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Nacogdoches Downtown Historic District  
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The Nacogdoches Downtown Historic District represents the core of commercial activity and economic development in Nacogdoches since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Founded in 1716 as Mission Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Nacogdoches and re-established in 1779 by Gil Antonio Ibarvo as a permanent center of trade, Nacogdoches eventually emerged as the home of several figures prominent in the establishment in the Republic of Texas, a county seat once statehood was achieved, and a regional center of agriculture and commerce. The initial platting of the town site in 1779, the subsequent founding of the first businesses, and the completion of the first rail line in 1883 were decisive events in the town's initial development. Although the town plat dating from 1779 is virtually intact, the earliest extant building within the district is dated to 1835 (Property #100, Durst-Taylor House), and the earliest commercial structure is dated to 1880 (Property #17, 106 S. Pecan, Mayer-Schmidt Building, with extensive alterations in 1934). Thus 1835 marks the beginning of the historic district's period of significance for the purpose of listing in the National Register of Historic Places. By 1883, the Houston, East & West Texas Railroad (HE & WT) began to transform Nacogdoches into a regional trade center and shipping point of consequence; the arrival of the Texas & New Orleans line (an affiliate of the Southern Pacific) in 1902 and the Nacogdoches & Southeastern in 1905 solidified the town's stature as an important transportation hub linking the economies of the town and outlying rural agricultural areas. Nacogdoches not only became a center for processing and transportation of cotton and lumber in Nacogdoches County, but came to host numerous commercial endeavors including banking houses, retail establishments, small scale industry and manufacturing.

The Nacogdoches Downtown Historic District played a significant and varied role as a commercial and economic center of the region, as well as the seat of county government, and is therefore eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under a number of Criteria. The Nacogdoches Downtown Historic District is eligible for listing under Criterion A at the state level of significance, in the area of Commerce at the state level of significance for its role in cotton production and distribution within the county, a center of East Texas Lumber industry, and as a host to numerous influential wholesale, retail and industrial establishments. The district is also eligible for listing under Criterion C at the state level of significance in the area of Architecture as an intact sampling of late 19th and 20th century commercial buildings that are reflective of local and national architectural trends during the period of significance (1835-1957).

### Immigration, Settlement, and Community Organization in Nacogdoches prior to 1779

Prior to European settlement of the region, the area that would become Nacogdoches was home to the Nacogdoche Indians of the Caddo Indian confederation, who built lodges and mounds along the Banita and Lanana Creeks. One of these mounds survives today, located at 516 Mound Street. Though occupation of the region dates to the Archaic Period (ca. 5000 B.C.-A.D. 500), archeological investigation indicates that surviving Caddo mounds date to approximately 1250.<sup>7</sup>

The first European presence dates to 1687, when René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, led an expedition from French-held Louisiana to explore areas to the west.<sup>8</sup> Though the region was officially under Spanish rule at this time, it was

<sup>7</sup> Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "NACOGDOCHES, TX," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/NN/hdnl.html> (accessed June 3, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Claims have been made that Hernando De Soto came as far as Nacogdoches in 1541, though the evidence is scant (For this, see R.B. Blake's *Historic Nacogdoches* (1939: 4). The date of the Sieur de La Salle's visit hinges upon the survival of specific descriptions of Nacogdoches, which were dated to 1685 in R.B. Blake's *Historic Nacogdoches* (1939: 4), but were subsequently thought to be from 1687. For this later dating, see *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "NACOGDOCHES, TX."



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largely neglected, and the French sought to regularize a trade relationship with the native tribes who resided in the northeastern portions of Spanish territory. In an effort to prevent further incursions by the French, the Spanish governors of this part of New Spain (or, Mexico) became interested in establishing a presence along the border of French territory (roughly, what would become the western border of Louisiana). This resulted in the Spanish mapping of El Camino Real, also known as the Old San Antonio Road, the King's Highway, and the San Antonio-Nacogdoches Road.<sup>9</sup> Between 1690 and 1693, the route was mapped by three expeditions. The first was led by Alonso De León in 1690; the second took place in 1691 and was headed by Domingo Terán de los Ríos (the first governor of Texas); the final expedition departed in 1693, led by Gregorio de Salinas Varona, who became the first to travel directly from the Rio Grande to the missions in East Texas.<sup>10</sup> Stretching nearly 700 miles, the Camino Real began at the border in Coahuila (Mexico), and passed through San Antonio and Nacogdoches, to end in Natchitoches, Louisiana (FIG. 4). Once established, the Camino Real became a conduit through which supplies and military support were provided for the missions, a means by which Spanish-Mexican traders and officials attended to their holdings in East Texas, and by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a route for cattle drives and immigration. All of these activities, with the network of trails that supported the Camino Real, encouraged the development of Nacogdoches.<sup>11</sup>

Though a route through East Texas was roughly established by the Camino Real, the first attempts to permanently settle the region did not occur until 1716. At this time, the Spanish Captain Domingo Ramón led an expedition to establish a series of missions and presidios along the Camino Real. Arriving in Nacogdoches in July 1716, he officially charged the Franciscan *padre* Antonio Margil de Jesús with possession of the newly-founded Mission Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Nacogdoches. Consisting only of a log church and a few houses for missionaries, the mission complex was probably located near the intersection of present-day North Street and Muller Street, just north of downtown Nacogdoches.<sup>12</sup> Mission Nuestra Señora was part of a new string of regional missions which included Concepción de los Hainai (1716), San José de Nazones (1716), Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de los Ais (1716), and San Francisco de los Neches (1721). Although a significant effort was made with these new missions, they failed to flourish. By 1719, less than three years after their founding, war broke out between the Spanish and French, and the Spanish were forced to temporarily abandon their missionary activity.<sup>13</sup>

In 1721, an expedition led by the Marqués of San Miguel de Aguaya, governor of Coahuila, reached Nacogdoches and successfully expelled the French, forcing them back to the frontier outpost of Natchitoches.<sup>14</sup> Soon after, the missions of Texas were reopened, again under Spanish control. Still, a general neglect and lack of continual immigration rendered the missions stagnant, and communities remained undeveloped. Early land grants made in Nacogdoches indicate that

<sup>9</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Camino Real."

<sup>10</sup> A. Joachim McGraw, John W. Clark, Jr., and Elizabeth A. Robbins, eds., *A Texas Legacy: The Old San Antonio Road and the Caminos Reales* (Austin: Texas State Department of Highways and Public Transportation, 1991) and *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "OLD SAN ANTONIO ROAD," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/OO/exo4.html> (accessed May 5, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> The Camino Real, officially surveyed and mapped by W. N. Zivley in 1929 under the auspices of the Texas Legislature and the Daughters of the American Revolution, now largely exists as part of State Highway 29. *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "OLD SAN ANTONIO ROAD."

<sup>12</sup> McDonald, *Nacogdoches: Wilderness Outpost to Modern City*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Partin, "History of Nacogdoches," 35-36.

<sup>14</sup> Partin, "History of Nacogdoches," 37.



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although land was indeed parceled out, few settlers actually made their way to this northeastern-most corner of the Spanish frontier during the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup>

As the Spanish gained full control of the Louisiana territories from France in 1767, tensions over the control of the Louisiana-Texas border were reduced, and the need for settlement in the region was fully reassessed. When Padre Gaspar José de Solís visited the Nacogdoches mission in 1768, he found only a few neat but aging buildings and a settlement occupied by the padre, two soldiers and their families, and a "few half-breed servants."<sup>16</sup> In the same year, the Marques de Rubí made an inspection trip of the mission, writing: "In this vast area (of East Texas) there was not a settlement or semblance of one, nor hope of any being established, until one reached Nacogdoches. There a lonely mission, aided by a few soldiers and an occasional Indian, eked a miserable existence, with hope in Providence undimmed."<sup>17</sup> As a result of the observations by Solís and Rubí, the viceroy Antonio María de Bucareli y Ursúa issued the "New Regulations for Presidios," (1772) which recalled all missionaries and settlers back to San Antonio.<sup>18</sup> A military expedition sent from Governor Juan María Vicencio de Riperda in San Antonio enforced the viceroy's order, causing a few Spanish settlers to flee to Natchitoches and others to surreptitiously join neighboring native settlements. By 1773, the tiny Nacogdoches mission was once again abandoned.<sup>19</sup> Still, over the next few years, some of the dispersed settlers returned to the vicinity of Nacogdoches and the French began to make new forays into "abandoned" Spanish territories.

## "Gateway to Texas": Nacogdoches Settlement and Community Organization 1779 to 1835

Nacogdoches owes its renaissance in 1779 to the efforts of a single man, Gil Antonio Ibarvo. Ibarvo (alternately spelled Ybarbo) was the son of Spanish colonists from Andalusia, born in 1729 in Los Adaes, a small settlement located between Nacogdoches and Natchitoches. He was a successful trader among the French, Spanish, and regional native tribes, and despite the recent governmental decrees to vacate the territory, was loathe to abandon his property and business.<sup>20</sup> Soon after the Spanish viceroy's rulings of 1772, he petitioned Riperda, still the Spanish Governor, to reestablish a settlement in the area of Nacogdoches. Permission was eventually granted and in April 1779 Ibarvo returned with a small group of Spanish-Mexican settlers.<sup>21</sup> The Spanish government appointed him the Captain of the Militia and Lieutenant Governor

<sup>15</sup> See for example, the 1792 description of the grant of a town lot in Nacogdoches to Juan José Sanches in R. B. Blake, "Locations of the Early Spanish Missions and Presidio in Nacogdoches County", Volume 41, Number 3, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly Online*, [http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v041/n3/contrib\\_DIVL4440.html](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v041/n3/contrib_DIVL4440.html) (Accessed Sun Jun 4 14:09:41 CDT 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Partin, "History of Nacogdoches," 53-54.

<sup>17</sup> Partin, "History of Nacogdoches," 56.

<sup>18</sup> McDonald, Archie. "Early Spanish Involvement in Nacogdoches: Missions" In McDonald, *Nacogdoches*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Partin, "History of Nacogdoches," 57; *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "NACOGDOCHES, TX,"

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/NN/hdn1.html> (accessed January 13, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> By 1772, Ibarvo already had considerable trade relations, particularly with prominent merchants along the Mississippi. Along with his business, he had property in Los Adaes, and a large ranch, or *pueblo*, called Lobanillo, along the Sabine River near the mission of Dolores de Los Ais. See Crocket, *Two Centuries in East Texas* (47).

<sup>21</sup> The settlers under Ibarvo, many of them from his home village of Los Adaes (Louisiana), left San Antonio for their former homes in about 1773, but were not permitted to travel as far as Nacogdoches. They settled on the Trinity River in near what became the northern boundary of Walker County, and established a presidio named Nuestra Señora del Pilar de Bucarell, with Ibarvo as captain of the militia and Justica Mayor, and Gil Flores as lieutenant. By 1779, Commanche threats, fires, and flood forced the settlers eastward toward the abandoned missions and to Nacogdoches. See Crocket *Two Centuries in East Texas*, 51.



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of the Pueblo of Nacogdoches with a salary of 500 pesos a year.<sup>22</sup> For nearly two decades, Ibarvo was the "gentle despot" of Nacogdoches, set with the task of writing the first codes of law, organizing community structure, issuing grants of land (verbally), and acting as an ambassador and regulator of trade with not only the Spanish ruling body in Mexico, but the French in Louisiana, and most significantly, with the native Indian population.

Upon his relocation to Nacogdoches in 1779, Ibarvo established a new town site at a slight distance from the original mission. His initial plan followed the Spanish model of creating a central plaza, or *plaza principal*, around which the remainder of the settlement would be situated. Within the new town plan, Ibarvo was careful to observe the path of the Camino Real and other existing travel routes. Intended as the primary location for governmental buildings and commercial establishments, the original *plaza principal* had corners to the northwest, northeast, southwest, and southeast. A secondary plaza was designated nearby (at the intersection of present-day West Main and North Streets) to serve the religious community then consisting of a Catholic church and cemetery.

With the settlers' return, Ibarvo's leadership, and the support of the Spanish colonial government, Nacogdoches was finally set to become more than an isolated mission. The town soon established itself as an important center of trade between the Spanish, the native tribes, and the French in Natchitoches. Ibarvo's venture was thus the first successful permanent settlement in the area. In addition to resuming trade, settlers began to cultivate corn, beans, squash and peas. Crude palisade-type homes, often lacking floors and windows, were erected in close proximity to the settlement.<sup>23</sup> By 1788, Pedro Vial, a French explorer employed by the Spanish, declared that Nacogdoches "contained some 80 or 90 houses and a population of about 250 persons, most of whom were Spanish and French."<sup>24</sup> A 1790 census documented 480 persons, and a 1791 census claimed that Nacogdoches was home to 504 residents: "172 men, 123 women, 98 boys, 93 girls, and 18 slaves."<sup>25</sup>

In addition to producing the original plat, Ibarvo began to plan his own residence. The two-story house was located at the corner of the *plaza principal* (at present-day Main and North Fredonia Streets), and was constructed of native stone measuring up to almost a yard in thickness. Known as the "Old Stone House" or the "Stone Fort," the building was erected around 1779 to be used primarily as Ibarvo's home and trading post, though in the coming decades it would also serve as a court house, general store, printing office, saloon, and shelter during military activities (FIG. 5).<sup>26</sup> Ibarvo's use of stone for his home and place of business indicates two very important things: one, that he intended the settlement to be permanent; and two, that in the absence of military support (which would come in small amounts by 1794), he felt a strong need for fortification. The Stone Fort survived until 1901, when it was torn down to make way for a newer commercial structure. The stones, however, were salvaged for a reconstruction of the building on the campus of Stephen F. Austin State University, executed under the auspices of the Texas Centennial Commission in 1936 (FIG. 6).

<sup>22</sup> Partin, History of Nacogdoches, 71. He held this position for nearly two decades, granting verbal lands, establishing and administering the judicial system, and overseeing friendly commerce with neighboring natives. Ibarvo was forcibly removed from his post in sometime between 1792 and 1794, due to charges of "illegal trading activities" and allegations regarding the legality of his verbal land grants. See Partin 74; and James McReynolds, "Spanish Nacogdoches" in McDonald, *Nacogdoches*, 20.

<sup>23</sup> These homes were described as being constructed from small trees laced together with vines and coated with an insulating layer of mud. Roofs were shingled, and stick-and mud fireplaces provided heating during the colder months. For more on the living conditions in early Nacogdoches, see James McReynolds, "Spanish Nacogdoches" in McDonald, *Nacogdoches*, 21.

<sup>24</sup> Partin, History of Nacogdoches, 91.

<sup>25</sup> Crocket, *Two Centuries in East Texas* (57).

<sup>26</sup> For this construction date, see Partin 73, and his reference to the Blake Collection, XXVIII:363.



