

COMMUNITIES
AFFILIATED WITH BIG THICKET NATIONAL
PRESERVE

Prepared for Big Thicket National Preserve

Sue Winton Moss
Austin, Texas

October 5, 1998

Amendment to

COMMUNITIES

AFFILIATED WITH BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE

Recommendations:

p. 2: 4. In a meeting between the Alabama-Coushatta Cultural Resources Council and Tribal Administrator and representatives of Big Thicket National Preserve, the tribes expressed a continuing interest in the activities, programs and employment opportunities of Big Thicket National Preserve. The Preserve should strengthen contacts with the Reservation administration to accommodate those continuing interests.

Big Sandy Unit:

p. 20: The Alabama-Coushatta Cultural Resources Council and the Tribal Administrator met with representatives of Big Thicket National Preserve on October 7, 1998, to discuss perceived affiliations of the tribes with units of the Preserve and other issues of mutual interest, including oil and gas exploration on the reservation and the adjoining preserve unit. The meeting identified the following preliminary list of tribal associations with Big Thicket National Preserve, particularly Big Sandy unit:

A portion of the Preserve abutting the Reservation's southern boundary was the site of "Ammon's House," a pre-Preserve residence of a tribal family. This area also served as a hunting and fishing spot for other tribal members. Tribal members would like access to this part of the Preserve to continue those activities.

Hunting and fishing were traditional pursuits in at least the northern part of Big Sandy unit, and the tribal representatives would like to see those pursuits continued and enhanced and fees waived. Deer, squirrel and bow hunting were particularly mentioned as member pursuits.

The tribes consider prehistoric sites within their reservation boundaries and perhaps within the Preserve units to be "ancestral" to the tribes. Legal opinion is now pending on the tribes' aboriginal title rights to portions of East Texas, which may include some or all of the Preserve units.

The representatives and tribal administrator requested the Preserve allow them to review reports of archeological findings on Preserve units.

The tribal representatives identified an early tribal village, Rock Village, as lying east of Big Sandy unit.

A historic Indian trail crossed Big Sandy unit somewhere along Big Sandy Creek, but the exact location has not been identified.

Some members of the Alabama and Coushatta tribes identify themselves as Creek; however, they are considered part of the Alabama and Coushatta tribes for administrative purposes and have no additional or particular affiliations with the Big Thicket National Preserve.

Contact Table:

Bryant J. Celestine, Historic Resources Officer
Alabama-Coushatta Reservation
Route 3, Box 640
Livingston, Texas 77351
409-563-4391 ext. 184

Historic Communities Affiliated with Big Thicket National Preserve : Community Contacts
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	Dr. Howard Williams, Chair Orange County Historical Commission 12 Bayou Bend Orange, Texas 77630
Beaumont unit	Harold Willis, Chair Hardin County Historical Commission 395 S. Williford Kountze, Texas 77625
	H. Tracy Richardson III, Chair Jefferson County Historical Commission P. O. Box 4025 Beaumont, Texas 77704
Little Pine Island Bayou Corridor	Harold Willis, Chair Hardin County Historical Commission 395 S. Williford Kountze, Texas 77625
	H. Tracy Richardson III, Chair Jefferson County Historical Commission P. O. Box 4025 Beaumont, Texas 77704
Big Sandy unit	Joanne Battise, Tribal Director Alabama-Coushatta Reservation Route 3, Box 640 Livingston, Texas 77351
	Harleyne Clamon, Chair Polk County Historical Commission 616 W. Calhoun Livingston, Texas 77351
Menard Creek Corridor	Harleyne Clamon, Chair Polk County Historical Commission 616 W. Calhoun Livingston, Texas 77351
	Harold Willis, Chair Hardin County Historical Commission 395 S. Williford Kountze, Texas 77625
	Kevin Ladd, Chair Liberty County Historical Commission P. O. Box 334 Hardin, Texas 77561-0334

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COMMUNITIES

AFFILIATED WITH BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Big Thicket National Preserve is made up of 12 disparate units that all share some historical and ethnographic attributes. All are in areas that were slow to settle and develop, and still have small rural populations. Of the five Indian tribes that had historic-era associations with the region, only the Alabama and Coushattas remain in the region and appear to have a continuing affiliation with a unit of the Preserve. The Alabama-Coushatta Reservation adjoins Big Sandy unit.

Preserve acquisition procedures avoided settlements and farmsteads, so there is little evidence in the Preserve of ethnographic patterns or affiliations. Various communities, populated by Anglo-Euro-American folk, grew up in the Big Thicket region and some of them are outlyers to the various Preserve units. Most, however, had a single economic focus (river ferrying, timber, oil extraction) and have since disappeared. In general, the counties in which most of the Preserve units lie are sparsely populated and rural.

The following ethnographic study identified a number of historical communities that lie near or in the Preserve units. The only continuing cultural or ethnographic affiliation identified in the study was that of the Alabama-Coushatta Indian tribe. The study, however, was limited to a review of the historical and ethnographic literature of the region and provides only the most basic of overviews.

Recommendations

1. The Caddo Indian tribe in Oklahoma should be contacted about the existence of continuing cultural affiliations with the Big Thicket region, in general and various units of Big Thicket National Preserve, in particular.
2. This report is only a summary of the current literature related to the Big Thicket Region and to communities that are close to units of Big Thicket National Preserve. The history and cultural landscape of unit of the Preserve should be thoroughly documented and presented in a cultural landscape report, including
 - land use history
 - updated survey of the cultural landscapes
 - oral histories of various historical and folk aspects.

3. Because no cultural landscape report exists at this time for the Preserve or any of its units, any mineral exploration project should include
an analysis of the land use history of the particular project area
an updated survey of cultural landscapes in the project area,
and
an oral history investigation of pertinent historical and folk
aspects of the project area.

INTRODUCTION

The Big Thicket region of Texas has been subject to many definitions, and a comprehensive study of its history has yet to be written. Henry C. Dethloff and Victor H. Treat summarized the broad patterns of history in the Thicket, giving an excellent starting place for an in-depth history.¹ And James Cozine pursued many of Dethloff and Treat's threads in his dissertation, "Assault on a Wilderness : The Big Thicket of East Texas."² Pieces of the region's heritage have been captured in the folklore collected by Francis Abernethy.³ Thad Sitton and his co-authors have described aspects of the cultural heritage in books about the hunters and stockraisers who lived off the land and the region's sawmill communities.⁴ The Thicket's natural heritage has formed the context for natural history expositions and photo-essays.⁵

For the purposes of this study, the Big Thicket is loosely defined by the units of Big Thicket National Preserve.⁶ Those units, sometimes as a whole and sometimes singly, represent all important aspects of the cultural history of the Big Thicket region:

¹Henry C. Dethloff and Victor H. Treat, "The Historical Survey of the Big Thicket National Preserve," Texas A & M University, December, 1975.

² James Cozine, "Assault on a Wilderness: The Big Thicket of East Texas," Ph.D. dissertation, College Station, Tex., 1976.

³Especially focussed on the Big Thicket area is his *Tales from the Big Thicket* (Austin: Texas Folklore Society, 1966).

⁴Thad Sitton, *Backwoodsmen: Stockmen and Hunters along a Big Thicket River Valley* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995) and Thad Sitton and James H. Conrad, *Nameless Towns: Texas Sawmill Communities, 1880-1942* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998).

⁵Joe C. Truett and Daniel W. Lay, *Land of Bears and Honey: A Natural History of East Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984); Pete Gunter and Roy Hamric, *The Big Thicket: A Challenge for Conservation* (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1971); Campbell and Lynn Loughmiller, *Big Thicket Legacy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977).

⁶The following introduction is based on Dethloff and Treat, "Historical Survey of the Big Thicket National Preserve,"; Abernethy, *Tales from the Big Thicket*; Sitton, *Backwoodsmen*; Sitton and Conrad, *Nameless Towns*; and Francis E. Abernethy, "Big Thicket," in Ron Tyler, et al., eds., *The New Handbook of Texas* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996) 1:539-540.

association with Native American groups,
association with early Anglo-American-European settlement and
Texas independence and statehood,
association with transportation advancements including riverboating
and railroads,
association with nineteenth and twentieth-century timber industry,
and
association with twentieth-century petroleum industry.

Native American groups associated with the Big Thicket region included the Atakapas, Caddos, and the Alabamas and Coushattas. Today, only the Alabama and Coushatta tribes live in Texas and have a continuing affiliation with a portion of the Big Thicket National Preserve (See Big Sandy unit following). The Caddos lived north of the woodlands, in settled communities, cultivating crops. The Big Thicket was a prized hunting and foraging ground. When European contact was made in the late seventeenth century, the Caddos were living in East Texas and along the Red River. Settlement pressures in the eastern part of the state during the mid-nineteenth century forced the Caddos onto the state's Brazos Indian Reservation in 1855; they were removed in 1859 to Indian Territory (western Oklahoma). Their impact on the Big Thicket was probably in its northern reaches where they may have laid hunting and foraging trails and campsites.⁷

The Atakapa Indians lived on the southern fringes of the Big Thicket, along the coastal plains. At the time of European contact, they lived in small bands that moved within a larger territory, hunting, fishing and gathering. Although the group has traditionally been known as cannibalistic, it is unclear where their practice was ritualistic or for sustenance. They declined quickly after contact; by 1805 there were only 175 in Louisiana. Today, the group does not exist. Like the Caddos, their mark on the Big Thicket was ephemeral: hunting and gathering trails and temporary campsites.⁸

During the early days of Anglo-American-European settlement in Texas, the Big Thicket was generally avoided. Not only was the Thicket dense and hard to get through, it was hard to clear and cultivate for the majority of immigrants who came to Texas to practice a subsistence agriculture. A few hardy pioneers settled on the region's edges in the 1830s, finding homes along the Neches, Angelina, and Trinity rivers, and the major creeks.

