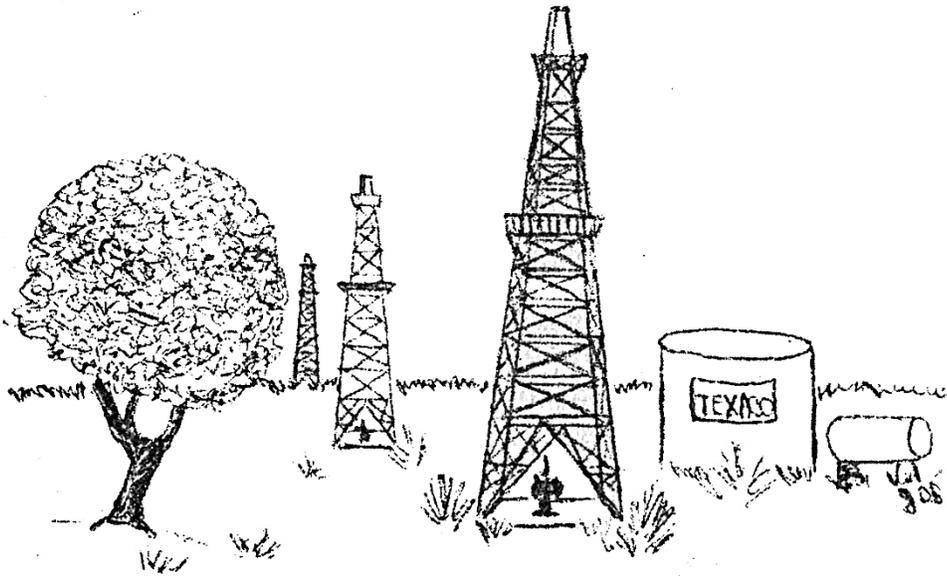


A BRIEF HISTORY OF MANVEL, TEXAS



Janice Del Bello
Ollie Booth Crainer

The City of Manvel expresses their appreciation for the information supplied by the citizens of the community. It was not possible for all of their stories to be printed in this brief history book, but the stories, information and personal stories given by individuals have been kept for a more detailed history which may one day be compiled into a larger history book.

This was a Bicentennial Project.

**A BRIEF HISTORY
OF
MANVEL, TEXAS**

by

Janice Del Bello

and

Ollie Booth Crainer

1976

A Bicentennial Project

The first settlers found the area of Pamona (later called Manvel) attractive, fruitful and full of game. There was prairie grass-land and timber, shade and fertile soil along the creek at the head of Chocolate Bayou. The area abounded with game animals and birds.

The first settlers in the immediate area was the family of the W.R. Booth, who had traveled from East Texas by oxen drawn wagon and settled on the Chocolate Bayou near its head, in July of 1857. They set to work to build some kind of house for shelter before the onset of winter. The building material was principally lumber hewn from trees cut by themselves. The closest neighbors were the Bingham's near the Brazos River, near what is now Rosharon. The Bingham's had a mill to grind corn into cornmeal and grits and also had slave labor which they loaned the Booths to get established.

William R. Booth was born in Arkansas in 1827 and his wife, Elizabeth Tursy Rawls Booth, was born in Georgia in 1830. Their first son

J.P. Booth, was born in Pamona in 1859.

W.R. Booth enlisted in the Coast Guards of Brazoria County for the war of 1860. Upon returning from the Civil War, Booth bought 100 acres of land. It is believed that he purchased the property for about five cents per acre.

A few families began to settle around the area after the war.

In 1877, the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad built lines out of Galveston to Alvin, Texas. Manvel, was first known as Pamona, but the people learned of a town in West Texas which was also called Pamona, so the community changed the name of Pamona to Manvel, honoring a man who later became the president of the Atchinson, Topeka, and Santa Fe.

