

John David Grissett Collection

The collection is comprised of news clippings, magazines, short manuscripts, and written recollections about the camp town created by the Big Lake Oil Company called Texon. The materials were gathered by the donor's father W. J. Grissett, who was the superintendent of the camp, and Velma Jewel Marshall.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: W. J. Grissett
Title: John David Grissett Collection
Dates: 1950-1997, bulk dates 1970-1980
Abstract: This collection is comprised of news clippings, company magazines, photographs, typed stories and memories about the Texon and the people who lived there.
Quantity: 1 linear foot
Identification: 2006-011 John David Grissett Collection
Repository: [The Permian Basin Petroleum Museum](#)

Biographical Sketch

Texon – Texon is the name of the city created by Levi Smith for the Big Lake Oil Company. The city was located in the Big Lake Field and is several miles outside of Big Lake, Texas. The Big Lake Field is the site of the Santa Rita #1, which is the discovery well and hence the first oil strike in the West Texas area.

The Santa Rita #1 came in on May 28, 1923, and was drilled by Carl Cromwell and financed by Frank Pickrell. After the initial strike Pickrell quickly enlisted Mike Benedum and Levi Smith's help in developing the Big Lake Field. Levi Smith recognized the need for housing and amenities for the company workers, so he devised a plan to build the perfect camp town, Texon. Texon was in operation from 1924 to 1962. The town had its own hospital, fire station, rail road depot, grocery store, movie theatre, grade school, baseball diamond, professional baseball team, polo field, swimming pool and golf course, as well as other amenities. Most of the residents remember life in Texon fondly.

Soon after the town closed, former residents of the city began an annual reunion that is held every year in Big Lake in June. Former residents of Texon travel from everywhere in the country to meet old friends and see what is left of the town.

W. J. "Whitie" Grissett

W. J. "Whitie" Grissett was working in the Corsicana-Powell field in deep East Texas when he came to Texon in 1924. He worked in the pipeline crew for a time and was later named supervisor, or "gang pusher" for the pipeline crew. At the retirement of Charles E Beyer on June

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1, 1950, he was named general manager of the Texon facilities. He was transferred to Midland in 1956 by Plymouth Oil Company. He retired in 1962 when Plymouth Oil Company was purchased by Marathon.

(Biographical information from the October 1983 Midlander Magazine.)

Scope and Content

This collection is made up of photocopies of various letters, typed stories and memories, newspaper clippings and photographs of the Texon camp. The materials were gathered by Velma Jewel Marshall and W. J. Grissett. Both parties either wrote stories about the camp, or gathered stories from other residents of the camp. The stories cover living conditions in the camp as well as wells and drilling stories. Many of the remembrances cover specific people who lived in the camp. The news clippings talk about the oil strike and the field. At the end of the collection there is an extensive set of company magazines, which relate monthly news from all of Plymouth Oil Company's camp towns including Texon. The photographs show various buildings and residents of the town, as well as several celebrations and school activities.

The original collection was arranged in binders by topic. Inside some of the binders there were organizational tabs. As the collection was copied, the titles of all the binders and tabs were noted and kept in original order. Each folder or folder group and title will equal one binder and inside each binder the individual documents or subjects will be listed in order with tab headings noted.

Restrictions

Restrictions regarding access

Library and Archive materials must be used in the library reading room. Prior appointment is preferred but not absolutely necessary.

Open for Research - * Some Collections will be restricted*

No materials within the collection are to be withheld from researchers. However due to the nature of the material, researchers may need to obtain copyright permission from the creators of the materials in the files. Copyright permission is the sole responsibility of the researcher.

Index Terms

Levi Smith
Michael Late Benedum
Texon
Best
Stiles
Kansas City, Mexico & Orient Rail Road
Texon Oilers

Baseball
Charles E. Beyer
W. J. Grissett
Barnhart
Big Lake
Big Lake Oil Company
Thelma Gardner
Roy Gardner
Plymouth Oil & Gas Company

Related Material

Photographs

Lilla (Beyer) Carter Collection 72-29, 81-24 & 82-14
M/M Roy Gardner Collection 78-12
Arthur C. Flores Photograph Collection 82-09
Bill Thompson Collection 82-17 & 84-03