⁷see F. Todd Smith, *The Caddo Indians: Tribes at the Convergence of Empires, 1542-1854* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A & M University Press, 1995) and Timothy K. Perttula, *The Caddo Nation: Archaeological and Ethnohistoric Perspectives* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).

⁸Dorothy Couser, "Atakapa Indians," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook* 1:272.

During the middle of the nineteenth century, the boundaries of the dense woodland began to shrink slowly. Limited lumbering was practiced, primarily along the major waterways where logs could be floated downstream to mills at Beaumont. The backwoodsmen and women who lived in the Thicket usually had a small clearing that included a dwelling, various outbuildings and a small garden patch. Their livestock was heavy on hogs that ranged freely on mast all year until killing time in the late fall. A few cattle, chickens, and a horse or mule may have completed the stock. Hunting and fishing, nut and berry gathering were important parts of the pioneer lifeways and provided vital contributions to the table. These attributes of life did not spring full-blown in the Big Thicket. Instead, they were integral components of the back-country lifestyle of the nineteenth-century South, the birthplace of most of the Big Thicket settlers.

The settlers lived on scattered homesteads: their "communities" were defined by a church, school, or cemetery, rather than any common economic enterprise. As a result, their "communities" were dispersed over the landscape and had little geographical cohesion. The subsistence culture of hunting, fishing, gathering, stock-raising, and small farming has persisted in much of the Big Thicket through the twentieth century, in spite of extensive technological and economic impacts. The "communities," however, have changed somewhat. Schools have become consolidated, and the isolated schoolhouse and its "community" of students, families and teachers no longer exists. Some churches have survived, as have the graveyards, but they sit in isolation until the scheduled Sunday service or a burial. The roles that the far-flung churches and cemeteries play in continuing to define a community of interest has not been studied in the Big Thicket and should be investigated.⁹

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, railroads and lumbering made a lasting impact on the Big Thicket. While logs had been floated down the Neches River and other tributaries to Beaumont saw and planing mills since the 1850s, large-scale exploitation of hardwoods and pine in the Big Thicket awaited quick, dependable transportation of both logs and rough and finished lumber. After the Civil War, demand for lumber was high, and rail technology and capital were available. During the 1880s and 1890s railroads built by Eastern capitalists, Houston and Galveston entrepreneurs, and regional lumber kings honeycombed the Big Thicket. Sawmill towns sprang up as timber companies leased or bought tens of thousands of acres of stumpage. Tram lines took fresh-cut logs to the new towns where main or spur lines transported rough and finished lumber to Beaumont, Houston, Galveston and points beyond. Mill towns often

⁹for more information about the backwoodsmen, see Sitton, *Backwoodsmen* and Truett and Lay, *Land of Bears and Honey*.

originated as a stop on the rail line, but some were in the deep woods at the end of a spur line. Many of the mill towns were "company towns," owned totally by the timber company which held title to homes, church, school, and the company store. Most of these communities disappeared when the timber ran out, and the mill was dismantled and moved to new stands. Others remained, particularly those on the main rail line, but most declined unless they had another purpose in the area, such as being the county seat.

The twentieth century came to the Big Thicket in the same way as it came to the rest of Texas: the Spindletop gusher. The Beaumont field was only a short way south of the Big Thicket region and had the same salt dome formations found in the southern part of the Thicket. During the first four years of the century, large fields were opened up in southern Hardin County. These fields rivalled Spindletop in more ways than one. Although the Saratoga Field seemed immune from the typical "boomtown" lawlessness, its neighbors at Sour Lake and Batson were not. Like the sawmill towns, most of the oilfield communities had one reason for being, and when the field played out, or the exploration was over, the towns faded.

African Americans and Hispanic Texans, who are an important part of the ethnic make-up of Texas as a whole, are few in the rural landscape of the Big Thicket region. The cotton plantation society which brought most blacks to Texas prior to the Civil War was not part of the Big Thicket economy due to the difficulty of clearing Thicket land and growing cotton or sugar. After the Civil War, black immigrants to Texas settled in larger towns or in rural areas where there was an established farming tradition. Railroad construction and the timber industry employed some blacks and Mexican Texans during the last quarter of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. These, however, were transitory occupations, and most blacks and Hispanics followed the railroad and mill towns when they moved. Today, African Americans live in the larger towns in the area, but do not have a sustained affiliation with Big Thicket National Preserve units.

During much of the twentieth century, the Big Thicket area has been economically depressed, and many residents have returned at one time or another to old lifeways, supplementing their tables and checking accounts by hunting, fishing, and timber cutting. And moonshining. Part of the folklore and the economy has been illegal production of alcoholic beverages for both home use and limited market consumption. Hunting, fishing, and timbering have also had their illicit components: property boundaries are often ignored and as well as game laws regulating bag, method, and season.

This subsistence lifestyle, while based on necessity, is also a deeply entrenched way of life. Hailing back to the days of the open range, when cattle, hogs and hunters could roam unfenced land freely, the lifestyle had

even earlier origins in the herdsman traditions Upper South. Part self-reliance, part clannishness, these traditions are still part of the lifeways practiced by the rural Anglo-Euro-American dwellers of the Big Thicket region.

At the end of the twentieth century, oil and timber are the primary sources of livelihood and commerce. Often economically depressed, the population of the Big Thicket region has always welcomed economic development such as timber exploitation and oil exploration, incorporating these new sources of income into older habits. The newest sources of income have been in the areas of outdoor recreation, and ex-urban housing developments. New communities, built near large towns like Beaumont or new reservoirs such as lakes Livingston and B. A. Steinhagen have propped up the economy and provided additional, welcome avenues for economic enhancement.

BIG THICKET COMMUNITIES

The following discussion examines the history and current status of communities in or near the various units of Big Thicket National Preserve. the selection of the communities was based on current maps published by the Texas Department of Transportation (county general highway maps) and the United States Geological Service (7.5 minute quadrangles). As a general rule, communities were included if they were named on one or the other of these maps and were within two miles of a unit boundary. There are some exceptions noted below. The research included local histories, older maps (primarily Texas State Highway Department maps, precursor to the Texas Department of Transportation county maps), a site visit, and discussions with Doug Hutter, Big Thicket National Preserve; and Maxine Johnston, librarian, Big Thicket National Preserve. No primary research was performed. The most consistently used source of information was Ron Tyler, et al, eds, *The New Handbook of Texas* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996). This six-volume compendium of Texas history focusses on the minutiae of the state, as well as more significant historical issues. The authors of the articles on the Big Thicket communities are experts in Southeast Texas history and theirs is the most up-to-date research. Another important resource was the Texas Sawmill Files compiled by the Texas Historical Commission in Austin. Like the *New Handbook*, it is a comprehensive, current source of information about mills and mill towns in the Big Thicket. The communities are listed within each preserve unit, generally ranging from north to south. See the attached county maps for their locations.

UPPER NECHES RIVER CORRIDOR BEECH CREEK UNIT

The 416-mile Neches River drains much of East Texas. Its ten-thousand-square-mile drainage basin covers most of the units of Big Thicket National Preserve and much of the historical area of Texas's Big Thicket. Major tributaries include the Angelina River, Village Creek and Pine Island Bayou. Dams have formed two major reservoirs in the upper reaches of the Neches: Lake Palestine and Lake B. A. Steinhagen. During historic times, the river has been witness and party to the major economic and historical influences of the times: Longtime Indian, Spanish and French trade and travel routes into and across Texas forded the Neches at well-known crossings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. American and European settlers used the same crossings as they traveled into and across East Texas in the nineteenth century. As the area developed, the Neches herself became a travel route, with steamboat traffic and barges of lumber floating downstream to mills and markets. Today, the river provides irrigation water to the large rice agri-business in its lower reaches; its mouth at Sabine Lake is home to a large petrochemical industry. And the river and lakes provide significant recreational opportunities for boating and fishing all along the Neches course.¹⁰

The Upper Neches River Corridor Unit runs south along the river from Dam B on Steinhagen lake to the Neches Bottom/Jack Gore Baygall unit. The corridor takes in two counties, Tyler on the west and Jasper on the east.

The unit includes several major historical crossings of the river and long-term ferry operations. The Town Bluff ferry was probably the oldest ferry on the river, established by Wyatt Hanks about 1833 on the Coushatta Trace.¹¹ The Thompson Ferry was probably established in the vicinity of today's FM 1013 bridge about 1834 by Ephraim Thompson. The Works Bluff Ferry was located on the river south of Town Bluff and north of

¹⁰Christopher Long, "Neches River," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 4:966-967.

¹¹The Coushatta Trace was a narrow trade and travel trail running from Louisiana into Texas. Probably first used by the Coushatta Indians in the late eighteenth century, the trace ran from their Sabine River village near the mouth of Quicksand Creek to La Bahia. It traversed ten Texas counties including Jasper and Tyler counties, crossing the Neches River near the mouth of Shawnee Creek en route to the Alabama villages of Cane Island and Peachtree in northwestern Tyler County. Fort Teran was erected at the trace's crossing of the Neches in 1830. The Coushatta Trace probably never passed through units of the Big Thicket National Preserve, instead it skirted the dense thicket that was considered impenetrable. (Howard N. Martin, "Coushatta Trace" in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 2:373-374.