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Following Ibarvo's removal from office (and from Nacogdoches) in late 1791 on charges of illegal trade and land granting, there was no "permanent official" to succeed him in either matters of governance or trade.<sup>27</sup> In an effort to extend Ibarvo's activities, William Barr and Peter Davenport founded the House of Barr and Davenport. Established in 1798 and housed in the Stone Fort, the firm attempted to control trade between Spanish Mexico and Louisiana much as Ibarvo had subtly done. Though trade between the two territories was officially prohibited by Spanish law, it was recognizably difficult to enforce, and the House of Barr and Davenport was granted an exemption in order to provide economic and political stability in the region. Their trading activities thus fostered friendly relations between Nacogdoches and the native populations in the region.<sup>28</sup> The company's fortunes strongly mirror the town's during this period. Using the founders's ties to Louisiana, the House of Barr and Davenport channeled manufactured goods from New Orleans to Natchitoches and then on to Nacogdoches where they were purchased as supplies for Spanish troops and then transported further into Mexico. In Nacogdoches, Barr and Davenport purchased raw materials, including pelts and horses, and channeled them back to New Orleans. They also provided supplies such as flour, beef, salt, soap, to the Spaniards, and traded various items of interest, such as tobacco, lead, gunpowder, and various tools to the Indians.<sup>29</sup> The House of Barr operated in full swing until Barr's death in 1810 and Davenport's change of allegiance away from the Spanish in 1812.<sup>30</sup>

By 1800, Nacogdoches had grown to accommodate a population of 660, and was second in size only to San Antonio.<sup>31</sup> Because of its strategic location as the "gateway into Spanish Texas,"<sup>32</sup> both trade opportunities and military operations continued to draw new residents. Descriptions indicate that the core of the town plan, much as it exists today, was fully established by this date. The *plaza principal*, North Street (El Calle del Norte), Main Street (El Camino Real), Hospital Street, and Pilar Street (Pillar) were already in place. By 1801, the mission church outside of town had been abandoned in favor of a new parish church constructed on Main Street just east of the *plaza principal*, and a new church plaza accompanied it, facing present-day Church Street. Neither the church nor the plaza survives today; the church was seized by the Mexican military in 1827 and used as a barracks, then abandoned and demolished in 1835. Numerous homes were built along North Street as far as Mimms; businesses also occupied the areas around the *plaza principal* and extended east along Main Street to the secondary church plaza. The church cemetery was initially located on the northeast corner of North and Main Streets.<sup>33</sup>

As Napoleon re-acquired the Louisiana Territory from the Spanish in 1800 and sold this vast holding to the Americans in 1803, tensions along the Louisiana border – and between Nacogdoches and parts east – increased (FIG. 7). The Louisiana

<sup>27</sup> Ibarvo put under house arrest in San Antonio in December 1791, asked to relinquish his duties, and an investigation into his activities was launched. In the fall of 1796, the case was settled and it was determined that there was insufficient evidence to prove any charges against him. Ibarvo was set free, allowed to keep his rank of captain of the militia, but forbidden to return to live in Nacogdoches. See Partin 82-85.

<sup>28</sup> J. Villasana Haggard, "The House of Barr and Davenport," *SHQ* 49 (1945): 72-73.

<sup>29</sup> Partin 96.

<sup>30</sup> Partin 97.

<sup>31</sup> Partin, "History of Nacogdoches," 91. Source listed as "Moral to the Governor, 1 January 1800, translation, Blake Collection, Supplement, IV, 42."

<sup>32</sup> James McReynolds, "Spanish Nacogdoches" in McDonald, *Nacogdoches*, 22.

<sup>33</sup> Partin, "History of Nacogdoches," 91-92. Source for description: Blake Collection, XLV, 102-103. For church Partin 143-44, source Blake Collection LXIV, 79.



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Purchase meant an influx of Americans to the region, adding yet a third interest group to complicate the tension between the Spanish and French contingents. Until the founding of the Republic of Texas in 1836, Nacogdoches was at the center of this political and military strife. With the establishment of the "Neutral Ground" between Spanish Mexico (or, Texas) and Louisiana in 1806, Nacogdoches's place as a point of political communication between the two territories was cemented.<sup>34</sup> This also meant that the town became an increasingly dangerous place to live, and that development between 1779 and 1810 was significantly arrested.

In 1812, the Gutiérrez-Magee Expedition, a coalition of Americans and Anglo-Spanish citizens based in Natchitoches, sought to take Texas from Spain on behalf of the United States. A single issue of the Spanish-language *Gaceta de Tejas*, the first newspaper written in Texas (produced in Nacogdoches but printed in Natchitoches), appeared on 25 May 1813 supporting the Expedition's goal of an independent Spanish-American state.<sup>35</sup> A volunteer army congregated in Nacogdoches under the leadership of Jose Gutierrez de Lara, who had participated in the failed Hidalgo uprising in Mexico in 1810, and Augustus Magee of Natchitoches. Many prominent Nacogdoches residents such as Peter Davenport participated in the revolt. The insurgent forces declared Texas free from Spain, and captured Nacogdoches, La Bahia and San Antonio before being defeated and pushed back to Louisiana in 1813.<sup>36</sup> Nacogdoches was abandoned as its citizens, who had supported the Expedition, fled Spanish ground and into Natchitoches. In June 1819, James Long (a plantation-owner from Natchez, Mississippi) led another expedition, again pushing through East Texas with the intent of taking the region for the United States. By October, Mexican authorities had repelled the invaders, sending them back to Louisiana.

As a result of this agitation for independence, the town of Nacogdoches suffered physically. The town was for the most part abandoned after the dismal failure of the Gutiérrez-Magee Expedition, and by 1820 when an American, W. F. Dewes, saw Nacogdoches it seemed "a desolate-looking place with a population of only about 100 persons."<sup>37</sup> In 1821, Stephen F. Austin described the town:

Nacogdoches is now the ruins of a (once) flourishing little village. The church and Seven Houses are still standing entire one of them two story high built of soft Rock—it was the seat of the Indian trade and a great deal of business was formerly done here.<sup>38</sup>

But Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821 changed Nacogdoches's fortunes. The town was recognized as a municipality of the Mexican Confederation, with jurisdiction over the territory bounded by the Neches and Sabine Rivers. Now serving as an administrative center of the new Mexican government (though controlled by the Department of Bexar in San Antonio), people began to re-settle Nacogdoches in small numbers. Nacogdoches again became the official point of contact between Mexican officials and native tribes of the region, including the Caddo, a growing number of Cherokee,

<sup>34</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Neutral Ground," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/NN/nbn2.html> (accessed August 9, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Gutiérrez-Magee Expedition," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/GG/eeg1.html> (accessed June 16, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> For more on the expedition, see James McReynolds "Spanish Nacogdoches" in McDonald 23.

<sup>37</sup> Partin, "History of Nacogdoches," 118; source W. F. Dewes, 10 June 1820, transcript, Blake Collection, LXIV, 176-80.

<sup>38</sup> Stephen F. Austin, diary entry for 20 July in Eugene C. Barker, ed., "Journal of Stephen F. Austin on His First Trip to Texas, 1821" vol. 7, n. 4, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly Online*, [http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v007/n4/article\\_3.html](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v007/n4/article_3.html) (Accessed Sun Jun 4 15:07:03 CDT 2006)



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Kikapoo, Coushatta, Shawnee, and Comanche (who were increasingly compressed into the region by American occupation of the southeastern and central U.S.).<sup>39</sup>

The first Mexican *empresario* contracts for the lands surrounding Nacogdoches were granted in 1825 to Haden Edwards and Frost Thorn. Though the Mexican government barred the immigration of Anglos from the United States, the granting of *empresario* contracts to American-born Mexican citizens like Edwards and Thorn meant that that immigration began despite the restrictions. It was during this period that Nacogdoches gained the epithet "Gateway to Texas" in recognition of the town's role as a waystation for travelers moving from the U.S. to points further west.

Haden Edwards, an immigrant born in Virginia and raised in Kentucky, was designated *empresario* for Nacogdoches and was granted a large swath of land descending to the Gulf of Mexico. He arrived in September 1825 with a charge to settle the area with 800 families. He found much of the land was already claimed by what he had incorrectly perceived as squatters, many of whom were actually descendents of the original settlers but held no paper titles to the land they occupied. Although the *empresario* contract specified that all preexisting Spanish and Mexican land grants were to be honored, Edwards insisted that the letter of the law be upheld and all grants be substantiated else the land would be auctioned.<sup>40</sup> This created tensions between old settlers and Edwards's new settlers, who stood to benefit by the confiscation of unsubstantiated claims. Nacogdoches became fiercely divided into camps of old and new, sparking the Fredonian Rebellion of 1826-27. Embroiled in a series of administrative conflicts with the Mexican government involving elections and title issues, Edwards finally revolted. Supported by a group of settlers he had brought to Nacogdoches, Edwards declared "Fredonia" an independent state on 21 December 1826. Following a series of armed conflicts, in which the Old Stone House served as a fort for the Fredonian rebels, the Mexican government put down the insurgency, forcing Edwards and the others to flee to Natchitoches in January 1827.<sup>41</sup> Among the more famous of the rebels was Adolphus Sterne, who had immigrated to Nacogdoches in 1826. Although he supported the Fredonian rebellion and was convicted of treason by the Mexican government, he was quickly pardoned on the condition that he renew his allegiance to Mexico. This fate was likely shared by many who had participated, though Edwards was not treated with such leniency.

Immediately following the Fredonia Rebellion, Edwards's *empresario* grant was cancelled and his lands reassigned to David G. Burnet (300 families, December 1826), Joseph Vehlein (300 families, December 1826), and Lorenzo de Zavala (500 families, March 1829). None of these *empresarios* were able to invest the time or financial resources to meet their obligations, and in October 1830 consolidated their holdings under the company name of the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company. Though the town of Nacogdoches was within the territory controlled by the company, most of the approximately 1,000 families had, by November 1835, settled along the Trinity River closer to the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>42</sup>

Frost Thorn's land grant, to the north and west of Nacogdoches, was equally inactive. By 1833, nearly a decade after the issuance of his grant, he had yet to bring any settlers to his land. Despite the fact that he failed to meet the requirements of his *empresario* contract, he chose to settle in Nacogdoches permanently and became a major political and economic

<sup>39</sup> See Manuel y Terán's diaries for his accounts of the Indians of the region in the late 1820s.

<sup>40</sup> "The Fredonia Rebellion" in McDonald 34.

<sup>41</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "FREDONIAN REBELLION," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/FF/jcf1.html> (accessed January 24, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/GG/ufg1.html> (accessed June 16, 2006).



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supporter of the community. Popularly believed to be Texas's first millionaire, Thorn's business savvy and dedication to the region eventually brought prosperity to the town.<sup>43</sup>

Despite early political instabilities, by the late 1820s, the settlement of Nacogdoches became permanent. Within Nacogdoches, the long-neglected civic infrastructure began to receive attention. In 1825, the *ayuntamiento*, or town council, began to hold regular meetings.<sup>44</sup> This council was an elected group consisting of three to five members, including a secretary, *regadores* or councilmen, and a legal advisor. All members were elected to support the head of the *ayuntamiento*, the *alcalde*.<sup>45</sup> This chief administrator was responsible for both judicial and administrative affairs, and served as the primary link between the Mexican governor and the local officials. According to election records from between 1821 and 1835, Nacogdoches had tremendous governmental instability, with 19 *alcaldes* in 14 years, and an average voter turn-out of 80 to 90%.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the apparent political volatility, the *ayuntamiento* encouraged order and civic development in Nacogdoches during these years. Not only did they pass laws to create a "civil" environment, such as prohibiting firearms, drunkenness, gambling, and giving or selling alcohol to Indians,<sup>47</sup> the local government encouraged property owners to fence their holdings, maintain well-groomed lots and public street fronts (both in terms of the lot and the public access), to cover wells and to pen livestock.<sup>48</sup> Progress was apparently slow: in 1833, the streets were in ill-repair and "Royal Street between the small square (probably the Church Plaza) and the creek needed repairing because 'there was formed in the middle of said street by the much waters a canal that prevented carts and wagons (From) being able to pass.'"<sup>49</sup>

The greatest potential for change to the physical structure of the town occurred during the Mexican period. In 1827, the council proposed changes to the plan of the *plaza principal* that would bring it in line with the regulations promulgated by the colonization laws of the Mexican state. These read as follows:

Art. 12. After selecting the site destined for the new town, he shall take care that the base lines run north and south, east and west, and he will designate a public square one hundred and twenty *varas* on each side, exclusive of the streets, which shall be called the principal or constitutional square, and this shall be the central point from which the street shall run, for the formation of squares and blocks in conforming with the model hereto annexed.

Art. 13. The block situated on the east side of the principal square, shall be destined for the church, curate's house, and other ecclesiastical buildings. The block on the west side of said square shall be designated for public buildings of the municipality. In some other suitable situation a block should be designated for a market square, another for a jail, and a house of correction, another for a school, and

<sup>43</sup> Partin, 124. *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Thorn, Frost" <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/TT/fth32.html> (accessed June 21, 2006). Lucy May, "The Life and Activities of Frost Thorn" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1939).

<sup>44</sup> Partin, 121.

<sup>45</sup> "Mexican Nacogdoches" in McDonald 27.

<sup>46</sup> "Mexican Nacogdoches" in McDonald 27. From J. Singletary, *Local Government in Nacogdoches*, 113, Special Collections, Steen Library.

<sup>47</sup> "Mexican Nacogdoches" in McDonald 27.

<sup>48</sup> Partin, 148. *Ayuntamiento minutes 1828-1832*, trans. R. B. Blake, Blake Collection XXII, 114-15, 135, 147-48, 150-51, 168-69.

<sup>49</sup> Partin, "History of Nacogdoches," 171, source: Minutes of the Nacogdoches Ayuntamiento, 25 May 1833, translation, Blake Collection, XXII, 193-34.



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other edifices for public instruction, and another beyond the limits of the town for a burial ground.  
Art. 14. He shall on his responsibility cause the streets to be laid off straight, and that they are twenty *varas* wide, to promote the health of the town.<sup>50</sup>

The Nacogdoches *ayuntamiento* accordingly proposed the following changes: the *plaza principal* would be made square and its name changed to the Plaza of the Constitution; the streets surrounding the square would be straightened and re-aligned toward the cardinal directions; additionally, the streets would be widened to conform to the twenty *vara* width prescribed in the regulations; and finally, the old church plaza would be converted to a site for a new town hall, jail, and school.<sup>51</sup> However, the spirit of independence that ruled Nacogdoches prevented these recommendations from being fully implemented. Because the straightening and widening of streets imposed on existing lots, curtailed street access, and rendered many properties inaccessible, citizens rose up against the plan and supported the retention of the irregular central plaza and trapezoidal city lots.<sup>52</sup> The dog-leg streets still remain as evidence today.