William R. Booth died in 1879, the year other families began to move into the community. Mrs. Booth had to continue to make a living for her young children. She had a few head of cattle, chickens, hogs, and an ox team for plowing. Mrs. Booth would leave home for three or four days to take her small supply of butter which had been kept in salt brine, eggs, wild game, and black moss to Houston, which was the nearest trading center. The black moss was used at the time for mattresses and upholstering work.

The money received for her produce was used to purchase necessary supplies which could not be provided at home.

Before the railroad came to Manvel people came to the community following a foot path leading from the Alvin depot to Pamona. By April 1879, the Gulf Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad had been built as far as Manvel, which opened Manvel to the larger world. Prior to the coming of the railroads, people settled along creeks and survived by small subsistence farms.

Some of the Santa Fe officials from Kansas formed the A.A. Luther Land Company and purchased all the land bordering on the railroad right of way. A townsite at the Manvel crossing was formed in 1890 and many lots were sold to families who had heard about the fertile land and the great prospects that the South had to offer. The town of Manvel began to grow, with businesses being established near the railroad. Businesses which were present at this time were Leamaster Grocery, Hancock Grocery, Porter Peck & John Hicks Grocery, Kerofene Grocery, D.W. Lentz Grocery, Joe Correll Grocery, John Pugh Grocery, Mike & Doug Remely Shoe Store, Dr. Raulston & Dr. Rose Drug Store, Joe Correll Blacksmith Shop, Jim Booth & Hardy Vaughn Meat Market, Packingham Hotel which had 14 rooms.

Once the train came through Manvel, families began to ride the train to Galveston where they would stay on the bay for a week at the time. People from other towns would come to Manvel for their honeymoon and would stay at the hotel.

The Manvel Post Office was first established in Manvel on September 22, 1892, at which time William N. Pugh was appointed Manvel Postmaster.

The first Depot Agent to be appointed was Charlie Bowen, who was also the first person to build a real house in the Manvel townsite. In 1933, the Manvel Depot was removed and no trains have stopped for passengers in Manvel since then.

The community realized the need of having a school. The upstairs of a grocery store was used to serve the purpose of a school. The first school teacher was Miss Deiter in 1893. As the community grew it became necessary for the school to seek larger facilities. Classes were held in the Church building for several years until a school was erected. Blackboards were made from lumber painted with black paint.

The first church and Sunday School was organized by the Christian Church minister, Mr. Lancaster. The services were held in their home.

Later a building was constructed by a colony of people moving in who were members of the Dunkard Church.

In 1893 the area thrived on the strawberry industry. At this time there were about 100 families between Manvel and Arcola who brought all of their strawberry crops to Manvel to be loaded on trains, at night, where there would be as many as 200 men at a time loading strawberries on to the trains. The strawberries were shipped in quart crates at the time, which contained about 12 quarts to a crate. The individual would send off as many as 25 crates a day during the Spring, each bringing approximately four dollars. Later the sale of strawberries played out because other places began to grow them.

In 1896 cattle roamed the land, no fences were needed because men respected the other mans area. If a head strayed into anothers territory it was returned. In the evening the cattle were rounded into a pen for the night. It was about this time that the cattlemen started branding cattle to distinguish who' was who's, due to the growth of the community and growing herds. Cattle drivers were common, and the cowmen would go off for weeks at a time to go all over the area to pick out the cattle they wanted for their herd.

Orchards were planted of peaches, plums, and figs, and people from far away would hear of how good the land was for growing fruits. Manvel had a growing population and by 1895 there were approximately 350 people, before a snowstorm in 1895, a tornado in 1899, and the 1900 storm which destroyed most of the buildings, orchards and crops.

In the early 1890's children entertained themselves by having mud ball fights and chasing Meadow Larks until the birds just gave up. As they got older and had horses they would chase jackrabbits until they gave up. The boys favorite swimming hole was Mustang Bayou, near the cemetery. Boys would come as far away as Rosharon and Fresno area to go swimming.