Spurger. Perhaps established as early as the 1850s, the ferry was operated by Tom Bower during the first 30 years of the twentieth century.¹²

Riverboats plied the Neches during the middle 50 years of the nineteenth century. With names like the Neches Belle and the Uncle Ben, Pearl River and The Star, the boats carried cotton, staves, hides and barrels down river and brought back a variety of manufactured items and refined foodstuffs, as well as medicine, tools and milled lumber from Beaumont and points south. It should be noted, however, that the cotton trade was not large. Plantation farming was difficult in the climate and forested landscape along the Neches River, and less than 4000 bales of cotton each were produced in Tyler and Jasper counties in 1860. The years after the Civil War saw no rise in cotton production. Cattle, on the other hand, became increasingly important in the area, and hides and tallow were important products in the nineteenth-century economy.¹³

Town Bluff is one of the earliest Anglo-Euro-American settlements on the Neches River. By 1833 Wyatt Hanks operated a ferry at the Coushatta Trace crossing of the river and soon established the community of Town Bluff. Hanks had lived in East Texas since the early 1820s; family tradition credits Hanks with building the first water-powered sawmill in Texas on Ayish Bayou (San Augustine County) in 1826. Hanks was active in Nacogdoches and San Augustine civic and military affairs and was a delegate to the convention of 1832. He later served in the Provisional Government of Texas and was quartermaster for the Jasper Volunteers during the Texas Revolution.¹⁴

Town Bluff, laid out on Hanks's land at the Coushatta crossing in Tyler County, grew up around the ferry. The small community served as the temporary county seat when Tyler County was first formed in 1846, until Woodville was established. During the middle nineteenth century, Town Bluff was the head of navigation on the Neches River and saw considerable boat traffic.

In the 1890s the town reached a peak population of about 300 persons. Railroads, however, bypassed the area and the post office, established in

¹²James E. Bradford, *Discovery of a Neches River Ferryboat, Big Thicket National Preserve, Tyler County, Texas* (Santa Fe, N.M., 1992), pp. 12-13.

¹³Lou Ella Moseley, *Pioneer Days of Tyler County* (Fort Worth: Miran Publishers, 1975), 153-155; Megan Bieselee, "Tyler County," in Tyler, et al. eds., *New Handbook*, 6:608-610; Glenn Justice, "Jasper County," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 3:915-916.

¹⁴Megan Bieselee, "Town Bluff, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 6:538-539; William M. Hanks, "Hanks, Wyatt," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 3:440-441.

1848, closed in 1915. Twenty years later the site was a ghost town. When Lake B. A. Steinhagen was impounded in 1951, fishermen and boaters returned to the area, and a small community called Town Bluff has risen in about the same place.¹⁵

The Sheffield Ferry grew out of Thompson's ferry in the vicinity of today's FM 1013 bridge. Jeff Sheffield took over the operation from Thompson and continued to provide ferry service until 1881, when Tyler County made it a public ferry. The "Sheffield Ferry" ran until 1959 and was the last public ferry on the Neches River. Today, a boat ramp marks the Sheffield Ferry site.¹⁶

Spurger, two miles west of the Neches River and just south of the Beech Creek unit, was part of an early land grant held by Ephraim Thompson, the same who first owned the Sheffield Ferry land at the river crossing of FM 1013. The community was on a Methodist circuit rider's route as early as 1854, and a Baptist church had been erected by 1855. There has been an area school since 1859, and the first post office was established in 1881.

Spurger served an agricultural area of small cotton and sugar cane farms and tanneries and was associated with the nearby Sheffield Ferry and Neches River landing. The town had a large sawmill until about 1959. "Joe's Lake Area Oil Field" also contributed to the community's economy after 1934. The town's population hit its peak of 500 people in the 1920s, but declined in mid-century to just over 100. The creation of Lake B. A. Steinhagen, however, revived the area, and the population stood at 470 in 1990.¹⁷

River Acres, where FM 1013 crosses the Neches, is near the site of the Sheffield Ferry. There were three dwellings in the vicinity in 1936, but it shows little occupation today.¹⁸

Oldham community, on FM 2992 just east of Beech Creek unit, is a scattered community, with no central church, cemetery or business. It is on the current county map, but is unidentifiable in the physical environment. The 1936 Texas Highway Map for Tyler County showed additional

¹⁵Bieseles, "Town Bluff, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 6:538-539.

¹⁶Bradford, *Discovery of a Neches River Ferryboat*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁷Megan Bieseles, "Spurger, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds, *New Handbook*, 6:48; Lou Ella Moseley, *Pioneer Days of Tyler County* (Fort Worth: Miran Publishers, 1975), pp. 146-147.

¹⁸Texas Highway Department, Tyler County Highway Map, 1936, on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

scattered houses in the area, primarily along FM 2992. The same map also showed a church along a tributary of Beech Creek, just outside the Preserve unit; the church no longer exists in that place.¹⁹

Beech Creek community, at the intersection of FM 2992 and FM 1013, had a church and cemetery in 1936, but only the cemetery exists today.²⁰

The Jasper County bank of the Neches does not have any nearby historic (or latter-day) communities associated with it along the Upper Neches River corridor.

NECHES BOTTOM AND JACK GORE BAYGALL UNIT LOWER NECHES RIVER CORRIDOR

The Neches Bottom and Jack Gore Baygall and the Lower Neches River Corridor units stretch downriver from approximately the historic Yellow Bluff Ferry site in the Upper Neches River Corridor to the Beaumont unit. The river here forms the county boundary between Jasper County on the east bank and Hardin County on the west. Both counties were sparsely populated in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century. The economy of each was based on small-farm agriculture and cattle-raising. Wider and deeper than the Upper Neches, the river in this area saw more year-round riverboat traffic. Wiess Bluff, at the head of tidewater navigation on the river became an important year-round port at mid-nineteenth century. With the advent of railroad transportation in the 1870s and 1880, the timber resources in both counties led an economic boom, and a number of mill towns grew up, including Evadale and Yellow Bluff along the Neches. Today, the corridor provides recreational resources for boaters and fishermen.²¹

Yellow Bluff, the company town of the Yellow Bluff Tram Company, no longer exists. It was located ten miles north of Evadale on the Neches River. In 1877 Col. B. D. Crary and B. F. Van Meter, independent logging contractors, built a tram road from Yellow Bluff on the Neches to a lumber camp at Cairo Springs, five miles to the east. The tram hauled timber to the river to supply the Beaumont mills of Long Manufacturing Company

¹⁹Texas Highway Department, Tyler County Highway Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

²⁰Texas Highway Department, Tyler County Highway Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

²¹Long, "Neches River," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 4:966-967; Patricia L. Duncan, "Hardin County," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook* 3:455-458; Justice, "Jasper County," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook* 3:915-916;

and the Beaumont Lumber Company. The size of the company town that sprang up is not known, but a crew of 60 men put 150 to 200 logs per day into the river for the trip to Beaumont. The tram road, renamed the Texas Tram and Lumber Company road, eventually stretched to Buna and on to Evadale; it operated through at least 1896. When railroad transportation came into the Jasper County forests in the 1890s, logs were no longer floated on the Neches, and Yellow Bluff ceased to exist. The 1936 county highway map gave no indication of Yellow Bluff nor any roads leading to the Neches in its vicinity.²²

Evadale, on US 96 just east of the Neches River in Jasper County, began life as Richardson's Bluff. Benjamin Richardson operated a ferry at the crossing during the 1830s and 1840s and served as postmaster in 1839. At Richardson's death in 1849, John, Philip and Charles Ford purchased the property and the site became known as Ford's Bluff. The Fords established a short-lived sawmill at the site about 1852. The site later became a collecting point for floating logs downriver to mills at Beaumont.²³

In 1893 lumber magnate John Henry Kirby rebuilt a tram line from Ford's Bluff to Buna. Ten years later Kirby built a large sawmill (Kirby Mill U) at the site and renamed the town "Evadale." (Miss Eva Dale was a teacher at Southeast Texas Male and Female College in Jasper.) The company town housed 256 workers and their families at its peak in 1918. Originally a cypress shingle mill, the mill had kilns, a circular sawmill and a planing mill by 1914, producing cypress and pine shingles and lumber. The mill was supplied with logs floated from up-river and by the Gulf, Beaumont and Kansas City line north of the mill. The operation averaged about 13 million board feet per year. The mill closed in 1931, as Kirby Lumber Company shut down all but three pine mills due to the Great Depression.²⁴

Evadale declined during the 1930s and 1940s, and the population fell to about 100 people. In 1948, however, Champion Paper and Fiber Company built a pulp mill on the river. In 1954 the East Texas Pulp and Paper Mill set up operations producing paper and pulp, and employing more than 400 workers. The operation continued under Eastex, Inc., and Temple Indus-

²²Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Jasper County, Texas Tram and Lumber Company; Texas Highway Department, General Highway Map, Jasper County, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

²³Robert Wooster, "Evadale, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook* 2:903; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Jasper County, Ford Brothers.

