built through the River Bottom in the 1960's cut the Bayou off from overflow water; thus, the Bayou has become a stagnant ditch.

By 1915, there were several automobiles in Bloomington. Al Slectha had a 1910 Sears; S.A. Pool had a J.I. Case; C.F. Reimenschneider had a 1910 Reo; Frank DeLong had a 1914 Mitchell; Jay Linville had a 1915 Haynes; Web Coffey had a 1915 Maxwell and Mr. Graf had a chain driven Metz.

The main street (Second Street) looked much like the typical town in



*One of the earliest cars found in Bloomington is pictured on Shepley Street in front of the Baldwin Hotel.*

an old western movie, with wooden store front buildings, plank sidewalks and dirt streets. Horses were tied to hitching posts in the alleys behind the stores.

*On at least two occasions the local law shot and killed an unarmed man during disputes on Main Street. On July 26, 1913 Marshall J.T. Flourney shot and killed a*



man. He hit him in the middle breast and left side and wrist. H.A. Hanley, J.P. held an inquest. Supposedly the two men were arguing and the victim bent over to pick up a rock and was shot dead. The Marshall said he was afraid the man was going to harm him.

On another occasion, a man kicked Mr. Noble in the stomach; an observer ran and got the Marshall. The Marshall came over and shot the man dead.

In March of 1916, Augustin Hernandez wrote a letter to the County Attorney, J.J. Woodhouse, describing a break-in and 'elopement' at his home by a man named Sebastian Ramirez. He requested severe punishment for Mr. Ramirez for having dishonored his family. (*Appendix I*)

The first brick building in town was built on Second Street in 1914. Over the years this building, which is located on the north side of the street, approximately half a block from the present day signal light, was occupied by: Barnet's Dry Goods, Noble's Drug Store, J.L.

*A view of Second Street in 1913 shows a variety of transportation; the horse, a wagon, a horse and carriage and a bicycle.*



*The 1914 building, shown in a recent photograph, was the first brick building to be built in Bloomington. The building was standing in 1997.*



*The first brick building reveals the vandallism that remains after the brass medallion noting the official elevation, was stolen from the front of the building in the mid-seventies.*

Crum & Co., Breivogel's Grocery, Talbot's Cassel's Grocery and Will's Produce. It has been vacant for years. A brass medallion was placed on the front of the building by the U.S. Government noting that the official elevation was 63.471 feet above sea level. Bloomington is located at latitude 28.5 degrees North and longitude 96.75 degrees West. In the mid-seventies, the medallion disappeared. It was chiseled from the wall and was never recovered.

*There were several two story buildings in the business district. On Second Street there was the McDaniel Building, the Bakery, Stubblefield Hardware Store and the Dernal Building; on First Street was the Jarvis Rooming House and the Lowery Rooming House; and the Telephone Exchange on Shepley Street was two story.*

From the Dec. 25, 1914, issue of the *Bloomington Breeze*: (Appendix J)

Local and Personal Mention:

- Dr. J.W. Rush went to Victoria Monday on business...
- R.G. Givens was a visitor to the county capital Saturday...
- R.T. Hubbard & G.W. Corbin went to DaCosta, Guadalupe & Placedo Wednesday with a load of apples...
- T.P. Traylor was in town Wednesday...
- Mrs. W.H. Wiley has gone to Louisiana to spend the winter...
- Dr. W.M. Dodson of Mariana was in

town Tuesday...

- We are indebted to the First State Bank for one of their beautiful calendars for 1915...
- A meeting of the City Council was held Tuesday night at which time the newly elected Alderman were given the oath of office...
- Mayor W.J. Manning is taking a lay-off this week to enjoy Christmas at home...
- Henry Westphal bridge gang came in Saturday and moved out Monday to Black Bayou, where they will be located several weeks doing some bridge work...
- Miss Margaret Warburton who is attending school in Victoria came home Saturday to spend the holidays...

Professional and Business Directory:

- Choice Houma, Louisiana, oysters received every week at the Frisco Cafe...
- W.T. Childers—The Know How Barber... Razors Honed... Shears Sharpened...
- R.N. Cole—Cleaning and Barber—City Laundry—Next to B&M Restaurant...
- John Kennedy—Drayman. All work entrusted to me will receive prompt and careful attention....
- Mal C. Winn—Dray & Transfer. Noth-

ing too large or too small for me to handle...

- Dunseth & Sears—Building Contractors. Let us figure on your work; we will save you money...
- J.F. Breivogel—Painter, Paperhanger & Decorator. Nice line of wall paper in stock...
- J.E. Ryan—Undertaker & Embalmer - Phone 50...
- Tom Katribe—Dry Goods & Notions. All Goods going at cost...

Four train crews were stationed at the Bloomington terminal. Most of the crewmen lived in Kingsville but worked out of Bloomington during the week. Crews were made up of an engineer, a fireman, a brakeman and a conductor. Each day except Sunday, a crew left Bloomington for Austwell/Tivoli; another crew went to Vanderbilt; one to Victoria and one to Port O'Connor. Also a bridge gang worked out of Bloomington.

Several Hispanic families worked on the Traylor Ranch. Around 1910 many of the Spanish surnamed families who had followed Juan Moya in 1832 to his land grant at Blanconia in the Beeville/Refugio area were taking notice of Bloomington. These people who had lost their lands and their fortunes after San Jacinto saw a more tolerant attitude in these new Anglos who were coming from the northern part of the

United States to start the new town of Bloomington. The Anglos in the older towns and cities such as Victoria, Goliad, Cuero, Galveston, San Antonio and Corpus Christi still identified all Hispanics as "enemies of the Texas revolution".

Some of the Hispanic families from around Blanconia, remnants of the Juan Moya colony, began migrating to this new community of Bloomington in 1915. The Moya, Robles, Leal, Hernandez, Guitierrez, Reyes and Liserio families were among others. Adolph Robles, his wife Genoveva, and his six sons Tibo (Natividad), Tito (Inocencio), Riley (Raleigh), Chano, Felix and Esteban (Eluterio) moved to Bloomington in 1917. Adolph's brother, Antonio Robles, moved his wife and eight children, Jose, Martin, Lupe, Elosia, Eva, Alfred, Donnie and Joe, to Bloomington the same year. Adolph and Antonio's father Antonio, was one of the original Juan Moya colonist migrating to Texas from the Canary Islands. Other Hispanic families who came to Bloomington included the Cortez, Renden, Luna, and Leonires families.

*In 1916, trains were coming through Bloomington daily carrying men and supplies to the U.S.- Mexican border to fight Pancho Villa. The trains carried infantry and cavalry as well as cavalry horses, cannons, wagons and armaments on flat cars, box cars and in troop cars. General Frederick Fun-*

*ston was in command; however, he was shortly replaced by General John J. Pershing. The movement of the Army through Bloomington caused a lot of excitement around town. I remember I found an army cap next to the railroad tracks. It was my prize possession for several months.*

*The Army posted a small group of soldiers at the River Bridge to guard it twenty four hours a day against a possible raid by Pancho Villa.*

Political unrest and revolution in Mexico brought many thousands of refugees from Mexico to the United States between 1917 and 1920. Several of these families, including the Martins, Ortegas, and Mercados, settled in Bloomington.

Beginning around 1918 and for about ten years, the Robles Band played for many local social functions, including the arrival of passenger trains on Sunday afternoons. Adolph Robles played the violin with his young sons Tibo on flute, Tito on violin and Riley on guitar. They were the only musical group around Bloomington at that time and played Spanish and Prussian music as well as Charleston dance music.

*Nineteen seventeen was one of the driest years ever. It was the only time Green Lake completely dried up. My brother George, Joe Spann and I walked across the lake bed.*

*'Shorty' Ewrs lived on the bank of*



*Stubblefield Lake. He was bitten on the foot and injured by an alligator while seining for catfish. He was walking in the water attempting to scare fish into his seine. He came upon an alligator lying under the water with several babies. Shorty thought this was a big catfish and began kicking it. The alligator bit him. He jumped straight up and caught the limb of a willow tree. He hung from the limb until he was rescued. He used a crutch and claimed he was unable to work.*

*Some weeks later, Shorty was sitting in his old Model T Ford parked on the street in front of Breivogel's Store with Mr. Lynch. Old man Lynch pulled a pistol and threatened suicide. He missed and shot a hole through the top of the car. Shorty jumped from the car, leaving his crutch behind and ran around the corner of the store and ran into his wife, Pinkie, who had been forced to make a living to support the family by taking in washing. Observing Shorty without his crutch was a surprise to Pinkie. Shorty went to work the next day on the very forceful advice of his wife.*

*Stubblefield Lake was drained into Black Bayou in about 1916. The Stubblefields wanted to farm the land covered by the lake. The lake, located in the river bottom, covered several acres. When it was drained, its bottom was covered with alligators, some up to twelve feet long. Al Slechta had*

*a friend in St. Paul who manufactured luggage so Al went out into the lake bed and skinned several of the alligators. He put the skins on top of his roof to dry. They curled up like fried bacon. He should have salted them and wrapped them in a bundle but Al didn't know how to cure the hides.*

*The Manire boys were snake catchers. In 1916, they had an old house on Black Bayou near the railroad which they used to keep live snakes. They would go by boat down the Guadalupe River to Matagorda Island and catch snakes. They would then bring the snakes up the river by boat and store them live in the old house. I have seen live rattlesnakes piled four feet high in the corners of the rooms and water moccasins all over the floor. I was with them one day when asked if I wanted to hear some music. I said sure. One of the boys took a pair of tongs and, stepping over water moccasins, he went over to a pile of rattlesnakes in the corner of the room. He began jabbing the snakes with his tongs and they began rattling. I have never been so scared in my life. The Manires sold the snakes to the San Antonio Drug Company for forty cents a pound. The drug company wanted them for their venom.*

*Old Captain Coffman (Kaufman), a retired Confederate captain lived on a hill overlooking Black Bayou at the railroad bridge. Mrs. Susie Hayes and*

her son lived in the house and took care of him. He was an old man and jealously guarded the ducks that swam on the Bayou. He would not let anyone disturb them.

There was a former actress named Callicutt who lived for a few years in a house on Edna Lane between our farm and the Breivogel farm. We were told she was famous.

Once a month, in good weather, I believe on the last Saturday of the month, the town had 'Trade Day.' You brought anything you wanted to get rid of to town. People brought produce, wagons, dogs and furniture to trade with other people. There was also fun and games. There was a greased pole about twelve feet high. A prize was given to the first kid who climbed the pole. There was an ugly person contest and donkey races down Main Street. One Saturday, I entered my donkey, Jack. Jack was the biggest donkey around and he was fast. I could take corn shucks and rustle them in his ear to make him run. A lot of people were betting on Jack that day. The race started and I rustled the shucks in his ear and Jack didn't move; he just stood there. I think we came in last. I was really embarrassed.

We had town celebrations on the fourth of July. The whole city block where the Methodist Church is located was the site of a barbecue, baseball games and other functions.

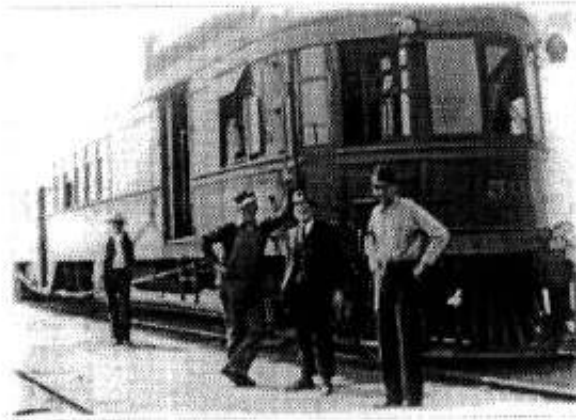
Trains became very important to

Bloomington. Four passenger trains ran daily between Houston and the Rio Grande Valley. A mixed train of freight cars and passenger cars ran daily, except Sunday, between Victoria and Port O'Connor. Beginning in 1912, special excursion trains ran between Victoria and Port O'Connor during the summer months. There was a dance pavilion and hotel on the beach in Port O'Connor. Trains remained our principal means of transportation for many years.

We would go to Victoria almost every Saturday on the train. It wasn't actually a train, it was a motor car, similar to a trolley car. The car had an area in front to carry freight, an area for mail in the middle, and a passenger area which would accommodate about forty people. You would board at the Bloomington Depot. It cost 50 cents for the thirty minute trip. Sometimes there would be so many people on the car that we would have to sit on the steps. Victoria built a new depot in 1912 at the end of the Port O'Connor Line. It was located about half way between the Court House and the River (Riverside Park). It was a concrete building. In the flood of 1913, water got seven feet deep in the lobby; it flooded again in 1914.

The first hurricane that I recall was the hurricane of 1915. We had never experienced weather like that before.

The U.S. entered the World War in



*The most common form of transportation between Victoria, Bloomington, Austwell and Port O'Conner was the motor car. Pictured from the left: Mr. E. Collins, Mr. Van Heussen, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Ellis.*



*The flood of 1913 provided fun for the children but brought devastation to many of the Bloomington citizenry.*



*The flood waters of 1913 edge closer to the Methodist Church of Bloomington.*



*The flood of 1913 not only flooded homes, streets and crop land but the train rail bed also suffered heavy damage.*



*As the flood waters of 1913 continued to rise, homeowners decide to move their household goods with the aid of a horse and wagon.*

April 1917. Albert Hunnicut, Ulmont Lowery, Wilmer Lowery, Louie Skarda and Frank Skarda enlisted in the National Guard, Company 'A' 5th Texas Infantry.



A group of Bloomington women supported the World War I cause with the formation of a Bloomington Red Cross group.

They were mustered into the 36th Division U.S. Army at Fort Bowie in Fort Worth. This division was sent to France and fought in the trenches. Others, including my brother John Skarda, who was working in St. Paul, were drafted. Two Bloomington boys, Andrew Jackson 'Jack' Handy and James W. Priddy were killed

in the war. The "war to end all wars" ended on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, 1918.

There was a heavy snow in January 1918. Old timers said it was the worse such storm in twenty five years. Daylight saving time first became effective in 1918, but it didn't have much impact on the community since we didn't get electricity for another nine and a half years.

Most of us saw our first airplane in 1918 when two biplanes (they were called Jennies) flew over Bloomington. They flew around over the town and surrounding area for about an hour. It was an occasion of great excitement.



The local town folk attend a social function in Bloomington.

In 1919, another hurricane hit the area. The eye hit Corpus Christi drowning several people of North Beach. Again, we had no advance warning.

In about 1919, Second Street was graveled from Shepley Street west across the railroad tracks to Commerce Street.

These were the times when women wore long corsets with long staves and skirts down to the ground. Men wore celluloid collars and button shoes. Little boys

wore knickerbockers. Times were rough and conditions were poor. There were no city amenities, no utilities, poor roads, many people lived in shacks miles from their neighbors while lacking the barest necessities. Moving here from the larger and older cities of the north was particularly difficult on the women. The men had their work; most often manual labor. And children are children anywhere. Many times it was the support of the women that caused a family to stay or return. Some accepted the hardships and went about supporting their husbands and raising their children. Others were nonsupportive and became discontented and angry. They hated it here and these families did not stay.

Residents frowned on drinking, gambling, smoking, dancing and divorce. To some of the town's women it was a terrible sin to dance or play any kind of card game. Some would not even touch a playing card. There is a story of the wife of one of the town's most prominent citizens finding a playing card on her lawn. Rather than picking it up she went and got a pitch fork and ran it through the card as she did not want to touch it.

There was a lot of pride in building the community in the early years.



A common pastime for Bloomington residents was a late afternoon summer baseball game.



Many residents attended the baseball games at the Al P. Giggs Ladies Ball Club in Bloomington.

## City Government

An election to incorporate was held on October 8, 1913; there were 48 votes for incorporation and 19 votes against. The first city officials were:

W.J. Manning - <i>Mayor</i>	O.H. Sears - <i>City Council</i>
J.A. Dickey - <i>Secretary</i>	J.J. Evans - <i>City Council</i>
J.R. Cole - <i>Assessor/Collector</i>	W.Z. Rigby - <i>City Council</i>
J.R. Cole - <i>City Marshall</i>	G.E. Jarvis - <i>City Council</i>
O.J. Delano - <i>Recorder</i>	J.L. Morgan - <i>City Council</i>
N.M. Bartley - <i>Treasurer</i>	O.J. Delano - <i>J/P</i>

In city elections of May 7, 1915 the following persons were elected:

W.J. Manning - <i>Mayor</i>	E.K. Stubblefield - <i>City Council</i>
N.M. Bartley - <i>Treasurer</i>	J.F. Lenderman - <i>City Council</i>
F.S. DeLong - <i>Assessor/Collector</i>	L.P. Schultz - <i>City Council</i>
R.G. Givens - <i>Secretary</i>	J.M. Clark - <i>City Council</i>
Dr. J.W. Rush - <i>Health Officer</i>	J.R. Cole - <i>City Council</i>
F.S. DeLong - <i>City Marshall</i>	

In city elections held April 5, 1916, R.G. Givens was elected Mayor. City Aldermen elected were W.P. Jones, E.K. Stubblefield, S.M. Crum, J.M. Clark and J.F. Lenderman. All were members of the City Council and were reelected except W.P. Jones who was elected as a new alderman.