Efforts to improve the town, however, did not abate. In 1835, George Pollitt created the town's first public well and a committee began the process of building an official public market.<sup>53</sup> Entertainment venues were also created, including those for dancing, horse racing, cock fights, and playing cards or billiards.<sup>54</sup>

Further improvements came in the form educational facilities. In 1825, citizens began to make the first attempts to found a local school. A teacher's contract has survived, and reports indicate that English-speaking children in Nacogdoches were able to receive private instruction by 1828.<sup>55</sup> In the absence of education funding from the Mexican government, local citizens formed the "Board of Piety" in 1831. Members included Colonel Piedras, Frost Thorn and Adolphus Sterne. This group, with its many Mexican contributors, successfully built a school for all children, both Spanish- and English-speaking. The school opened in 1831 with 51 students;<sup>56</sup> in March 1832, twenty-four were enrolled; in 1834, it accommodated eleven children.<sup>57</sup> Don José Cariere was the school's teacher during this early period. The list of contributions to the building campaign indicates the relative wealth of many of the town's leading citizens, as well as the kind of economy that existed in Nacogdoches at the time:

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| José de las Piedras | 100 pesos                                  |
| Peter Ellis Bean    | all of the lumber necessary                |
| Adolphus Sterne     | 25 pesos and 100 pounds of nails           |
| Patricio Torres     | month's service of hired laborer           |
| Juan Mora           | 10 pesos                                   |
| Francisco Guerrero  | all of the hinges of the windows and doors |
| Manuel Santos       | 10 pesos                                   |

<sup>50</sup> Instructions to Commissioners, 1827. Translated by ??? <http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/cololaws.htm> CHECK THIS SOURCE.

<sup>51</sup> Partin, 145-46; Jose Antonio Saucedo to Alcalde of Nacogdoches, 23 August 1827, trans. R. B. Blake, Blake Collection, LXVII, 1-2.

<sup>52</sup> Partin 146, Ramón Musquiz to ayuntamiento of Nacogdoches, 5 February 1828, trans. R. B. Blake, Blake Collection, LXVII, 3.

<sup>53</sup> Partin, "History of Nacogdoches," 173. 24 January 1835, Ayuntamiento, Blake Collection, XXII, 219-20.

<sup>54</sup> McDonald 31.

<sup>55</sup> Partin, 142. Mier y Teran, p. \*\*\*.

<sup>56</sup> Vera Blackburn, "The Development of Education in Nacogoches County," (MA thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1950), 25.

<sup>57</sup> Partin, 143.



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|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Jesus Santos      | 5 pesos   |
| Ynes Santaleon    | barrel of beans                                   |
| Martin Ybarbo     | 2-year old steer, barrel of corn                  |
| Andres Gonzalez   | personal service with yoke of oxen for 8 days     |
| Juan Lazarin      | personal service with yoke of oxen for 8 days     |
| Concepcion Ybarbo | yearling calf                                     |
| Antonio Mahchaca  | 10 pesos  |
| Bautista Chirino  | 3-year old steer                                  |
| Brigido Sineda    | service of hired laborer for 8 days <sup>58</sup> |

Though this fundraising campaign enabled the construction of a school building, it could not fund a new church as the Board of Piety had hoped. Religious services in Nacogdoches, when held at all, took place in various private homes until 1847. At this time, the wood-frame Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart was erected on present-day Pecan Street, between Main and Hospital Streets (potentially replaced by Property #87). This building was moved to Fern Lake in 1937, and in 1951 was relocated northeast of Nacogdoches to Center, where it remains today. The building was purchased by Nacogdoches's present-day Sacred Heart Catholic Church in 2001 with the intent to restore it.<sup>59</sup>

In 1828, Manuel de Mier y Terán was sent to report reporting on the condition of the outlying territories of the state of Coahuila y Tejas. While staying in Nacogdoches, he claimed the town's population had reached 700, accounting for the soldiers stationed at Piedras' garrison, and 100 women. He wrote that the "houses of the town were of lumber, well-built and facing the street. This town is located on a low hill surrounded by forest on all sides. Less than a mile away to the east and west run two arroyos with very good water. The first is called La Nana, and on its bank is the little stream called Father Marfil (Margil), with lovely water."<sup>60</sup> Despite Mier y Terán's optimistic description, an author named Pavie wrote in 1830, describing Nacogdoches as a "miserable outpost" with "the forty buildings which make up this village are in large part stores where English is spoken; the rest are more or less dirty huts with no other floor than the ground, on which the Spaniards stretch out skins and multicolored rugs which also serve them as coats. As for the Mexicans, they do nothing, absolutely nothing but warm themselves in the evening around the fire..."<sup>61</sup>

Despite the varied observations of the character of the town, Nacogdoches had clearly expanded from the days of Ibarvo's settlement. Improvements were made possible by the solidification of its trading economy, the beginnings of an agricultural economy, and the growth of an educated population interested in investing their own capital in a permanent settlement for their families. For example, in 1828, extensive trading resulted in the exportation of more than 40,000 deer skins, 1,500 bearskins, and so much otter and beaver that it had "almost been eradicated along the Neches, Angelina, and Trinity Rivers."<sup>62</sup> Still, the economic backbone of Nacogdoches in the 1830s consisted primarily of dry goods stores and services related to small-scale agricultural endeavors. Other businesses included lodging houses that provided primitive

<sup>58</sup> Chart from Blackburn, "The Development of Education in Nacogoches County," 24; source cited: document, Nacogdoches, 18 January 1831, Bexar Archives.

<sup>59</sup> <<http://sacredheartnac.org/history.html>> viewed 21 June 2006.

<sup>60</sup> Quote from Mier y Terán, 75. Partin, "History of Nacogdoches," 147.

<sup>61</sup> Pavie, 1830, page 194.

<sup>62</sup> Manuel de Mier y Terán, *Texas by Terán: The Diary Kept By General Manuel De Mier Y Terán On His 1828 Inspection of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 75.



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quarters to traders and travelers.<sup>63</sup> Tax records show that in 1834, eighteen businesses paid \$191 in taxation, up from ten paying \$170 in 1832.<sup>64</sup> Another report documented seven retail stores in town, all owned by "foreigners," meaning Americans. Both Mier y Terán and local Mexican officials noted that the Mexican-born population of Nacogdoches often lacked the capital to compete with the English-speaking North Americans.<sup>65</sup> None of the wooden structures that housed businesses during this period have survived.

In accordance with a diversifying economy, a nascent lumber industry began to emerge in Nacogdoches during the 1820s. Though the town's geographical isolation, poor roads and a general lack of efficient transportation kept the production of lumber to a local affair, by 1820 Peter Ellis Bean, a significant figure in the political life of Nacogdoches, had reportedly established a lumberyard as well as a sawmill and gristmill powered by water.<sup>66</sup> Bean's lumberyard was located along Banita Creek, "on the east side of the main plaza, just south of the present Stone Fort Bank."<sup>67</sup> The lumber milled in this small-scale operation was certainly used locally to increase the speed and ease with which new settlers could build the increasing number of frame houses and businesses in the region. No longer would they have to fell trees and manually split them – instead they could purchase a higher quality of building materials in their own town.<sup>68</sup> Despite the ease of acquiring these materials, the erection of frame buildings required a great deal more skill and effort than previous palisade or log construction techniques. Only the relatively affluent of Nacogdoches, such as Adolphus Sterne, could afford to erect a building made of milled lumber. His home, located at 211 S. Lanana Street (NR 1976) just outside the Commercial District is perhaps the earliest surviving building in Nacogdoches (ca. 1830), and remains an excellent example of the construction technology and building materials that were put into use in Nacogdoches during the Mexican period.

With the immigration of Americans from the cotton-farming regions of the U.S. came the emergence of a significant agricultural economy in the Nacogdoches region. By the late 1820s, numerous slaves were brought from the southeast and the first cotton crops were harvested. Slavery became a lasting point of contention between Americans and the Mexican government. The American settlers believed that to become an agricultural center that could rival neighboring Louisiana, slave labor was an absolute necessity despite the fact that it was illegal in Mexico. Eventually an exception to the law was made for the region of Tejas and both slavery and large-scale agriculture flourished.<sup>69</sup> Colonel Juan Almonte's reports of 1834 gave some indication of the early state of agriculture in the region: the Department of Nacogdoches, with a population of 8,000 whites and 1,000 black slaves, exported about 2,000 bales of cotton in 1833, as well as 90,000 skins

<sup>63</sup> See Pavie's 1830 report, published in *Texas by Terán*, P. \*\*\*.

<sup>64</sup> Partin, 153; tax rolls, Nacogdoches, 1830-34, trans. R. B. Blake, Blake Collection, XII, 5-10.

<sup>65</sup> Partin, 154; source *ayuntamiento* of Nacogdoches to the Political Chief, 24 April 1832, translation, Blake Collection, XII, 311-13.

<sup>66</sup> Robert S. Maxwell and Robert D. Baker, *Sawdust Empire: The Texas Lumber Industry, 1830-1940* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 1983), 17.

<sup>67</sup> Lois Foster Blount, "The Old Red House at Nacogdoches: A Leaf from the Reverend George L. Crockett's Sketchbook," v. 49, n.4 Southwestern Historical Quarterly Online,

[http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v049/n4/contrib\\_DIVL8677\\_print.html](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v049/n4/contrib_DIVL8677_print.html) (Accessed Thu Mar 2 11:59:11 CST 2006). See also R. B. Blake "Site of the Old Red House," *Daily Sentinel* 5 March 1936.

<sup>68</sup> Hamilton Easton, "The History of the Texas Lumbering Industry," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1947), 54-58 contains various accounts of the use of lumber to build ante-bellum cabins and houses.

<sup>69</sup> Mier y Terán, *Texas by Terán*, 99: "Prosperous North Americans in Louisiana and other western states wish to acquire lands in Tejas for large-scale speculation, but they are restricted by the laws prohibiting slavery. If these laws were rescinded (may God forbid), in just a few years Tejas would be a powerful state that would rival Louisiana in production and wealth."



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and 5,000 head of cattle.<sup>70</sup> In general, larger cotton farms were picked by slaves; on small acreage, the farmers and their families did the harvesting. The first cotton gin was established in Nacogdoches in 1833,<sup>71</sup> but cotton was mainly exported raw to New Orleans where it was ginned, keeping the price for the product relatively low. An agricultural economy of this smaller scale meant that only a very few individuals made a substantial profit from the enterprise.

Nacogdoches became not only a "gateway" community, providing a way station to settlers and traders passing from the U.S. to Mexico, but a regional hub for trade, communication, and farming. As agriculture began to take root, Nacogdoches became one of the best regional sources for agricultural implements and stock, building supplies, and household goods. By 1832, the number of local businesses had increased, and included Sim's Tavern, Thorne's Store, and Robert's Store.<sup>72</sup> In addition, the region's postal service and entertainment centered in Nacogdoches.

Wealth was accumulated in Nacogdoches by those involved in numerous enterprises, with Frost Thorn, Adolphus Sterne, and William Goyens<sup>73</sup> being the prime examples. Each was involved in real estate speculation, trade, agriculture, and the burgeoning timber industry. Not only did they amass personal fortunes and exert tremendous influence within the community, but they re-invested some of their private capital into maintaining the civic infrastructure of Nacogdoches. Their support impacted not only the physical character of the town, but the cultural environment as well. For example, Adolphus Sterne, born in 1801 in Cologne, Germany, immigrated to New Orleans 1817 and became involved in law and trade throughout Louisiana. After moving to Nacogdoches in 1826, he maintained his trade contacts, bringing goods to and from New Orleans through Natchitoches. The Adolphus Sterne House, built in about 1830, is widely agreed to be the oldest surviving structure in Nacogdoches. A wooden frame structure clad in clapboards with a side-gabled roof and a deep gallery on the front, it is typical of the structures that would have been built in Nacogdoches during the period. Because of Sterne's status within the community, the home had finer detailing and interior appointments than most of the other wooden structures of the time. It clearly reflects the cross-cultural influences from French creole Louisiana that produced such deep-galleried, four-square plan buildings. As Jay Dearborn Edwards has shown, this basic typology, which is present throughout the American south and Atlantic seaboard, can be traced to the creole forms of the Caribbean and their interaction with European prototypes on the mainland of North America.

The "Red House," the home of Colonel José de las Piedras (commander of the Mexican soldiers garrisoned in town), was typical of the Hispanic building tradition that existed in Nacogdoches during this period. In 1827, he petitioned the Mexican government to grant him and his soldiers town lots on which to build suitable homes. He received a lot on Pilar Street in the block west of the *plaza principal*, between present day Pecan and North Streets. Piedras purchased wood from Peter Ellis Bean's lumberyard in 1830 or 1831, erecting a wood-frame structure covered with adobe made from the

<sup>70</sup> Almonte's Statistical Notice in Kennedy's *Texas*, II, 71-77, as cited in Tarlton, "The History of the Cotton Industry," 34. MORE DESCRIPTION in :Abigail Curlee, "History of a Texas Slave Plantation 1831-63\*", Volume 26, Number 2, Southwestern Historical Quarterly Online, [http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v026/n2/contrib\\_DIVL1132.html](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v026/n2/contrib_DIVL1132.html) (Accessed Thu May 11 10:32:38 CDT 2006)

<sup>71</sup> George W. Rice, "Agriculture," in Nacogdoches Jaycees, *Bicentennial History of Nacogdoches* (Nacogdoches: Jaycees, 1976)  
<sup>72</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Nacogdoches, Battle of" <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/NN/gen1.html> (accessed June 23, 2006).

<sup>73</sup> William Goyens (1794-1856) was a free black man who arrived in Nacogdoches in 1820 from North Carolina and established a series of successful businesses. He was a trusted negotiator with the Cherokee, but also had a blacksmith shop and manufactured wagons that he used to run a trade route between Nacogdoches and Natchitoches. He later opened a lumber and grist mill. Archie P. McDonald, "William Goyens," All Things Historical series, Jan. 26, 2002. Viewed online <http://texasescapes.com>, March 3, 2006.



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red clay common in the region. Other officers under Piedras also petitioned for land and probably built similar houses.<sup>74</sup> Piedras's own residence was demolished sometime before 1912.

Despite the progress that diverse homes like Sterne's and Piedras's shows, Nacogdoches still had a complex social and political make-up that remained unresolved. Manuel Mier y Teran's assessment of the town aptly described the competing interests and factions that co-existed during these early years:

The population of the frontier is very heterogeneous. In numerical order of inhabitants, it consists of 25 tribes of savages who are situated around Nacogdoches, North Americans, and Mexicans. There are black slaves belonging to the second group, and four or five of these are the only capital brought by those who come from the north into Mexican territory. A great number of the foreigners who have entered the frontier are vicious and wild men with evil ways. Some of them are fugitive criminals from the neighboring republic; within our borders they create great disturbances and even (commit) criminal acts....The foreigners enjoy greater advantages than do the Mexicans. Commerce is in the hands of a few (of the former), but legal authority—in the form of an *ayuntamiento* and its *alcalde*—is in the hands of the latter. The greatest aversion prevails between them....<sup>75</sup>

Mier y Teran's observation of an "aversion" refers to competing factions within Nacogdoches, with one side loyal to the Mexican government, and the other continuing the push toward independence. The influx of Anglo settlers from the United States finally tipped the scales in favor of independence in the 1830s.