Manuscript

Biographical & Historical (B&H) Files: R –
 Reagan County, Texas - Santa Rita, Texas Home of Texon Oil & Land Co.
Biographical & Historical (B&H) Files: T –
 Texon Camp Reagan County, Texas Home of Big Lake Oil Company 1 of 2
 Texon Camp Reagan County, Texas Home of Big Lake Oil Company 2 of 2
 Texon Oil Camp - T. Gardner & F. Grissett
 Texon Oil and Land Company
 Texon Tidings / Benedum - Trees Loose Leaf
Petroleum Hall of Fame Collection
 Charles E. Beyer 1973
 Haymon Krupp 1969
 Levi Smith 1985
 Clayton W. Williams, Sr. 1987
Samuel Myres Collection – Oral History Transcripts
 Akins, Cullen 1964
 Akins, Cullen 6/17/1970
 Asher, A. E. 2/13/1970
 Bosworth, Mr. & Mrs. Guy 6/19/1968
 Collins, Walter B. 2/2/1970
 Hedburg, H. A. 6/26/1970

Administrative Information

Preferred Initial Citation:

The Petroleum Museum Archives and Library Center, 1500 W. I20, Midland Texas 79701.

Preferred Subsequent Citations:

John David Grissett Collection, The Petroleum Museum.

Provenance:

Gift of John David Grissett, 2006.

Processed By:

Amy Hooker, 2007

Collection Inventory

Box 1 of 1

Folder 2006-11 Administration

Collection Inventory

Folder 2006-11-01 Research by Velma Jewel Marshall re Texon: File One

Organizer's note to researcher explaining the origins of the information

News clipping

Color photo of rig and historical marker with a note detailing historical marker text

Handwritten account of Texon

Tab: Marshall, Velma Library

Copy of Midlander Magazine from October, 1985

Tab: Recommendations of Levi Smith

Hall of Fame information, clippings, letters and invitations for the Ceremony

Tab: Application for Texon Historical Marker

Copy of official application for the historical marker with Marshall's annotations

Tab: Info on people not included in the final application for historical marker.

Hand written notes on the following people: Mike Griffith, H L "Bob" Addams, H. H. Talley, Tom Reed, Clyde Miller, Jeff Kelly, and Charlie Davidson

Tab: Interviews Agnew Ham

Handwritten narrative on notebook paper

Tab: Texon material

News clippings about the camp

Tab: Newspaper reports compiled by Velma Marshall

Tab: Audiovisual Workshop

News Clippings, Dedication of the historical marker, typed manuscript "The Story of Texon" 8 pgs, Handwritten notes

Folder 2006-11-02 Research by Velma Jewel Marshall re Texon: File Two

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Tab: Post office for Texon

Map showing the Butterfield mail route in Texas

Handwritten notes about the post office: opening date, post master list etc

Copy of the post office register from national archives

More handwritten notes about post master/mistress appointments and post offices for other camp towns (Best and Stiles)

Tab: Extracts from newspaper articles

The Big Lake (Texas) Wildcat: "Faith and 'The Big Swede' Drilled Santa Rita Discovery Well in 1923" 5/31/1973

Tab: R. C. Marshall Family

Letter to Velma J. Marshall from Jane S. Wilson re: Texon questionnaire and personal business

Handwritten quote from Collier's Encyclopedia 1960 edition pg 343 re: decline of American jobs and wages from October 1929 through March 1933

Poem titled "Texon" by Angie Fell Hasty

Handwritten notes and letters detailing memories of living in Texon by Velma Marshall and biographies of her husband R. C. Marshall

Piano Recital flyer for December 14, 1941 held at the Texon Church (Martha Ann Marshall participant)

List of children who were playmates of the Marshall children

List of people and the positions they held in Texon

Memories of activities that went on in Texon, ex Women's study club, library, flying lessons, polo team, the Texon churches, housing

Tab: Velma Marshall – Research notes on Texon

Handwritten notes made by Marshall during her research into the history of Texon covering the following subjects: the creation of the town, oil rush, Levi Smith's vision for town and reason for creating such a nice city

Tab: List of books V. J. Marshall researched for

Bibliography of books with quotes and page number references

Folder 2006-11-03 The story of Texon... Part One

Binder contains various letters, stories, hand written accounts, news clippings etc talking about living in Texon.

Big Lake Oil Company official letterhead with the address of Texon, Texas

Hand written accounts by Fay (Mrs. W. J.) Grimett,

"The birth, life and death of an oil town" by Thelma Gardner (1993)

1956 telephone directory for Barnhart, Big Lake & Texon Texas.

Information on the Santa Rita Club of the Petroleum Museum

Midlander Magazine with profiles of petroleum pioneers (including Texon residents W.J. Grissett and Roy Gardner

Copies of letters to Texon residents W. J. Grissett and Ruby McCollum

Poem about Texon by Crystal Smith

Letter by Roger L. Goertz and an article by him titled "Life in Texon"

Program for "Roses for Santa Rita" play held at the Petroleum Museum

News articles about Texon reunion, the disappearing town of Texon and working in Texon/oil industry.