*The only paid city employee was the 'public scavenger' who went from house to house cleaning outdoor privies. The scavenger was required to post a bond. The person who had the job always complained that a bond was unnecessary. He assured everyone who would listen that he was not going to steal any of that stuff.*



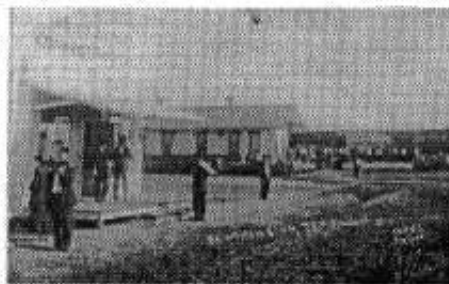
*The first Bloomington Mayor, 1913, was W. J. Manning shown here with his wife.*

## Business Community

*Farming was the principal economic activity in these first years, cotton and corn being the principal crops. The business community of Bloomington grew rapidly.*

By the outbreak of the War there were over fifty businesses in town. Most businesses were built along First Street and Second Street to be near the depot rather than in the designated business section in the original townsite. There was a conflict for several years as to where the business district was to be built with the location near the depot winning out.

Listed below are the business establishments I recall starting operations during the first ten years. Not all of them made it into the 1920s.



The Bloomington Post Office was located near the train depot.

Business	Location	Owner
Bloomington Pharmacy	Katrise & Guadalupe	Dr. J.D. Motheral
Drug Store	Shepley & 1st St.	Dr. J.V. Rush
Noble Drug	2nd St.	Mr. McClennen
Shiller Drug Store	2nd St.	Kelly Stubblefield
Stubblefield Bros. Gro	2nd St.	Page Stubblefield
Crum & Co. Groc.	2nd St.	Sam & John Crum
Schultz Groc.	Nueces & Commerce	Louis Schultz
Bucek Groc. & Dry Goods	Second St.	P.H. Bucek
Dernel Grocery	2nd St. & Shepley	Mr. Dernel
Byrne Grocery	2nd St. & Market	Eugene "Toady" Byrne
Reimenschneider Gro.	Placedo Road	C.F. Reimenschneider
Breivogel Meat Mkt.	2nd St. & Illinois	Fred Breivogel
Bloomington Meat Mkt.	Shepley & 3rd St.	Jones Brothers
Lewis Groc. & Feed Store	2nd St. & Illinois	D.F. Lewis
City Bakery	2nd St.	W.L. Noble
Barnetts Dry Goods	2nd St. & Illinois	A.J. Barnett
Katrise Dry Goods & Notions	Cuero & Commerce	Tom Katrise
Slectha Saloon	1st St.	Albert Slectha
Keily Saloon	1st St.	Walter Kelly
Hanna Saloon	2nd St.	Ed Hanna
Childer Barber Shop	Nueces St.	
Cole Barber Shop	Shepley & 2nd St.	R.M. Cole
Pierce Barber & Chiropractor	Shepley & 2nd St.	H.H. Pierce
Ryan Funeral Parlor	Shepley & 2nd St.	J.E. Ryan
Bank of Bloomington	Shepley & 1st St.	O. Haisley, J.R. McGuffin

First State Bank	First St.	N.M. Bartley
Bloomington Breeze	First St.	L.N. Bell
Baldwin Roominghouse	Cuero St.	W.T. Baldwin
Jarvis Roominghouse	Placedo Road	George Jarvis
Lowery Roominghouse	2nd St.	Pete Lowery
Bloomington Hotel	4th St. & Shepley	N.H. Rowlett
Stell Cotton Gin	Shepley St.	John Stell
Reimenschneider Gin	Placedo Rd.	C.F. Reimenschneider
Taxidermist	3rd St. & Market	Gertrude Hall Milan
Ice Cream Factory	2nd St. & Indiana	Charlie Wynn
Broom Factory	Indiana & Texas	P.K. Lane
Blacksmith Shop	Shepley & 5th St.	C.F. Reimenschneider
Blacksmith Shop	Shepley St.	A.T. Vetter
Blacksmith Shop	Cuero & Commerce	Mr. Spoonman
Blacksmith Shop	2nd & Indiana	F. G. Gaulden
Shoe Shop	3rd St.	Mr. Graf
Airdome Theater	2nd St.	Mr. Keathlay
Anchor Lumber Yard	2nd St. & Shepley	
Grant Lumber Yard		J.F. Grant
DeLong Livery		Frank DeLong
Stubblefield Hardware		Roy Stubblefield
Dunseth Feed Store		Ancel Dunseth
Frisco Cafe	Baldwin Roominghouse	
B&M Cafe	Jarvis Roominghouse	
Dickey's Confectionary	2nd St.	J.F. Dickey
Well's Confectionary	2nd & Illinois	H.C. Wells
Cameron Confectionary	1st & Shepley	L.A. Cameron
Page & Givens Land Office	1st St.	Grant Page, R.G. Givens
Pool Land Co.	1st St.	S.A. Pool
Bloomington Realty		W.T. Baldwin
Ferguson & Post Real Estate		Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Post
Beer Warehouse	2nd St. & Commerce	L.A. Cameron
Bottleworks	2nd St. & Market	W.H. "Son" Wiley
Frisco Lines Railroad	Depot	W.W. Plumb, Agt.

The following are from articles appearing in the *Victoria Weekly Advocate*:

- January 17, 1912

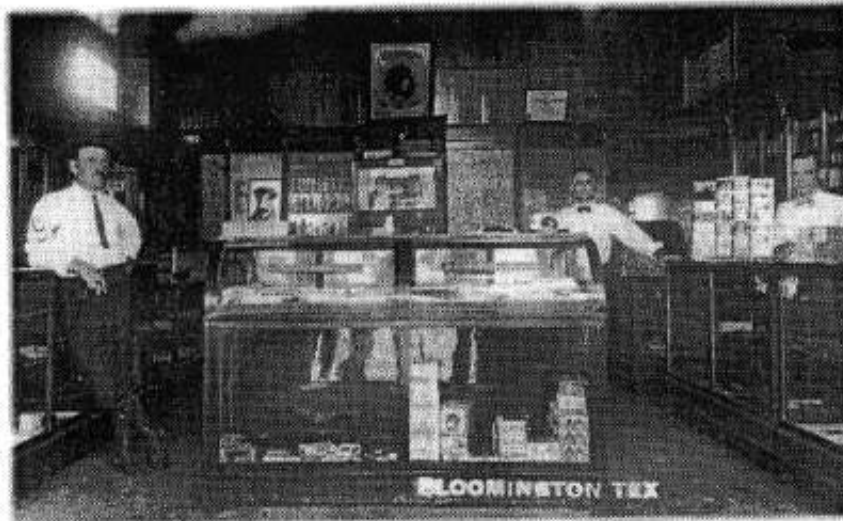
Reimenschnader moved his cotton gin from its original location on Shepley Street near Eighth Street to a location on the Placedo Road near

the stock pens. He also moved his blacksmith shop from downtown to the same location.

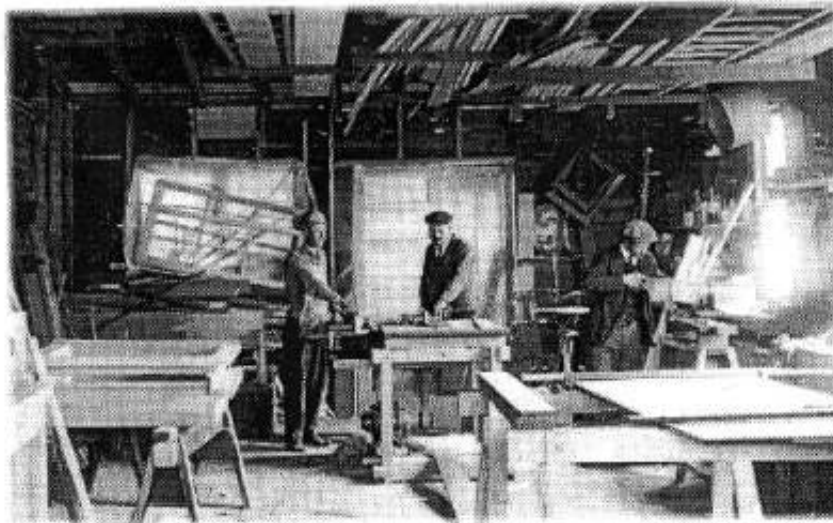
- January 24, 1912

H.C. Wells of Fannin rented the storeroom in Mr. Rowelett's building to open Confectionery.





*One of the drug stores in Bloomington offered a variety of goods including cards, lotions, potions, and tobacco goods.*



*Dunseth and Sears owned and operated a carpentry shop in the booming early days of Bloomington.*



*Bloomington boasted as many as five rooming houses at one time. The Linzey Rooming house was one of the rooming houses in 1912.*



*The Pool Land Company was one of several companies selling land in the Bloomington area. Pictured from left, Frank Skarda (b. 1864) and S. A. Pool on the Skarda farm about 1913.*

S.M. Crum to build home. Will live in Everston building while home is being built. The Grant Brothers of Vanderbilt bought out Coffey & Dunseth Lumber Yard.

• February 8, 1912

A contract was let to Page & Kuhn contractors to build Bloomington Bank building, a two room structure. One room will house the bank and the other will house a hardware store. Building to face Dr. Motheral's office.

• March 7, 1912

John Crum was granted a fifty year franchise to put in a Telephone Exchange in Bloomington. He expects to receive the machine Saturday and will have direct lines to Victoria, Port Lavaca and Port O'Connor. On same date, Commissioners Court of Victoria County approved Port Lavaca Telephone Co. franchise to build telephone line along road parallel to GH&SA Railroad from Calhoun and Victoria County line to Placedo and along road parallel to Missouri Pacific (Frisco or Gulf Coast Lines) from Placedo to Bloomington and to connect with the Bloomington

Telephone system at switchboard. In November 1912, Crum moved the phone office to upstairs two rooms in new two story building. Miss Amelia Diebel (Mrs. D.Q. Todd) was the first operator. Mr. Esterlein was the night operator. The Western Union telegraph line has been completed to Victoria.

• March 12, 1912

W.V. Coffey and Cecil Dunseth purchased Mr. Adams water well outfit. They will continue to do well work

• March 12, 1912

The brick building for the hardware store nearly complete, some stock of hardware store is in place. Mr. McGuffin in charge of hardware stock... D.F. Lewis of Sinton bought two lots near Bank on same street and will erect a feed store... W.T. Lowery bought two



*Local men visiting outside the meat market before heading home.*

lots and meat market from H.C. Kelly and will run the meat market... John Crum bought J.J. Evans General Merchandise store building and stock... Dr. J.W. Vermillion of San Benito, Texas purchased two business lots opposite the drug store and will build a business house. He also bought ten acres from A.L. Cameron located 1/2 mile from town... Claude Grantland announced plans in 1912 to build a cold storage plant in Bloomington.

• March 8, 1913

A petition was presented to Commissioner's Court to grant John Alexander a franchise for an electrical system. Signers to the petition were:

W.T. Baldwin	N.M. Bartley
J.R. McGuffin	E.P. Stubblefield
J.J. Evans	E.K. Stubblefield
E.E. Wilson M.D.	W.W. Plumb
J.M. Clark	L.A. Cameron
J.W. Brown	C.F. Cole
John L. Morgan	G.H. Bonner
Grant Page	Nat Dickey

• March 10, 1913

Commissioners Court granted the petition of John Alexander for an Electric Plant and System Franchise for fifty years. To use streets, roads, alleys and highways for right-of-ways for poles and wires. (Alexander never exercised his franchise. Bloomington did not get electricity until late 1927.)

- November 2, 1912  
Mr. DeLong from Francitas went into business in Bloomington.
- July 29, 1913  
It was announced that J.E. Ryan would erect a building in Bloomington. The contract was let to Dunseth & Sears. Eliza Childress of Bloomington to be in charge of Ryan's undertaking business.
- November, 1913  
A.J. Barnett & Son built a 50' X 80' brick building with a plate glass front located on Main Street.
- September 22, 1914  
J.H. Chapman sold the Busy Bee Confectionery to J.M. Browning. There was a mortgage to secure the agreement for \$500.



*The patrons of Kelly's Saloon in Bloomington around 1913 were a somber looking group for this picture.*

Wilson Smith operated his store and rooming house from May 1907 until 1910 when he sold out to E. Page Stubblefield and E. Kelly Stubblefield. Smith returned to Waverly, Illinois, in 1910, where he published the town's newspaper.

The Reiminschnider Gin operated until about 1916. The Stell Steam Gin opened on Curo Street at Franklin Street in about 1914. The Wet/Dry election of December 5, 1914, prohibited the sale of beer, wine, whiskey, etc. in Bloomington and closed the local saloons. J.M. Hanna was a wholesale malt dealer at the time. W.G. Kelley, A.F. Slectha, M.E. Wilburm and Carl Thurman were retail malt liquor dealers. They each operated a saloon. This election ushered in the era of the bootleggers.

Grant Page built a Rooming House in 1908. It later became the Baldwin Hotel. The Baldwin Hotel was one



*The Baldwin Hotel located near the train depot burned in 1956.*



*Built in 1908, the Baldwin Hotel burned despite efforts to save it. Many of the town's people came out to watch a part of Bloomington's history turn to ashes.*

of the first buildings and was in continuous use until it burned in 1956. The Frisco Cafe was located in the hotel. It was said to be the only eating establishment on the Railroad between Houston and Brownsville. Page contracted with a rancher in Refugio to buy meat. The meat was shipped from Refugio to Bloomington by train. He sold meat out of his Cafe.

There were three rooming houses to provide lodging for land speculators, cattle buyers, cotton buyers, home seekers, cowboys, and railroad men. Rooms were \$1.50 per day, less by the week or month.

The Bank of Bloomington was organized in 1912 by Otto W. Haisley, President, and James R. McGuffin, Cashier. It opened for business on April 1, 1912 and went bankrupt in 1913.

"The two young men (Haisley and McGuffin) came from the North. As they made some poor investments, the bank did not prosper. Then one night, according to the interview with a local resident, when they were supposed to be out of town, they slipped back to the bank and got all the money. They stayed around town for a while to make people think they were not guilty. There is supposed to have been an eye witness who saw them enter the bank, but she would not reveal it for several years. There were some disheartened people in Bloomington in 1913 after the bank closed." (*Wyatt, p.64*)

Some people maintain that McGuffin made off with the money in the 'dark of the night'. The bankrupt bank paid depositors eight dollars on the hundred.

The First State Bank was chartered on March 1, 1913. (*Appendix K*) The bank was chartered with 100 shares of stock at \$100 per share for twenty years.

The first shareholders were:

F.S. Buhler - Victoria	5 shares
S.M. Crum - Bloomington	5 shares
A.B. Dunseth - Bloomington	5 shares
J.W. Coffman - Bloomington	5 shares
O.H. Sears - Bloomington	5 shares
N.M. Bartley - Bloomington	10 shares
R.G. Givens - Bloomington	5 shares
Grant Page - Bloomington	5 shares
A.C. Barnett - Bloomington	10 shares
T.P. Traylor - Victoria	6 shares
Chas. C. Zirijacks - Victoria	5 shares
J.F. Welder - Victoria	5 shares
L.A. Cameron - Bloomington	2 shares
Ed Hatch - Bloomington	1 share
Claude Dunseth - Bloomington	1 share
E.P. Stubblefield - Bloomington	1 share
E.K. Stubblefield - Bloomington	1 share
W.G. Kelley - Bloomington	1 share
J.F. Grant - Galveston	5 shares
Jno. D. Harrison - Austin	5 shares
W.H. Crane - Victoria	1 share
Jules C. Levy - Victoria	2 shares
F.R. Parcal - San Antonio	1 share
E.G. Parcal - San Antonio	1 share
H.A. Wavels - San Antonio	1 share
D.J. Jecker - Victoria	1 share
E.H. Schneider - Victoria	1 share
J.W. Henderson - Victoria	3 shares
Thad Post - Victoria	1 share



*Bloomington's Pioneer Years (1907-1919)*

The seven stockholders on the first Board of Directors were:

S.M. Crum	A.B. Dunseth
J.W. Coffman	O.H. Sears
Jas. F. Welder	N.M. Bartley
T.P. Traylor	

The charter was for twenty years. The new bank advertised as having \$10,000 capital and that their non-interest and unsecured deposits were protected by the State Bank Guaranty Fund. Officers and Directors of the First State Bank in the second year were: A.B. Dunseth, President; Sam Crum, Vice-President; and N.M. Bartley, Cashier. Directors were S.M. Crum, N.M. Bartley, R.G. Givens, V.H. Rush, T.P. Traylor, J.F. Welder, and A.B. Dunseth.