In an attempt to quell subversive influences, the governors of Mexico had in 1830 passed a law prohibiting immigration from the U.S. This brought to a head the tensions between loyalists and republicans, who began to organize throughout the East Texas region. In July of 1832, forces assembled just outside Nacogdoches; on August 2, under the leadership of James W. Bullock, they entered town and ousted Colonel Piedras and his soldiers, who were headquartered in the Stone House, the church, and the Red House. Instrumental in the Battle of Nacogdoches and its aftermath were James Bowie, who escorted the Mexican soldiers back to San Antonio, and Stephen F. Austin, who paroled Piedras at San Felipe and sent him back to Mexico. This battle and its victorious result pushed Mexican military forces out of Nacogdoches for the last time, making Nacogdoches the center of the early military and political activity that led to the creation of the Texas Republic in 1836.

With the removal of Mexican troops and the continued influx of Americans, Nacogdoches grew in large numbers during the mid-1830s. Colonel Juan Almonte, on an inspection tour of Texas in 1834, estimated the population of Nacogdoches to be 3,500,<sup>76</sup> an increase of from the 828 people counted in 1828 (100 of whom were slaves).<sup>77</sup> By 1835, the permanent population was reported to have been 996 with 140 reported slaves. Census data indicates that at this time, 37 masters

<sup>74</sup> Lois Foster Blount, "Old Red House at Nacogdoches", Volume 49, Number 4, Southwestern Historical Quarterly Online, [http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v049/n4/contrib\\_DIVL8677\\_print.html](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v049/n4/contrib_DIVL8677_print.html) (Accessed Thu Mar 2 11:59:11 CST 2006). See also R. B. Blake "Site of the Old Red House," *Daily Sentinel* March 5 1936. For a sketch see *Nacogdoches Texas Centennial, 1716-1936* (Nacogdoches: Redland Herald, 1936), 13.

<sup>75</sup> Mier Y Teran, 79.

<sup>76</sup> J. E. Ericson, "Introduction" to Carolyn Reeves Ericson, *Nacogdoches - Gateway to Texas: A Biographical Directory, 1773-1849* (Ft. Worth, TX: Arrow/Curtis Printing Co., 1974), xxxii.

<sup>77</sup> "Mexican Nacogdoches," in McDonald 31.



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owned slaves, and the majority of these slaveholders were of Anglo descent. Only one, William Goyens, was a free black.<sup>78</sup> John Durst was the town's largest slaveholder, with 22 reported in 1835.<sup>79</sup> The influx of Anglo settlers – and with them African slaves – had a profound effect on the character of Nacogdoches. Though the Anglo and Mexican citizens seemed to live, work and govern together with little conflict, a rising discontent with the Mexican government created a climate of political anxiety.

Between 1832 and 1836, many Americans who supported the cause of independence from Mexico began to assemble in Nacogdoches. Thus, the small town became a way point on the journey to fight in the coming revolution. Many of these would-be soldiers simply passed through, or came to enlist in volunteer companies that were forming and embarking from Nacogdoches – often stopping only long enough to gather arms and munitions that the Nacogdoches Committee of Vigilance and Safety had collected to outfit the resistance.<sup>80</sup> Other participants in the Revolution had a more permanent base in town. Sam Houston, for example, first came to Texas in 1832 and established his law practice in Nacogdoches in 1833 before becoming a hero in the Texas Revolution by defeating Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto. Likewise, Thomas J. Rusk – who fought alongside Houston at San Jacinto and served as commander-in-chief of the Texas forces in 1836 – made his home in Nacogdoches by 1834.

### Texas Republic and American State: Community Development of Nacogdoches, 1836-1882

With the establishment of the Texas Republic in 1836, Nacogdoches experienced its first period of large-scale immigration, growing in its importance as a point of political authority. As the Republic of Texas was organized, the former Department of Nacogdoches was divided into several new Republican counties. In March 1836, at least seven counties split off, including the areas surrounding Liberty, Jefferson, Jasper, Sabine, San Augustine and Shelby; these were further subdivided at a later date. The remainder of land east of the Trinity River was allocated as Nacogdoches County (FIG. 8).<sup>81</sup> On 5 June 1837, the town of Nacogdoches was officially incorporated under the Republic of Texas. With this new decree, the city government reformed under the alderman-mayor system, to be governed by an elected council of eight aldermen, a mayor, treasurer, secretary, collector and constable.<sup>82</sup> In this same year, Nacogdoches held the first district court, presided over by Judge R.M. Williamson and held at the Stone House.<sup>83</sup>

Although the form of government and the cultural character of Nacogdoches had begun to change, the original plazas, laid out by Ibarvo, remained the physical focal point of the town. In expectation of further growth, town lots west of the central plaza were platted, and the county's first courthouse was erected on land south of the *plaza principal*. Although expansion remained slow, the downtown remained vital, and streets were lined with retail establishments such as general stores, printers, and tailors. Small manufacturing shops included a cabinet-maker, a door shop, and a crate and basket shop. New residential buildings were erected along Pilar, South Mound, Hospital and Church streets, all in close proximity to the dominant commercial district along Main Street (or, the former El Camino Real).

<sup>78</sup> "Mexican Nacogdoches," in McDonald 31.

<sup>79</sup> "Mexican Nacogdoches," in McDonald 31.

<sup>80</sup> For a detailed account of the activities of this Committee, see Partin 189.

<sup>81</sup> Partin 202.

<sup>82</sup> Partin 203.

<sup>83</sup> Partin 205.



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Despite its prominence in the Republic's formation and its role as a county seat, Nacogdoches experienced very little population increase after the initial waves of immigration in the 1830s. Geographical isolation and poor roads contributed a great deal to the town's slow growth. Nevertheless, many citizens were relatively prosperous land-owners who were well-connected outside of the region. Still, those who lived in the county were generally poor slaves and sharecroppers who worked the land. Despite an overall stagnation, Nacogdoches was still perceived as a "prosperous" town.<sup>84</sup>

The relative success of Nacogdoches depended on the dedication of its private citizens, and the development of the town's civic infrastructure often relied on their personal financial investments. For despite its isolation, because of the role it had played in the Texas revolution, many prominent Texans had resided in, and continued to reside in Nacogdoches. Among these were Sam Houston, Frost Thorne, and Adolphus Sterne. Sam Houston lived in Nacogdoches shortly after the establishment of the Republic of Texas. Houston resided at the corner of Pilar and Pecan Streets between 1839 and 1840. Although the home was later demolished, it became the site of Liberty Hotel, and was eventually refurbished as Nacogdoches City Hall.<sup>85</sup> Frost Thorne, the state's first millionaire, lived in town until his death in 1854. He built his home on Main Street; after his death in 1854, the two-story wood-frame structure became the Hart Hotel. It was eventually demolished to make way for the Woodmen of the World building.<sup>86</sup> Adolphus Sterne remained until his death in 1852. Both the Sterne and Thorne families continued to be influential in Nacogdoches. Other prominent citizens to maintain homes in Nacogdoches included Haden Edwards (*empresario* and leader of the Fredonia Rebellion of 1825), and Thomas J. Rusk, who kept his home in town even as he was elected chief justice of the Republic's Supreme Court in 1838 and to the United States Senate, along with Sam Houston, in 1846.

Under the Republic, Nacogdoches clearly identified with American policies rather than Mexican, and the balance of power in the town clearly shifted toward immigrants from the north and east. Mexican loyalists, losing their support base, had departed the area. This meant that the practice of slavery, which had been problematic as part of the Mexican state, became largely acceptable. The Native American tribes that had populated the region were, under United States policy, regrouped elsewhere, and their use of Nacogdoches as a point of contact with authorities was discontinued. With both political and economic authority now centered in the hands of Anglo-American settlers, the diversity that had marked Nacogdoches early on thus diminished. In the 1830s, Nacogdoches began to emerge as predominantly "American" town, a status cemented by Texas's admission to statehood in 1845.

Agriculture, small scale commercial and manufacturing endeavors, and institutionalized education were among the dominant economic forces in Nacogdoches between 1836 and the 1880s. A lack of expedient transportation largely impacted the area's ability to diversify or develop at a rapid pace; growth was thus comparatively slow. To counter this obvious hindrance to economic prosperity, a number of local citizens began to invest private capital to improve the transportation infrastructure. Among these efforts was the clearing of the Angelina River, completed in 1844 by Robert S. Patton, with the financial backing of Adolphus Sterne, Thomas J. Rusk, and John Hyde, Sr. "Patton's Landing" was established as the primary transfer point between the river and the road connecting to Nacogdoches. This effort provided a faster outlet via steamboat to the Sabine Pass. Still, the river was subject to seasonal variations in flow and was not always

<sup>84</sup> Nacogdoches Chronicle 21 Dec 1852.

<sup>85</sup> *Nacogdoches Texas Centennial, 1716-1936* (Nacogdoches: Redland Herald, 1936), 21. Bill Murchison, *Nacogdoches: past and Present*, 83.

<sup>86</sup> *Nacogdoches Texas Centennial, 1716-1936* (Nacogdoches: Redland Herald, 1936), 21. sketch on p. 12.



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navigatable. Shipping did, however, remain an important means of transporting goods to and from Louisiana until the introduction of the railroad in 1883.

After Texas achieved independence, agriculture, with a newly sharpened focus on slave-based cotton production, continued a slow regional expansion.<sup>87</sup> Few records of cotton production survive for the period of the Republic, but production numbers beginning in 1850 indicate a steady growth. A small store and cotton storage sheds were built at Patton's Landing to accommodate the slight increase in agricultural trade.<sup>88</sup>

Education, an early concern of the citizens of Nacogdoches, became a major source of growth and prosperity for the small town. The earliest primary schools were funded privately. In the early 1840s there were at least two schools, one run by Mr. Moffitt and another by Benayah Thompson – the latter is where Adolphus Sterne sent his own children.<sup>89</sup> In 1855 a high school was established "at the building now occupied by Judge Ochiltree as an office" with the fees for basic lessons ranging from \$3.00 a month for spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and grammar to \$7.00 per month for piano lessons.<sup>90</sup>

Perhaps the most significant educational development occurred in February 1845, when Nacogdoches University was granted status as the first non-sectarian college in the Republic of Texas. Its charter stated that "no religious, sectarian tenets or doctrines shall be inculcated in the course of instruction, and that the institution shall be equally open to the education of the children of persons of all classes, without regard to their religious belief."<sup>91</sup> Hayden Edwards was reported to have donated eighteen acres of land for a campus north of the central plaza,<sup>92</sup> to which J.R. Arnold and Charles Taylor added three and a half acres. The 21 ½ acres were named Washington Square, in honor of George Washington. Classes met in the Red House until 1852, when the university adopted the Temperance Hall (located on current-day Hospital Street on the site of the present Methodist parsonage). In 1858, the Howard Brothers of Henderson designed the first building on Washington Square, a Greek Revival building which still stands today. Constructed of hand-made red bricks, the Old Nacogdoches University Building was completed in 1859 and is now part of the Washington Square Historic District (NR 1992). Classes met for a few years in this building, before school was interrupted by the outbreak of the Civil War. A shortage of income forced the University to close in 1861, after which the building served as a hospital and as a barrack for Confederate troops. It was later used as a part of Nacogdoches High School until the 1930s.

With the restoration of order under the Republic, citizens of Nacogdoches began to turn their attention to other civic development, including the establishment of fraternal organizations. Among the many efforts of the 1830s and the 1840s was the formation of the first Masonic Lodge in 1837. Many of the new settlers in Nacogdoches were Masons, and with

<sup>87</sup> For a comparison of the cotton-based economies in 1844: Jefferson, Jasper, and Bowie Counties produced 6,000 bales; St. Augustine, Nacogdoches, Shelby, and Harrison Counties produced 8,000 bales each; Red River County produced 10,000 bales. *Telegraph and Texas Register*, 30 October 1844, cited in Dewitt Talmage Tarlton, "The History of the Cotton Industry in Texas, 1820-1850" (MA Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1923), 45.

<sup>88</sup> Lois Foster Blount, "Steam Boats on the Angelina," *Bicentennial Commemorative History*, 127-28.

<sup>89</sup> Blackburn, 32-34.

<sup>90</sup> *Nacogdoches Chronicle*, 3 April 1855, quoted in Blackburn, 39-40.

<sup>91</sup> Weems, "Gateway of a Gaining Nation," 113-14.

<sup>92</sup> Jackson; Historic Resources of Nacogdoches, 3.



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the help of John Gillespie, established a charter for Milam Lodge No. 40.<sup>93</sup> Prominent members of the lodge included Haden Edwards, John Roberts, Adolphus Sterne, Frost Thorn, Charles S. Taylor, and Thomas J. Rusk.<sup>94</sup> Other endeavors included the formation of a "lyceum" in 1853 to promote intellectual discussion and maintain a lending library.<sup>95</sup>

Under the Republic of Texas, Protestant congregations, which had been illegal during the Catholic-dominated Spanish and Mexican periods, made their presence more obviously known in Nacogdoches. Methodist camps were also established throughout the county. For many years, however, Nacogdoches had only two churches: the Sacred Heart Catholic Church built in 1847 and Christ Church Episcopal Church established 1848, with its church building erected in 1852. The timber for the church was "hand-hewn, and the lumber was sawed with 'whip' saws." To support the building campaign, Frost Thorn donated the site on the east side of Church Street, just north of Main (on present-day Church Street), and Judge Clark offered \$500 in gold.<sup>96</sup> This church was abandoned in favor of a new building on Washington Square in 1888.

Despite the relative slow growth of the town during the Republic, its citizens maintained a healthy self-image. Interest in building the accoutrements of a prosperous town rose. For example, in 1847, the county's wooden courthouse was moved to the center of the *plaza principal* to give it an air of importance. However, citizens objected to building in the center of the old plaza, and a new brick county courthouse, two stories with a gable front supported by columns, appeared in 1855 on the south side of the square (FIG. 9).<sup>97</sup>

With the death of its first generation of civic boosters in the 1850s – figures such as Thorn, Bean, Sterne, and Pollitt – and the onset of the Civil War in 1861, Nacogdoches slipped into a period of stagnation. The population declined to around 500 in 1870, and hovered at 300 into the 1880s. Little new construction commenced. Even the private attention to infrastructure that existed from the 1820s to the 1850s diminished as both manpower and capital were diverted to the war cause. Of all men eligible for military service in Nacogdoches County, only 90 remained un-enlisted in 1863.<sup>98</sup> Fields lay fallow, and lumbering came to a stand-still. Steamboat traffic on the Angelina stopped. The iron works foundry located in Nacogdoches turned its production to support the war effort, but its output was apparently negligible and it closed its doors before the war's end.<sup>99</sup> The university ceased operation and its main building was used as a hospital for Confederate soldiers, only later to become the headquarters for federal troops during Reconstruction.

After the Civil War ended, economic recovery was extremely slow. The lack of prosperity was further exacerbated by inevitable social and racial tensions of the Reconstruction period. A branch of the Freedmen's Bureau headquartered in Nacogdoches with the mission of smoothing the transition from slavery to freedom. The ex-slave narratives recorded by the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration in the late 1930s include three testimonials by African-Americans who had been enslaved in Nacogdoches County: Lizzie Hughes, who had been the property of Dr. Newton Fall in Chireno; Willis Easter, born into slavery in Nacogdoches; and Annie Row, who worked on the plantation of Charles Finneley near Rusk. Row's recollections describe log cabins and a division of labor between men and women, with men working in the cotton fields and women spinning cotton into fabric. Many of these men and women left

<sup>93</sup> McDonald, Archie. *By Early Candlelight; The Story of Old Milam*. Fort Worth: 1967, 25, 37. See also Partin 208.