²⁴Wooster, "Evadale, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook* 2:903; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Jasper County, Kirby Lumber Company, Mill U.

tries and operates today as a unit of Temple-Inland Forest Products, Inc. In 1964 Hart Stud Mill set up operations in Evadale and produced precision-trimmed, kiln-dried southern pine studs into the mid-1970s. Evadale's population in 1990 was 1422.²⁵

Wiess Bluff, at the extreme southwest corner of Jasper County, is one of the oldest communities in the area. In January 1840, Simon Wiess, a Jewish immigrant from Poland, opened a general store and laid out a town. Although the town did not materialize, Wiess's store prospered, serving far-flung settlers in Jasper and Hardin counties. Wiess Bluff, the head of year-round navigation on the Neches, became an important river port and served as a Confederate depot during the Civil War. Connected by a stage route to San Augustine, Wiess Bluff extended the reach of the river port far inland.²⁶

Wiess also built a small sawmill during mid-century, probably an animal-powered adz mill. Samuel Remley operated a steam sawmill between 1860 and 1876 at Weiss Bluff, producing rough lumber. Massive timber cutting began in 1886 when J. G. Smyth and Company bought more than 10,000 acres near Wiess Bluff and built a tram logging operation at Wiess Bluff. In 1888 the Smyths sold the operation to Beaumont Lumber Company. Although the timber business boomed at Wiess Bluff, the construction of the Sabine and East Texas Railroad in 1883 and the Gulf Beaumont and Kansas City RR in the 1890s brought an end to the river port. In 1908 the Wiess Bluff Post Office, in operation since 1853, closed and the town slowly died. The 1936 county highway map did not have a listing for Wiess Bluff, nor any indication of habitations in its vicinity. Today, there are a few scattered, modern houses near the site of the old town.²⁷

Silsbee, at the intersection of US 96 and SH 327, is located approximately four miles west of the Neches River due west of Evadale and the Richardson Bluff ferry crossing. Silsbee came into being as a railroad stop in 1894 when John H. Kirby's Gulf, Beaumont and Kansas City Railway reached into the Big Thicket's timber lands. First a logging camp, then a sawmill town, the community was named for one of Kirby's partners, Nathan D. Silsbee. In 1901 the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe system took over the line and built shops and a roundhouse in Silsbee. The mill, still in Kirby

²⁵Wooster, "Evadale, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook* 2:903; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Jasper County, Temple-Inland Forest Products, Inc., and Hart Stud Mill; Temple-Industries web site: <http://www.templeinland.com>.

²⁶Robert Wooster, "Wiess's Bluff, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook* 6:962.

²⁷Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Jasper County, Simon Wiess, Samuel Remley, Beaumont Lumber Company; Wooster, "Wiess's Bluff, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 6:962.

ownership, grew and produced more than 12 million board feet of lumber in 1907. Although removed from the Lower Neches River Corridor of the Preserve, Silsbee had, from its beginning, major interests in the timber resources of the area. In 1936 the Silsbee Oilfield came in and another in 1941. One of the larger towns near a preserve unit, Silsbee had more than 6000 residents in 1990.²⁸

BEAUMONT UNIT

The Beaumont unit lies primarily in Hardin County between the Neches River, the Neches Canal and Pine Island Bayou. As late as 1936 the area had not been penetrated by roads. Several communities have been identified on the fringe the unit. Loeb and Rose Hill Acres sit just north of Little Pine Bayou. Lakeview and Bunn's Bluff in Orange County are on the east bank of the Neches River, and Voth is on the south bank of the bayou. And Beaumont proper lies just to the south of the unit's southern boundary.

Loeb, one of the earliest settlements in Hardin County, was established under the name of Concord about 1858. A popular crossing on the road from Beaumont to points north, it was also an important landing on Pine Island Bayou. During the mid-nineteenth century, Concord flourished as shipping point and had several mercantile businesses. The town's post office was first established in 1858 on the Jefferson County side of Pine Island Bayou, but was moved to the north bank in 1866. According to a historian of Hardin's County, Concord "was the gateway into the Big Thicket, and from Concord only narrow paths were first hacked through for passage to the north."²⁹

It declined during the 1870s and 1880s as railroads came into the area. Although a station on the Texas and New Orleans Railroad, Concord was not longer a central shipping point. In the early part of the twentieth century, Henry Loeb built the Diana Brick and Tile Company at Concord, and the town was renamed in his honor. The materials to make the brick and tile came from the bayou banks. Although the Concord post office had closed in 1877, it reopened in Loeb in 1903. The town soon declined again, and the post office closed permanently in 1908. Its population stood at 20 in 1940, and it has since been absorbed into the Beaumont suburb of Lumberton. Today, a varied residential community occupies the old

²⁸Robert Wooster, "Silsbee, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:1047-1048.

²⁹Robert Wooster, "Loeb, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 4:260-261; Robert Schaadt, ed., *Hardin County History*, (Dallas: Hardin County Historical Commission, 1991), p. 128 (quotation).

townsite. A few 1920s-1930s small bungalows are surrounded by manufactured and site-built housing of more recent vintage.³⁰

Rose Hill Acres, lying west of US 69 near Loeb, is a new residential community, a suburb of Beaumont. It was incorporated in 1961 from the communities of Rose Lawn Park, Hillcrest and Artesian Acres: hence its name Rose Hill Acres.³¹

Lakeview is a recreational and residential suburb of the Golden Triangle, on the east bank of the Neches River just west of FM 1131. It had its beginnings around the turn of the century when William Wiess built a hunting camp at the site. By the 1920s, it had become a popular resort and recreational area with a swimming pool, bowling alleys, and artesian water wells. About the same time the Miller-Vidor Lumber Company put a lumber camp in the location and built a tram road into the dense Orange County timber lands. In 1990 about 75 people lived in the community.³²

Bunn's Bluff, on the Neches at the south end of the Beaumont unit just above its juncture with Pine Island Bayou, sprang to life in 1854 when Joseph Bunn secured a post office there. It was probably a ferry crossing, as well as a shipping point. After the Civil War, Bunn's Bluff handled shingles that had been rafted down the river. Its size waned in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1880 the community had 30 residents, and its post office was discontinued in 1900. According to the Texas Historical Commission, the Morgan Lumber company operated a sawmill at Bunn's Bluff in late 1899 and 1900. Although little is known about the mill, it may have been the forerunner of the Lemon Lumber Company that operated at Lemonville in north central Orange County. The Beaumont Water Works purchased the Bunn's Bluff site in 1917, and today the Wiess and the Bunns canals flow through the site.³³

Voth, originally known as Elwood, sat on the south bank of Little Pine Bayou at the turn of the century, at the junction of the Texas and New Orleans Railroad and the Gulf, Beaumont and Kansas City railroads. When the Keith Lumber Company built a sawmill there in 1902, the community adopted the name of Voth to honor lumberman Henry Voth. With the

³⁰Wooster, "Loeb, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 4:260-261; Schaadt, ed. *Hardin County History*, pp. 128, 131.

³¹Robert Wooster, "Rose Hill Acres, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:680; Schaadt, ed., *Hardin County History*, p. 135.

³²Robert Wooster, "Lakeview, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 4:33.

³³Robert Wooster, "Bunns Bluff, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 1:826-827; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Orange County, Morgan Lumber Company.

impetus of the new mill, the community grew as a company town in the first two decades of the century. The Keith Lumber company had a mill and tram road; logs were kept in the bayou until milled. By 1906 the tram road could carry 100,000 log-scale-feet per day. Most of the mill's production was board stock, with some cross ties and timbers. A fire in 1916 burned the mill, but Keith rebuilt and was operating again in 1917. Keith sold out to Kirby Lumber Company in 1922 and the site became Mills V and W of the Kirby empire. The mills at Voth continued in operation until their functions were transferred to a new plant in Silsbee in 1952. The population declined from a high of 750 residents in the mid-1920s to 300 in 1950. In 1957 the community became part of the city of Beaumont when the city limits were extended to Little Pine Bayou. As early as 1975, the community was unidentifiable; today, it is an indistinguishable part of north Beaumont.³⁴

Beaumont is removed from the Beaumont unit, but its history is closely allied with the Big Thicket and her resources. Founded in 1835 the small town served the surrounding agricultural community. Beaumont was an active riverport in the last half of the nineteenth century and became an important lumber milling center, receiving timber from the Neches River. The town became a rail hub in the last quarter of the century and was even more important in the timber and lumbering industries. The Spindletop gusher brought a new era to Beaumont and to Texas in 1901. As the site of the first major oil field in Texas, the city became the headquarters of a new industry that was also important throughout the Big Thicket region.³⁵

TURKEY CREEK UNIT

HICKORY CREEK SAVANNAH UNIT

A wide corridor spanning both sides of Turkey Creek for ten miles above its mouth constitutes the Turkey Creek unit. The waterway originates north of Woodville in Tyler County and reaches its mouth more than thirty miles later at Village Creek in Hardin County. It is one of four significant drainages in the southern part of Tyler County. The creek drains the north central section of Hardin County before emptying into Village Creek. The area was generally unsettled until the railroads came through and the timber industry became important in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Hickory Creek Savannah Unit sits off Tyler County road 2827, wholly in Tyler County and just west of US 69/287; Hickory Creek runs just to the north.

³⁴Robert Wooster, "Voth, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 16:774; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Jefferson County, Kirby Lumber Company, Mills V & W; Dethloff and Treat, "Historical Survey of the Big Thicket National Preserve," p. 92.

³⁵Robert Wooster, "Beaumont, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 1: 447-448.