The *Bloomington Breeze* newspaper published its first edition on July 12, 1912. Publication was later taken over by Miss Rosa Cameron who published the paper until operations were suspended in January 15, 1918. The weekly newspaper stopped publication 'due to conditions of the war'.

*Page Stubblefield would sell you a ton of hay for \$6.50.*

*The Airdome Theater was in a roofless building that showed silent movies at night.*

*Ryan Funeral Parlor and Anchor Lumber Yard were Branches of Victoria businesses.*

*Claude Dunseth and Onie Sears were carpenters. Many of the old houses still standing around town were built by them. C.K. 'Dutch' Cole also built houses as did T.M. Gaunt.*

*Dr. Motheral was the town's first doctor, arriving in 1911. Dr. E.E. Wilson practiced medicine in Bloomington in late 1912 and 1913. Dr. John Rush came in 1913*



*In 1913, the First State Bank of Bloomington was chartered with N. M. Bartley and A. C. Barnett the largest stockholders.*

from Gainesville, Texas. He had his office on Shepley Street and First Street. He had a Drug Store in his office. Dr. Rush served patients in an area from Mariana (McFaddin) to Placedo and from Green Lake to Victoria. In early days, there was no hospital in Victoria. The nearest hospital was in Cuero. Dr. Rush was also the city health officer. He lived in Bloomington until his

death in 1933. One didn't often go to the doctor's office. It was more common for the doctor to get his little black bag, mount his horse and come visit the patient at home.

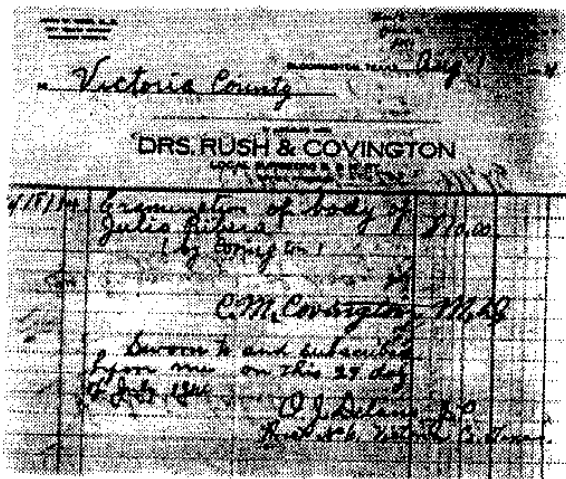
In 1914, a Dr. Charles M. Covington worked with Dr. Rush in Bloomington.

Walter Kelly was Deputy Sheriff in about 1914. The city jail, known as Kelly's Jail was built by Kelly behind his Saloon. It was a small frame structure covered with sheet

iron. A hole was cut in the floor to serve as a toilet. There were bars over the open windows and on the door. Inside were two or three bunks. Kelly would sell liquor to his customers and when they got drunk would lock them up in his jail. The next morning the Justice of the Peace would try and levy a fine on the drunks and turn them out of jail. City Marshal was L.N. Flourney. Most times Kelley didn't bother with a Justice of the Peace, he issued the fine and collected it.

## Post Office

In the early days, before there was a post office, there were two ways to mail a letter. One could walk to Placedo Junction as trains stopped there. Or you could out by the tracks and wave the train down. It would





*slow and you would hold up a barrel hoop with the letter attached. Someone on the moving train would lean out and grab the barrel hoop. A little piece down the track they would throw the hoop off the train, minus the letter, and you would go and retrieve it.*

*In 1907, the Postal Department approved Bloomington as a Post Office. On August 28, 1907, Wilson Smith was appointed the first postmaster. The post office was in his store on Nueces Street at the railroad. For incoming mail, the postal clerk on the moving train would just throw the mail pouch off at Smith's store. If there was outgoing mail, it was hung on a special hook next to the tracks. The clerk would snare the pouch from the train. Smith would sort the incoming mail on a small table; people would come in and look around to see if there was anything with their name on it. Wilson Smith was postmaster until October, 1910.*

*When Wilson Smith returned to Illinois in 1910, Page Stubblefield became the town's second postmaster from 1910 to 1913. He moved the post office to his mercantile store on Second Street.*

*L.A. Cameron was postmaster from 1913 to 1915. He moved the office to the northeast corner of Shepley and First Street. He had a delicatessen in the same building.*

*In 1915, J.J. Evans became postmaster and served until 1919. The post office was moved one block to the northeast corner of Shepley and Second Street. Gurney Kindred, Page Stubblefield's brother-in-law, became postmaster in 1919. The office stayed in the same location.*



*One of the first churches in Bloomington in August 1913 was the First Methodist Church.*

## Churches

An interdenominational Sunday School was organized in 1908 by Mrs. Ancel Dunseth and by Wilson Smith's mother, while on a visit from Illinois. The Prot-

estant Sunday School class met for several years before a church was organized. The Sunday School enrollment in 1909 was 46 members with an average attendance of twenty. In those first years, they met in the shade of Wilson Smith's store, the bunkhouse, a cotton pickers shack, the lumber yard and the two room school. No attempt was made to organize a church.

#### **Methodist**

The interdenominational Sunday School was the forerunner of Bloomington Methodist. Ministering to the local community church was taken up in 1910 by Rev. R.G. Flummer, pastor of the Victoria Methodist Church. Later in the same year, G.Z. Sadler was appointed first pastor for Bloomington; he also served Port O'Connor. In 1911, Rev. Sadler received the first members into the Bloomington Methodist Episcopal Church. The first members included the Ancel Dunseth family; Conel Dunseth, Will Dunseth family, Pete Lowery family, L.D. Midgett family, Dr. J.B. Motheral family, O.H. Sears family, Mrs. R.G. Givens, Mrs. W.J. McDaniel and Miss Rosa Cameron. In November 1912, property was obtained at the corner of Indiana Street and Third Street to build a church. Services were held in the two room school until the first church building was completed in August, 1913. The "Ladies Aid", a womens organization was organized in 1913. Pastors follow-

ing Brother Sadler were A.J. Coburn (1912/13); N.W. Carter (1913/14); J.D. Worrell (1914/16). According to the December 25, 1914, issue of the BLOOMINGTON BREEZE there was preaching at the Methodist Church on the second Sunday of each month at 11:00 am & 7:30 pm and Sunday School every Sunday at 10:00 am. Other ministers were W.L. Brandon (1916/17) and Edward W. Morton (1917/19).

#### **Baptist**

In 1910, some men got together and built a church at Fifth Street and Illinois Street. The unpainted building was called the Baptist Tabernacle. Among the first members of Bloomington Baptist were the Albert Wynn family, the Rye Rigby family, Dave Rigby family, Web Coffee and W.P. Jones. The local Baptist community joined the Colorado Baptist Association and was recognized by these churches in 1912. The first pastor in 1912 was Brother C.S. Pond, who commuted from Blessing, Texas. There were sixty people on the Sunday School rolls, and the Sunday average attendance was fifty three. Church records show the church had property in 1913 valued at \$4500. In 1914, preaching was on the first and third Sundays of each month at 11:00 am & 7:30 pm, and Sunday School every Sunday at 10:00 am. Following Brother Pond, ministers included George W. Clark (1913/14); W.L. Evans (1915); C.H. Wray (1916); and W.S.

Gibbs (1917/20). In 1918, the large white permanent wooden building known as First Baptist Church was built. It had an auditorium and six class rooms. In 1919, the membership was transferred into the Guadalupe Baptist Association.

The Methodists and Baptists conducted their individual Sunday school each Sunday. But they alternated church services with the Baptist on first and third Sundays and the Methodist on second and fourth Sundays. Many attended services at both churches, going one Sunday to the Methodist Church and the next Sunday to the Baptist Church. They followed such a schedule until the early 1920s.

#### Catholic

*Father Peter M. Baque began coming from St. Mary's in 1914. He came on alternate Saturdays to hear confessions and celebrate Mass. We met first at the home of the Al Slectha family, corner of Nueces Street and Commerce Street. Families attending those first masses were the Joe Warburton family, Fred Breivogel family, Al Slectha family, Frank Skarda family and Mrs. Exira Cameron Anderson family. The Eugene 'Toady' Byrne family who lived over around where the DuPont Plant is began coming a few years later as did Mrs. Moses Bowen.*

*In about 1914 and for about a year, Father Baque said mass in the chapel of Ryan's Funeral Parlor. When this*

*chapel became too small, we used a room in the abandoned two room public school and then an abandoned pool hall of First Street. Baled hay stored in the other half of this latter building was used to support the altar. In 1918, we returned to the Funeral Parlor. The partition dividing the chapel and the storage room was removed in order to use the entire building.*

*Reflecting on these years, Thelma Schurtz said it best when she said, "We had Mass just about anywhere we could find a place".*

#### Nazarene/Pentecostal

In 1914, the Nazarenes had preaching every 4th Sunday at 11:00 am & 8:00 pm. Sunday school every Sunday at 3:00 pm; prayer meeting Wednesday & Sunday nights; Finest C. Beakley was Pastor. They used a store front building on First Street between Illinois Street and Indiana Street.

Rev. Matt Davis, Brother Bennett and their wives conducted a Pentecostal Revival in 1917, but no plans were made to establish a church.

#### Christian Church

Bloomington was founded by three Christian ministers. There was a Christian Church in those early days. John Page held several worship services on the second floor of the McDaniel store building on Second Street. But he was not an ordained minister and the services were considered interdenominational.

In 1913, the church was organized and in 1914 the Rev. J.R. Briggs had preaching on the second Sunday at 11:00 am & 8:00 pm Sunday school each Sunday at 10:00 am and Christian Endeavor on Sunday evenings at 7:00.

In 1920 the Catholic Church bought the pews from the Christian Church as its members had disbanded.

### Black Churches

In the mid-teens, Mt. Calvary Baptist Church under Rev. Rhodes and Mt. Pilgrim Primitive Baptist Church were organized. Early members of Mt. Calvary were Francis Scott and Celeste Scott. Primitive Baptist was started in about 1916 when several families moved from Mariana (McFaddin) to Bloomington. These families included Mose Lewis, Raymond and Andrew Lewis. In 1916, Rev. Albert Pleasant began conducting Sunday services in the 'school in the pond'.

### Schools

*The first school in the area was the one room red school in the settlement of the Traylor Ranch. In about 1910, this school was closed and a school was built on the corner of Guadalupe Street and Texas Avenue (Black Bayou Road #1). This became known as 'the school in the pond'.*

*By the end of 1907 and the beginning of 1908, there were several school aged children in the community. A collection was taken up among the townspeople to hire a school marm. Almost fifty dollars was collected. John Page's daughter Flossie was hired. She had graduated in Indiana a few months earlier. Classes were conducted in the shade of the Lumber Yard Building on the corner of*



*One of the first teachers at the two room Bloomington School in 1909 was J. D. Midgett, pictured here with wife, Minnie Bell; Claude (10 yrs.); Wayland (7 yrs.); Velcie (5 yrs.); and twins Bell and Nell (1 yr.).*



*Clara Dunseth was one of the first teachers in Bloomington circa 1909. She is shown here with family and friends, from left; Sudie Cameron, Bessie Randolph, Clara Dunseth, Sara Dunseth, Mrs. Dunseth and Mrs. Motherall.*

*Commerce Street and Cuero Street. There were only six or eight kids in attendance. Flossie returned to Indiana in the summer of 1908 and in the fall Rosa Cameron organized a class for school aged children.*

*In the fall of 1908, classes were held in the old bunkhouse. The move was made to obtain a quieter place to study and the need for more room to accommodate the increasing number of students. My brothers Frank and George and sister Jennie attended classes in the bunkhouse under Miss Rosie.*

In 1909, the two room Bloomington School was completed on the corner of Commerce Street and Guadalupe Street. The two teachers were Clara Dunseth and J.D. Midgett.

School enrollment grew rapidly between 1910 and 1913, reflecting the growth of the community. By 1911, there were over eighty students; J.D. Midgett was Principal and Mollie Motheral was a teacher. J.R. Trice was later the Principal at this school and Alma Lenhart was a teacher. Classes only went to the eighth grade.

The students included: Cleo Kelly, Manly Bonner, Claude Reimenschneider, Otto Reimenschneider, Edmund Manire, Tom Pool, John Stell, Doil Pool, Jim

Skarda, Wilbur Hunt, John Warburton, Rigby Bonner, John Evans, Claude Midgett, Wilmer Lowery, Pierce Kelly, Louis Slectha, Charlie Reimenschneider, George Skarda, Lena Lane, Julia Motheral, Betsy Midgett, Thelma Breivogel, Elta Hunt, Joe Hernandez, Marcella Slechta, Alberta Breivogel, Mary Etta Hunt, Pauline Hunt, Bertha Wynn, Waldo Wynn, Paul Evans, Mary Gaunt, Janie Givens, Madge Lowery, Mellie Austin, Bessie Wynn, Bill Bonner, Andy Lane, Roy Bowen, Grady Brumagen, Victor Hunt, Connie Wynn, Galen Wynn, Level Wynn, Hershall Souders, Annie Louise Givens, Margaret Warburton, Helen Selecta, Mannie Brown, Ella Gaunt, Jennie Skarda, Paula Hernandez, Justa Hernandez, George Slechta, Guy Wynn, Claude Kelly, Roy Wycarver, Ulmont Lowery, Mae Hall, Tran Trawick, Ida Williams, Owen Bonner, Roper Hall, Annie Martin, Cyril Slectha, Irving Bowen, Ollie Hayes and the three Parker boys.

In March 1913, a petition was circulated to build and equip a free public school. The structure was to be two story with an exterior of brick. The petition by the citizens of Common School District #13 of Victoria County was presented to the County Judge requesting an election. The petition requested a vote on the issuance of 88 bonds in denominations of \$100 at 5% to be paid off in 40 years. Those signing the petition were:

H.C. Kelley	A.W. Flynn
J.L. Crum	C.L. Wynn
H.L. Finley	E.K. Stubblefield
J.D. Motheral	H.V. Hunt
E.P. Stubblefield	J.J. Evans
Frank Skarda	J.R. Cole
W.J. Rigby	O.H. Sears
H.C. Wells	A.B. Dunseth
J.F. Breivogel	D.O. Rigby
Geo. C. Morgan	J.E. Warburton
J.R. McGuffin	W.G. Kelly
S.A. Pool	R.G. Givens
L.C. Dowdy	D.F. Lewis
O.J. Souders	S.M. Crum

The election was called on April 5, 1913; Grant Page presided over the election.

The two story brick building was built on Guadalupe Street. It had four or five classrooms; the two classrooms on the second floor could be opened up to make a large auditorium. There was a plank sidewalk all the way from Commerce Street to the school, about a block and a half.

Charles A. Timm was Principal at this school. W.A. Kuydendahl, J.A. Risenhoover and Mary Glascock were teachers. This school was built off the townsite property designated for use for a school. In later years the West Ward School and then the E.E. Hatchett School would be located on this site. The old school on Commerce Street was torn down some years later.

There was a conflict centered around the location of the 1913 school.

Some citizens wanted it located on the school property in the townsite while others wanted it located on the other side of town near the depot (present location of the elementary school).

*Students went through the tenth grade. The first graduating class was the class of 1916. There was one graduate, Annie Louise Givens. My sister Jennie would have graduated but she went to Nazareth Academy to finish her senior year. In 1919, the Texas Legislature established the Bloomington Independent School District. (Appendix L)*

## **Citizens**

By the end of ten years, in 1917, well over a hundred families had moved to Bloomington, many coming from the midwestern states of Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky, as well as from other parts of Texas. (*Appendix M*) The area contributing the largest number of settlers to Bloomington was Murray, Calloway County, Kentucky. Over twenty families came from this southwest Kentucky county, including members of the Stubblefield family. One of their family members, Nathan Stubblefield, is credited with the invention of the radio in the 1880s prior to Marconi, who is historically given credit for that invention. A marker near Nathan Stubblefield's old home place in Murray reads, "Here in 1902 Nathan B. Stubblefield, inventor of radio, broadcast

and received the human voice by wireless. He made the experiments 10 years earlier. His home was 100 feet west."