<sup>94</sup> McDonald, Archie. *By Early Candlelight; The Story of Old Milam*. Fort Worth: 1967, 25, 37. See also Partin 208.

<sup>95</sup> Nacogdoches Chronicle, 23 August 1853, 14 March 1854.

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.christchurch-nacogdoches.org/history.htm>, viewed 23 June 2006.

<sup>97</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 121.

<sup>98</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 103-04.

<sup>99</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 105.



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Nacogdoches County when freedom came, but others stayed as house servants, as workers in the lumber industry, as agricultural workers, and as sharecroppers.<sup>100</sup>

The transition to freedom was difficult, however, and there was a great deal of tension between former masters and the newly freed African-American population. The comments of landowner James Harper Starr, local physician and brother-in-law of Frost Thorn, illustrate a common point of view:

They (Freedmen) are congregating in the homes and shanties about the villages and towns doing nothing but begging and stealing, sunning themselves like alligators along the mud banks. They think freedom means freedom from labor, and are generally thus taught by the philanthropic and pious agents of the Freedmen's Bureau.<sup>101</sup>

But by 1867, farmers had begun to employ former slaves and pay them wages. The *Texas Almanac* wrote the Nacogdoches County farmers, despite their prejudice, employed blacks who "work tolerably well, without a Bureau; their behavior is very good, but their numbers are diminishing."<sup>102</sup>

Incidents of racially-motivated violence flared in Reconstruction-era Nacogdoches County. The events of the Linn Flat Raid of 1871 centered on conflict between local pro-Southern agitators and the members of the state police force created by Governor Davis to quell local incidents of violence against blacks and Union supporters. In Linn Flat, just northwest of Nacogdoches, white members of a Reconstruction police force backed by a group of armed African-Americans killed members of the local sheriff's department, leading to a well-publicized trial and much racial paranoia amongst the white citizens of Nacogdoches County.<sup>103</sup>

The Ku Klux Klan had formed a group in Nacogdoches by 1870, when a report by a Reconstruction officer indicated that Klansmen had attacked a group of African-Americans, "killing one, leaving another for dead, (with) several others missing."<sup>104</sup> Despite the passage of the Ku Klux Klan Act in 1871, the group did remain active in the area, though record of its activities is, as in most southern towns, hard to come by.

Against this backdrop of racial and political tension, Nacogdoches struggled to find an economic source to aid its recovery from the Civil War. Though Nacogdoches County was home to the first producing oil well in Texas – Lynn T. Barrett tapped the Oil Springs field about 15 miles southeast of town – the timing of this exploration was poor. Oil prices were low and Barrett's contract for production was cancelled before it even began. Though the field began producing ten years later, it never became an important economic contributor to the local economy.<sup>105</sup> In 1870s, a fledgling lumber industry again began to develop, but remained severely limited by expense and lack of efficient means of transportation.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>100</sup> *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*. Texas Narratives, Volume XVI, Part 3, Annie Row, p. 258.

<sup>101</sup> Starr to \*\*\*, from Craven, James Harper Starr, quoted in Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 106.

<sup>102</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 106.

<sup>103</sup> See Gary Borders, *A Hanging in Nacogdoches: Murder, Race, Politics, and Polemics in Texas's Oldest Town, 1870-1916* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), \*\*\*.

<sup>104</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 106.

<sup>105</sup> *Daily Sentinel*, 22 July 1959. See also Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 107.

<sup>106</sup> McDonald, *Nacogdoches*, 83.



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By 1880, Nacogdoches remained a small town of around 300 people, a population that it had maintained since at least 1860.<sup>107</sup> The economy relied upon the providing of goods and services to agricultural families and workers in the county. Agriculture remained the major industry in the area, with a focus on cotton and corn. Still, compared to other counties within the Texas cotton belt, Nacogdoches produced a relatively small crop. The 54 cotton gins operating in 1880 produced only 6,000 bales.<sup>108</sup>

In 1880, the commercial district consisted of a short row of one-story frame buildings along Main Street (FIG. 10). According to Burke's 1881 *Texas Almanac* the town had "nine general stores, one grocery, one drug store," daily mail and one weekly newspaper, the *Nacogdoches News*.<sup>109</sup> In his county history of 1880, Nugent E. Brown wrote:

The town, as in now exists, is by no means equal to what it has been in the past, either as to population, wealth, or importance.... in course of time came railroads, steamboats and ships, that all passed around and beyond Nacogdoches, and stripped her of her strength by taking away these advantages, and she now stands upon the same footing with ordinary county sites, save in point of history, a somewhat sad relic of past glory.<sup>110</sup>

## "Poor Man's Paradise:" Community Development of Nacogdoches, 1883-1919

The arrival of the Houston, East and West Texas Railroad in Nacogdoches in 1883 finally generated a much-needed economic impetus. Having missed the first wave of railroad development in Texas during the 1850s, the citizens of post-Reconstruction Nacogdoches were determined to bring tracks to town. The great inhibitor to the expansion of Nacogdoches had always been its poor accessibility. Though it had been an anchor point on the Camino Real, by the late nineteenth century the old trails were all but abandoned. As trade began to shift away from the interior and toward the coast, Galveston and Houston replaced San Antonio as the dominant transportation centers. With this shift, the older routes to and from Mexico – which passed through Nacogdoches – became less prominent, and many portions became impassable in poor weather, often turning into a sea of mud.<sup>111</sup> Even in good weather, "the road had deteriorated into a series of holes, ruts, and ridges through which wagons and coaches lurched and groaned."<sup>112</sup> Travelers allotted two days just to reach nearby San Augustine, only 35 miles from Nacogdoches. The railroad was essential not only for expedient travel, but to provide a means by which the town could begin to engage in more than just a local economy.

Paul Bremond, a businessman from Houston (and the former president of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad), was the force behind the Houston, East & West Texas Railroad (HE&WT). This narrow-gauge line was meant to connect the small communities of East Texas with Houston to the southwest and to Shreveport in the east, primarily to expand the potentially rich cotton and lumber industries of East Texas. With an approved charter from the State Legislature (granted

<sup>107</sup> Census figures, quoted in Robert S. Maxwell, "Nacogdoches and the Railroads," *Nacogdoches Jaycees, Bicentennial History*, 133.

<sup>108</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 108.

<sup>109</sup> *Burke's Texas Almanac* (Houston: W. H. Coyle, 1881), 67. Partin lists, "ten general mercantile establishments, one drug store, two saloons, two family groceries, a restaurant, two blacksmith shops...a jeweler's shop, a shoemaker, a saddle and harness maker, three hotels, a livery stable, and several woodwork shops...several land agents and surveyors...(and) nine or ten attorneys, and four doctors." Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 108-09.

<sup>110</sup> Nugent E. Brown, *The History of Nacogdoches County, Texas* (1880), 57.

<sup>111</sup> Stephen L. Hardin, "People and Events Along the Old San Antonio Road and Los Camino Reales," in *A Texas Legacy: The Old San Antonio Road & the Caminos Reales, A Tricentennial history, 1691-1991*, p. 20:5

<sup>112</sup> Maxwell, *Whistle in the Piney Woods*, 23, source cited as *Burke's Texas Almanac* (1881): 67



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in 1875), Bremond began construction of the line in 1875 and 1876. The project was financed in large part by Bremond and community leaders near Houston who were convinced to contribute funds and land to the HE&WT in order to avoid a devastating rail by-pass. Bremond also enlisted investors from his native New York and borrowed huge sums from bankers, but the finances of the project remained so tenuous that building the entire line took nearly ten years.

Thus, the efforts and contributions of private citizens, rather than any made by county or city administrations, led to the construction of the railroad to Nacogdoches. Along with Bremond's funding, local citizens donated land and rights-of-way, and pressured non-complying neighbors to do the same.<sup>113</sup> The path of the railroad was laid out in the low grounds to the west of Banita Creek, nearly a half mile from the *plaza principal*. It was typical for landowners to contribute town lots, with no compensation. One such citizen gave land asking for nothing other than a guarantee that the railroad would reach Nacogdoches before 1 November 1883. Yet another contribution of land was made for the depot, with the requirement that one hotel and one saloon be built on the parcel; other contributions were made specifically for the warehouses to be built adjacent the depot. Several donations were made in exchange for an annual railroad pass.<sup>114</sup>

The line reached Livingston by 1879 and Lufkin in 1882. In May 1883, the first rail service arrived in Nacogdoches, connecting the town over the 140 mile journey to Houston. What was once a week-long journey now took one day: the express train left Houston at 9:40am and arrived in Nacogdoches at 7:10 pm; the outbound train departed at 8:00 am and arrived in Houston at 5:30 pm.<sup>115</sup> In January 1886, the line was completed northwards to Shreveport. Though the railroad was heralded with great fanfare, dissatisfaction came quickly. It was a narrow gauge rail (3'), and the majority of lines in Texas were standard gauge (4'8").<sup>116</sup> Bremond had lobbied for this, as he hoped that the narrow bed would be less expensive to build and operate. In reality, it meant that upon reaching Houston or Shreveport, the train cars had to be unloaded and re-loaded onto standard gauge cars. The rough travel experience often caused cars to jump from their tracks. After suffering nearly ten years of inconvenience, in 1894, the rails were finally converted from narrow gauge to standard.<sup>117</sup>

Despite some dissatisfaction, the HE&WT did encourage the construction of subsequent railroads through the county. The second railroad to reach Nacogdoches was affiliated with the Southern Pacific, and operated under the name of the Texas and New Orleans Railroad (T & NO). Built between 1882 and 1903, this line ran from Beaumont to Dallas, and intersected with the HE&WT in Nacogdoches. The Nacogdoches and Southeastern Railroad was completed in 1905 and ran southeast from Nacogdoches to Calgary where it shared a junction with the Santa Fe Railroad. This line was in part constructed to transport lumber to EB Hayward's mill, and was later extended by the Frost Lumber company.

In Nacogdoches, the rail line was built on a north-south trajectory on the far west side of the commercial district, parallel to North Street and roughly perpendicular to Main Street. In 1880, the first wood-frame depot was built to accommodate passenger service on the line. The original depot survived until 1910 when it was destroyed by fire caused by a lightning strike (FIG. 11). Giles Haltom, editor of both the *Daily* and *Weekly Sentinel*, later recalled this first depot:

<sup>113</sup> For example, a group of citizens formed a fund with which to purchase right-of-way from a land owner who refused to participate in the effort. Robert S. Maxwell, *Whistle in the Piney Woods: Paul Bremond and the Houston, East and West Texas Railway* (Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association, 1963), 19-20, 20 quoted.

<sup>114</sup> Maxwell, "Nacogdoches and the Railroads," *Bicentennial Commemorative History of Nacogdoches*, 134.

<sup>115</sup> Maxwell, *Whistle in the Piney Woods*, 25, see *Houston Post*, May 25, 1883.

<sup>116</sup> Handbook of Texas, "Paul Bremond."

<sup>117</sup> Maxwell, "Nacogdoches and the Railroads," 136.



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The passenger depot was a small brown building – two stories high where the office was located and one story in height in the extension that was used as the freight depot, and loading and loading facilities. Charlie Stinson was agent. He was a bachelor and slept upstairs. Jeff Harris was the colored porter. He and Stinson handled all the freight...<sup>118</sup>

To the north and south of the depot, wood-frame warehouses were built to accommodate goods and to provide packing spaces for shipping. This area was soon home to numerous cotton yards, sheds, and platforms, including the large yard operated by I.V. Sturdevant from 1896.<sup>119</sup> (FIG. 12)

The railroad brought a small boom to Nacogdoches in the 1880s. The town saw a small, if brief, influx of new people and new businesses. By 1890, the city had tripled in size, from 333 in 1880 to 1,138. Cotton production in the county likewise tripled between 1880 and 1900, with more than 16,000 bales harvested per year. Though this continued to be small in comparison to the major cotton-producing counties in southeastern Texas, yet it was a noticeable gain over pre-railroad cotton production. By 1904, Nacogdoches County was home to over seventy gins, and a large cotton seed oil mill was set up in town.<sup>120</sup> Timber production continued to increase slowly as the railroad made it possible both to log more quickly and to transport lumber for sale in Houston, Shreveport, and Dallas. Small manufacturing plants also took root, including a cabinet shop, door factory, and basket factory.<sup>121</sup>

Though occupied since the eighteenth century, it wasn't until the late 1880s that the commercial district of Nacogdoches finally began to take on the built character that it retains today. As the first Sanborn fire insurance map of Nacogdoches (1885) indicates (FIG. 13), the location of the train depot at the western edge of town began to give the commercial district some discernible shape. The greatest concentration of commercial properties remained around the public square and the two flanking blocks of Main Street. The public square, still open and containing only a well, was the core of town, with the court house and jail anchoring the southwest corner (near the present-day city hall). Sanborn maps indicate that within this core, in 1885, there were at least 13 general merchandise stores, three grocers, two meat markets, two druggists, one furnishings shop, two printing offices, five warehouses, one school building (located just north of the square along Fredonia Street), and three churches. Services included two barbers, five professional offices, one cobbler, one tailor and one jeweler. Entertainment could be had at the Saloon and Billiards on the north side of the public square, or at the small restaurant tucked just behind the saloon, on Elm Street (later Pecan). EM Brown's Livery at the corner of Main and Church was the only one mapped at the time, and neighbored one of Nacogdoches three hotels (the Mitchell to the west Church and Main, the Hart Hotel on the east side of Main and Church, and the Goff at Piller (Pilar) and North Streets). Typical of general merchandise and dry goods stores to open in the 1880s were Mayer & Schmidt and Cason, Monk, & Co. John Schmidt and Abraham Mayer left Germany for the United States in 1875, arriving in Henderson, Texas in 1878. These two formed a business partnership, and opened Mayer & Schmidt department store on Main Street. In 1880, with news of the railroad's arrival in Nacogdoches being imminent, they opened a branch in Nacogdoches that operated until the stock market crash in 1929.<sup>122</sup> In 1895, Loughery described Mayer & Schmidt store as the "Hercules of

<sup>118</sup> Giles Haltom, "In Nacogdoches 40 Years," *Weekly Sentinel*, 31 October 1929, p. 4.

<sup>119</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1896.

<sup>120</sup> McDonald, *Nacogdoches*, 85.

<sup>121</sup> McDonald, *Nacogdoches*, 83.

<sup>122</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 118.