Warren, approximately two miles west of the western boundary of Turkey Creek unit on US 69/287, was established in 1883 when Young and Williams' Globe Planing Mills of Beaumont built a sawmill on the site. A second mill was erected in 1887, and the two were merged in 1889 to form the Warren Lumber Company under Alexander Young. The town was probably named for a Mr. Warren who was associated with the Young mill. The company had four nearby logging camps connected to Warren by five miles of trams, two locomotives and 25 cars. Camp Battle Ax was to the east of Warren and may have been in Turkey Creek unit. The town was a station on the Texas and New Orleans Railroad. Other mills in Warren included the Bruff and Cooper Mill and the B. and K. mill. Population in Warren peaked in 1890 at 883 and declined to just over 300 in 1990.³⁶

Bumstead Cemetery lies at the northwestern end of Turkey Creek unit. In 1936 there were three dwellings in the immediate vicinity, but no community remains today.³⁷

Gardner Cemetery is south of Bumstead Cemetery, on the western edge of the Preserve and on some maps appears inside the Preserve boundaries. In 1936 six dwellings surrounded the cemetery and a rudimentary road ran from Warren direct to Gardner. Today, only the cemetery remains.³⁸

Hyatt, about three miles south of Warren on US 69/287, and two miles west of Turkey Creek unit, also began as a sawmill town in the early 1880s when the Sabine and East Texas Railroad came through. Jonas S. Rice and William M. Rice, nephews of Houston entrepreneur William Marsh Rice, and F. A. Hyatt built a sawmill on the site in 1882 and named the town for Hyatt. The mill produced rough and finished lumber and pine and cypress shingles. It reached a maximum production of 100,000 board feet per day in 1906. The planer alone produced 60,000 board feet per day that year. Local tradition has it that the ice plant built in Hyatt in 1896 was the first such plant in Tyler County. The mill employed 100 people, and the company supplied 75 to 100 houses for employees. The town grew from about 30 people in 1883 to 429 twenty years later. In the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, the town was one of the larger in Tyler County. Although production peaked in 1906, the mill closed in

³⁶Megan Bieselee, "Warren, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 6:828; Moseley, *Pioneer Days*, pp. 183-187.

³⁷Texas Highway Department, Tyler County Road Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

³⁸Texas Highway Department, Tyler County Road Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

1907, having cut over all the timber in the area. The Rice brothers moved the mill to Ward, Louisiana, and Hyatt soon died. The railroad was abandoned in 1934. The 1936 county road map names the community, but does not depict any buildings in the town.³⁹

Hicksbaugh, on the western edge of Turkey Creek unit, about four miles south of Tyler County Road 1943, probably came into being in the second decade of the twentieth century. In 1917 S. B. Hicks and J. T. and J. P. Wurtsbaugh built a sawmill and company town at the terminus of their railroad the East Texas and Gulf Railway. Although originally intended to serve a larger area, only four miles of the railroad were completed, from Hicksbaugh to Hyatt, a station on the Texas and New Orleans. The lumber mill operated until 1928, and the railroad was finally abandoned in 1934. During the 1920s and early 1930s Hicksbaugh had a population of about 500 with a post office, school, and a number of businesses. After the railroad left the town quickly declined, its population cut in half by the late 1930s when postal service moved to Warren. Today, there are a few scattered houses, but no community as such.⁴⁰

Hester Cemetery, on the east side of Turkey Creek unit, is the sole remnant of a small accumulation of structures that appeared on the 1936 county road map around a school. This community was not named on the 1936 map and is not extant today. The cemetery appears to be within the unit boundaries.⁴¹

Richardson Cemetery lies east of the eastern boundary of Turkey Creek unit just north of the Hardin County line. There are a few scattered dwellings nearby, but no identifiable community.

Just north of Hickory Creek Savannah unit on Tyler County Road 2827, a small community centered around a church showed up on the 1936 county road map. The community was not named on the map. The church, which

³⁹Megan Bieselee, "Hyatt, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 3:808; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Tyler County, Rice Lumber Company; Moseley, *Pioneer Days*, pp. 195-196; Texas Highway Department, Tyler County Road Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

⁴⁰Megan Bieselee, "Hicksbaugh Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 3:588; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Tyler County, Wurtsbaugh-Hicks Lumber Company; Texas Highway Department, Tyler County Road Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

⁴¹Texas Highway Department, Tyler County Road Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

does not exist today, may have also served the various dwellings that lined US 69/287 from Hyatt to the county line.⁴²

Village Mills, at the intersection of US 69/287 and FM 3063, is more than three miles west of Turkey Creek unit. It came into being, as did its neighbors to the north (Hyatt and Warren) as a result of the Sabine and East Texas Railroad in the early 1880s. The Village Mill Company began operations in 1883, shipping lumber products over the new rail line. In 1890 the community was Hardin County's largest town with 800 inhabitants. The mill was one of the largest in the state and broke a world production record in 1895 when it produced 255,403 board feet of lumber in 11 hours with a single circular saw. In 1902 the Kirby Lumber Company purchased the mill and the surrounding 10,000 acres of timber land, some of which was probably in Turkey Creek unit. Kirby produced almost 17 million board feet of lumber at Village Mills in 1907. The mill was closed in 1930, and many of the townspeople moved south to Long Station, another lumber milling town. The town was "almost a ghost town" according to a county historian after the mill closed. The population dropped to 80 in the early 1940s. In 1945, however, oil and natural gas were found nearby, and the town prospered again. Continuing mineral production and the neighboring Wildwood Resort City pushed the population of Village Mills (combined with Long Station) up to 300 in 1990.⁴³

Providence, on FM 420, was one of the earliest settlements in Hardin County. First settled about 1830 by Austin Colony immigrants, it grew during the Republic period because it was outside the dense Big Thicket area. It was not named on the 1939/41 Hardin county road map, but did show up on the 1958 map. The 1989 map did not name the community, and there is no discernible community on the ground today.⁴⁴

McKinney Cemetery lies at the end of FM 420. It appeared on the 1939/41 county road map with four dwellings nearby.⁴⁵

⁴²Texas Highway Department, Tyler County Road Map, 1936. on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas. Although Dethloff and Treat (Historical Survey, p. 56) dismissed Hickory Creek Savannah unit as having no historical significance, there was at one time a community on its northern boundary.

⁴³Robert Wooster, "Village Mills, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 6:751-752; Mary Lou Proctor, A History of Hardin County, M. A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1950, pp. 84-85.

⁴⁴Robert Wooster, "Providence, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:362; Duncan, "Hardin County," in Tyler et al., *New Handbook*, 3:456; Texas Highway Department, Hardin County Road Map, 1939/41; 1958 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

⁴⁵Texas Highway Department, Hardin County Road Map, 1939/41 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

BIG SANDY UNIT

Big Sandy Creek rises near Moscow in central Polk County northeast of Livingston. A major drainage basin of the county, it flows 47 miles southward into Kimball Creek just north of Village Mills in Hardin County. It has had other names in the past, including Alabama Creek in Polk County and Village Creek in Hardin County. Officially named "Big Sandy" by USGS in 1960, the creek flows through the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation. Big Sandy unit lies wholly in Polk County and includes approximately 16 miles of Big Sandy Creek.⁴⁶

Polk County was formed in 1836 by the Republic's first Congress, and the next 25 years saw an influx of American settlers, most of whom chose lands along the Trinity River (its western boundary today) and other major streams, out of much of the Big Thicket area. The lumbering and timber-cutting industry in Polk County began in the last two decades of the nineteenth century as railroads came into the county. As early as 1846, however, Thomas McDonald had a small sawmill east of Livingston. Timber production has remained the county's most important industry in the twentieth century.⁴⁷

The Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation lies on the northern boundary of Big Sandy unit. With more than 4500 acres of land, the reservation includes portions of Big Sandy and Bear creeks and spans US 190.

Although the Alabamas and the Coushattas are two separate tribes, they have long shared a language affiliation and cultural attributes. Both groups lived along the Alabama River in the sixteenth century, hunting gathering and practicing some agriculture. They lived in scattered clan communities and were allied with the Upper Creek Confederacy. During the mid-eighteenth century the Alabamas and Coushattas began moving to the south and west. Hunting and trapping resources were being depleted due to the great demand for furs and pelts by Europeans; European settlers were also moving into the Alabama Rivershed; and the new English government was not as hospitable as the previous French. By 1766 both tribes had moved into Louisiana, and many had settled on the Sabine River.

Less than 20 years later in the 1780s, both groups moved across the Sabine River, seeking refuge under Spanish rule. The Alabamas,

⁴⁶ "Big Sandy Creek," Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 1:537.

⁴⁷ Richard B. McCaslin, "Polk County," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:258-259; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Polk County, Thomas McDonald.

Coushattas and a smaller group, the Pakana branch of the Creek Indians, settled in the Big Thicket area of Texas, near Attoyac Bayou, and the Angelina, Neches and Trinity rivers. The Big Thicket provided rich hunting and fishing grounds and were removed from Spanish forts and settlements. The dense thicket even discouraged trails and travel routes. The Old San Antonio Road skirted the northern part of the thicket, and the Atascosito Road ran to the south.

In 1830 the Alabamas were grouped around three communities in northern Tyler County: Peach Tree Village about two miles north of Chester; Fenced-In Village about five miles to the southeast of Peach Tree Village; and Cane Island Village, between Peach Tree Village and Fort Teran on the Neches. The Coushattas lived on the Trinity River at Upper Coushatta Village (also known as Battise Village) near Onalaska; at Long King's Village about two miles north of the Lake Livingston dam; and at Colita's Village at the great bend of the Trinity.

The Alabamas and Coushattas were not subject to the removal and extermination of Native Americans practiced by the Mirabeau B. Lamar administration during the Republic of Texas era. Rather, the Republic's Congress granted the tribes two leagues of land in East Texas near their villages. Misunderstanding the government's intent, the tribes moved south into Polk County. In 1853 Polk County citizens and the Alabama tribe petitioned the Texas legislature (Texas had become a state in 1845.) for a reservation in Polk County and the state purchased 1110 acres, the nucleus of the present reservation. Two years later the legislature designated funds to purchase 640 acres of land for the Coushattas in Polk County. Suitable land, however, was not available and the Coushattas moved onto the Alabama Reservation in 1859. During the later years of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, the federal government and the state wrangled over responsibilities toward the tribes. During this period, railroads and more and more settlers came into Polk County, and the Big Thicket was being lumbered and settled, severely depleting the tribes' hunting and fishing resources. The timber industry, however, also brought new jobs into the area, and the tribal members were soon employed in the sawmills and lumber camps.