Folder 2006-11-04 The story of Texon... Part Two

Do Not Cite

General information about residents of Texon

Big Lake Oil Company letterhead

Letter from Jane Spraggins Wilson re: Texon book she is writing June 1, 1977

Notes and questions Jane Spraggins Wilson sent to W. J. and Fay Grissett about Texon

Stories from Texon by W. J. "Whitey" Grissett – Typed letter to Jane Spraggins Wilson talking about Texon materials Mr. Grissett sent to her for book, as well as stories about Texon life and answers to her questions (see above) 4 pg

"A Fortnite at 'Hotel Orient'" by W. J. Grissett housing facilities in Texon for single men early in the camp 3pg

"Hotel 'Orient'" re: turning railway cars into housing for Texon residents 2pg

List of Big Lake Oil Company's officials in the Texon office 5pg

"Early Living Conditions in Texon" 1pg

"Early Workmen at Texon" 6pg

"Well Number Seventeen on Rampage" 6pg

"Swivel Necks' vs. 'Jar Heads'" i.e. cable tool drilling vs. rotary drilling the West Texas fields 12pg

Continuation of "'Swivel Necks' vs. 'Jar Heads'" 12 pg

"The Texon Café" 4pg

"The Union's Effort at Texon" 3pg

"The 'Bull Pen' and its Grand Opening" company housing bunk house 5pg.

"Tankies and Their 'Cot House'" 3pg

"The 'Bunkhouse'" 2pg

"The Casers" casing contractors 2pg

"Three Fires and out of Business" fire station at Texon 2pg

Folder 2006-11-05 The story of Texon... Part Three

Postcard for Texon reunion 6-1-1997

Copies of articles written by W. J. Grissett for The Petroleum Engineer

Story "Santa Rita – The Oil Well" with note next to title compiled by Berte R.

Haigh from Frank Pickrell papers and interview 16 pg

"Why Santa Rita" the story behind the name of the Santa Rita Letter from Mike

Letter Benedum to W. J. Grissett re: 25 years of service to the Big Lake Oil

Company 11/22/1949

Reply and thank you letter to Mike Benedum

Post it note explaining the fate of Mike Griffith

Letter to W. M. Griffith from W. J. Grissett re: writing the story of Texon

3/16/1954

Letter from Charlotte A Woodside editor of The Pioneer Magazine to W. J. Grissett thanking him and his wife for agreeing to write the column for Texon for the magazine 6/15/1953

Listing of Big Lake Oil Company's Officials Texon Office – The history of W. J. Grissett

Clipping from Midland Reporter Telegram 1/19/1992 showing photo of early

Texon

Clipping "Big Lake Field 29-Years Old; Produced 109-Million Bbls."

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Map – 1939 Oil & Gas pipelines Gulf Coast/Mid-Continent/Illinois (not photocopied)

Map- Oil & Gas Lines Kansas 1940 (not photocopied)

Calendar pages showing photos of Texon: May 1992 & October 1992

Obituary for Mrs. Edna Hewitt Maxey 8/15/1982

Obituary for Mrs. Norene M. Menielle 11/21/1982

Obituary for M. E. “Milt” Witherspoon

Folder 2006-11-06 Newspaper Articles ... part 1

Midland Reporter Telegram’s Petroleum Pioneers Special Editions: October 22, 1995, October 15, 1993

Big Lake Wildcat 6/6/1991 “Texon Reunion addresses listed in Wildcat:”

Abilene Reporter News 6/3/1990 “Santa Rita Plugged after 67 years”

San Angelo Standard Times 6/3/1990 “Famous Permian Well goes out with a sigh”

Midland Reporter Telegram 10/28/1983 “Petroleum Pioneer’s Special Edition”

The Big Lake Wildcat 6/7/1973 “Over 3,200 attend Santa Rita Celebration”

Midland Reporter Telegram 6/3/1973 “Big Lake Fetes Oil Discovery”

The Big Lake Wildcat 5/31/1973 “Reagan County is site of Many Firsts” Santa Rita No. 1 50th Anniversary Celebration

The Big Lake Wildcat 5/31/1973 “Santa Rita No. 1 50th Anniversary Celebration”

The Big Lake Wildcat 5/31/1973 “Reagan County Where it all Began” Santa Rita #1 50th Anniversary Celebration

The Big Lake Wildcat 6/18/1964 “Over 500 Attend Texon Reunion”

Folder 2006-11-07 Newspaper Articles ... part 2

Midland Reporter Telegram August 31, 1975 “Museum Officials Invite Public to Facility Dedication Sept. 13”