Others forms of entertainment were square dances held in homes and at the hotel and school. There was no music so the people sang for the dance. On Saturday nights a literary was held at the school in the large building which is now called Rocking Chair Ranch. The young girls would have box suppers prepared for the occasion, which would be shared with a boy that drew the girls name. Taffy pullings were the youngsters favorite event. These dinners were also held in the in the home.

Tent shows were common in Manvel. One tent

show that was recalled was were an Indian covered a woman with paper and threw spears around the womans body to make a perfect outline of her on the paper. Medicine men came hthrough town also, but parents would not allow the children to attend the shows.

The beautiful days of peach, plums, pears and fig orchards came to an end when the 1900 hurricane storm blew into Manvel one late afternoon. The storm blew in almost every house in Manvel, and every house was severely damaged or flattened by the hurricane. Only two houses were not blown from their blocks during the storm. The Dunkard Church was flattened by the hurricane which left the town without a classroom for school. At this time a two room school building was erected for classes until a larger school house was constructed in 1916 on the present school campus.

The storm not only destroyed the crops and homes but also brought mosquitoes which carried Typhoid fever, from the stagnant water that was trapped on the land causing a breeding ground for mosquitoes. The mosquitoes were so bad that people had to sleep under hot and heavy canvas mosquito nets.

Financial difficulties prior to the 1900 storm forced people to leave Manvel. Many more

People left after the hurricane struck, leaving only with a few things that had been salvaged from the debris. Only a few families stayed in Manvel to pick up the pieces and start a new life. There was only one death caused by the hurricane in Manvel.

Goodwill existed in 1900 also. People from all over the country would send clothes and food to help the storm victims. The things that were sent were stored in the old grocery stores that remained.

The Dunkard Church was rebuilt on a new location immediately after the 1900 storm. This was the only organized religious group in Manvel.

The orchards were destroyed by the tremendous force and by the salt that was blown in from the Gulf spray.

After the storm the land was so wet and holding water because of poor drainage the people started stacking their hay along the the high banks of the railroad. This kept the hay dry but when the grass started to dry and a train went by it would sometimes start prairie fires that went for miles, destroying hay stacks and what ever else got in the fires way. The only way to stop the fires were by digging trenches when the fire was seen far enough down the tracks.

Years after the 1900 storm, the large A. A. Luther Company came to Manvel and would give big barbeques at Big Island and invite people from all over so that they could get them interested in buying land and sold the idea of orange orchards to many. People as far away as Chicago would hear about the orange orchards and would become so igore to grow the citrus that they would move down here an give the citrus orchards a try.

The oranges grew and pears grew well also for a short while. Alvin held Orange festivals and people would take in their oranges, to sell. The pears were destroyed by a blythe and the freeze in 1913 destroyed the oranges and other trees. After the blythe many people had to seek other farming. Hay making proved to be good business since the prairies were open and had an abundance of good grass. The farmers simply mowed around a certain area to establish his hay meadow and this area was respected by all other men. The vastness of the prairies enabled each farmer to have as large of hay meadow as he could manage.

About 1913 the Italians began to move into Manvel. They also had seen literature and heard about how fertile the soil was for growing fine fruit orchards, and vegetables. The first Ital-

ians in Manvel were the Volettis, who sold their land to Angelo Dalmolin for \$50.00 an acre, who wanted to grow lemons and oranges which never grew after planting the orchards. Many of the Italians came from Thurber, Texas where they had been working in coal mines.

After the strawberry boom, pear boom, fig and orange orchards were hindered, the dairying industry showed great money prospects and many farmers built dairies.

Even in the early days of 1913 Manvel had their traffic problems. On cemetery road there were head on collisions of horses and buggies at night. At that time they did not have head lights on the buggies. They felt that they knew just where they were going and so did the horses. There were several collisions of this type before they used lanterns.

Manvel was struck by another storm in 1915 which started in the morning. Several days passed before the storm let up. When the winds stopped the people thought the storm was over but it was only the eye of the storm that had passed. For a short period it was calm and then the winds came twice as hard from the opposite direction.