Congress was encouraged by the tribes and local interested citizens throughout the early years of the twentieth century to expand the reservation. It was not, however, until 1928 that money was appropriated to purchase an additional 3071 acres of land adjoining the reservation.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Howard N. Martin, "Alabama-Coushatta Indians," in Tyler, et al., eds, *New Handbook*, 1:77-80.

Camp Ruby is located on FM 1276 in Polk County, just west of the north-western corner of Big Sandy unit. The community had its beginnings in a pre-Civil War community on the site that had taken the name of Old Hope by 1880. A post office was established there in 1880 under the name of Rhoden, and from 1896 to 1911 the post office was billed as Charity. In 1926 the W. T. Carter and Brother Lumber Company moved into the area and established a logging camp at the site. The town was designated Camp Ruby after a friend of A. B. Clayton who scouted the area for the lumber company. Camp Ruby linked by tram line to the railroad in Camden, became a major logging camp for the Carter sawmills. The company town was basically built from scratch. It had a large commissary, 25 tenant houses for white families, 10 for Mexican families, and 25 for blacks. With the depletion of the area's timber, the logging camp moved on in the 1940s and soon the town had about 25 inhabitants. The community's fate was further sealed when US 190 was built about two miles west, and most of the population moved to New Camp Ruby on US 190. The 1960s discovery of moderate amounts of oil in the area did not bring Camp Ruby back to life, and in 1990 the population stood at 35. Today, a church and cemetery mark the historic community. No doubt the area within big Sandy unit was one of the prime timber sources.⁴⁹

Dallardsville is a small community, indistinguishable from **Big Sandy**, that sits on FM 1276 in Polk County on the eastern edge of Big Sandy unit. the community arose in the late 1870s when John J. Dollard, a schoolmaster and physician, settled there and a post office was secured. The community school was organized in 1888 and seems to have been a continuing definition of the community since. In 1890 the town had a population of 75 three churches, and a public school. In 1907 the community may have been the home of a sawmill owned by Lafayette "Fate" Davis. Little is known about the mill, except that it blew up in 1907 and was evidently not rebuilt. The early part of the twentieth century, however, saw the community decline, and its post office was discontinued in 1929. When oil was discovered in the Segno fields to the south, however, the community rebounded, and the post office returned in the 1940s. In 1990 the town's population was 350, and the Big Sandy School serves a large area.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Robert Wooster, "Camp Ruby, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 1:944-945; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Hardin County, W. T. Carter & Bro. Logging Front.

⁵⁰Robert Wooster, "Dallardsville, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 2:477; Polk County Bicentennial Commission Heritage Committee, *A Pictorial History of Polk County, Texas (1846-1901)*. (Livingston, Tex., 1976), n.p.; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Polk County, Lafayette "Fate" Davis, Big Sandy. Dollard's name is subject to several spellings, but Dallardsville is the accepted form for the community.

Sunflower Road cuts through Big Sandy unit from Dallardsville west to **Sunflower Church** on the western boundary. Along the road is a small cemetery that is within the unit boundaries. Sunflower Baptist Church has a historical marker noting that the congregation dates to 1882 when seven area families established a community church in the local school house. Over the years the church has grown and is still an active congregation. The church may have also served another community nearby, **Double Branch**, near where Double Branch Creek empties into Big Sandy. The Double Branch community was not named on the 1936 Polk County road map, but there are several scattered dwellings in the vicinity. Although this hamlet may have been within the boundaries of the Big Sandy unit, it does not exist today.⁵¹

Knight, just north of FM 943 and west of the south end of Big Sandy unit began as a farming community and was named for local storekeeper Charlie Knight when a post office was established in 1889. A logging tram to Camden was built to the area probably around the turn of the century, and it may have run through Camp Ruby to the north. Another post office was established in 1905 and the community was named Mack. Regardless of its name, however, the community failed to flourish, and most of the residents were gone by the 1950s. Today, there are several dwellings scattered along the dirt road where Knight used to be.⁵²

Segno is at the juncture of FM 943 and 2798, just south of Big Sandy unit. Its history began during the middle of the nineteenth century when it served the surrounding agricultural community. About 1850 Dr. John E. Hill built a cotton gin and press near the site. Henry Knight is considered the founder of the community when he began a farm at the site. Knight had named the locality Sego after a local Indian. About 1904 area settlers built a community hall to be used as a church and school and that became Magnolia Hill School. The town was always small, and in 1925 the population stood at 10. In 1936 the nearby Segno oil field was brought in, and the town grew to 80 persons in 1941, where it remained through 1990. In the 1960s and 1970s M. G. Harrison ran a tie mill in Segno, supplying railroad ties of oak, ash, beech, cypress, gum and shortleaf pine. Today,

⁵¹Texas Historical Commission, Marker Files, Polk County, Sunflower Baptist Church; Polk County Bicentennial Commission Heritage Committee, *Pictorial History*, n.p.; Texas Highway Department, Polk County Highway Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

⁵²Robert Wooster, "Knight, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 1:944-945; Polk County Bicentennial Commission Heritage Committee, *Pictorial History*, n.p.

the community is a scattered village with a community cemetery and church in the Magnolia Hill location.⁵³

Camp Seale, east of the southern extremity of Big Sandy unit off FM 1276, was established in 1928 as a logging camp by the Kirby Lumber Company. It had a post office and a population of about 20 in 1940, although it is not named and there is only one dwelling in its vicinity on the Polk County road map in 1936. Today, it is not identifiable as a community.⁵⁴

MENARD CREEK CORRIDOR

Menard Creek is a major drainage in Polk County. It rises in central Polk County west of Big Sandy unit and flows south and east, then cuts west across the far northwestern tip of Hardin County to cross the extreme northeastern tip of Liberty County before heading into Polk County again where and feeding into the Trinity River just north of the Liberty County line. The creek was named for Michel B. Menard who had settled on the upper reaches of the creek in 1832 and built a mill on it by 1833. Menard, a French Canadian, had come into Texas in the late 1820s and established himself as a fur trader and land speculator. He operated the saw and gristmill on Menard Creek at the Menard's Chapel site in Polk County with his cousin Pierre J. Menard. Menard attended the Independence Convention at Washington-on-the-Brazos in March 1836 and signed the Declaration of Independence. In 1838 Menard moved to land he owned on the eastern end of Galveston Island and organized the Galveston City Company in 1838. Although Galveston would develop into one of the state's most important towns in the nineteenth century, its early years were hard, and Menard was plagued with financial problems when he died there in 1856.⁵⁵

⁵³Robert Wooster, "Segno, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:964-965; Polk County Bicentennial Commission Heritage Committee, *Pictorial History*, n.p.; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Research Files, Polk County, M. G. Harrison Tie Mill, Leggett (Segno). Major Henry W. Augustine, an Republic of Texas patriot and area resident, is buried in the Magnolia Hill Cemetery. Augustine settled in the San Augustine area in the late 1820s and was a delegate to the General Consultation of 1835. He served in the Republic's Congress and commanded a company in the Cherokee War in 1838. He moved to Polk County in 1855 where he lived until his death in 1874. A special act of the Texas Congress awarded Augustine a wooden leg after his leg was amputated from a wound suffered in the Cherokee War. (Texas Historical Commission, Marker Files, Polk County, Major Henry W. Augustine; McXie Whitton Martin, "Augustine, Henry William," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook* 1:288).

⁵⁴Robert Wooster, "Camp Seale, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 1:946.

⁵⁵Richard B. McCaslin, "Menard Creek," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 4:616; Margaret Swett Henson, "Menard, Michel B.," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 4:613.

Menard's Chapel continued in existence, although the Menard brothers left the area. In 1838 a post office called Menard's Mill was established there, and in 1862 the town's name was officially changed to Menard's Chapel. The chapel for which the town was named was Mount Gilead Baptist Church, organized in 1854. The town grew around the school, and in 1906, Menard's Chapel had 4 schools, 4 teachers and 91 students. The town declined in the twentieth century. By 1936, it was no longer listed on the county road map, although there were several dwellings in its vicinity. Today, the church and cemetery mark the historic site.⁵⁶

Menard Creek enters Big Sandy unit at its southeastern edge, and a portion of the creek is contained within Big Sandy. When Menard Creek leaves Big Sandy unit just south of FM 943, the corridor unit spans both banks of the creek until it empties into the Trinity River.