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Nacogdoches' business houses." Dealing primarily in dry goods, the store carried "\$50,000 stock, and yearly sales of \$100,000....They employ ten salesmen and keep a buyer constantly in New York."<sup>123</sup>

The character of retail establishments soon began to change both economically and architecturally. The railroad made it possible to stock a wider variety of goods and the larger volume of business allowed owners to build more expensive and permanent structures. The material of choice for commercial establishments quickly shifted from wood to the more fire-resistant brick, enabling permanent and more aesthetically ambitious buildings. By 1885, eight brick buildings had been constructed around the public square, five of these along Main Street. The *Pen Picture*, for example, noted that: "The business section of the city is, for the most part, built up with handsome brick blocks of modern design, and all businesses practiced in modern towns, are represented here and there..."<sup>124</sup> Demand for bricks prompted the establishment of a local brick-making enterprise. The Brick House at 522 Virginia Avenue (outside of the Downtown Historic District) has long been thought to be the oldest surviving brick structure in town, built in 1886 by local brick maker Henry L. Austin as a residence for himself. Another local brick manufacturer, Lit Herring, was thought to provide the bricks for Dietrich Rulfs's Christ Church on Washington Square.

In anticipation of the building boom to come, in 1880 local businessman John Schmidt invited German-born architect and builder Dietrich Rulfs (1848-1926) to come to Nacogdoches (FIG. 14). Rulfs arrived in New Orleans, in 1879 or 1880, from Oldenburg, Germany, and made his way (with his family) to Nacogdoches. He was skilled in the design and construction of brick buildings, and perhaps more than any other builder or architect, significantly affected the architectural character and ambitions of Nacogdoches. Rulfs designed and built Schmidt's house (now demolished) and went on to construct many of the major commercial edifices downtown, churches, and several large homes for prominent citizens. Among his most important commissions in the downtown area are the Opera House (1888-89), the Liberty Hotel (1891), the Cotton Exchange Building (1895), the Commercial Bank Building (1903), the Mahdeen Building (1918), and the Jones House (1897).

The Opera House, commissioned in 1888-89 by John Schmidt was one of Rulfs most notable architectural achievements that also affected the cultural life of the small town (FIG. 15). It was built at the corner of Main and Church Streets (Property #40), on the site of the former Mitchell Hotel. The theater space was on the second floor, with a ticket booth, general store, and confectionary on the first. Though small, Nacogdoches hosted theatre companies passing through the region on the two railroads that now passed through town that did put on one-night performances.<sup>125</sup> Hypnotists, minstrels, escape artists, plays, musicals, and vaudeville acts performed well into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

By 1891, six years after the Sanborn Company could document only eight permanent brick buildings in town, Nacogdoches had grown in every direction. At least 35 new brick buildings appear on the Sanborn Map of 1891, illustrating both the trend toward permanent construction and the commercial expansion along Main Street (approximately to Mound Street). The density along Main Street between Mound and North increased to match what had previously been limited to that around the public square. Typical of the establishments that opened in this period were hotels, dry goods stores, and even entertainment venues. D. K. Cason moved to Nacogdoches in 1893 and opened a hardware, furniture, and

<sup>123</sup> Loughery, *Pen Picture of the City of Nacogdoches*, 33.

<sup>124</sup> Loughery, *Pen Picture*, 5.

<sup>125</sup> H. Lawrence Zillmer, "Theatre in Nacogdoches," *Commemorative History of Nacogdoches*, 107.



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undertaking business at the corner of Pecan and East Main Streets. In 1906 he formed Cason, Monk & Company by forming a partnership with R. C. Monk, a former manager for Mayer & Schmidt. Cason Monk focused on hardware and undertaking and moved into a building at 317 East Main Street where it remains today.<sup>126</sup>

To accommodate increasing travel through the area, the Bullens Hotel opened on Church Street, and the Baxter Hotel opened on West Main Street near the train depot around 1890. It advertised forty rooms and was the largest of several hotels that opened on the west side, including the Banita Hotel at 201 W. Pillar (1896), a large two-story wooden-frame structure called "the choice of traveling salesmen," (burned 1926) and the Wilson Hotel, "a favorite boarding house for local residents."<sup>127</sup> (FIG. 16)

One of the more significant developments in Nacogdoches's commercial history was the formation of several large banks. Soon after the arrival of the railroad in 1883, retail trade began to expand and the need for institutionalized banking became evident. The foundation of financial institutions made it possible to do business locally, without traveling to Houston. The first bank in Nacogdoches was privately owned.<sup>128</sup> Operated as A. Wettermark and Son, this banking house was established in 1883 and operated until 1903 when its proprietor, Colonel Benjamin S. Wettermark, fled Nacogdoches after allegedly embezzling \$500,000. He was never caught, yet the immediate closure of this bank and the loss of funds dampened the immediate economic progress in Nacogdoches. The first public bank was established in 1890, but soon closed. Between 1890 and 1899, the First National Bank (the first nationally chartered bank operated in Nacogdoches) provided much-needed loans and financial services. It was replaced by the Commercial National Bank (1901) and the Stone Fort National Bank (1903), both of which still operate. In 1901, the Commercial National Bank opened at the corner of East Main and Church Streets, in a brick building designed by Dietrich Rulfs. The bank was led by a diverse group of investors, including T. J. Williams of Beaumont, Pete and H. H. Youree of Shreveport, W. B. Chew and James A. Baker of Houston, and R. S. Lovett, president of the Southern Pacific Railroad.<sup>129</sup> In 1902, E.A. Blount purchased the controlling interest. In 1910, the Commercial National Bank re-organized under the State Guaranty System (precursor of the Federal Deposit Insurance Company, 1933), changing its name to Commercial Guaranty State Bank. With F. Hal Tucker as cashier, Blount ran the bank until his death in 1914. He was succeeded as president of the bank by his son, Eugene H. Blount.<sup>130</sup> Later bank presidents included Thomas E. Baker (1928-1945) and Thomas W. Baker (1945). In a continued effort to counter the deleterious effects of the Wettermark scandal, the Stone Fort National Bank opened in 1902. While the Commercial National Bank was originally owned by a group of outside investors, the Stone Fort Bank was organized and ran by local businessmen. Captin I. Link Sturdevant, Charles Hoya, William U. Perkins, and J. J. Hayter were early leaders. Later bank presidents included William B. Mast and E. W. Monk.<sup>131</sup>

Due in part to its rail linkage to Houston, Nacogdoches assumed a leading role as the agricultural center of the county. Rich soils and an agreeable climate proved conducive to production of cotton, though the town saw little in the way of related industries. The majority of cotton-related industry was linked to packaging (compression of bales), storage and re-distribution. By 1896, several cotton yards and platforms had opened along the railroad tracks between Main and Pilar Streets, the largest of which was Sturdevant's (which became part of PM Sander's yard in 1900). The Nacogdoches

<sup>126</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 118-19.

<sup>127</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 119 and *Commemorative History*, 249.

<sup>128</sup> McDonald, *Nacogdoches*, 85.

<sup>129</sup> Joe E. Ericson, "Nacogdoches Banks and Bankers," in *Commemorative History of Nacogdoches*, 192-93.

<sup>130</sup> McDonald, *Nacogdoches*, 87.

<sup>131</sup> Joe E. Ericson, "Nacogdoches Banks and Bankers," in *Commemorative History of Nacogdoches*, 192-93.



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Cotton & Compress Company was founded on W. Pilar in 1897 by John Schmidt and E.A. Blount to compress bales of cotton prior to rail shipment. The plant was acquired by Roland Jones in 1906 and operated until 1930. Other establishments organized during the 1880s and 1890s were the Alliance Cotton Yard, a cotton seed warehouse, and Sander's Cotton Platform on the east side of Banita Creek. A few refining facilities were built in this area, including C.T. Clark's Cotton Gin and Grist Mill, near Sturdevant's Cotton Yard, and the Merchants & Farmers Cotton Seed Oil Mill, which operated from 1896 to 1906 when it changed hands and was re-named the Nacogdoches Oil Mill. Within the commercial district proper, Rulfs expanded a one-story Mayer & Schmidt warehouse to become a cotton exchange at 305 E. Commerce St. (Property #68). Around 1898, he added a second floor and extended the eastern portion of the building to create more space for both transactions and storage. The Nacogdoches Cotton Exchange was a welcome addition, allowing local farmers to trade and negotiate prices closer to home (FIG. 17).

Service industries were also crucial to Nacogdoches's operation. While properties associated with the cotton and lumber were positioned near the railroad tracks, the majority of the town's commercial activity was interspersed on the small plateau around the *plaza principal*. For example, several blacksmiths, saddle and harness shops, livery stables, carriage houses, and wagon yards were scattered throughout the commercial district. Professional services were not lacking, and the town was host to a good number of surveyors, physicians and attorneys (who often officed in the second floor above retail spaces). For example, the Charles Hoya Land Office (Property #95), housed in a one-story brick building at the corner of Pecan and Pilar and designed by Houston architect Frank Rue in 1897, accommodated real estate transactions.

With the building of the railroad and the beginnings of a more diversified economy came an enormous push to bring new people and resources to Nacogdoches. Typical of this push is a small brochure published by Mrs. E. M. Loughery in 1895. *A Pen Picture of the City of Nacogdoches and Nacogdoches County, Their Present and Future: An Invitation to Immigration, Capital and Enterprise* extolled the virtues of the town and the surrounding agricultural lands, with a focus on drawing people from the east coast into the west. Declaring that "the great need of the county is the immediate introduction of TEN THOUSAND FARMERS," Loughery went on to say that the people of Nacogdoches were "NOT A RACE OF BARBARIANS."<sup>132</sup> Loughery was self-conscious of the perception of the South as "backward" and took pains to correct this image as part of her strategy to impart optimism:

The people of Nacogdoches county—seventeen thousand strong—are in the main, as intelligent, refined and progressive as any rural population in the older states, and I beg leave to remind my eastern readers that they have a much higher measure of hospitality—genuine, social, business hospitality—than any community of equal numbers in any of the eastern or northern states. They are MORE COSMOPOLITAN too in their general make up than the people of the older states. Few of them are "to the manor born."

They are congregated here from the older southern states, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia... The friction of diverse religious, political, social, mental, commercial, industrial and thought and habit, has worn away the provincial conceit and prejudice born of more homogeneous conditions and development in this heterogeneous mass, and on the broader field of opportunity a liberal comprehensive "WORLD CHARACTER" embracing the best thought, experience and tendencies of all the peoples represented,

<sup>132</sup> Loughery, *Pen Picture of the City of Nacogdoches*, quote from p. 9 and 29.



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and the result is everywhere seen in the boundless enterprise, liberal intelligence, liberal views and progressive ways of the community.<sup>133</sup>

As reinforcement of the cultural sophistication of Nacogdoches, fraternal organizations and other social clubs became a vital part of the community. For example, in 1894, the Cum Concilio Club for women began meeting weekly to discussion art and literature, including classics of the Italian Renaissance as well as of Texas folklore.

Still, as with many towns in the post-Reconstruction south, Nacogdoches continued to struggle with issues of race and violence. Though there was indeed a progressive side to Nacogdoches embodied by county sheriff A. J. Spradley, the opposite was embodied by the *Daily and Weekly Sentinel* editor, Bill Haltom. Spradley, a popular figure in the county, was an active supporter of the People's Party (established in 1892, the same year the group was founded nationally), which during the 1890s fought bitterly with the Democratic Party in Nacogdoches to attract black voters in this last decade before Jim Crow laws barred them from voting at all. Spradley attempted, for example, to empanel a jury with black members in 1894, but his efforts were blocked. He started a newspaper, the *Plaindealer*, also in 1894, to counteract the editorial page of Haltom's *Sentinel*. John B. Raymer, a prominent black populist, spoke in Nacogdoches in 1894 in support of Spradley's re-election as sheriff.<sup>134</sup> In fighting the inclusion of blacks in the political process, the Democratic party had an ally in Haltom, who frequently used the *Sentinel* as a pulpit. In 1900 he wrote:

The experiment of Negro suffrage in the South has failed so singlely (sic) and was such an unqualified crime against civilization from the start that even in the north the fact is now recognized that the southern states must protect themselves against it by constitutional amendment.<sup>135</sup>

Gary Borders, in *A Hanging in Nacogdoches* (2006) examines the tension between the Democrats and Populists and the culmination of their conflict in the "legal lynching" of Jim Buchanan, an African-American who pled guilty to and was convicted of the murder of a white family (Duncan, Nerva, and Allie Hicks) in Nacogdoches County in October 1902. Spradley was able to keep Buchanan's location a secret until a trial could be held, but his execution by hanging in the old *plaza principal* was rushed and the appeals process was forcibly waived by the pressure of a mob that wanted to burn Buchanan alive (FIG. 18).<sup>136</sup>

Racial and class tensions festered in Nacogdoches, particularly as economic expansion foundered. African-American men and poor whites mostly found employment in the agricultural and lumber industries. Though cotton production continued to dominate, a push for a more diversified crop system and an expansion into truck farming began. Cotton production tripled between 1880 and 1900 and associated industries grew in tandem. Though the number of cotton gins in the county was variable, one source reports that over 70 operated in 1906. A cotton seed oil mill opened in Nacogdoches in about 1902, crushing the seeds and refining the oil for use in manufacturing and food.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 24-25.

<sup>134</sup> Gary B. Borders, *A Hanging in Nacogdoches: Murder, Race, Politics, and Polemics in Texas's Oldest Town, 1870-1916* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 66-73 and Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "People's Party," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/PP/wap1.html> (accessed August 14, 2006).

<sup>135</sup> Haltom, quoted in Borders, *A Hanging in Nacogdoches*, 80.

<sup>136</sup> Borders, *A Hanging in Nacogdoches*, ch. 14.

<sup>137</sup> "Nacogdoches Oil Mill Now Running at Full Capacity, Considered State's Cleanest," *Weekly Sentinel*, 5 Sept 1929, 4. In the article, which notes expansion of the mill, it is stated that "Mr. Adams has been with the oil mill for 27 years."



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The lumber industry was also among those to benefit from improved rail connections. The timber industry expanded slowly in the two decades after the railroad arrived, but as demand for yellow pine in the northern states increased at the turn of the century, production picked up. In 1900, lumber employed about 300 people in Nacogdoches in both large sawmills and on small tree farms run by individuals.<sup>138</sup> In 1904, the first major lumber company in Nacogdoches County formed. This, the Hayward Lumber Company, employed 400 men by 1906, more than had been in the entire industry total just one year earlier. The plant was located near Lanana Creek east of downtown. In 1910, the Frost-Johnson Lumber Company bought Hayward. Under H. W. Whited of Frost-Johnson, timber conservation practices were first encouraged.

The growing lumber industry brought several associated businesses. In 1906 these included the Nacogdoches Crate and Box Factory, the Nacogdoches Show Case and Hardwood Manufacturing Company, the Banita Hardwood Manufacturing Company, and the Craven Lumber Company. In 1914, there were between 750 and 800 men employed in the lumber and associated industries, consisting mainly of including poor blacks and poor whites.