# Timeline

## The Roaring Twenties (1920-1929)

- 1920 Ku Klux Klan organized  
First radio in Bloomington  
First oil well drilled
- 1921 First and last issue of the *Bloomington Star*
- 1924 Blizzard of 1924
- 1927 CP&L provided electricity to Bloomington
- 1928 Chamber of Commerce organized
- 1929 City of Bloomington declared bankruptcy  
First State Bank declared bankruptcy



### *Chapter Three*

## **The Roaring Twenties (1920-1929)**

The 1920s were not as prosperous for Bloomington as the previous decade had been. The local economy was primarily based on agriculture with the principal crops being cotton and corn. In Europe, farmers recovered from the destruction of the World War and began producing again and in this country, women's fashions changed to shorter skirts and fewer petticoats while at the same time synthetic fabrics were being introduced. All these changes reduced the demand for American farm products.

Bloomington voted itself dry in 1914 and nationwide prohibition became law in 1918. But these were the 'Roaring Twenties'. There were at least eight bootleggers operating in Bloomington during the twenties. Three made and sold beer; three made and sold whiskey; and two made and sold both beer and whiskey.

*One bootlegger claimed he delivered whiskey to customers in the Court House in Victoria every Saturday. He once showed me how he wrapped the bottles and explained how the deliveries were made. He claimed to actually go into the Court House and deliver from office to office. His whiskey was reputed to be the best made in this part of the country.*

*Another bootlegger came into Bloomington every Saturday wearing a Macinaw (a big coat). He would stand in a downtown alley and sell in the open, pulling the bottles from pockets that had been sewn into the coat. No one ever tried to stop him. This man was also the Deputy Sheriff.*

*A Mexican man lived in a shack across from Miller's Steam Gin. Farmers would bring their cotton to town and line up at the gin. While their teams were in line they would go to the shack and drink beer. He would not charge anything for his beer, you just paid him what you wanted. His place was very well known around town.*

*There was another bootlegger who had a still in the motte on Black Bayou. He made good beer and had a lot of customers; many from Victoria. On Saturdays there was a steady stream on people going to his place. The road to his still was adjacent to our farm and I watched this continuous flow of people while working in the fields.*

The federal revenueurs would raid these stills from time to time but they never put them out of business. When a revenueur was in the county, everyone knew it.

*The home of Bloomington area farmer W.M. Miles burned down dur-*

*ing the night of February 9, 1920. The damage was estimated at \$2,000. An overturned kerosene lamp started the fire and nothing was saved except the family's supply of bacon and lard. The Miles farm was where the Amerada Camp is located today.*

In 1920, Pat M. Neff was campaigning for governor. He aggressively sought the office traveling throughout the state by airplane, automobile, and mule and making from three to seven speeches a day. He brought his campaign to Bloomington making a speech from an especially built platform on a vacant lot. After his speech, one of the Givens girls gave him a bouquet of flowers. He was elected governor twice and served from January 1921 to January 1925.

*The Ku Klux Klan was organized in Bloomington in the early 1920s. There were about thirty active members and many more sympathizers. Some of the community's most prominent citizens were Klan members. It was generally known who the members were but the membership was kept secret. The town divided between the Klan and its sympathizers and the Anti-Klan citizens. Those opposed to the Klan were called 'Andys.' An unofficial list on Klan members circulated within the 'Anti' community.*

*On Main Street, the Klan stayed on one side of the street and patronized those businesses. The Andys stayed on*

*the other side of the Street. Klan members boycotted Anti-Klan businesses and vice-versa. Several stores went out of business.*

*Fred Breivogel ran his meat market in a building owned by a Klan member. Being anti-Klan, Mr. Breivogel was forced to move down the street to the Anti-Klan side. When he moved, he rented a larger building from R.G. Givens on the corner of Second Street and Shepley Street. This was a larger building in a better location. Mr. Breivogel added a line of groceries as well as to continue to sell meat. His business prospered. Some time later, Mr. Breivogel met his former landlord on the street and asked to shake his hand. Puzzled, the other man asked why. Mr. Breivogel told him that his forced move had been a very good thing for his business.*

*Another merchant joined the Klan when it organized. The anti-Klan people boycotted him. After becoming involved and learning what the Klan represented, he resigned. Klan sympathizers then boycotted his business. He was forced out of business because he alienated both sides and had no customers.*

*The Klan would 'patrol' the town streets at night on horse back wearing their sheets. This was very upsetting and frightening to some of the citizenry. The Bloomington KKK went to Victoria one Saturday to march*

*in a parade. The rumor was that every upstairs window along Main Street had a gun sticking from it. The parade was cancelled and our Klansmen returned home without staging their march.*

*Klansmen were not to associate with Catholics, Jews or Blacks. There were no Jews in Bloomington. The Klan remained a very divisive element in the community for three of four years in the early twenties.*

The Woodman of the World became less active and ceased to exist by the end of the decade. There was a woman's organization called Rebekah Lodge. The Odd Fellows were also organized and had a lodge above the Post Office.

*In about 1920, Lonnie Farmer brought the first radio to Bloomington. It had three components; two table cabinets about 24"x18"x18" and a speaker horn. It was a battery powered crystal set. It was a popular pastime to gather at the Farmer home on Sunday afternoon and listen to the radio. My brother George and I bought the radio in 1925 for \$25. We could pick up stations all around the United States. By adjusting four knobs, we could pick up stations in St. Paul as well as Chicago, Des Moines and other far off cities. Some of our favorite programs included the 'Little Jack Little Show' from Des Moines and the 'Harry Snodgrass Show.'*

*Sunday afternoon dances became a favorite activity in the twenties. As many as thirty or forty people would be invited to someone's house to listen to the radio or phonograph and dance. Whole families would attend.*

On April 5, 1921, Josephine Cottle was born in Bloomington. The Cottle home was located on the northeast corner of Commerce Street and Brazos Street. When Josephine was about eighteen months old, her father, who managed the Grant Lumber Yard, died, and the family moved to Houston. Josephine won a beauty contest in about 1939 and went to Hollywood to become the movie and television star, Gale Storm. Her movies included 'Tom Brown's School Days' in 1939; 'Red River Valley' with Roy Rogers and Trigger in 1941 as well as 'Sunbonnet Sue' and 'The Texas Rangers'. She starred in the TV series 'My Little Margie' in the 1950s. Her hit songs included "I Hear You Knocking" and "Never Leave Me".

On November 18, 1920, President-elect and Mrs. Warren G. Harding and their party passed through Bloomington on the train on their way to Houston. They had been to Port Isabel on a deep sea fishing trip. Word spread around town that the special train would stop at the depot for about ten minutes to take on oil and water. A large crowd met the train. The President and his wife came out of the car



## Bloomington Star

By Henry Wolff Jr.

We were all sitting around the drive-in, sipping on root-beers, listening to Gale Storm sing on the radio, watching all the cars come and go.

It was a time of fender skirts and low rear ends, a car that didn't have one or the other wasn't to be noticed, look both to really attract any attention. A little extra trim on the side didn't hurt any.

Must have been about 1956 or '57, didn't pay much attention to years at the time.

Gale Storm had some popular tunes out in those days, "I Hear You Knocking," "Never Leave Me," number of others, had the Gale Storm Show on television, would later star in *My Little Margie*.

Hadn't thought about her in a long time, not until about a week ago. The wife was working one of these crossword puzzle things she's so fond of, something called a word search, this one about Texans in entertainment.

"Know where Gale Storm is from?" she asked.

Before I could answer in the negative, she answered herself.

"Bloomington."

I'd heard that before, in fact had been trying to recall which star had come from Bloomington, knew she was a singer, had become quite famous.

After the wife found her for me, went searching the library for more information about Gale Storm, found out



GALE STORM

her of others. Even starred with Roy Rogers and Trigger in Red River Valley about 1941, don't know how many times I'd seen that movie and

never paid all that much attention to the girl. In those days I was more interested in the horses.

Decided to drift over to Bloomington and see if I could find anyone who knew her when she was Josephine Coltie, found Jim Skarda, who's been in Bloomington since the place was founded back in the early 1900s.

"Sure, I knew her," he said. "Remember when she was born. Had two sisters, Lois and Marjorie, and a brother, Wilbur."

Skarda said her father managed Grant Lumber Co., but died of tuberculosis soon after she was born, that the mother and children then packed up and moved to Houston.

"I used to go see them after they moved," he recalls.

He said Josephine won a beauty contest in Houston,

that's what got her in the movies.

"She was born down the road here about a half-mile," he recalls. "The house was later moved next to where the post office is now."

Skarda says his brother, George, once owned the house.

"It's gone now, burned down in 1953."

Skarda, who was postmaster in Bloomington for many years, said a letter came addressed to Gale Storm about 15 years ago, he forwarded it as best he could, hopes she got it.

Us kids used to spend a lot of our time at one kind of drive-in or the other, never gave much thought to where the people entertaining us had come from, had other things on our minds at the time.

Wasn't horses either.

(Reprinted courtesy of *The Victoria Advocate*)

*the trains come and go. On Sunday afternoon a train came through at about 1:30 and another, going the opposite direction, came through about 2:30. The town's people were interested in who was getting on the train to take a trip and where they were going and who they were going to see and when they planned to return. It was also of interest who was getting off the train and where they had been and what they had done and what had happened in Bloomington while they were gone. People would socialize on the depot platform between trains. Often times*

and waved "Hellos" and "Thank you for coming out" from the trains observation platform.

*A favorite pastime in Bloomington was to gather at the depot and watch*

*the Robles band would play and travelers on the train would throw pennies from the train windows.*

*One day a man leaned out the window and yelled, "What is the population of this place?". Someone in the crowd yelled back, "Why don't you count them? They are all here."*

*The engines were steam driven and they would stop in Bloomington to take on water. Their huffin and puffin caused great excitement. Water came from an artesian well and was pumped up and into an open tank supported by a tower next to the tracks. Water was piped from the tank into the depot drinking fountain. The water tasted fine but always had a foul odor. One afternoon, my brother George climbed to the top of the tank. He said the water in the tank was covered with dead birds and had bugs swimming in it.*

*A man named Baker ran a jitney from Victoria to the Bloomington depot. He drove a Dodge Touring Car and met the day trains and the night trains shuttling people back and fourth between the Bloomington depot and Victoria.*

*The area's first oil well was drilled in the Bloomington area in about 1920. The driller sold stock in the well to area citizens to raise money to finance the drilling operations. It was a dry hole. Then in 1922, John Myers drilled an oil well on the Sanders Marshall farm about a mile out of town on the Placedo Road. They built a wooden derrick and drilled. The first hole was dry. So, they drilled six more holes for a total of seven, from the same derrick without finding oil. Homer McDaniel was a roughneck on this derrick.*

*In the early 1920s, and for about two years, state law required that all cattle be dipped to eradicate ticks. A vat was constructed near the railroad and Nueces Street (present location of the Lions Club building). The*



*Dipping vats and cattle pens were a common sight in Bloomington in the early 1900s. Many of the early settlers owned cows.*

*vat was about 4 feet wide and 20 feet long. Built of wood, it was buried at ground level. Each end slanted down toward the middle. Individual head of cattle were lead down into the vat, the dip getting deeper and deeper until the animal would fall off over its head and swim over to the other end and get out. Dipping cattle was a very messy job and half the time you would have to force the animal into the vat. Dipping the horses and mules was still worse.*

*The state inspector knew exactly how many cattle each farm owned. We rounded up all of our cattle and live-stock, about 30 head, and drove them to the vat. It was a big job to keep your cattle separate from those of other farmers. The first time we went to the vat we were one cow short. A few days later, the Deputy Sheriff came to the farm to determine what we were going to do about the missing cow. Over a period of about two years, we had to take all of our livestock to be dipped three times. It was a nasty job, but after a period it eradicated the tick problem. The area ranchers with large herds had their own vats.*

In the 1920s the government posted the names of those who paid Federal income tax in the post offices. In 1924, the only individuals to pay income taxes in Bloomington were Page Stubblefield and Kelly Stubblefield. No one else made enough money to be required to pay the tax.

On December 19, 1924, a blizzard struck the Texas Coast. The next day the temperature plummeted to 19 degrees and for eight days it stayed below freezing. Six inches of snow blanketed the countryside. According to some of the Bloomington old timers, cattle froze in the fields. The trains could not run and the mail was delayed for several days. *The Victoria Advocate* reported that an ice-laden tree limb fell on J.B. Scheumack, a pecan dealer who was working the Stubblefield bottom across the river from Bloomington, and knocked him unconscious for two hours.

*When the train was able to get through it brought a mountain of mail. About a dozen men helped carry it from the depot to the post office. It was like a parade. Of course, the train had to stop to throw off the mail. It had a lot of difficulty getting under way again; having to back up and make several running starts to break through the snow and ice covering the tracks.*

*W.J. Manning planted a twenty acre fig orchard in 1925. A man named Holstein was Manning's farm manager. Paul Bowen and I planted hundreds of fig cuttings about four feet apart. The orchard was on the property presently occupied by St. Patrick's Church. He canned the figs for sale in his cannery which was on the property. A few years later, we had another freeze*

*which damaged the trees. Manning cut the trees off at ground level which killed them; if he had just pruned the trees, they would have survived. He also planted dozens of palm trees on his property.*

*In 1925, the two story Jarvis Rooming House was moved from First Street to Second Street. It was moved with a block and tackle and two mules. The building was moved directly across the block from its previous location to its new location. The move took all one Saturday afternoon and the whole town turned out to watch.*

*The little iron jail continued to serve the community until 1928 when Coda Wynn and some twenty five of his friends turned the building over as a Halloween prank. The boys tied ropes to the building and used horses to turn it over. There were men in jail at the time; they crawled through the toilet hole in the floor and escaped. The upside down jail was never replaced. From then on, anyone having to be incarcerated were taken to the county jail in Victoria. Fouts Ballard was City Marshal in the early 1920s followed by Starly Thornton in about 1925. Lee Miller and then Gus Paulus (about 1929) were Constables and Rafel DeLeon and then Ralph Cameron (1928) were Deputy Sheriffs.*

*Page Stubblefield obtained the required number of subscribers for CP&L to provide electricity to the communi-*

*ty. In December 1927, the 600 citizens of Bloomington got electricity. Breivogels had a Christmas tree with colored electric lights! By 1928, the town had three street lights; one at the depot; one at Shepley and Second (Main) Streets; and one at Second (Main) and Illinois Streets. The lights were 150 watt bulbs.*

*Page Stubblefield was also instrumental in getting United Gas Corporation to bring natural gas to the community in 1928.*

*The Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1928. Officers were: W.J. Manning, President; J.B. Hardy, Vice President; George Skarda, Secretary-Treasurer; and Ed Hanna and Herman Vela, Directors. The purpose of the CofC was to obtain a roadway between Bloomington and McFaddin across the Guadalupe River. There was a meeting to draw up a petition to present to Commissioners Court. One of the early meetings was rather lively with various opinions being expressed. Some wanted to petition just for the right-of-way; others wanted the right-of-way and a gravel road; while some wanted a paved road. Some wanted to ask for a river bridge immediately; while others wanted to delay the bridge request believing we would have a better chance of achieving our goal in the long run by not asking for too much initially. The petition was finally drawn up to be submitted to the*

authorities. A meeting was arranged at the Court House in Victoria on a Saturday with county officials and our state representative. Everyone was assembled at the appointed hour for the meeting. But the individual who was to make the presentation for the Chamber of Commerce never showed up. Speculation was that he had been bought off. Neither the county or the state expressed any interest in this project. Then came the depression and the CofC disbanded and the initiative to build the road and bridge was dropped.

Highway 35, the 'Hug the Coast Highway' from Houston to Corpus Christi via Port Lavaca was not constructed until the 1930s.

In 1928, the Bloomington Booster Band was formed. However, it lasted only about a year as the depression brought hard times and the band ceased to exist.

### City Government

In city elections on April 6, 1921 R.G. Givens was re-elected as Mayor. Alderman elected were: C.P. Scarborough, Ed Bowen, Roy I. Stubblefield and C.M. Dunseth. W.T. Baldwin was elected City Marshall.

The city of Bloomington went bankrupt in 1929 because of the bad economic times. City incorporation was terminated. George Skarda was appointed trustee with the authority to liquidate the city's assets and pay off its creditors. The only property owned by the City was a road maintainer. William McDaniel was the last mayor of Bloomington.



*The last mayor of Bloomington was William Jackson McDaniel, born 1871 in Tennessee. His wife, Rosa Ellen McDaniel, was born in 1881 and died in 1963 in Victoria. They had five children.*

### Post Office

Guerny Kindred was Postmaster until 1924. The post office was located on Shepley Street at Second Street. Kindred's postal clerk was Mrs. Cole.