Holly Grove is situated just west of Menard Creek Corridor about two miles before the corridor enters Hardin County. Although the area was called Holly Grove before 1860, the Holly Grove Missionary Baptist Church was organized in 1871, and the school may have begun about the same time. The earliest burial in the large cemetery dates to 1873. The 1936 county road map shows two schools and a cemetery at the site, along with several dwellings scattered in the vicinity. Today, only the cemetery and church mark the site of historic Holly Grove.⁵⁷

Fuqua, in the northeastern corner of Liberty County on FM 787 just south of Menard Creek Corridor, came into being in the early twentieth century, as a company town for Kirby Lumber Company's Mill O. It was also called Menard in the early days, but a post office under the name of Fuqua was established in 1902. The mill was originally built by Tom L. and David C. Hackney in 1901, and John Henry Kirby purchased it and 10,000 acres of timber land nearby in January 1902. Water from Menard Creek was used to fill the mill pond, and the mill's capacity was 100,000 board feet per day. By 1905 the mill town consisted of 200 dwellings, a commissary, depot, dispensary, barber shop, and a meat market. The mill's production reached almost 16 million board feet in 1907 and the timber stands were soon depleted. In 1918 there were 309 employees. By 1928 the mill was abandoned, and the post office left in 1929. The 1936 county road map shows Fuqua as a stop on the Santa Fe Railroad, but no dwellings are

⁵⁶Diana J. Kleiner, "Menard's Chapel, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 4:616; Texas Highway Department, Polk County Road Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

⁵⁷Robert Wooster, "Holly Grove, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 3:670; Polk County Bicentennial Commission Heritage Committee, *Pictorial History*, n.p.; Texas Highway Department, Polk County Highway Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

around it. Today, Fuqua is the site of scattered residential communities served by dirt roads and made up of manufactured housing. The historic townsite is not evident.⁵⁸

Rye is farther south of Menard Creek corridor than Fuqua, but is also on the Santa Fe line. When the Santa Fe's predecessor, the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe, came through in the 1890s, Rye grew up around it. The town was named for an early settler, M. C. Rye. Joseph Kopecky had a general store in the town, and a Yugoslav immigrant, P. A. Racki built a sawmill and started Racki Lumber Company. The 1936 Liberty County road map showed several substantial buildings lining the town's main street, including a sawmill. Unlike the nearby mill towns of Fuqua and Milvid which disappeared with the timber ran out, Rye has a community that numbered 76 in 1990.⁵⁹

Milvid, on the Santa Fe Railroad west of Rye and south of Menard Creek Corridor, was a company town built by the Miller-Vidor Lumber Company in 1906. (The town's name is a combination of Miller and Vidor.) Miller-Vidor began milling operations in 1907 and sold out to Union Lumber Company in 1913 for more than \$600,000. The large mill was housed in a two-and-one-half story building. The mill town had 250 employees in 1910 and a population of 1200. Town buildings included 125 tenant houses, a commissary, ice cream parlor, ice house, meat market, church/school /community building, and barbershop. The mill's timber came from 20,000 acres in Liberty Polk and Hardin counties, and mill capacity in 1910 was at its peak of 100,000 board feet per day. By the mid-1920s production was decreasing as the timber was depleted. The post office shut down in 1925 and the mill left in 1928. The 1936 county road map showed a church and a few buildings in the Milvid area in 1936, but by the 1940s, the population had declined to 41. Today, there is no identifiable historic community, and it is not named on current maps.⁶⁰

Ace, in southern Polk County, about two miles about Menard Creek's junction with the Trinity, had its beginnings in a nearby town called Smithfield, founded by Samuel G. Hiram in 1830. Smithfield, which may

⁵⁸Robert Wooster, "Fuqua, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 3:34-35; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Files, Liberty County, Kirby Lumber Company, Mill O, Fuqua; Texas Highway Department, Liberty County Road Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

⁵⁹Robert Wooster, "Rye, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:736; Miriam Partlow, *Liberty, Liberty County, and the Atascosito District* (Austin: Pemberton Press, 1974), p. 207.

⁶⁰Robert Wooster, "Milvid, Texas," in Tyler et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 4:756; Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Files, Liberty County, West Lumber Company, Milvid; Texas Highway Department, Liberty County Highway Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

have been the earliest town in Polk County took its name from settler Robert Smith, and it became a stopping point on the Liberty-Nacogdoches Road. Hiram, a carpenter, was the town's first postmaster in 1840. As late as 1841, a group of Coushattas lived close by on the Trinity in what was dubbed Coushatta Village. In 1840 the town moved to the Trinity River nearby and also became a riverboat landing. In 1848 Smithfield resident Thomas McDonald built a steamboat which he sold to Michel B. Menard for \$426. (Menard was in Galveston by this time.) Four early sawmills were operated in the area. By 1871 the town had declined and lost its post office. The town did not entirely die, however, and in 1915, a new post office opened, and the town was named Ace after its new post master, Ace Emanuel. In 1936 Ace had a church and school, as well as several businesses and a number of residences lining its main street, SH 146. Oil discoveries after the second world war brought the population to 40 in the early 1970s, where it has remained.⁶¹

LOBLOLLY UNIT

Loblolly unit sits in Liberty County at the end of a county road north and east of Moss Hill. The 1936 county road map showed a cluster of dwellings just south of the unit that has been identified by Maxine Johnston as **"Butterbean Island."** Another small group of dwellings nearer SH 105 was called out as **Moss** on the 1936 map, as well as a church on SH 105 named **Mt. Calvary**. Those communities have no discernible identity today.⁶²

LANCE ROSIER UNIT

LITTLE PINE ISLAND BAYOU CORRIDOR

Lance Rosier unit and Little Pine Island Bayou corridor are in the heart of what has traditionally been known as Big Thicket or bear country. Both units have long-term associations with the major nineteenth and twentieth-century aspects of Hardin County history. The units have seen the early settlement associated with the mineral cures, the timber industry and the oil industry. Lance Rosier unit and Little Pine Island Bayou corridor lie wholly in Hardin County.

⁶¹Robert Wooster, "Ace, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 1:15; Polk County Bicentennial Commission Heritage Committee, *Pictorial History*, n.p.; Texas Highway Department, Polk County Highway Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

⁶²Texas Highway Department, Liberty County Highway Map, 1936 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas; Maxine Johnston to Sue Moss, conversation, Aug. 4, 1998.

Immigration into Hardin County was slow, and the earliest settlement was in 1835 at Sour Lake, south of Lance Rosier unit. It was not until 1858 that the county had a large enough population to justify the creation of a county government. The first county seat was at Hardin (now called Old Hardin), and the county court met there until the mid-1880s. In 1881 the Sabine and East Texas Railroad passed through Hardin County, bringing a great deal of change to the sparsely populated agricultural economy. The railroad stimulated the nascent timber industry which had been oriented toward the far eastern boundary of the county. Over the next twenty-five years other railroads came into the county, brought by the promise of the immense lumber resources. The county's economy was also changed by the discovery of oil at Saratoga, Sour Lake and Batson in the first three years of the twentieth century. Boom and bust characterized much of the early development of both industries, and many Hardin County residents continued subsistence farming and stockraising to make ends meet in the meantime. Timber and oil, however, remain the county's most important commodities.⁶³

Little Pine Island Bayou is a major drainage of Hardin County. It rises in Polk County near Segno and runs 44 miles south and east to Pine Island Bayou on the Jefferson County line.⁶⁴

Lance Rosier unit bears the name of the man who was known in his lifetime and after as "Mr. Big Thicket." Lance Rosier was born in the unit, his old homesite sitting at the end of Cotton Road. Rosier died in 1970 after spending many years advocating for the preservation of the Big Thicket and inspiring the state and national movement to preserve a portion of it in the Big Thicket National Preserve.

Old Hardin, the county's first seat of government, sits at the crossroads of FM 770 and SH 326. Old Hardin, considered to be the center of the county, was founded in 1858 when the county was organized. It served as the seat of government until 1881, but was never a large town. In 1878 it had several stores, a post office, gristmill, county courthouse, a Grange association, and a temperance society. The Sabine and East Texas Railroad pushed through Hardin County in 1881 and built a station at Kountze, about two miles northeast of Old Hardin. The county seat faded as commerce moved toward the railroad. In 1887 the county government moved to Kountze. Old Hardin lost its post office in 1903, and four dwellings

⁶³Patricia L. Duncan, "Hardin County," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, pp. 3:457-458.

⁶⁴ "Little Pine Island Bayou," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 4:235.

marked its location in 1939. Today, it is indistinguishable from the outskirts of Kountze.⁶⁵

Saratoga began as a small settlement, growing up in the 1850s and 1860s around the homesite of John Fletcher Cottons. Cottons, a farmer and stockraiser, had moved to the area looking for better mast for his free-ranging hogs. Cottons noticed oil and gas seepages and in 1865 dug a well looking for oil. Though unsuccessful, his attempt is locally considered to be the first hole punched into the Saratoga field. During the 1860s and 1870s several other settlers moved into the area: the first school was built in 1871; the First Baptist Church was organized in 1874; and Richard Teel built a gristmill about the same time.⁶⁶

In the 1880s entrepreneur P. S. Watts purchased the Cottons place and set about creating a mineral water spa along the lines of nearby Sour Lake. Watts built a hotel, campground, and cottages for visitors and erected a pavilion over the springs. The community had been variously called New Sour Lake and Friendship. When the post office was established in 1884, the name was changed to Saratoga, probably as a reminder of the New York health resort of the same name. The resort prospered through the end of the century.⁶⁷

Although Cottons had drilled an unsuccessful 100-foot well in 1865, and a small producer was made in 1887, oil exploration did not begin in earnest until after the Spindletop gusher in 1901. Later that year, the Saratoga field came in, the first large commercially viable oil field in Hardin County. Unlike Beaumont and nearby Sour Lake and Batson, Saratoga never had the reputation of some oil boom towns. The Saratoga Townsite Company platted the townsite in 1903 and began to sell lots. In 1904 a rail link was completed between Saratoga and the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe Railroad at Bragg. Oil production in the Saratoga field peaked in 1905 at almost 3

⁶⁵Robert Wooster, "Hardin, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas *New Handbook*, 3:456; Texas Highway Department, Hardin County Highway Map, 1939-1940.

⁶⁶Schaadt, ed., *Hardin County History*, pp. 135-136, 147; Robert Wooster, "Saratoga, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:895-896.