Alongside lumber, tobacco farming arrived in Nacogdoches County by the turn of the century. Investment in tobacco farming was encouraged by a 1903 federal study that showed the county's soil was "identical with that of Cuba, and other countries which grow the best qualities of the aromatic cigar tobacco."<sup>139</sup> An advertising booklet for the county proclaimed:

Eminent experts in the East unite in saying: '...we find that there are other soils in East Texas far superior to the tobacco growing districts of Florida, Connecticut and Cuba. This tobacco can be raised in Texas under more favorable conditions than in either of the above mentioned States owing to the fertility of the soil, negro labor, the quantity and cheapness of the lumber necessary for the building of the shades, and the long growing season.'<sup>140</sup>

As a result of increase in tobacco production, a tobacco storage warehouse and later a cigar-rolling factory opened in Nacogdoches. The facility on Pecan Street between Main and Hospital (Property #31), constructed in 1909 by John Cox for William Tausig, was used for storage, curing, and manufacturing the Spanish Maid Cigar until about 1914.<sup>141</sup> This served as an excellent example of the direct interdependence between the county's agricultural lands and the development of the downtown commercial district during this period.

Other light industries and manufacturers settled in Nacogdoches as well, including the Mahdeen Company. Founded by Frank Aikman and local barber John Needham (Mahdeen spelled backward) in 1912, the company began to sell hair tonic that Needham had developed in his shop. In 1917, the two commissioned Rulfs to design a brick building south of the square, to be built on the site of the old courthouse (Property #11). The Mahdeen Company occupied the basement, an office on the first floor and the third floor. The Garage Company, a local Ford dealer, shared the first floor and part of the

<sup>138</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 115.

<sup>139</sup> James Wilson, United States Secretary of Agriculture, quoted in Nacogdoches Land Company, *NACOGDOCHES County, The East Texas Gold Mine*, 11.

<sup>140</sup> Nacogdoches Land Company, *NACOGDOCHES County, The East Texas Gold Mine*, 12.

<sup>141</sup> Heritage Club of Nacogdoches, Marker for Cox Building 1909.



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second. The W. T. Wilson Grain Company was also on the second floor.<sup>142</sup> Mahdeen operated in Nacogdoches until 1965 when the company moved to Dallas after being purchased by Owen Laboratories.<sup>143</sup>

After the turn of the century, a series of destructive fires altered the commercial character of Nacogdoches once again. On 12 January 12 1903, the two-story brick building at the corner of Main and Church Streets (across from opera house) burned, destroying all neighboring buildings to the west. In total, eight buildings were destroyed and five damaged, including the Opera House, the Commercial National Bank, and the Wallace Hotel.<sup>144</sup> Just over a year later, on 16 May 1904, the Central Hotel at the corner Hospital and North was also destroyed by fire. In December 1906, a major fire decimated 100 block of East Main Street along the north side of the *plaza principal*.<sup>145</sup> Yet another fire, in January 1908, damaged a large portion of the 300 block along Main Street. The Mayer & Schmidt Building and the Davidson Building were completely destroyed during this conflagration.<sup>146</sup> The fire damage sustained in Nacogdoches between 1903 and 1908 was widely believed to be the result of an arsonist, and led to the organization of the city's fire department in 1907. In June of that same year, the city council awarded a contract to Fairbanks of New Orleans to provide fifty fire hydrants and a new supporting waterworks.<sup>147</sup>

Entertainment and recreation were not lacking in turn-of-the century Nacogdoches. In 1902, for example, Dial's Saloon, the Lone Star Saloon, the Hollow Log Saloon, and the Hub Saloon ran advertisements in the *Daily Sentinel*.<sup>148</sup> Ibarvo's Stone House was home to a disreputable saloon when it was demolished in 1902.<sup>149</sup> The sale of alcohol was prohibited in the county in 1905, and the saloons that had operated in town were closed. Yet a new entertainment venue soon replaced the saloon. In 1909, the first silent movies played at the Royal Theater on Main Street.<sup>150</sup> In April 1909, Aqua Vitae Park opened to great fanfare. The fourteen-acre "health resort" was located on the west side of Lanana Creek, and stretched along a portion of Main Street and along the east bank of the creek.<sup>151</sup> Similar to those at Mineral Wells, the waters at Aqua Vitae were rich in sulfates and carbonates thought to have great medicinal value. Investors in Nacogdoches constructed the park and mineral wells for public benefit (admission was free), bottling the healing waters for sale locally and statewide. (FIG. 19).<sup>152</sup>

Between 1910 and 1920, with twenty-five years of slow economic growth and money still a problem in this relatively poor county, Nacogdoches took on the most ambitious civic improvement process that it had yet seen. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "local voters proved time and again unwilling to pay for public

<sup>142</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 136.

<sup>143</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 211.

<sup>144</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 122.

<sup>145</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 122.

<sup>146</sup> Carolyn Reeves Ericson, *Fires and Firemen of Nacogdoches, Texas*, 58-59.

<sup>147</sup> Ericson, *Fires and Firemen*, 4.

<sup>148</sup> Borders, *A Hanging in Nacogdoches*, 49.

<sup>149</sup> Borders, *A Hanging in Nacogdoches*, 40.

<sup>150</sup> "The Airdome presented films outdoors. In 1910 the Lyric Theatre replaced the Royal and it in turn was replaced by the Ideal in 1913. Admission costs were 5¢ and 10¢!" Zillmer, "Theatre in Nacogdoches," *Bicentennial Commemorative History*, 108.

<sup>151</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 125.

<sup>152</sup> See "Aqua Vitae Park," Old Town Printing Press, February 1997.



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improvements.”<sup>153</sup> However, in 1910, Nacogdoches turned to its concentrated attention to civic buildings and infrastructure for the first time in decades. In the space of ten years Nacogdoches constructed several new important public buildings. After the organization of the fire department in 1907, the new equipment needed a home. The city purchased a lot on the south side of the city square, and commissioned Rulfs to construct a city hall and fire department in 1910.<sup>154</sup> It was demolished in 1952 or 1953. By 1911, the county courthouse constructed in 1854-55 had fallen into disrepair. The *Daily Sentinel* reported that “the building is not only indecent, but dangerous.”<sup>155</sup> To remedy the public eyesore and nuisance, E. A. Blount offered a new site for the building on the corner of the old *plaza principal* at Main and North Streets. The city accepted his offer, and county voters approved a new building campaign. The new courthouse facility was completed in 1912 at a cost of \$90,000 (see FIG. 9).<sup>156</sup> The new passenger railroad depot was finished in 1911; extensive street paving and bridge building were also undertaken.

The quest for a new post office and federal building was a bit longer in the making. As early as 1905, a group of citizens in Nacogdoches had been interested in acquiring a federal building. In 1914, their efforts bore fruit in the form of a design for a one-story building designed to occupy the *plaza principal*. Though citizens had opposed building in the square in the past, this time the lure of federal funding overcame what were perhaps sentimental attachments. The square was surveyed, title disputes resolved, and the federal government paid \$5,000 for the lot. Since land for most other civic buildings had always been traditionally donated by private citizens, financial concerns were certainly foremost in the decision-making process. Though the lot was purchased in 1914, construction was delayed until January 1917, when a California contracting firm, Graeme McDonald Company, received the contract for construction. James Wetmore was the supervising architect, and created a small Classical Revival building be erected at an approximate cost of \$46,000. The federal building, which would also house the Post Office, was completed in early 1918.<sup>157</sup> Nacogdoches citizens were not immediately impressed with the façade, though clearly felt that building would serve its function. An editorial from the *Daily Sentinel* in 1918 declared that “while the building is not so imposing in its appearance from the outside as was expected, the interior is...a model of perfection in its appointments and workmanship, designed especially for the convenience of the enterprise that will occupy it.”<sup>158</sup>

Civic infrastructure also received concerted attention. After a devastating flood in 1902 destroyed most of the bridges in town, with the exception of the iron bridge over Main Street,<sup>159</sup> bridge building and street paving and took center stage in the teens. In 1910, a steel bridge was built over La Nana Creek on East Main,<sup>160</sup> and in 1918 two concrete bridges were constructed over Banita Creek at Main and Fredonia Streets. Despite these improvements, Nacogdoches’s streets still turned into a sea of mud with each rain. Paving soon became a major concern. In 1914, some portions of the streets of the

<sup>153</sup> Borders, *A Hanging in Nacogdoches*, 39. A nd, on page 50: “With a few exceptions, such as the approval of bonds in 1902 to create the Nacogdoches school district, most campaigns for civic progress—whether for paved streets, a professional fire department, a waterworks, or a new jail and courthouse—failed miserably.”

<sup>154</sup> In December 1908, acting on authority given him by the City Council, Sturdevant negotiated the purchase of the Hoya lot on the south side of the public square, where some two years later a brick building was completed to house the Fire Department’s equipment and the City Hall. Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 123.

<sup>155</sup> *Daily Sentinel*, 26 January 1911, quoted in Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 121.

<sup>156</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 122.

<sup>157</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 130.

<sup>158</sup> *Daily Sentinel*, 13 February 1918, quoted in Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 130.

<sup>159</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 124.

<sup>160</sup> Historic and Architectural Resources of Nacogdoches.



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commercial center were paved with gravel, including Mound Street, Main Street along the square, and Pilar Street to the Banita Bridge. North Street was graveled in 1915.<sup>161</sup> But these first steps proved unsatisfactory, and Mayor Matthews complained in June 1915 that "the principal street of our town which first meets the gaze of the visitor entering it, is the one half paved from the depot to the intersection of North and Main streets, the other half is an eye sore to every citizen of the city who would like to make a credible showing to the "stranger" within our gates."<sup>162</sup> In 1918, Nacogdoches contracted with a Dallas company to provide wood-block paving for the entire commercial district and the city installed ornamental street lamps at street corners and the Main Street bridges. The wood block pavers were made of pine that was shrank and swelled with variations in rain and heat and were immediately problematic. The city had paid \$90,000 for this "best pine block pavement" and it decided to sue the company to recover some of the funds wasted in the venture. After settling out of court, the city received only \$600 in damages.<sup>163</sup>

Other public services experienced vast improvements in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Southern Ice Utilities Company, later known as the Nacogdoches Ice Company, formed in 1905 off West Main at Cox and Bremond Streets just across the railroad tracks from downtown. Its location along the railroad allowed it both to supply townspeople with ice for domestic purposes, but also enabled easy loading of ice into warehouses and rail cars to support the shipping of agricultural goods.<sup>164</sup> With an initial capacity of 20 tons, by 1924 the plant doubled its capacity. Brothers Lynus and Ulric Wilson ran the plant, whose monthly payroll had reached \$1500 to \$2000 in 1924.

The provision for a public water supply and sewerage began in 1914, concurrent with the construction of the post office and federal building (perhaps because the well in the public square was to disappear). At this time, city and citizens partnered to share the cost of drilling a fourth artesian well to provide city water. This well, along with the three earlier wells, doubled the cities supply of artesian water.<sup>165</sup> All were was located near the light plant, just north of the courthouse near the H.E.&W.T. Railroad and Banita Creek.<sup>166</sup> City water was stored in a concrete storage tank that was built in 1916 to the capacity of 130,000 gallons, and served as part of a supply system that included the four wells and various pumps. In 1917, civil engineers surveyed land for the construction of a new sewer system that would service most if not all parts of the city. The estimated cost was \$40,000, but the mayor and council "promised that no new taxes would be necessary to pay for it."<sup>167</sup> By March 1918, the new system was installed along with nine new miles of sewer line that was meant to give access to anyone living within 150 feet of the line.<sup>168</sup>

**Community Growth in Nacogdoches, 1920-1945**

By 1920, Nacogdoches was becoming a "modern" city, with a "city-owned waterworks, municipal electric system (originally privately owned, but the city bought the plant for \$40,000), and a privately-owned telephone system. Public transit was provided by "Jitney" car known as "the cricket" that ran a North Street Mound Street loop to the Union

<sup>161</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 131-32.

<sup>162</sup> *Daily Sentinel* 12 June 1915, quoted in Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 132.

<sup>163</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 132.

<sup>164</sup> "Great Ice Plant Is Pioneer Industry of All East Texas Area", *Weekly Sentinel*, 23 May 1929, p. 8.

<sup>165</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 135.

<sup>166</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 135.

<sup>167</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 135.

<sup>168</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 135.



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Depot.”<sup>169</sup> The interest in civic improvement that had begun in the 1910s continued. In 1923 the failed wood-block pavers were replaced with the red brick that remains today (FIG. 20). Bridge improvements were forced by a flood in April 1922, which washed out the South Street bridge across Banita Creek and sent it downstream where it lodged on the Nacogdoches & Southeastern Railroad bridge, destroying both.<sup>170</sup>

As private citizens had banded together in the early 1880s to ensure that the railroad came to Nacogdoches, they again came together in the 1920s to foster further economic development. “The Citizens Committee,” later known as the Nacogdoches Booster Club, formed to persuade state officials to locate a new Teachers College in town. The college had been authorized by the legislature in 1917, but World War I interrupted its formation and funding. After the war, the Nacogdoches citizens group published “Twenty-Three Reasons Why the Stephen F. Austin State Normal Ought to Be Located in Nacogdoches.” The reasons were:

Nacogdoches is the center of the section to be served...; is the most accessible city...; has 5,000 people in the city and 32,000 in the county who would be proud...; its schools rank among the best in the South...; guarantees 250 children for a training school...; once hosted Nacogdoches University...; has high moral tone...; the jail is empty; is a city of refined homes...; has nine churches...; has a delightfully mild climate...; is a city of good health...; has a well-equipped light and power plant...; the electricity is cheaper...; has a good sewage system...; has pure artesian water...; and three, two-story hotels...; has 22 boarding houses...; has rare natural beauty...; has a progressive business spirit...; has ample entertainment facilities...; offers superior (building) sites...” is “the Cradle of Texas Liberty”...; and, No. 23...Nacogdoches links Old Texas With The New.<sup>171</sup>

The promise of a new college in Nacogdoches gave the town a much-needed financial anchor, bringing both new jobs and a steady flow of students. The Teachers College opened on North Street in 1923, on a campus just two miles north of the original commercial district. New buildings and businesses emerged along North Street to serve this population, including restaurants, lodging houses, and grocery stores.

The central commercial district itself did not grow specifically in response to the Teachers College, but its survival was insured by the influx of people and capital. In 1919, the Nacogdoches Chamber of Commerce formed, becoming a major force in citizen-driven efforts to encourage civic and economic development. Major figures in the Chamber in the 1920s and 1930s included W. U. Perkins, Capt. I. L. Sturdevant, Carl Monk, and A. T. Mast. As a result of the Chamber’s efforts in the early 1920s, Nacogdoches recruited several small manufacturing and light industrial businesses. Many of these businesses had their headquarters in and around the main commercial district. One of these was the Mize Department Store and clothing manufacturing facility. In 1925, B. H. and W. A. Mize opened the Mize Brothers Department Store on Hospital Street, and established a dress-making plant that employed 200 women. The Hunt Plumbing and Supply Company and McKinney Contractors also got their start in the 1920s.<sup>172</sup> In 1930, the Texas Farm Products Company was established, opening a feed mill in 1931. It marketed Lone Star Cream Meal and Lone Star Pearl Meal made from locally-grown corn. The plant was intended to keep farmers’ money within the county: “The idea is that

<sup>169</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 135.

<sup>170</sup> Joe E. Ericson, “And The Rains Came,” *Nacogdoches Jaycees, Nacogdoches Bicentennial Commemorative History*, 213.