In 1924, Louie Skarda was appointed Postmaster. He hired his sister Agnes as his clerk. When Agnes married in 1925 and moved to San Antonio, Louie hired



Owassia Givens. When Owassia quit in 1926, he hired Edna Glascock (Diebel). Louie's wife Monte was postal clerk from 1927 until 1930.

## **Churches**

### **Baptist**

Mr. Kelly was minister in 1920 through 1923. By 1924, membership had grown to 144 members. Brother J.T. Hollan in 1923 and 1924 came to hold services three times a month. Mr Woods was the minister in 1924 and 1925 and Brother E.E. Smith in 1926, and G.L. Johnson in 1927 through 1929.

### **Catholic**

In 1920, the Catholics bought the Ryan Funeral Parlor, which they had been using for about two years, and converted it into a church. Bishop Arthur Drossaerts of San Antonio dedicated the funeral parlor as a church in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Bloomington church was made a mission of St. Mary's in Victoria. Father Patrick Feeney and then Father Lambert Schiel served the mission during this decade.

### **Methodist**

In 1922, the church was remodeled and additional property was purchased. Pastors included W.H. Dunseth (1919/20), Charles H. Doak (1920/21), L.W. Walker (1921/22), J.W. Brown (1922/23), C.J. Rogers (1923/26), E.A.

Potts (1926/27), and George L. Ryan (1927/29).

### **Black Churches**

In 1921, Morning Star Baptist church was organized by Rev. Elijah Heard. Early members included the families of Sanders Marshall, Sam White, Hayes Fisher and Evelyn Rydolph. The church was located on two lots on the corner of Cuero Street and Franklin Street on land donated by Earl Rydolph. Rev. R.F. Scott succeeded Rev. Heard as pastor.

### **Schools**

In the early 1920s the Black school moved from its location in the pond to property on Katribe Street between Park Street and Kensington Street. (Present location of the Bloomington Cemetery)

The 1921 graduating class of Bloomington High School included Mary Avis Boales, Helen Agnes Bundick, Tressie Anita Newell, Verona Marceline Linville, Mack Othello Glasgow, and Mark Louis Parker. In 1922, John Crum, Ruth Nobel Anderson and Robbie Givens graduated. Graduation ceremonies were at the Baptist Church.

On Tuesday, March 3, 1925, at about 10:30 in the evening, the two story brick school house erected in 1917 at a cost of \$20,000 was completely gutted by fire. The school burned at night while the town slept. A freight train



*The red brick school often served as a background for social gatherings in Bloomington.*



*The two story red brick building was built in 1925 at a cost of \$55,000 and was in use until 1966.*

coming from the valley saw the sky aglow. Mike Munlin was fireman on the train and he began blowing his whistle to awake the town. The fire, which completely destroyed the school, was rumored to have been purposely set. For the remainder of the school year and part of the next year, classes were conducted in the Baptist Church, Methodist Church and in store buildings downtown. Some temporary frame classrooms were also constructed.

A bond issue passed to build the red brick school. In late 1925, the new two story was completed on the north side of town on Second Street at Leonard Street, present site of Bloomington Elementary School. The building had a coal fired boiler for heat and a gasoline power plant for lighting. This building was used until 1966, and was torn down in 1975.

Hispanic and Black students did not attend the new school.

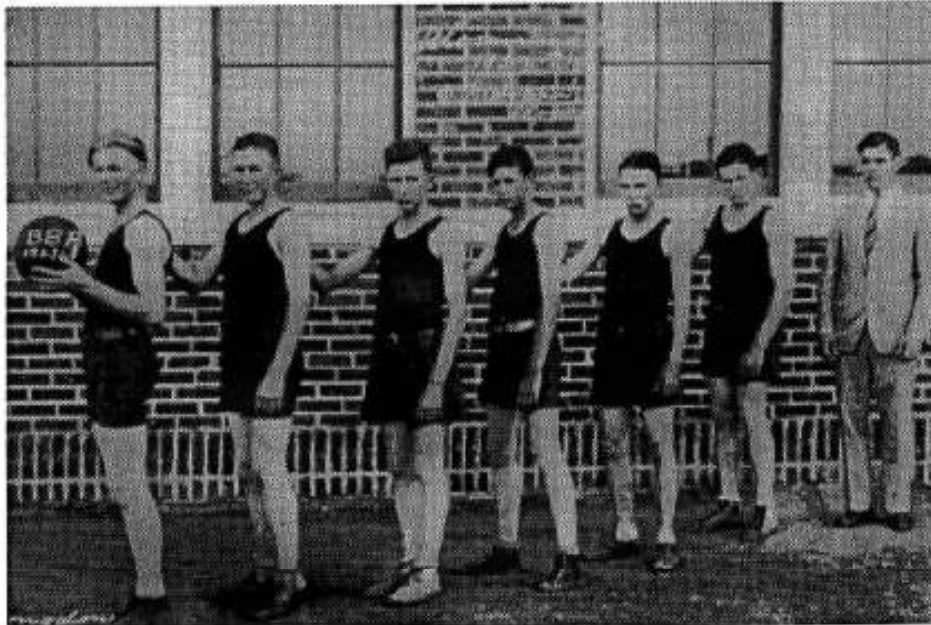
In 1925, four students graduated. They were Bessie Crum, Owassia Givens, Grace Armstrong and Geneva Corder.

By the mid twenties, the high school had enough male students to organize a basketball team. They played on an outdoor

dirt court, dressed in old plow shoes and overalls. In 1928, a string of electric lights was strung across the outdoor court and games were played at night.

E. E. Hatchett came to Bloomington in 1926 with the intention of teaching at the Black elementary school for one year. He was 20 years old. Professor Hatchett and his wife Marion retired from BISD in 1969. The Black elementary school and the street on which it was located were both named E. E. Hatchett in his honor.

The class of 1926 graduated Minnie Vetter, Radkey Clark, Ladoska Dowdy, Edna Wynn and Luther K. Maroney.



*The Bloomington High School Basketball team, 1927-28, won the 1929 Loving Cup. Pictured left to right: Dan Hougan, Hilbert Glasgow, H. L. "Booger" Ross, Tracy Browning, Roy Stubblefield, Ewin "Six Shooter" Guerin, and Coach E. P. Hopper. Forrest Diemer replaced Tracy Browning for the 1929 season.*

The 1927/28 basketball team was coached by B.P. Hooper. Team members were Dan Haugen, Hilbert Glasgow, Booger Ross, Tracy Browning, Roy Stubblefield and Ewing Guerin.

Lourana Stubblefield, LaVernia Schultz, Byrl Page, Margaret Hall, Faye Paulk, Maxine Corder, Jack Glasgow and Dan Haugen graduated from Bloomington High School in 1928. Byrl Page is TV newsman Dan Rather's mother. Byrl, the daughter of Mark and Effie Page, was raised in Bloomington. Her parents were among the first set-

tlers here. Dan Rather is Lola Maroney's nephew and Marvin Maroney's cousin.

Until 1928, students graduated after ten years in school. Seventh graders were known as freshman. In 1929, the eleventh grade was added. Some of the 1928 graduates returned for their eleventh year and graduated again in 1929.

In 1929, the basketball team won the school's first Loving Cup (trophy). All schools in the county competed for the trophy. Bloomington played Patti Welder School, Mitchell School, Wood

Hi School and Telfener School among others. The first school to win the Cup three times got to keep it. This winning team of Coach Hooper included Roy Stubblefield, Forrest Deimer, 'Six Shooter' Guerin, Dan Haugen, Robert Glasgow and 'Booger' Ross.

In the late 1920s, about 1928, Gilbert Prichard shot a bobcat in the river bottom. He had it mounted and gave it to the school as a mascot - thus the Bloomington Bobcats.

The last superintendent of schools in Bloomington during the 1920s was Tom England.

### Business Community

In 1929, The First State Bank went bankrupt.

*As to the number of business establishments, the town didn't experience much growth in the 1920s. Several businesses closed while others opened. The Ford dealership, owned and operated by Dave Crum, was in business for most of the twenties. Aksel Haugen and Ed Hanna each opened garages to service and repair these new automobiles. Blacksmith shops were doing much less business.*

In about 1923, John Stell sold his gin to C.H. Miller who in turn sold it to the South Texas Cotton Seed Oil Co. in 1926. (The old gin on Cuero Street was torn down in about 1932.) E.W. Martin opened his new Gin on Market Street in 1925.

P.H. Bucek's General Merchandise Store was broken into during the night of April 1, 1924.

*Mr. Noble, the peanut man, had a peanut stand on the corner of Shepley Street and Third street. All he sold was peanuts; he lived in his peanut stand.*

The first issue of *The Bloomington Star*, a weekly newspaper, was published on January 29, 1921. The publisher's name was J. L. Adams. The following is a letter taken directly from the paper.

*Mr. J. L. Adams  
Bloomington Star  
Bloomington, Texas*

*Dear Sir;*

*Here are my congratulations along with \$2.00 for a years subscription for the Star. Funny thing about this. A week ago today, when leaving the office with the Victoria Fact in my hand, I made the remark that the Bloomington Breeze would be a very welcome visitor each week as it was a few years ago. Reading the Fact at noon, imagine my surprise upon seeing the article that plans were underway to commence publishing the Breeze again.*

*Such a prompt fulfillment of that prophesy was hardly expected as to receive a copy of the newspaper so soon. I see the new paper is the Star rather than the Breeze. Well and good and may your beams shine brightly. It is worth a lot to Bloomington to have*

the Star and you should receive the most hardy and loyal support.

As you perhaps are not yet aware my interest in Bloomington arises from the fact that I was one of its earliest inhabitants, its first storekeeper, and first postmaster but Grant Page can tell you about it, he is the only man who beat me there.

Yours truly  
Wilson M. Smith  
(Wyatt p. 88)

The Star was published only a few months.

Some of the businesses in the early 1920s were:

Businesses	Owner(s)
Bloomington Ice Cream	W.A. Wyle J.F. Breivogel
Bloomington Bottling Works	W.A. Wyle
Crum Motor Company	J.D. Crum
Bloomington Cafe	J.F. Paulk
City Drug Store	W.L. Noble
City Bakery	A.M. Wynn
The Barber Parlor	R.A. Diebel
Frisco Hotel	W.T. Baldwin
Lewis Grocery	D.F. Lewis
Miller Gin Company	E.H. Miller
Stubblefield Bros.	E.P. Stubblefield E.K. Stubblefield
Stubblefield Hardware	Roy I. Stubblefield
Thornton Grocery	J.N. Thornton W.R. Thomas

Fred Breivogel bought out Thornton Grocery in about 1922 when he moved into the Givens Building and added a line of groceries to his meat market.



The Bloomington Ford Dealership was owned and operated by Dave Crum during most of the 1920s.

C.A. Wynn and G.W. Wynn bought the Bottling Works from W.A. Wyle in about 1924.

New businesses in the late 1920s included Evans & Wynn Garage, Gary Evans and Mel Wynn; Haugen Garage, Askel Haugen; Holloway & Meyers, Russ Holloway and J.F. Meyers; Texas Cafe & Confectionery, G.E. Jarvis.

There was a bakery and an ice cream plant. There were also two gins, Miller's Steam Gin and the B.W. Martin Gin.

In 1926, 268 Bloomington citizens paid their poll tax to vote. (Appendix N)

# Timeline

## The Hard Times (1930-1945)

1930-33 The Depression

1933 Prohibition repealed

1936 Guadalupe River flood

1936 Bloomington votes to be "Dry"  
Oil discovered in Bloomington area

1939 Municipal Water and Sewer District established

1940 Severe winter storm  
Fire destroyed half the town

1941-45 World War II

1942 Hurricane

*Chapter Four*

## **The Hard Times (1930-1945)**

*During the 1930s, times were tough; there was no money. I farmed all year in 1931, producing thirty-six bales of cotton on sixty acres. For my effort I lost \$600. Nineteen thirty three was probably the worse year of the Depression.*

*Every train that came through town was carrying stowaways in the cattle cars and freight cars. These families—men, women, and children—were riding box cars leaving home and going to other parts of the country in hopes of finding employment. Individuals and families were aimlessly moving around the country trying to find employment. It was not unusual to see men riding on top of box cars.*

The best jobs around were with the railroad. Some of the locals working on the bridge gangs were Floyd Schurtz, Doss Ross, Dave Page, Radkey Clark, Louis Anderson, Weldon Burnett and John Hunnicutt. 'Six Shooter' Guerin and Kelsey were section Foremen. Slim Garrison was a lineman for the telegraph company.

In the 1930s there were onion sheds located next to the railroad tracks across from the depot. Farmers brought their onions to be culled and prepared for sale. Buyers came to the sheds to purchase onions by the sack full.

*During this period there was an unusual number of disasters. In 1934, we had another strong hurricane. Though the eye went ashore in the Rio Grande Valley, we received high winds and rains. As with the storms*



*The 1940 winter storm was severe, bringing a five inch snow to Bloomington that lasted for several days.*

of 1915 and 1919, we had no advance warning. (Hurricanes were not named back then.)

In 1936, the river flooded. This was the worse flood ever. Water got so high it flowed over the railroad bridge and washed out the grade for about a mile and a half at the Bayou Trestle. Trains had to be routed through Victoria. Later, water got so high in Victoria, trains were re-routed through San Antonio.

The winter of 1940 was severe. In January we received a four to five inch snow. Everything was covered with snow. No sleet, just snow. It was a beautiful sight and lasted several days.

There was a big fire in 1940. The business district on the east side of Main Street burned destroying about half the town's business. Among those burned out were Thames' Grocery, Hunt's Butcher Shop, the Bakery and Vela's General Store. The estimated loss was \$30,000 to \$40,000.

On August 30, 1942, the strongest hurricane yet hit Bloomington. The eye passed over town. Much damage was done with many homes and storefronts being destroyed. Naval vessels at sea knew in advance of this storm, but they could not break radio silence to warn civilians for fear that German submarines patrolling in the Gulf would pick up their signals and locate their positions.

In 1945, there was another hurricane. It was rather weak compared to

the one in 1942.

Prohibition was repealed on Tuesday, December 5, 1933, at 4:32 in the afternoon. This was the end of the bootleggers. Ironically it was the legalization of liquor that resulted in Bloomington going dry. Liquor was legally voted out in 1914 and by 1918 the bootleggers had moved in and they were active until the end of prohibition. With the end of prohibition, Bloomington remained dry but Placedo was wet as well as Calhoun County and the precinct beginning about three miles up the road toward Victoria. On June 28, 1936 there was a Wet/Dry election in Bloomington. (Appendix O) The "Drys" won by a 99 to 69 margin. A few months after the election, Walter Kelly then opened the Avalon Terrace just two miles south of town. It remained a popular club until the early 1950s.

Oil was discovered in Placedo and south of Bloomington in Calhoun County in 1936. The Heyser Field was about three miles south of town in Calhoun County. Humble Oil Company and Gulf Oil Company opened Camps in the Heyser Field. The Humble Camp was built adjacent to the Heyser Gas Plant in Calhoun County. Several families lived in each camp.

The Humble Camp had a community hall and about eighteen homes. The Gulf Camp had approximately six homes. The Heyser Field also includ-



ed Sunray, three homes; Magnolia, one house; Sinclair, one house and Buchannon Oil Co., two houses.

United Gas had a natural gas pipeline booster station near the Bill Bauer farm at the southwest corner of Black Bayou Road #1 and the Old Bloomington Road. In 1942, the government took it over to be used as an oil pipeline. They took water out of Black Bayou to flush out the line. It almost emptied the bayou with the water level getting down to about three feet.

Scout Troop #68, Boy Scouts of America was organized in about 1938.

The circus came to town Sunday December 17, 1940. Animals included two camels, two elephants, one baby lion, two Shetland ponies, one baboon, one badger and six monkeys.

City water came from open tanks which caught rain water and from shallow wells pumped with windmills or pressure pumps. The owner of a water well might sell water to as many as ten to twelve of his neighbors. Sewage was disposed of in septic tanks and in cesspools. In some cases, waste water was allowed to run into open ditches. In 1939, the voters approved the organization of a water control and improvement district whose purpose was to provide the community with a municipal water and sewer system. C.M. Dunseth was the first President. Other board members were P.K. Stubblefield, C.E. Beckley, Floyd Gilbert and

M.H. Dunham. World War II interrupted the planning and development and nothing could be done for its duration.

The population of Bloomington in 1940 was about 800. The phone book in 1942 had 10 listings for Bloomington.