Midland Reporter Telegram October 17, 1982 Petroleum Pioneer Edition “Carl Cromwell Killed in Pennsylvania accident”

The Odessa American October 17, 1982 “Company Camp – Attorney recalls youth there”

The Big Lake Wildcat June 9, 1977 “Texon Reunion Scenes”

The Midland Reporter Telegram September 22, 1985 “Basin’s Petroleum Museum marks 10th Anniversary”

Permian Basin Petroleum Pioneers invitation letter for their Biennial celebration (September 20, 1985) with Petroleum Museum flyer and program for October 25, 1985 meeting

Midland Reporter Telegram October 25, 1985 Petroleum Pioneer Edition

Midland Reporter Telegram (no date) “More than 650 attend oil pioneer’s reunion”
Section for Texon Reunions

The Big Lake Wildcat June 11, 1992 “80 register for Texon Reunion”

The Big Lake Wildcat June 9, 1988 “142 old-timers and visitors attend Texon reunion”

The Big Lake Wildcat June 6 1991 “Texon Reunion addresses listed in Wildcat”

The Big Lake Wildcat June 11, 1987 “Texon Reunion registers about 130”

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The Big Lake Wildcat June 4, 1987 “Texon Reunion to be held Sunday”
“Texon Reunion 1985 attendance list”
The Big Lake Wildcat June 7, 1984 “250 attend Texon reunion”
“Texon reunion attendees” 1983
The Big Lake Wildcat June 10, 1982 “Over 200 attend annual Texon reunion”
The Big Lake Wildcat June 3, 1982 “Texon reunion is set for this weekend here” and
“1933 article tells about early Texon”
The Big Lake Wildcat June 20, 1974 “Texon Reunion to be held Annually”
Attendee list from Second bi-annual Texon Reunion
Address lists of Texon reunion attendees
Letter to Velma Marshall from Fern Kosel May 25,? (post mark from Texon) re:
attendance for Texon reunion
Letter to Bertha and Fern Kosel from Velma Marshall re: reunion and loss of husband (?)

(Note: For magazines in this collection that are in our library only the front cover was copied. Please refer to the library for complete copies of these magazines. Magazines that are not in our library were photocopied in their entirety and a second photocopy made for the library.)

Folder 2006-11-08 Benedum-Trees Loose Leaf 1948/1949

Inventory of magazines
Plymouth Oil Company 25th Anniversary issue
February – March 1948
Letter to Charlotte Woodside from Jack Hitt March 29, 1948 re: biography of W. J. Grissett for April issue of the Loose Leaf.
April, June, August, September, October and December issues 1948
January, February, April, May, June, July, September, October, November and December 1949 issues

Folder 2006-11-09 The Pioneer 1950

Inventory of magazines
January, February, March, April, May 1950 issue of The Pioneer
June 1950 issue of The Rig & Reel
June, July, August, September, October & December 1950 issue of The Pioneer

Folder 2006-11-10 The Pioneer 1951

Inventory of magazines
January, March, April, May, July, August and September issues

Folder 2006-11-11 The Pioneer 1952

Inventory of magazines
February, April, May, June, July, September & November issues

Folder 2006-11-12 The Pioneer 1953

Inventory of magazines
February and May issues
Letter to Mrs. W. J. Grissett from Charlotte A Woodside June 15, 1953 re: Mrs. Grissett taking over writing the Texon Tidings column from Mr. Isbell
July, September, October and November issues

Folder 2006-11-13 The Pioneer 1954

Do Not Cite

Inventory of magazines

January, March, June, July, August, October, November and December issues

Folder 2006-11-14 The Pioneer 1955

Inventory of Magazines

January issue

Typed copy of Texon Tidings by Fay Grissett for March 1955 issue

March, April, July, September, October, November and December issues

Folder 2006-11-15 The Pioneer 1956/1957 (two folders)

Inventory of magazines

1956 January, May, June, July, August, September, November, December issues

1957 January, February, May, June, July, August, November issues

Folder 2006-11-16 The Pioneer 1958/1959 (three folders)

Inventory of magazines

1958 January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October,
November

1959 January, February, March, April, May, June, July, September, October, December

Folder 2006-11-17 The Pioneer 1960/1961

Inventory of magazines

1960 January, February, June, August, September, October, November, December

1961 January, February, April, Summer, Fall

Folder 2006-11-18

Texas Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association Texas Oil and Gas, December 1956 issue

Folder 2006-11-19 Photographs

Printouts of 222 photographs which were digitized and entered into the photograph database