<sup>171</sup> As excerpted by Archie P. McDonald in “SFASU,” *All Things Historical* syndicated column of September 28, 2005 column, viewed online at <<http://www.texasescapes.com/AllThingsHistorical/SFASU-AM905.htm>>.

<sup>172</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 154-55.



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if half a million dollars was spent for fertilizer last year in Nacogdoches County, every cent of which was sent out of the county, why not keep all this money in Nacogdoches by building a fertilizer factory at home."<sup>173</sup>

With the growth of small industry and the expansion of agriculturally-related production, the town of Nacogdoches was able to maintain a business relationship with the agricultural families and businesses of the County, thus ensuring its vitality not only as the county seat, but as a regional center of commerce. Both county government and regional business still took place in town. The central commercial district continued to supply groceries, household goods, agricultural implements and, increasingly, cars and automotive supplies. Passenger service on the regional train lines, regional bus lines (Airline Motor Coaches opened a terminal at 224 N. Fredonia in 1931) and local hotel accommodations continued to be focused in the commercial district.

## "Times is Hard:" Nacogdoches and the Depression

The late 1920s and early 1930s brought extremes in financial prosperity and losses. The economic hardship that devastated the United States in October 1929 did not immediately affect Nacogdoches, as the county was still relatively isolated. Still, the records of the Masonic Lodge indicated that Nacogdoches, like the rest of the country, suffered during the Depression. Members, for example, were unable to pay dues and let their memberships lapse, and many requested financial assistance from the group. By 1933, however, the Lodge had to deny all further requests "due to its financial condition." Member Wylie J. Hicks wrote simply that "Times is hard."<sup>174</sup>

The onset of the Depression quickened the transformation of Nacogdoches local economy away from its traditional dependence on cotton and lumber.<sup>175</sup> Though the promotion of truck farming had long been underway, progress was seen in the 1930s as poor cotton production and prices combined with small farmers' need to grow food for their families. Cotton and corn, the two major crops in the area, had exhausted the land and were barely profitable. In 1934, for example, the amount of cotton ginned in Nacogdoches county dropped by nearly one-third, from 17,057 to 12,779 bales of cotton.<sup>176</sup> A slight resurgence occurred in 1937, but by 1938, this number had declined again to 12,060 bales.<sup>177</sup> This should be compared to the larger cotton producing counties, such as Ellis, who ginned 102,628 in 1937, and Dawson at 106,324 in the same year.

During the Depression, the Soil Conservation Corps brought a new infusion of energy and ideas about how to farm in the soils of east Texas, and provided a major catalyst in fueling this transformation. The goal of the Corps was to rest and revitalize the soil as well as introduce new crops that would generate more income for local farmers. As a result, new crops did appear in Nacogdoches County, particularly tomatoes, peas, potatoes, and watermelon, and new facilities to

<sup>173</sup> "Big Fertilizer Factor to Be Established at Nacogdoches," *Weekly Sentinel*, 15 January 1930, 1.

<sup>174</sup> Archie P. McDonald, *By Early Candlelight: The Story of Old Milam*. (Ft. Worth: Masonic Home Press, 1967), 126-27.

<sup>175</sup> Although American urban centers had enjoyed nearly a decade of progress and prosperity during the 1920s, farmers had already experienced ten years of declining fortune. Between 1923 and 1929, prices received by farmers were 40 to 50 percent above that of pre-war years, but the cost of seeds, goods, and machinery was at least 60 percent higher. Part of the decline in the agricultural economy was attributed to a reduction in international demand for cotton following World War I, as foreign competition and new synthetic materials reduced the demand for American-grown cotton fiber.

<sup>176</sup> "Cotton Ginning Short Nearly 5000 bales this Year," *Weekly Sentinel*, 15 November 1934, 1.

<sup>177</sup> *Texas Almanac* 1939.



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process and sell those crops were built within the commercial district. Occasional articles appeared in the *Sentinel* promoting truck farming to Nacogdocheans. In 1925, J. W. Hutson wrote:

If you ever intend to get out of debt and quit planting your crop in cotton, now is the time. Leave off part of your cotton crop and get in the truck deal with us. If you plant one or two acres of tomatoes, peas, melons, or cantaloupes, or some of the money things we are growing to ship, it will give each of us some early money which I am sure we all need. Just a few of us cannot do much so please plant a few acres of truck and help all you can—we need you. Come out to the next truck growers' meeting on January 2, at the court house. Lets get together and stay together and make 1926 worth while.<sup>178</sup>

As early as the mid-1920s, the Nacogdoches County Fair began to focus on demonstrating the value of truck farming with exhibits about the varied crops available for local farmers to produce. The 1929 county fair had a "negro day" that sought to include, on some level, the African-American population in the agricultural transformation of the region.<sup>179</sup> A canning plant opened in 1929, ready for that year's crop of tomatoes and peas. Roland Jones of the Nacogdoches Compress Company had pledged in February that if local farmers promised to plant 300 acres of tomatoes, he would build the canning factory on West Main with a payroll of \$6,000 per month. By the end of March, work on the new plant began and canning began in June.<sup>180</sup> By 1930, the plant expanded and took the name East Texas Canning Company.<sup>181</sup>

Agricultural production increasingly focused not only on truck farming, but also on livestock, dairy and poultry. Federal aid agencies deployed to help local ranchers were primarily concerned with improving care for ailing livestock (diseases were common in humid climates), and improving pasture management.<sup>182</sup> Stock-raising tripled after 1940, and gave new purpose to land that would no longer provide agricultural profits. Alongside a new interest in livestock, dairy and poultry production increased dramatically during the 1940s. Dairy income grew by five times between 1940 and 1948; in 1949 there were 230 dairies in Nacogdoches county. Poultry income doubled between 1941 and 1945 and the first broiler house opened in 1948.<sup>183</sup> As an adjunct to a growing dairy industry, the Pure Ice and Milk Company built a new plant in Nacogdoches in 1929 to bottle milk and make ice cream. The *Sentinel* heralded the arrival of the new plant with a spirit of boosterism: "...the real big objective is that of developing the whole milk business and the dairy business in the Nacogdoches area. The dairy business is now making Tyler, an east Texas town with no better natural advantages than Nacogdoches the big outstanding industrial center of all this section. That has been done at Tyler may be done at Nacogdoches."<sup>184</sup>

<sup>178</sup> J. W. Hutson, "Farmers Urged to Grow Truck Crops Here in Next Year," *Weekly Sentinel*, 31 December 1925, 1.

<sup>179</sup> "Nacogdoches Fair Program Is to Be the Best in History," and "Colored Exhibits at Fair to Be Very Extensive," *Weekly Sentinel* 17 October 1929, 1 and 8. "Nacogdoches County Fair Was Success Says Pres. Hinds," *Weekly Sentinel* 31 October 1929, 1. The fair had 45,000 attendees and had receipts of \$4500 and expenses of \$3500.

<sup>180</sup> "Canning Factory," *Weekly Sentinel* 21 February 1929, 1; "The Canning Plant at Nacogdoches Now and Assured Fact," 7 March 1929, 1.; "Nacogdoches Canning Plant Makes Initial Run Wednesday Morning," *Weekly Sentinel*, 27 June 1929, 1.

<sup>181</sup> "All Tomato Contracts are to Be Protected Says Roland Jones," *Weekly Sentinel* 30 March 1930, 1.

<sup>182</sup> McDonald, *Nacogdoches*, 87.

<sup>183</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 165; Weems, "Gateway of a Gaining Nation," 119.

<sup>184</sup> "Development of Dairy Industry Is Objective Sought in Location of Big Plant at Nacogdoches," *Weekly Sentinel*, 10 January 1929, 1.



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Alongside the fading cotton economy, the lumber industry began to suffer. By the 1920s, most of the first-growth forest had been lumbered in Nacogdoches County. With this depletion, lumbermen were encouraged to practice new conservation and planting practices to ensure the long-term viability of the lumber industry. Giles Haltom, the editor of the *Sentinel* in the 1920s, wrote: "Nacogdoches has everything to gain and nothing to lose in encouraging the renewal of commercial forests and practical forestry on 50 percent of over 338,880 acres of its total land area. When the nominal acreage of virgin timber, now remaining, has been cut, and this will occur within the next ten years, the stumpage value of second growth pine will increase at a rapid rate. As time goes on our second growth timber will be harvested with more care than is now practiced..."<sup>185</sup> The Depression had a dramatic impact on the Texas lumber industry, both because virgin growth forest was nearly exhausted and because prices for lumber collapsed in 1932—"in that year Texas mills produced only 354 million board feet of finished lumber, comparable to production in 1880."<sup>186</sup> The result for Nacogdoches was felt in very real terms when Frost-Johnson was forced to reduce its operating schedule drastically. It did not lay off any employees, but the work schedule was reduced to the extent that some only worked a few days a month. In the company's mill town just south of the commercial district, additional land was cleared to allow workers to plant gardens to provide themselves with much-needed food.<sup>187</sup>

Federal programs did make some small impact in helping Nacogdoches through the Depression. Along with the Soil Conservation Service, the Rural Electrification Administration, the Farmers Home Administration, the Forest Service, and other aid agencies made an appearance in Nacogdoches. New Deal subsidies available for land owners who allowed acreage to lie fallow, the economic structure of Nacogdoches was severely impacted. Over 60% of farmers in the county were tenants, meaning they were often left without land to work. Many of these tenant farmers left for Houston or Dallas, particularly with the start of the war industries in the 1940s. By 1950, the number of farms in Nacogdoches were half that of 1930.

A branch of the Civil Works Administration (CWA) was headquartered in Nacogdoches in the Milam Lodge Building, employing upwards of 85 people. The office closed in 1934 when the program was discontinued.<sup>188</sup> Upon its closure, an emergency feed loan office opened in the same location and the CWA was careful to announce that: "The commissary will continue on Church Street providing food for those out of employment or unable to work and a bigger more complete program is planned for the healthy and sanitation department which will come under the new program."<sup>189</sup> The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) assembled a "tree army" in East Texas, employing camps of young, unmarried men who worked in the remote timber fields. In 1934, advertisements in the *Sentinel* indicated that the closest camp for Nacogdoches residents was at Lufkin and that the pay for an enlistee, who had to be male, 18-25, unmarried but with dependents, was \$30 per month.<sup>190</sup>

Further aid was provided in the form of road construction projects. Federal relief funding through the Highway Department made possible an expansion of county road building that resulted in great improvements in the area transportation networks. The paving of Highway 21 east from Nacogdoches to the Angelina River, of Highway 35 north,

<sup>185</sup> Giles Haltom, "Is Nacogdoches County Interested in Forestry?" *Weekly Sentinel*, 19 March 1925, 4.

<sup>186</sup> Maxwell and Baker, *Sawdust Empire*, 201.

<sup>187</sup> Maxwell and Baker, *Sawdust Empire*, 201.

<sup>188</sup> "Employees of CWA Offices Enjoy Picnic at Angelina River Saturday," *Weekly Sentinel*, 1 March 1934, 8.

<sup>189</sup> "Emergency Feed Loan Office Opened at 116 North Church Street," *Weekly Sentinel* 2 July 1934, 7. "Entire CWA Program to Cease in Nacogdoches County Thursday night," *Weekly Sentinel* 29 March 1934, 8.

<sup>190</sup> "Enlistments Open for Tree Army to Nacogdoches Boys," *Weekly Sentinel*, 26 July 1934, 1.



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Highway 7 to Center, and a new bridge across the Angelina River (concrete series of 30 foot arches, 1,950 feet long, three lanes of traffic) all employed men in the county. The Highway Committee of the Chamber of Commerce aggressively pursued bringing highway monies to the county; its members included Carl Monk and Moss Adams.<sup>191</sup> From 1938 to 1940, the Work Projects Administration also sponsored the construction of a concrete bridge over Banita Creek at Pecan Street (Property #131). A.D. Muckleroy was the engineer, and E.B. Haley supervised the construction.

Aid and work programs may have helped smaller local businesses and small farmers a bit, but many still had difficulty weathering the financial hardship of the early 1930s. In early 1934, Nacogdoches's economy received a temporary boon, or at least a glimpse of future profits when J. C. Penney arrived as a national retailer. They purchased the building at 106 Pecan Street, (Property #17), substantially remodeling both the exterior and the interior, and adding a second story to the rear. The project not only provided a brief flurry of building, but injected new life around the plaza.<sup>192</sup>

Despite this small glimmer of financial hope, in 1934 civic boosters, including local architect H. B. Tucker, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce's committee on the National Better Housing Program acknowledged that there had been "five years of stagnation in the building industry." Tucker stated that "quite a large percentage of the structures in Nacogdoches are greatly in need of repair....Many properties have reached a point where it is harly (sic) worth making any effort to salvage them." Tucker and others hoped that the federally sponsored National Better Housing Program would provide a needed stimulus to building.<sup>193</sup>

As the Depression came to a close and World War II loomed on the horizon, the Teacher's College continued to financially anchor the community, particularly as in the coming absence of male laborers that made farming extremely difficult. In 1941, at the beginning of the war, college enrollment was about 1,000. With the departure of male students who enlisted, the college's president, Dr. Paul L. Boynton, feared they would not be able to stay open. He made an agreement with the army to use the college's facilities to train new members of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. Groups of women went through basic training in Des Moines, Iowa and then came to Nacogdoches to live in the college's dormitories and take classes specifically to train them for the clerical and support duties they would take on in the Army.<sup>194</sup> Thus Nacogdoches, though its male workforce was largely absent during the first half of the decade, did find a new influx of people and jobs for teachers to sustain the town during this slow economic period.

In addition to the educational basis for economic stability, a number of war-related industries began to provide the town with opportunity. In 1942, NIBCO located a factory that produced parts for Navy destroyers and submarines and other boats on South Fredonia Street. This plant was a subsidiary of the Northern Indiana Brass Company (Founded 1904), which began as a manufacturer of brass fittings for plumbing. The Nacogdoches Chamber of Commerce was instrumental in bringing the plant to town, and it remains in operation today, manufacturing metal valves and fittings (FIG. 21).<sup>195</sup>

<sup>191</sup> "Highway Work to Begin in Dochess County," and "Highway Committee Entertains Huffman and Group from Lufkin at the Liberty Hotel Today" *Weekly Sentinel*, 26 July 1934, 6 and 7.

<sup>192</sup> "J. C. Penney Company Will Open Store on Pecan Street Here Soon," *Weekly Sentinel*, 25 January 1934, 8.

<sup>193</sup> "Purpose of Local Better Housing Program Outlined by Committee," *Weekly Sentinel*, 15 November 1934, 8.

<sup>194</sup> Archie P. McDonald, "WACs" Sept. 1-7, 2002, All Things Historical syndicated column, viewed online at <<http://www.texasescapes.com/AllThingsHistorical/WACs-Womens-Army-Corps-AM902.htm>>. See also Clarice Pollard, *Laugh, Cry, and Remember: The Journal of A G.I. Lady* (1991).

<sup>195</sup> Partin, *Nacogdoches*, 172.