*The second World War began on December 7, 1941, and lasted until mid-1945. Four Bloomington boys were killed; they were Wesley Terrell Ballard, in Sicily; Reginald T. 'Reggie' Clews, in Belgium; Oscar R. Dietering and Julius Fjukus.*

*Mac Key had a night job guarding the railroad bridge over the river. There was a fear that a German sympathizer might attempt to destroy it, thus impending transportation along the railroad.*

*Franklin D. Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, just weeks before victory in Europe. My brother George, sent our brother Paul, to the church to ring the bell for thirty minutes as the community mourned.*

## **Post Office**

*The post office was relocated from its location at Second and Shepley Streets to the building on Second Street midway between Shepley and Illinois Streets in 1930. The biggest problem was how to move the safe. When all else failed, Louie tied it with a chain to the back of his Model T and pulled it down the gravel street. George and Louie bought the building*

*from Sam Crum. In those days the postmaster owned the building and supplied all the fixtures. Louie owned the boxes but the government received the box rent. He was paid \$42 a quarter for building lease and utilities. The post office remained at this location until 1965.*

*On January 1, 1931, my brother Louie died. He was a veteran of World War I. Shortly thereafter, my brother George was appointed postmaster. He held the position until 1936 when he resigned because of poor health. I was appointed postmaster in 1936 and served in the position until retirement in 1972.*

*Alleen Ross was hired by Louie to be his clerk in 1930. She worked in the post office until Margaret Hall was hired in 1932. When Margaret married and moved to Seadrift in 1934, Dorothy Hall was hired. Alleen Ross was rehired in 1938. We married in 1939 and Alleen worked until just before Jimmy was born in 1941. Sidney Traylor replaced Alleen until he was employed by the railroad in 1942. Alleen returned as postal clerk and remained in the position until her death in 1964.*

Trains delivered mail seven times a day: four deliveries from the main line, two from Victoria and one from Port O'Connor/Austwell.

The post office was open for window service seven days a week: 8:00

am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Saturday, and 8:00 am to 10:00 am on Sundays. The lobby was locked when no one was on duty.

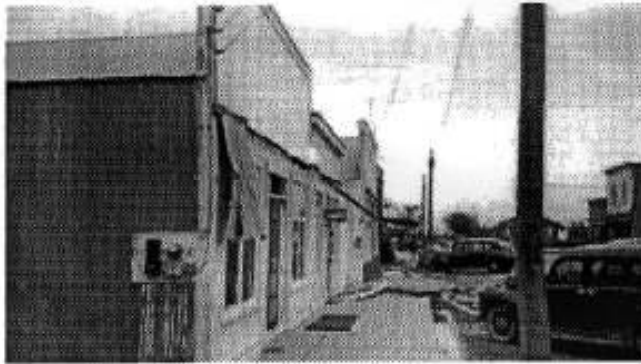
## Churches

### Assembly Of God

A tent meeting was held in Bloomington in the summer of 1939. It was conducted by Rev. Jim J. Lands and Rev. Wayne Harbaugh. Services lasted for three weeks or more. Rev. Harbaugh conducted open air services in Bloomington for about nine months in 1941/42.

### Baptist

The drop in membership in 1930 to 1934 reflected the general decline of the town in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1930/31 Brother R.T. Thomas held services on alternate Sundays. Lem W. Crouh (1933/37) held services every Sunday. Services then returned to twice a month. In 1932, First Baptist sponsored a Mexican Mission which lasted until 1941. A parsonage was built in 1937. In 1937, the church began having services every Sunday again. H.V. Dennis (1938/39) came on alternate Sundays. Beginning with Brother E.W. Cofer (1940/41) Sunday services were held weekly. Brother Cofer was followed by Brothers J.E. Welch (1941/43) and O.D. Henley (1943/45). By 1940, membership had grown to 196. In 1945, the church sponsored a radio program.



*Scenes of Bloomington after the 1942 hurricane.*

### Methodist

In 1931, the congregation purchased two lots across from the church for a parsonage. Pastors were: J.E. Burnett (1929/31), Leon D. Brown (1931/32), J.D. Ramsey (1932), C.B. Dietz (1932/33), G.T. Haster (1933/34), T.M. Mitchell (1934/36), E.M. Jordan (1936/37), Lowell O. Ryan (1937/38), W.T. Veatch (1938/39), C.W. Rylander (1939/40), A.W. Monk (1940/42), Clarence M. Walton (1942/43), Walter W. Lipps (1943/44) and Harvey C. Bamberger (1944/46).

The hurricane of August 1942 blew the windows out of the church. Repairs were promptly made. In March 1943 a twister moved the building about twelve feet off its foundation. Again, repairs were made.

### Catholic

*Father Emmett Kolodize and Monsignor James R. Boyle came from St. Mary's Church between 1932 and 1937. My uncle, Father Frank Dvorak came to live in Bloomington in 1937. He was retired from the Diocese of St. Cloud, Minnesota, and moved here to live with my parents. He was the first priest to reside full time in Bloomington. He said Mass every Sunday and on all the holy days. When Father Dvorak returned to*



*The Sacred Heart Catholic Church of Bloomington, April 1937, was located near the main Bloomington town site. This scene looks southeast and the primary residential and business areas were north and west.*

*Minnesota in 1938, Father Henry Psencik began to come to Bloomington from St. Joseph's Church in Inez, Texas. In 1940, we were made a mission of Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Victoria. Father Salvador Marco and then Father Julius Petru came from Sorrows. In late 1943, responsibility for Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Sacred Heart Mission in Bloomington and Infant of Prague Mission in McFaddin were turned over to the religious Order of the Most Holy Trinity. Father Daniel Giorgi and Father Richard Toal then began coming to Bloomington.*

*The old funeral parlor served as a church until it was severely damaged by the hurricane of August 1942. Plans were made to build a larger church. The new Sacred Heart Church located on the corner of Third Street and Rail Street was dedicated on January 1, 1944.*

### **Black Churches**

Rev. Samuel Demond became pastor of Morning Star Baptist Church in 1930, a position he held for twenty-eight years. The first building on this location was destroyed by the 1942 storm. Another church was built the same year and was used until the present church was built in 1964.

### **Schools**

Most activity in the 1930s centered around the school. Lee Payne was superintendent during most of the 1930s.

Bloomington's first championship team came in 1931. The Bobcats, representing Victoria County, beat Edna, Port Lavaca and Hallettsville for the District 24 Championship and played Lanier High School of San Antonio for bi-district. The starters for Coach Claude Mullins' Bobcats were: Alton Bundick, forward; Tracy Browning, forward; Lassiter 'Booger' Ross, center and captain; Festus Elkins, guard; and Mack Parker, guard. Rounding out the team was Raymond Bundick, Albert Stovall, Joe Middleton, Novis Elkins and Lewis Sparkman. The San

Antonio newspaper stated: "Bloomington deserves credit for defeating Hallettsville in the District 24 tournament final to earn the right to meet Lanier, Champion of San Antonio and District 23. The Victoria County school has an enrollment of exactly 19 boys, most of whom are on the team." The Bobcats lost the Bi-District to Lanier 35 to 22.

In 1932, BHS graduated Harold Hall, Albert Stovall, Raymond Bundick, Erna Vetter, Barbara Taylor, Fay McDaniel, Gwendolyn Hatch, Flake Shropshire, Mark Glasgow, Doris Simpson and Brownie Hodges. Joe Middleton was killed two weeks before graduation.

Again in 1932, the basketball team minus Mack Parker and Joe Middleton won the district championship. The high scoring Bobcats defeated Port Lavaca 39 to 13; Goliad 40 to 21; and Yorktown 45 to 15.

In 1932 (or 1933) the first football team was organized and coached by Claude Mullins. St. Joseph's Academy in Victoria dropped football that year. Bloomington bought their equipment. After much discussion the school board voted to spend \$40.00 for the padding and uniforms for 24 players.

Bloomington fielded an eleven man team with five substitutes. Players played both offense and defense. After two years, football was dropped. Most of the players were farm boys who could not



*1932 District Champions included back row left to right: Novis Elkins, Tracy Browning, H. L. 'Booger' Ross, Festus Elkins, Alton Bundick, and Coach Claude Mullins. Front row left to right: Raymond Bundick, Lewis Sparkman, Albert Stovall, and Terril Ballard.*

practice in the afternoon as they had to go home and work in the fields.

The 1936 class graduated Arthur Hall, Donovan White, Ann Miller, Pinkie Carpenter, Lorraine Brockman, Tom Whitfield and Eunice Buckholtz. The graduating class of 1937 included Sidney Traylor, Sidney Key, Herman

Fox, Earnest Lewis, Carl Hunt, Ruby Wynn, Abiss Elkins, Syble Sammons and Quincey Thompson.

The West Ward school for Spanish speaking students was opened on the site of the school in the original town-site in 1937/38. The frame one room school was for students in grades one



*The yellow brick gymnasium building, as it appears today, 1997, still in use after 58 years of service.*

through eight. A year or so later, another frame building was built. The first teacher was Lowell Ryan. Later teachers were Miss Laza, Miss Glasgow, Miss Gladys McCurray and Edna Mae Maroney.

O.C. McClennon was superintendent for two years beginning in about 1938/39. He was succeeded by Mr. Roscoe. The yellow brick gym was built at the High School in 1939. It remains standing today.

"Our new gym is becoming the center of school and community activities. We have had many different kinds of entertainment in it this year. We have a "play night" every Monday and on Friday a motion picture show for everyone's enjoyment. The town uses it for a "play night" on Wednesday. When

the basketball season opens, it will be used for many match games. We are proud of our gym and wish to express our thanks to the town and community for making it possible for us to have such a nice building. It is the best gym in the county and the students of Bloomington think it is the best in the district. Students, lets show our appreciation by taking care of it." (Mary Lee Hanna in THE BOBCAT, Published by Juniors of BHS, November 2, 1939).

The football program was reorganized in 1940. "September 2, 1940, about twenty boys started out for football on the dusty field east of our school. Of these twenty boys many had never seen a game of football, and not one of them had ever played. New uniforms from head to foot, a September

sun, and a new coach presented a very hot situation. Time rolled on and by the end of a week most of the boys had learned how to put on and pull off their uniforms without aid or direction." (From *The Bobcat*, November 19, 1940).

The 1940 football schedule began in October, after the cotton crops were in, and included eight games.

The team was district football champion in 1941; but were beaten in bi-district by Columbus 20-0. Players in this winning team were: Guthrie Sklar, Philip Wetherbee, Andrew Nuckols, Jessie Ballard, Tom Fielder, Billy Glascock, Robert Fielder, Harley Dee Myers, Victor Moore, Donovan White, Camey Myers, James St. John, Paul Beall, Billy Duckett, Billy Patterson and Junior Linville.

Football was played only a year or two when the war intervened. During the war years there were not enough boys to field an eleven man team. An attempt was made to field a six man team but there were no other schools in the area with six man teams to compete against, so the program was dropped until 1945/46.

Bloomington High School also remained a basketball power, winning the district in 1940. In 1941 they went to state and in 1942, 1943, 1944 and 1945 they again won the District.

In 1941, the BHS basketball team was Regional Champion. On Coach C.G. Smith's team were Russell Myers, Eddie Kocian, Harley D. Myers, James

St. John, Frankie Traylor, Irwin Maroney, Don Davis, Camey Myers and Page Maroney. Bloomington was the only class 'B' school at the state meet in Austin. Other schools at state were Jeff Davis, Houston, Pampa, Mt. Vernon, El Paso, Waco, Abilene and San Marcos. The Waco tigers beat the Bobcats in their first game 35 to 19. Russell Myers was high point man in the game and placed on the all state team.

The class of 1941 included Eleanor Clark, Irwin Maroney, Margaret Gremmel, Doris Rush, Lillian Dunseth, Nolan Faggolores White, Hoit Hunnicut, Gladys Haugen, Mary Lee Hanna, Margie Harvey, Norman Andrews, Eddie Kocian and Ira Sklar.

The school faculty in 1941 included O.O. Vickers, Principal and teachers: Ellie Watson, Norvel McCauley, Ben Abney, C.G. Smith, Lydia Koester, Fannie Mae Foster, Lois Lancaster, Agnes Smaistrala, Atha Bee Henrichson, Lucile Rock and Gladys Mae Harbaugh. Members of the Board of education were M.H. Key, President; S.A. Todd, Secretary; and Harry Heins, C.E. Smith, B.C. Wildberger, A.S. Traylor and J.F. Ballard.

## **Business Community**

Business establishments began declining in the late 1920s and continued well into the 1930s. Some of the places of business open in the early 1930s included Breivogel's Grocery; Thame's Grocery; Stubblefield Bros. Grocery;



Nobel's Drug Store; Stubblefield's Hardware; Clark's Hardware; Dieble's Barber Shop; Crum and Co. Grocery/ Dry Goods; Myer's Grocery; Dunseth's Feed Store; Haugen's Garage; Miller's Gin; Martin's Gin; Baldwin's Hotel and Warburton's Blacksmith Shop.

In about 1932, the gin on Cuero Street owned by South Texas Cotton Seed Co. was torn down. In 1936, the E.A. Martin Gin was sold to the Bloomington farmers Co-Op.

*In 1932/33, Charles Dietz, the Meth-*

*odist preacher, and V.B. Cassel operated the Dietz Manufacturing Co. They manufactured automobile batteries that supposedly did not need to be re-charged. Dietz and Cassel imported beetles from Mexico and used the beetle juice in the batteries. They were in business only a couple of years.*

By 1940/41 the Bloomington business community had begun to grow again with several businesses surviving the depression and others opening anew.

BUSINESS	LOCATION	OWNER
Bloomington Amusement Club (Pool Hall)	2nd St.	Bill Handly
Gilbert Barber Shop	2nd St.	Floyd Gilbert
Diebel Barber Shop	2nd St.	Reuben Diebel
Red & White Store	2nd St.	Page Stubblefield
Patterson Grocery	2nd St.	Fred Patterson
Breivogel Grocery	2nd St.	Truman Breivogel
Cassel Grocery	2nd St.	Grover Cassel
City Drug Store	2nd St.	W.L. Nobel
Stubblefield Stock Co.	2nd St.	Page Stubblefield
Dunseth Electric Co.	2nd St.	Cecil Dunseth
Baldwin Hotel	2nd St.	W.T. Baldwin
Mrs. Van's Cafe	Second & Illinois	Gertrude VanZandt
Hanna's Cafe	2nd St.	Ed Hanna
DoDrop Inn	2nd St.	
Ideal Cleaning Co.	2nd St.	Quincy Thompson
Magnolia Service Station	2nd St.	Norman Key
Diebel Service Station	First & Shepley	Ed Diebel
Thames & Dunham Garage	Shepley St.	Fred Thames, Mel Dunham
Humble Garage	Second & Shepley	Axsel Haugen
Stubblefield Hardware	2nd St.	Roy Stubblefield
Randolph Plumbing Shop	2nd St.	Eston Randolph
Skarda Bros. Newsstand	Second & Shepley	George & Jim Skarda
Talbot Variety Store	2nd St.	Bob Talbot
Matchett Ice House		Curtis Matchett

*Dr. Davis hung his shingle in about 1933 and practiced medicine here a few years. Later, Dr. Wilson practiced medicine. Dr. Rudy Gauger came to town in about 1940.*

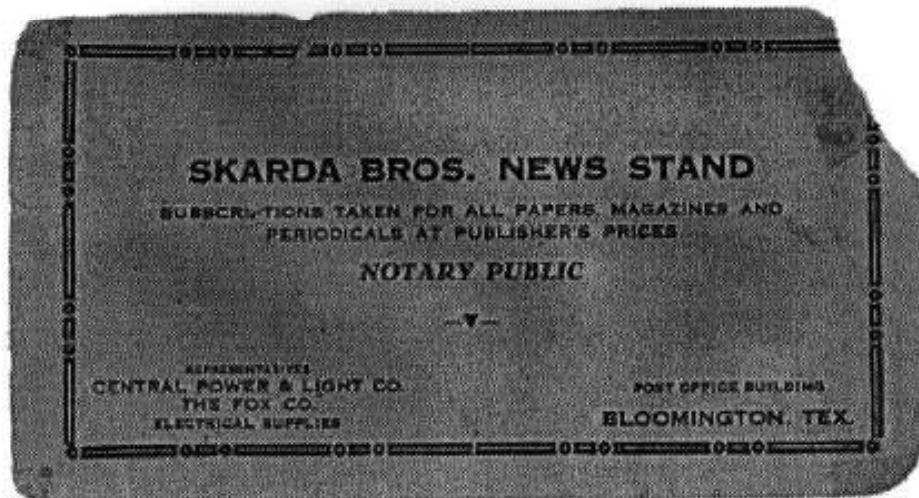
*Joe Warburton, Jr., practiced law here for about six months in 1941. He was the only lawyer ever to practice in Bloomington.*

*In 1940, you could buy round roast*

*of beef for about 16 cents a pound and pork roast for 18 cents a pound at Stubblefield's Red & White Store.*

*In the late 1930s area farmers formed a co-op and purchased the B.W. Martin Gin Company.*

*In about 1942, Arthur Hodde and Mac Key operated a dairy; they were in business until about 1947. Edgar Ray also operated a dairy in the late 1940s.*



# Timeline

## The Second Boom (1946-1957)

- 1946 Major fire in downtown Bloomington
- 1947 Water System installed  
Oil discovered in Bloomington  
New road built to Crescent Valley  
Tallest Christmas tree on oil derrick  
Citizens vote against incorporating
- 1948 Guadalupe River flooded
- 1949 Eddie Kocian elected Fire Chief for Volunteer Fire Department  
Sewer System installed
- 1950 Alcoa Aluminum opened
- 1951 DuPont plant opened
- 1953 Mary Caletka has first TV
- 1954 Union Carbide plant opened  
Water tower built  
Gas pipeline blow-out  
Major storm and flood
- 1957 First school district west of the Mississippi to integrate  
New High School opened

## Chapter Five

# The Second Boom (1946-1957)

After long years of economic depression and war, Bloomington began to grow again in 1946. In the next ten years the community would experience the greatest growth since the founding years of 1907 to 1917.