The Will Burner home still stands in this Bicentennial year of 1976, it is the only large

house in Manvel that was not severely damaged by the storm.

The storm destroyed a church called Big Island which was being used as a school. Art Pearson let the people use his peanut storage house for the school until another one could be built. The people decided to build a new brick school building at which time cost approximately \$10,000. This building is now being used for the Manvel Elementary Building, which is on the present campus on FM 1128.

At the time the 1915 storm struck Manvel there were several businesses located around the railroad which were destroyed, one of which was the rooming house, with the telephone. Twenty two inches of rain fell, which caused tremendous flooding. Even though houses were up on blocks there was water in the homes and others had water slapping up against the floors.

The Manvel people finally finished the new two room school building in 1916 which was located on the present campus before the brick building was built. This red school house burned in 1928 and the larger brick school was built at this time and the Big Island school was discontinued for awhile.

By 1918 dairying wa the main source of income. At that time it took 100 pounds of milk to make 4 pounds of butter which they sold

for forty cents per hundred pounds of milk which provided a good living for a dairy man.

On March 30, 1930 a milk strike developed. The dairy men dumped their milk into the creeks because it cost more to deliver the milk than they received for the milk and milk products. The strike lasted from 1930 to 1937.

On February 26, 1930 the first oil well was drilled in Manvel. After drilling for 15 months they decided it was a dry hole. They moved down away from that well and drilled a nother well for three months on property which had been purchased by W. T. Belcher, as an investment in 1908. Mr. Belcher had purchased a large amount of land which paid off after 23 years.

September 8, 1931, was about the happiest day that Manvel had seen in a long time as for as economics were concerned. Texaco Oil Company struck oil on the Belcher property, calling it the A#1 Belcher oil well. The well produced 1800 barrels of pipeline oil a day. As of 1976 it is still producing. Manvel had no roads at the time the oil was struck, but people did not seem to mind, because they came from all over the country to see the oil well, which produced the black gold, Texas Tea. People walked across

the prairies in ankle to knee deep water just to see the well. It was a very important industry then just as it is today, because it provided many jobs to people in the area, and fuel was scarce then too.

The oil industry helped provide jobs for the men which were hendered by the milk strike and weather conditions that were making it hard on the crop farmers.

The 1st Scopel oil well produced oil in March of 1933, and the Dalmolin oilwell began to produce in 1934. Manvel became one of the richest oil producing community in the area.

In 1930 after the start of the big oil boom, rice farming became the main source of farming income for Manvel. Rice farming proved to be the most successful type of farming in the Manvel area. People started commuting to other cities for work about this time.

All levels were taught at Manvel school until about 1929, at which time the high school students transferred to Alvin to complete their education.

By 1937 the milk strike was over. In 1939 Manvel had another very bad flood.

In the late forties the Manvel Cemetary Association was created. Town meetings are still held to this Bicentennial year each Memorial Day.

On this day people gather at the cemetery to clean and have a picnic. The cemetery has 7 generations of Booths, which was the founding family of Manvel. In 1976 Angelo and Valentino Dalmolin gave an additional 2 acres to the Association, because all of the lots were sold.

The Iowa Colony Common School District consolidated with Manvel Independent School District in November of 1950.

In 1953, citizens realized the need for fire protection so the Manvel Volunteer Fire Department was organized.

In 1959, the City of Manvel with a population of 300 incorporated. The citizens became aware of the possibility of other towns desires for more territory. Citizens were concerned and began to talk about becoming incorporated, so that the community would be protected from the surrounding communities. In 1959, Manvel became an incorporated general law city.

Paul Kreuzer, was elected as the first Mayor of Manvel.

The city created an annexation program later in the sixties, which would take in approximately 24 square miles of territory. The city has made 4 annexations to the city, all by petition.

In the mid 1960's new businesses came to Manvel. Two modern industries were established. Wanda Cartridge was the first plant to be built, it produced plastic shot gun shells. Houston Natural Gas built a gas separator plant in the southern part of the city. The plant was a joint effort of Houston Natural and Phillips Petroleum. Both of the plants provided employment to local men and women and added income to the community businesses.