⁶⁷Schaadt, ed., *Hardin County History*, pp. 135-136; Wooster, "Saratoga, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:895-896.

million barrels and declined in the next three years to just over 1.5 million barrels.⁶⁸

The oil industry and railroad line brought another industry to Saratoga to exploit another of the area's resources--timber. In 1904 the McShane Lumber Company built a steam sawmill at Saratoga, producing between 85,000 and 125,000 board feet of pine and hardwood lumber daily. In 1905 the mill estimated that it had 15 years of stumpage in its holdings served by more than eight miles of tram. The stumpage estimate, however, was optimistic, and the mill was dismantled and moved to Louisiana in about 1918. McShane's was not the only sawmill in town in the first decade of the twentieth century. Rio Bravo Oil Company operated a mill in 1905 (and perhaps longer), cutting rough lumber for derrick and rig timbers. T. L. McCaughan also had a mill at Saratoga about the same time, also cutting derrick timbers, as did W. V. Rose and H. L. Graham and Company. Cheek & Heyman Lumber Company operated a steam mill that provided yellow barrel staves and railroad ties, both important in the oil and related industries. In 1928 there were three lumber companies in Saratoga: Hardin Lumber Company, C. C. Crow Lumber Company, and Blumberg Sawmill.⁶⁹

Oil and lumber production have remained mainstays of the Saratoga economy, although the rail line left in 1934 and the population has dwindled. In 1948 when the fields were producing about 45,000 barrels per month, the population was 1200. At that time there were three areas of town. Old Town or Old Saratoga was the site of the original town around the springs. Adjoining the old town was the oil boomtown of New Saratoga. And Depot Town centered around the old Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe station. The 1990 population of Saratoga was 1000. The Saratoga Field discovery well has a Texas Historical Marker. Saratoga proper has two cemeteries, Oil Town Cemetery and Middle Town Cemetery.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Schaadt, ed., *Hardin County History*, pp. 135-136; Robert Wooster, "Saratoga, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:895-896; Mary Lou Proctor, "A History of Hardin County," M. A. thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1950, pp. 79-82.

⁶⁹Texas Historical Commission, Sawmill Files, Hardin County, McShane Lumber Company, Rio Bravo Oil Company, T. L. McCaughan, W. V. Rose, H. L. Graham and Company, Cheek & Heyman Lumber Company, Hardin Lumber Company, C. C. Crow Lumber Company, and Blumberg Sawmill.

⁷⁰Schaadt, ed., *Hardin County History*, pp. 135-136; Wooster, "Saratoga, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:895-896.

Teel Cemetery is almost certainly within Lance Rosier unit on Little Pine Island Bayou, just as the unit narrows into Little Pine Island Corridor.⁷¹

Pine Ridge sits on FM 421 just north of Little Pine Island Bayou Corridor and east of SH 326. Although there was a scattered, unnamed assemblage of dwellings, a church, cemetery, and school, in the vicinity in 1939, the Pine Ridge community grew up around the nearby Pine Ridge oil field that was discovered in 1952. Today, the community is scattered and has little site identification.⁷²

Little Rock community is at the crossroads of SH 326 and a county road about one mile south of Old Hardin. The settlement's origins are unknown, although two dwelling were shown in the vicinity in the 1939/40 Hardin county road map. In 1958 there was a church in the location and several additional scattered dwellings. Today, however, there is no church or discernible community, although the name still exists on the current county road map.⁷³

Sour Lake had its beginnings in 1835 when Stephen Jackson received a league of land that contained the lake and springs. Long before contact, East Texas Indians had visited the area, and the waters of a two-acre pond were thought to have medicinal powers. By 1850 Jackson had developed the site into a health resort. Although the town had its ups and downs, it had a population of 150 in 1885. Over the next ten years the town declined. It was almost a ghost town when large oil discoveries created a boomtown there in January 1902. At times the population numbered more than 10,000, and peak oil production reached 50,000 barrels per day. The Texas Company (Texaco) had its start in the Sour Lake oil fields. Like the timber resources, however, the oil was finite, and the market fickle. In 1914 the town had a population of 2300. Although the field is still in production, the town's population declined to 1727 in 1990. The town has long affiliations with the historical Big Thicket of Texas, but is somewhat removed from the Lance Rosier/Little Pine Island Bayou Corridor units.⁷⁴

⁷¹Mildred S.Wright, *Hardin County, Texas Cemeteries*, (Beaumont, Tex. 1976) n.p., map 1; United States Geological Service, *Sour Lake Quadrangle*, 7.5 min., 1984.

⁷²Robert Wooster, "Pine Ridge, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:210; Texas Highway Department, *Hardin County Highway Map*, 1939/40 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

⁷³Texas Highway Department, *Hardin County Highway Map*, 1939/40, 1958, 1989 on file Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

⁷⁴Diana J. Kleiner, "Sour Lake, Texas," in Tyler et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:1150-1151; "Sour Lake Oilfield," in Tyler et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 5:1151.

Batson, like Sour Lake, is somewhat removed from Lance Rosier unit. It, too, has long been interested in and influenced by the resources of the Thicket. The community was settled early in the county's history: prior to 1840 the Batson brothers arrived in the area. On the edge of the Thicket, settlers congregated in a dispersed community that in 1897 had two schools in the area known as Batson Prairie. With the discovery of the Batson oilfield in 1903, however, the town became the epitome of a Texas oil boomtown, with the population swelling to more than 10,000. Production decreased over the next twenty years, and in 1927 the town had about 600 inhabitants. Although new oil discoveries in the mid-1930s brought some of the population back, the town dropped to about 200 in 1970 and stood at 140 in 1990.⁷⁵

⁷⁵Diana J. Kleiner, "Batson, Texas," in Tyler, et al., eds., *New Handbook*, 1:415-416.

COMMUNITY CONTACTS

As noted in the above report, only one "community" in the ethnohistorical sense exists in affiliation with Big Thicket National Preserve and its units: the Alabama-Coushatta tribe on their reservation adjoining Big Sandy unit. There are, however, persons in counties and towns nearby that have an interest in the history and culture of various Preserve units, and who represent various interest groups. The following list is comprised of local persons with official and non-official interests in the history and culture of Big Thicket National Preserve units. It is only a starting point, and additional contacts and sources of information should be developed in any study of a specific park unit and/or mineral exploration project.

Upper Neches River Corridor	Linda Primrose, Chair Jasper County Historical Commission 712 N. Austin Street Jasper, Texas 75951
	Jack Whitmeyer, Chair Tyler County Historical Commission Rt. 1, Box 110 Colmesneil, Texas 75938
Beech Creek unit	Jack Whitmeyer, Chair Tyler County Historical Commission Rt. 1, Box 110 Colmesneil, Texas 75938
Neches Bottom & Jack Gore Baygall unit	Linda Primrose, Chair Jasper County Historical Commission 712 N. Austin Street Jasper, Texas 75951
	Harold Willis, Chair Hardin County Historical Commission Kountze, Texas 77625
Lower Neches River Corridor	Linda Primrose, Chair Jasper County Historical Commission 712 N. Austin Street Jasper, Texas 75951
	Harold Willis, Chair Hardin County Historical Commission 395 S. Williford Kountze, Texas 77625

	Dr. Howard Williams, Chair Orange County Historical Commission 12 Bayou Bend Orange, Texas 77630
Beaumont unit	Harold Willis, Chair Hardin County Historical Commission 395 S. Williford Kountze, Texas 77625
	H. Tracy Richardson III, Chair Jefferson County Historical Commission P. O. Box 4025 Beaumont, Texas 77704
Little Pine Island Bayou Corridor	Harold Willis, Chair Hardin County Historical Commission 395 S. Williford Kountze, Texas 77625
	H. Tracy Richardson III, Chair Jefferson County Historical Commission P. O. Box 4025 Beaumont, Texas 77704
Big Sandy unit	Joanne Battise, Tribal Director Alabama-Coushatta Reservation Route 3, Box 640 Livingston, Texas 77351
	Harleyne Clamon, Chair Polk County Historical Commission 616 W. Calhoun Livingston, Texas 77351
Menard Creek Corridor	Harleyne Clamon, Chair Polk County Historical Commission 616 W. Calhoun Livingston, Texas 77351
	Harold Willis, Chair Hardin County Historical Commission 395 S. Williford Kountze, Texas 77625
	Kevin Ladd, Chair Liberty County Historical Commission P. O. Box 334 Hardin, Texas 77561-0334

Turkey Creek unit	Harold Willis, Chair Hardin County Historical Commission 395 S. Williford Kountze, Texas 77625
	Jack Whitmeyer, Chair Tyler County Historical Commission Rt. 1, Box 110 Colmesneil, Texas 75938
Hickory Creek unit	Jack Whitmeyer, Chair Tyler County Historical Commission Rt. 1, Box 110 Colmesneil, Texas 75938
Loblolly unit	Harold Willis, Chair Hardin County Historical Commission 395 S. Williford Kountze, Texas 77625
Lance Rosier unit	Harold Willis, Chair Hardin County Historical Commission 395 S. Williford Kountze, Texas 77625
general regional history	Robert L. Schaadt, Jr. Rural Route 2 Liberty, TX 77575-9802
	Darrell D. Shine 220 W Avenue P, Silsbee, TX 77656-5824
general Big Thicket National Preserve history	Maxine Johnston P.O. Box 154 Batson, TX 77519-0154
Native American campsites and trails	Wanda L. Bobinger 213 W Abbey St, Livingston, TX 77351-3203
Neches River history	Geraldine Watson Red Oak Ln, Warren, TX 77664
Jack Gore Baygall unit	Shirley Wilson, President Jack Gore Baygall Association Silsbee, Texas

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