*On the night of May 26, 1946, there was another major fire. Again the east side of Main Street burned. Four frame buildings were burned to the ground including those housing Myers' Pool Hall, Gilbert's Barber Shop, Ideal Cleaning Shop and Stubblefield's Red & White Store and warehouse. Losses were estimated at \$25,000.*

*The fire was directly across the street from four buildings I owned, including the post office. I stayed on the roofs of these buildings for several hours with a water hose trying to keep the buildings from catching on fire. The fire did not spread across the street. The next day I had blisters on my face and hands from the heat. After the war, the water district was re-activated. By 1946, all but one of the five original board members had resigned and moved out of town. As each member resigned the remaining members appointed his replacement. This process continued until all members were replaced except Mel Dunham. The new Board President was W.P. (Jim) Skarda; Vice President, R.L. Bowen;*

*Secretary, Truman Breivogel; and A.W. Garrison and M.H. Dunham, Board Members. The district originally covered 225 acres in and around Bloomington. Eight months after the founding, 50 acres were loped off because nobody was living on them.*

*The water system was installed and became operational in June 1947. The sewer system went on line in November 1949. For all the years since Bloomington's founding, we were supplied water from individual shallow wells and open collection tanks. Sewage was disposed of in septic tanks and into open ditches. Citizens were responsible to no one for the condition of our drinking water and sewage disposal. As soon as we got clean municipal water from a deep well, here came the state regulators with a myriad of forms and reports to complete and water test to be conducted! For years we had been drinking stagnant water collected in open top tanks full of bugs and polliwogs with birds roosting around the tank rims. Now that we had water that did not have to be strained through cotton cloth before drinking, the state wanted to be assured it was pure water!*

*Marvin Maroney was the first Water Superintendent and Mrs. Adena Key served as the first Tax Assessor/Collector.*

*In 1946 there was another liquor election. Mrs. Kelly came to the Shoe Shop, operated by Lupe Bararra, with a tub of cold beer. She was giving away beer and electioneering against the election for Bloomington to go wet. The Kellys still owned the Avalon Terrace just across the county line and nearly all of their trade was from Bloomington. If the citizens were to approve the sale of alcoholic beverages in Bloomington it would surely have killed their business. The election failed by a substantial majority.*

*The old Givens Building on the southeast corner of Second and Shepley Streets had been leaning to the right for years. It was vacant. The building was leaning so bad that kids would play there attempting to ride their bikes up the side of the building. It was leaning more and more every day. One day in the summer of '46, it gave up the ghost and with a swisssssh - just laid over flat in a cloud of dust.*

*In April 1947, oil was discovered in Bloomington. Within five months eleven wells were producing and ten more rigs were drilling. The cost of drilling and completing a well was about \$40,000. Landowners were selling royalties for as much as \$2,000 an acre. The price of oil was \$1.80 to \$1.95 a barrel. The field was developed by Amerada Petroleum Co. Other Independent drillers included L.D. Cain Drilling Co., Henshaw Brothers, Mon-*

*day Oil Co., Hiawatha Oil & Gas, A.O. Phillips and Walter B. Shelton.*

*In August 1947, a new road was cut from Bloomington to Crescent Valley. The road was a continuation of Shepley Street toward Victoria. This road eliminated many of the curves and turns in the Old Bloomington Road which followed the high ground along the east edge of the river bottom. Four railroad crossings were eliminated between Bloomington and Victoria. In early 1948, the new road was hard surfaced.*

*We asked the County Commissioner to pave Main (Second) Street. He agreed, but said we would have to pay for it. Eddie Kocian and I contacted the land owners along the Street and collected \$2,200. We paid the contractor \$1,800 to pave eight blocks from the cotton gin at the railroad tracks to the sewer plant beyond the school. The other \$400 was given to the fire department. We asked Amerada for a contribution, but they refused because Bloomington had voted against becoming incorporated in June 1947 and had refused help from Amerada at that time. (See Chapter Heading: City Government).*

*The derrick drilling the Givens well on the corner of Second and Shepley was decorated with lights for Christmas, 1947. At 120 feet it was billed as the tallest Christmas Tree in the nation and the community received*

*nationwide publicity. The publicity centered on a Texas Christmas showing the oil drilling in close proximity to homes and buildings. There was a giant star atop the derrick.*

*With devastating fires of 1940 and 1946 and the voter rejection of the plan of incorporation and Amerada's offer for a fire station and fire truck, some in the community recognized the need for a volunteer fire department. In late 1947, there was a drive to collect funds to establish such a department. In the original drive, three hundred and seventy five dollars were collected. The first contributors were : A.H. Hodde, Raymond Bundick, Alton Bundick, L.C. Black, Page Stubblefield, W.P. (Jim) Skarda, D.B. Adcock, J.F. Ballard, Q.O. Thompson, M.H. Key, Service Garage - Eddie Kocian and A.A. Jurena, Ross Ahlstrom, Mrs. R. Thompson and the George J. Skarda, Estate. The first fire truck, a 1946 Chevy truck, was purchased in 1948. It was equipped with a 90 GPM pump, 300 gallon tank and 150 feet of hose.*

*Arthur Hodde and Page Stubblefield were leaders in organizing the Bloomington Lions Club. It was founded December 18, 1948. Charter members were J.M. Barber, Lloyd Bass, Charles Beard, L.C. Black, R.I. Bowen, Raymond Bundick, W.J. Coffee, Rex Davis, Carl DuBose, W.C. Ertle, A.W. Garrison, Tom Harris, A.H. Hodde, M.H. Key, Norman Key, J.M. Maroney, L.K. Ma-*

*roney, R.F. Oliver, W.C. Parks, Rankin Robertson, S.J. Samuelson, O.G. Walton, W.O. Webb, J.M. Wyatt and Joe Wyatt.*

*The Lion's Club took over sponsorship of the fire department. Page Stubblefield, whose grocery/dry goods store was burned out in 1946, and Arthur Hodde, manager of the Bloomington Co-op Gin that burned in December 1948, were prime movers in promoting Lion's Club sponsorship of the Fire Department. The gin fire gave momentum to the drive to establish a fire department. The community no longer had to depend on the Bucket Brigade to quench fires as it had for the past fifty years. In 1948, Eddie Kocian was elected Fire Chief; L.C. Black, Assistant Chief; Rex Davis, Captain; Clarence Spearman, Lieutenant; and Raymond Bundick, Secretary-Treasurer. In 1950, the first fire station was completed on Illinois Street next to the water office.*

*When in need of the fire Department, citizens were advised to call Eddie Kocian at phone number 13 during the day and Raymond Bundick at number 15 at night.*

*Eddie Kocian served the community as Fire Chief until 1982 - for thirty four years. The pride of the BVFD is the 1916 American - LaFrance fire engine purchased from the Victoria Fire Department in 1956 for \$1.00.*

*Industry came to the area in the late*

1940s. With construction going on for several years before plant opening, Alcoa Aluminum opened its Point Comfort Plant in 1950. DuPont opened its Victoria Plant just three miles north of Bloomington in 1951. The Union Carbide Plant began operations at Green Lake in 1954. The construction and operations of the plants brought thousands of workers into the area. Most made their residence in Victoria but some chose the more convenient location of Bloomington.

In 1949/50, Amerada built a Camp for ten families on fourteen acres purchased from M.H. Key on the edge of town. The Diebel Addition was developed about a mile and a half out the new Victoria Highway on land sold off to individual families in the early 1950s. A pump station and about eight houses were built by TGT (Tennessee Gas Transmission) on the Old Bloomington Road about four miles west of town (across from DuPont).

The Earl Bundick family developed the Bundick Additions; 16.63 acres were subdivided into lots along Johnson Street and Hedges Street from Leonard Street to Alton Street. In July 1957, Bundick Addition II subdivided 6.55 acres into 25 city lots along Rodgers Street to Alton Street.

During the 1940s and the early 1950s, the Avalon Terrace continued as a popular area club. Large crowds would gather on weekends to hear lo-

cal and area bands play for dances.

*Bailes (Mexican dances) were held at the Mexican Dance Hall on weekends. There were usually more Anglos in attendance than Mexicans. The building is still standing this side of the Victoria/Port O'Connor railroad on Second Street. There were also hot tamale and drink stands. Bingo games were held outside between the hall and the parking lot and Klondike games were held in the bushes out back. On most occasions, a Mexican man who drove an old black hearse came to the bailes and parked behind the Dance Hall. He sold beer from the back of his hearse.*

*The Lions and the BVFD sponsored many community projects over the years including Santa Claus, who arrived every Christmas on the fire truck to distribute fruit and candy to area kids. In the 1950s they mounted the Christmas star lighted with Christmas lights atop the siren tower next to the water office. They also strung Christmas lights across Main Street for several years. The Lions also sponsored the Boy Scouts for about 15 years.*

*The river flooded again in June, 1948. The winter of 1950/51 was severe with snow and sleet.*

In the 1950s bright gas flares could be seen in all directions from town as the oil companies were producing natural gas faster than it could be sold and was burning off the excess at the top

of tall towers located in the oil fields.

Over 400 wells were drilled in the immediate Bloomington area.

The community continued to be served by four passenger trains a day; two during the day and two at night. An average of 90 people a month boarded the train at Bloomington.

Mary Caletka had the town's first TV in 1953. She had a 40 foot antenna erected at her Cafe on the corner of Main and Shepley Streets. The black and white TV drew large crowds every night to watch such shows as "The Milton Berl Show" and "Ozzie and Harriet" on the small snowy screen.

*In 1954, a \$225,000 bond issue was approved to enlarge and improve the water and sewer system. The original water bond approved in 1946 was \$40,000 and the original sewer bond approved in 1947 was for \$48,000. We had to borrow \$10,000 from the sewer bond to complete the water project. The \$10,000 water bond approved in 1941 was never issued. Bloomington's skyscraper, the water tower, was constructed in 1954.*

On October 6, 1954, a natural gas pipeline blew out at about 8:30 pm on the edge of town on the Placedo Road. Residents stampeded from their homes, the Joy Theater and other downtown businesses. Freight train like rumblings rocked the town. The explosion blasted a hole 20 feet across and 8 feet to 10 feet deep. The bright

sky from the flames could be seen 25 miles away. Power failures darkened Bloomington, Seadrift, Green Lake and Long Mott. Electrical power was effected as far away as Laredo.

*On October 22, 1954, an unexpected storm and flood hit town. Over nine inches of rain and hail and winds of 75 to 80 miles per hour hit the community. I described the storm for the VICTORIA ADVOCATE; "It was raining so hard that it looked like fog, only it was moving around. I have lived here 46 years and it is the most water I ever saw standing around town". Several houses, garages and signs were damaged. The bleachers at the football field were overturned onto the middle of the playing field.*

*There were the Ladies Home Demonstration Club and the Decoration Club. And the Athene Study Club was organized in October, 1955.*

Fouts Ballard was Deputy Sheriff and Luther Weaver was Constable during this period.

## **City Government**

The community was booming, but there was no city government. Wells were being drilled in town, some just a few feet from homes and business buildings. Storage tanks were built in residential areas. Amerada wanted fire protection and improved streets and roads.

Amerada encouraged the townspeo-



ple to incorporate. They sent a Vice President, a Mr. Blow, from Tulsa, to conduct a town meeting in the High School Gymnasium. He explained that Amerada wanted an ordinance that a well would have to be so many feet away from a building and that storage tanks could not be built within the city limits. The oil company agreed to pay the \$3,000 cost to incorporate. They also promised, that if we approved incorporation, to build a city hall/fire station, buy a fire truck and pave and maintain certain city streets until the city was financially able to take over these functions.

A petition containing 50 signatures was filed with County Judge A.B. Chambers on June 13, 1947, calling for an election to incorporate Bloomington. The election was set for June 28, 1947. The voters decided by a ratio of over three to one that the community should stay unincorporated. The returns were 114 to 37. The majority was afraid of big business and that Amerada would attempt to run the town.

The community has not had a city government since it voted to unincorporate in 1929. (*Appendix P*)

## Post Office

*I was Post Master during this period and my wife Alleen was the postal clerk.*

*F.D. Whitfield picked up the mail*

*five times a day at the depot and pushed it through the streets in his two wheel cart to the post office. He made a like number of daily trips from the post office to the depot. He attached extreme importance to his job of delivering the mail. There was a bench on the side walk in front of the post office. He sat there all during the day when not on one of his runs. He carried a club in his cart for protection.*

*A postage stamp to mail a first class letter still costs only three cents.*

## Churches

### Catholic

*The Church experienced significant growth during this period. Two army surplus buildings were purchased in the late 1940s. One was attached to the rear of the existing church building to provide an enlarged sacristy and classrooms. The other was set on the lot next to the church and used as an activities hall. Bloomington continued as a mission of Our Lady of Sorrows; Father Daniel Giorgi and Father Richard Toal were transferred and replaced by Father Hyacinth Rosati and his assistant, Father John Cedilot, in 1950. Father John was replaced by Father Ignatus Estes in 1957 as assistant to Father Rosati. To accommodate the number of people the church began having two Masses each Sunday; the average attendance was*

*about 260. With growth continuing, it became apparent there were enough Catholics in Bloomington to support a parish. Archbishop Robert E. Lucey of San Antonio established St. Patrick's parish and named Father Gino Bernasconi as pastor in September, 1959. (St. Patrick's Church and Rectory were dedicated on May 1, 1960. St. Patrick's Hall was completed in 1975.)*

#### **Church of Christ**

The Bloomington congregation of the Church of Christ had its beginning in 1948 with Brother Scatter McClain as the first preacher. Early members were the Lois Reeves family, Loyd Fleeman family, Willie Smith family, Bill Moore family, Bubba Autry family and Travis Nettles.

The group started meeting in individual homes, the Humble Camp Recreation Hall and, on Sunday mornings, had use of the Joy Theater. Later, in 1949, a building was purchased from Foster Field Air Base in Victoria which provided an auditorium and two class rooms. The building was located on property purchased at Rail Street and Fifth Street. Brother Bill Hamilton was the first full-time preacher. During his tenure in 1951, the minister's residence was built. Other ministers to serve the congregation through 1957 were Lynn Browning and Tex Stevens. (The present building was erected in the Spring of 1963.)

#### **Assembly of God**

In 1947, Rev. Bob Caddell, Jr., came from Seadrift each Tuesday night to hold services in the Joy Theater. In early 1950, Rev. Anna Bell Davis held church services in the Bloomington Elementary School Music Room until September 1950 when Rev. James M. Sellers opened the Full Gospel Mission in a vacant store downtown. Families attending were: Fred Goynes family, Zeke Bonnet family, Benard Evans family, Jean Allred and children, Cammie Bius and Myra and Mrs. Sharron. About nineteen months later, Rev. Anna Davis replaced Rev. Sellers. In 1952, the congregation purchased a lot on Rail Street between Third Street and Fourth Street and built their first church. This church was dedicated April 26, 1953. Anna Davis was pastor until June 9, 1957, when Lloyd Evan became pastor. (The present Assembly of God Church was dedicated on June 26, 1977, and in 1984 the Activities Building was constructed.)

#### **Baptist**

In 1948, the church purchased the Crescent Valley School and moved it onto their property to be used as additional class rooms. In 1956, another Mexican Mission was started. In 1956/57, the old church on Fifth Street and Illinois Street was torn down and the land sold to help finance a new church building. The new First Baptist Church was opened in 1957 with 274 mem-

bers. It is located on Leonard Street at Johnson Street. Ministers for the period 1947/57 were: M.G. Ellis (1945/46), J.H. Dean (1947/48), R.F. Lewis (1949/55), and J.L. Ferguson (1955/58).

#### **Methodist**

In 1950, the education wing of the present church was constructed. In 1953, the present sanctuary was completed. Pastors were William P. Hoover (1947/48), Marvin H. Keen (1948/49), Don Youngblood (1949/51), C.C. McKinney (1951/53), Charles R. Brewster (1953/55) and W.C. Craig (1955/58).

In many cases over the years, the pastor at Bloomington had responsibilities of other area churches on a circuit. These other churches paired with Bloomington included, at various times, the churches at Port O'Connor, Seadrift, Port Lavaca and Austwell.

#### **Morning Star Baptist**

In the late 1940s the Morning Star Baptist changed its affiliation from the Free Missionary Baptist Church to the American Missionary Baptist Church.

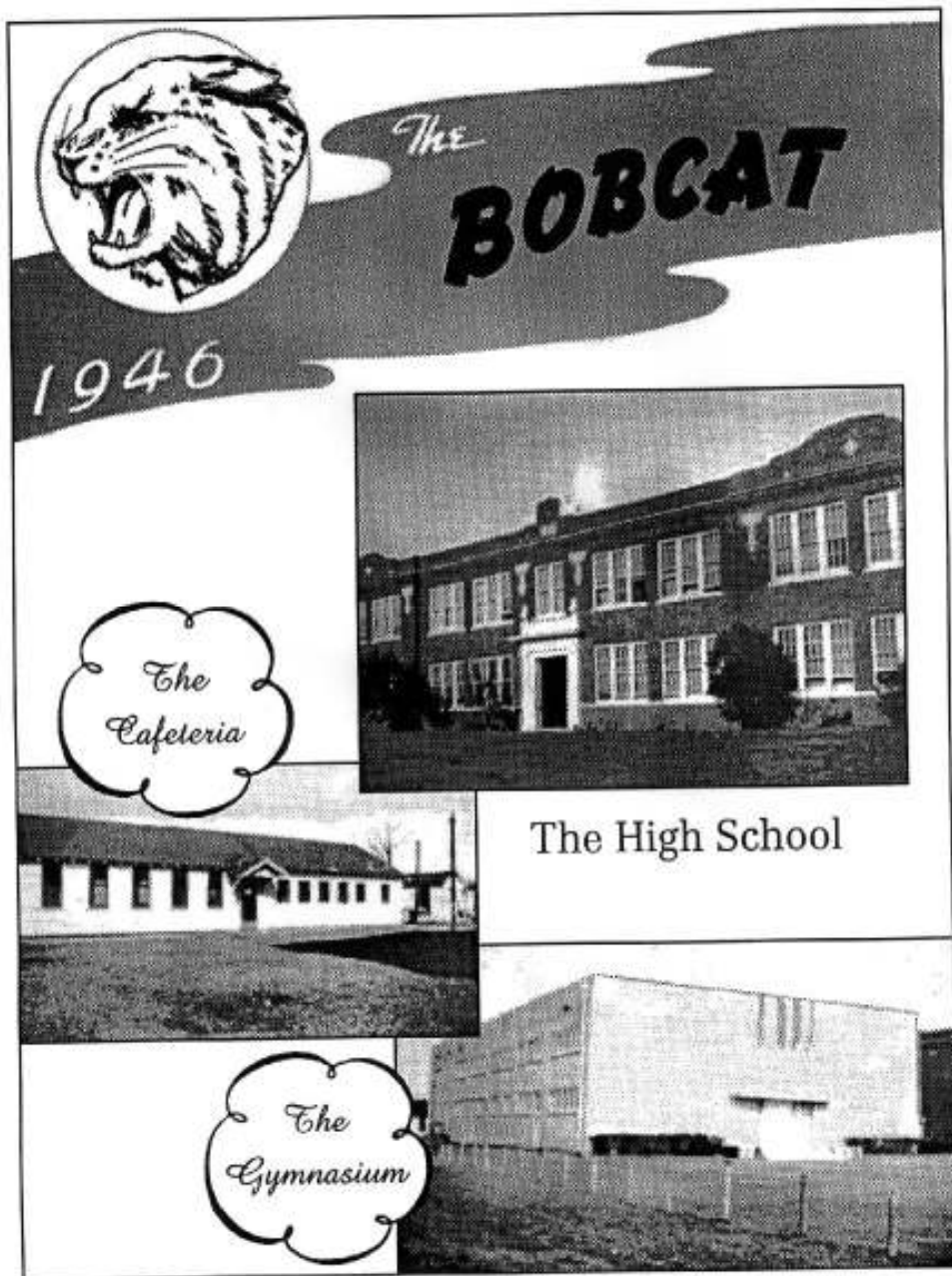
### **Schools**

*The Bobcat*, the school yearbook, was first published in 1946. Rankin Robertson was Superintendent and Jim Wyatt was Principal. There were six high school teachers, Miss Ellie Watson, Mrs. William Parris, Mrs. J.M. Barber, Miss Katherine Stephens, Miss Gladys McCurry and Mrs. Jim Wyatt,

teaching fifty-one high school students (grades 9-12). The 1946 class graduated twelve girls; Estelle Malcher, Nadine Bius, Billie Rose Ellis, Rosa Mae Young, Sadie Mae Westerman, Geneva Sharron, Wanda Conner, Vernell Galloway, Dixie Reed, Gaynelle Cook, and only one boy, Bob Daughtery. The BHS girls basketball team went to state.

1945/46 Elementary School (grades 1-8) had eight teachers: Mrs. Sam Davis, Mrs. Rankin Robertson, Miss Agnes Dworsky, Miss Dorothy Halepska, Mrs. Weldon Burnette, Miss Fannie Mae Foster, Mrs. Alfred Reid and Mrs. V.E. Moore to teach one hundred and thirty-five students.

There was also the school for Black elementary students on Katribe Street. In 1945, the West Ward School for Hispanic students was closed and the students integrated into the main school. The buildings on Guadalupe Street were then used as an elementary school for Black students as they were moved from their school on Katribe Street. Black high school students were bussed to W.B. Gross High School in Victoria. In 1955, the new Black elementary school building was built. (This school was later named for Professor E.E. Hatchett. This school was used for Black elementary students until they were integrated with the other students in 1967. The buildings were used for two years, 1967/68 and 1968/69, as an integrated Bloomington-



ton Elementary School. This school was closed in 1969 and the building torn down a couple of years later.)

The BHS boys basketball team won district in 1946, 1947 and 1948 and won second in Regional in 1948. They were District 87B champs again in 1951.

Lloyd Bass, who started teaching in Bloomington the year before, became Elementary School Principal in 1948. In 1949, the one level four classroom elementary building was built between the red brick high school building and the football field.

The Bloomington Bobcat Band was organized with 36 members in 1950. Al Kirby was the school's first band director. The band was made up of students from the sixth through the twelfth grades.

In May, 1950, Luis G. Robles, his brother, Fernando Robles, and Steven Mercado became the first Hispanic students to graduate from Bloomington High School.

Claude Mullins returned to Bloomington as Superintendent in 1954; Carl DuBose became High School Principal the same year.

In February 28, 1955, the Bloomington Independent School District annexed the Placedo Common School and, in 1960, the DaCosta Common School. BISD covers 111 square miles including Bloomington, Placedo and DaCosta.

In 1957, BISD became the first school district west of the Mississippi River to vote to integrate its' high

school. The first Black student to graduate was James Herron in 1959. (Elementary and Junior High students were integrated in 1967.)

The class of 1957 was the last to graduate from the old two story red brick Bloomington High School built in 1925. The class included Milton Brooks, Jimmy Cherry, David Clark, Marcus Covington, Tommy Fagg, Norma Haugen, Barbara Hutto, Jeanette Hutto, Glenda Kocurek, Delores Marek, Shirley Meador, Shelby Miller, Peggy Nuckols, Beverly Pense, Tommy Payne, Jessie Ramirez, Beatrice Rojas, Earnest Rundzieher, Margaret Sanders, Mary Nell Schiwitz, Marilyn Schooler, Vearl Smith, Ann Stanfill, Milton Wall, Marie Whitfield, Raymond Williams and Charles Van Zant.

In September 1957, the new Bloomington High School was opened for grades eight through twelve. The \$900,000 plant, which was located midway between Bloomington and Placedo, was designed to accommodate four hundred students. There were fifteen teachers for one hundred and eighty one students. At that time, other schools in the area included Bloomington Elementary School, Placedo Elementary School and E.E. Hatchett Elementary for Black students.

## **Business Community**

The oil boom and construction of the nearby industrial plants increased Bloomington's population to

1,000/1,200 by 1950. The business community began to grow after the war although improved roads and automobiles allowed many citizens easy access to the larger and more numerous business establishments in Victoria. Stores operating in Bloomington in the early 1950s included:

---

<b>Business</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Owner</b>
Breivogel & Schurtz Grocery	Second St.	Truman Breivogel, Thelma Schurtz
C & B Grocery	Second St.	Ross Ahlstrom
Springs Grocery	Second St.	W.H. Springs
Thompson Grocery	Second St.	Quincy Thompson
Bloomington Food Store	Second St.	Zac Lentz
Sayles Drive Inn Grocery	Shepley St.	M.E. Sayles
C & B Cash Grocery & Mkt		Jack Buffaloe
Mary's Cafe	Second St.	Mary Caletka
Betty's Cafe		Betty Nedbalek
Pool Hall	Second St.	J.T. Myers
Bowen's Service Station	Second St.	Irvin Bowen
Service Garage	2nd & Illinois	Eddie Kocian, A.A. Jurena
Joy Movie Theater	Shepley St.	Norman Key
Skarda's Newsstand	Second St.	Jim Skarda
City Drug Store	Shepley St.	Norman Key
Key's Dry Goods	Second St.	Mrs. N.H. Key
Miller's Variety Store	Second St.	Charlie Miller
Handley Hardware	2nd & Illinois	Bill Handley
Autry Lumber Yard	Shepley & 7th	Bubba Autry
Diebel Lumber Yard	Diebel Addition	Rubin Diebel
Bingham Cleaners	Shepley St.	W.C. Bingham
Reeves Barber Shop	Shepley St.	Lois Reeves
Mildred's Beauty Shop		
Ora's Beauty Shop	Second St.	Ora Miller
Farmer's Co-Op Gin	Second St. @ RR	A.H. Hodde, Mgr.
A.M. Wynn & Sons Oil	Illinois & 3rd St	Arthur Wynn
Field Service		Coda Wynn, Alvin Wynn

---

The Joy Theater opened in 1946. There were three movies a week and the price of admission was 25 cents for adults and 9 cents for children.

In 1949, Page Stubblefield sold his business to an employee, Mrs. M.H. Key.

Dr. Clarence S. Booher opened his practice in Bloomington in 1955.

The last bale of cotton was ginned in Bloomington in 1972. The Farmer's Co-Op Gin was sold in 1974 and torn down in July, 1977. For the first time in over sixty five years, Bloomington did not have a cotton gin. Over the years, there were as many as three gins operating. In peak years the gin operated twenty four hours a day in late summer ginning up to 4,000 bales in a season.

Breivogel & Schurtz, after forty years in business, sold out to Angerstein Brothers in 1957.

There was a new paper called the Bloomington Banner, but it never published any issues.

## **Citizens**

Though not a complete census, the 1954 telephone directory list of 109 phones included most of the families residing in Bloomington. (*Appendix Q*) By August, 1956 there were 210 telephones in Bloomington.

## **Conclusion**

The first fifty years for Bloomington began with ten years (1907 to 1917) of tremendous growth. By 1917, the community had grown to a population of approximately 800 to 1,000. By 1916, schools were established and the first student had graduated. The Methodist, Baptist, and Catholics had

organized churches and the Methodist and Baptists had their own buildings. A City government was organized and over thirty businesses were in existence. There was a community baseball team and various community wide social events.

World War I marked the beginning of change for the community. The automobile replaced the railroad as the principal means of transportation and telephones replaced the telegraph operator at the depot. Two divisive forces were at work within the community during the years after the war - prohibition and the Ku Klux Klan. In 1923, the school burned and it was widely rumored to have been deliberately set afire. During the depression years the City Government went bankrupt, the Chamber of Commerce ceased to exist, and the bank failed. Money was scarce, crops were poor, and business was bad. In 1940, half the business district burned.

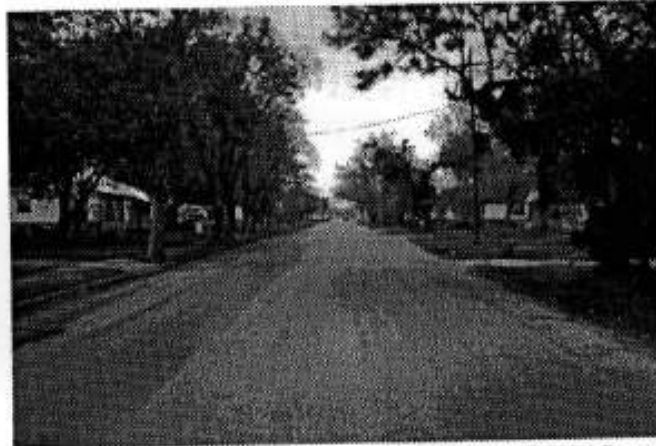
With the advent of World War II, the planned municipal water and sewer system had to be delayed until 1946. Another major fire burned the business district.

After World War II, oil was discovered in town and industry moved into the area bringing new people to Bloomington. After much controversy and by a small majority, the municipal water and sewer system was approved. But the attempt to incorporate a city gov-

ernment with substantial financial assistance from Amerada Oil Corporation was defeated by the voters. As a result, city services such as land control, street maintenance and law enforcement are not available and the citizens of Bloomington must rely on the County for services.

A critical factor in the development, or lack thereof, in Bloomington is that automobile traffic is routed around Bloomington by the State highway system. Highway 59 goes through Victoria and 35 through Port Lavaca so that traffic up and down the coast bypasses Bloomington. A highway should have been built to parallel the Missouri Pacific railroad west across the Guadalupe River toward McFaddin and Refugio and connecting toward the east to Bay City but, according to the Highway Department, the cost of bridges to span the numerous waterways was prohibitive.

Its location placed early Bloomington at the center of many of the colorful and exciting events in Texas history, but eventually populations became concentrated in the major metropolitan areas and like many of



*This is Second Street, more commonly known as Main Street, in Bloomington, Texas, 1997.*

the small towns along the Texas coast, Bloomington became a bedroom community for the surrounding area. Although the influence and interest necessary for commercial growth in the community seem to be lacking, Bloomington has much to be proud of, including fine churches, good schools, a water and sewer district and an excellent volunteer fire department and ambulance service.

During its first fifty years, Bloomington produced many things, as varied as cotton and oil and ice cream and brooms. But mostly, it produced small town families. Although most of the people who lived in Bloomington since 1907 are now gone, there are still thousands of families throughout Texas and throughout the country who at one time called Bloomington home.



## Bibliography

- Gilmore, Kathleen. *The Keeran Site: The Probable Site of Ft. St. Louis in Texas*. Texas Historical Commission, Office of the State Archeologist Report, No. 24. Austin, Texas, 1973.
- Grimes, Roy. *300 Years In Victoria County*. The Victoria Advocate Publishing Co., Victoria, Texas, 1968.
- Malsch, Brownson. *Indianola: The Mother of Western Texas*. Shoal Creek Publishers, Austin, Texas, 1977.
- Maril, Robert Lee. *Cannibals and Condos: Texans and Texas Along the Gulf Coast*. Texas A & M University Press, College Station, Texas, 1986
- Newcomb, W.W. Jr. *The Indians Of Texas: From Prehistoric To Modern Times*. University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, 1961.
- Rose, Victor. *History Of Victoria County*, Edited by J. W. Petty, Book Mart, Victoria, Texas, 1961.
- Walls, Thomas. *The Japanese Texans*. University of Texas Institute of Texas Culture, Austin, Texas, 1987.
- Wyatt, Mabel. *Community Resources In Social Studies*. Thesis, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, 1954.
- Winfrey, Dorian H. (and others) Introduction by W.W. Newcomb. *Indian Tribes Of Texas*. Texian Press, Waco Texas, 1971.
- The Sidney R. Weisinger Files* - Victoria College Library Archives.
- The Victoria Sesquicentennial Scrapbook 1824-1974*. Victoria Advocate Press, Victoria Texas, 1974.