The Gas separation plant was built by Phillips and it was operated by Houston Natural Gas. Later Houston Natural sold out to Phillips who later sold it back to Houston Natural Gas. The plant was shut down in 1975 because of the governments regulation of prices.

Other small businesses started to appear along Highway 6, from 1960 on.

In 1963, a new primary school building was built with a cafeteria which served the complete school up till 1972 when the new Junior High Building was built with a cafeteria and gymnasium

In the early 1960's the Manvel Community Development Program was started and sponsored by the Houston Lighting and Power Company. The program held several functions for the community.

C.L. Mc Daniels was appointed as the first

City Marshall of Manvel. He was very busy around Halloween when he confiscated water balloons from boys, and taking care of complaints of citizens.

In early 1970 Manvel grew rapidly, requiring more school space. The new Junior High building was a beautiful design and offered the Manvel students more educational opportunities than ever before.

In 1972, after debates and a vote the Manvel School consolidated with Alvin Independent School District. The reason for consolidating was due to fear that the state was going to force small schools to meet certain requirements as to the number of children.

The people were given the choice to consolidate with Alvin, Pearland, or stay unconsolidated and take the chance of being required to consolidate with school that the state appointed.

After consolidation with Alvin School district the Manvel students had to start wearing shoes, and could not ride their horses to school, but other than those minor adjustments the consolidation went smoothly.

The school has sports activities for all ages, and it seems that the country kids of Manvel do very well in sports and scholastics.

With a steady increase of population from the early seventies Manvel has an estimated population of 2100. There are approximately 660 students enrolled at the Manvel School, during the Bicentennial year.

In 1975 a new freeway was started leading from the 610 loop in Houston going through Manvel into Iowa Colony and leading to the Highway 288. This is causing even more growth to the Manvel area. The freeway acreage is being bought by large investors, at very high prices.

More and more people are moving to Manvel to escapt the big city problems, flooding problems, and to enjoy fresh air and lots of open space.

The City does not charge taxes as of the 4th of July 1976 and in return to the citizens no services except for the Volunteer Vire Department are rendered. The City only provides the protection of not being taken by other cities which are trying to obtain more territory.

The growth of Houston has influenced the growth of Manvel and probably of greater significance will be the new Highway 288 and planned Super Port to be built in the new future.

This brief sketch on Manvel history has covered almost a century and fourth of events.

No great battles were ever fought on Manvel

soil, no outstanding outlaws even passed through Manvel that is known of, no great historical events from Manvel ever shook Texas or Brazoria County. But a large number of ordinary decent men and women have led good happy lives here. In their triumphs and tragedies, they have shared the common history of Texas, the Southwest, and the United States.

BRIEF HISTORIESMANVEL VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

During the summer of 1953 a group of Manvel residents saw a need for fire protection to serve the Manvel area.

After several meetings the department was organized electing Frank Davis as the first Fire Chief on June 20, 1953. In 1954 a fire station was built with a meeting room and two stalls for fire trucks. The land for the building was donated to the Manvel Fire Department by the W.W. Belcher family.

In 1955 the department received its state charter. The department has a total of 4 fire trucks in service at present, to serve the community with. Of these four three have been built by members of the Department.

The Department has men in attendance at the Texas A & M Fire Training School which is held annually. The firemen who attend take one week of their vacation to attend the training school. The members of the Department meet three nights of the month to train and conduct business.

The MVFD is a member of the Brazoria County Firemens Association; The State Firemens and Fire Marshalls Association of Texas and the

National Fire Protection Association. Recently the Manvel Fire Department chose to participate in the Texas Volunteer Fire Fighters Certification program. The purpose of this program is to upgrade the fire fighting capabilities of Texas firefighters through an organized training program.

Helen Schlitzkus was the first lady fireman of the Department and joined during the Bicentennial year. The present Firechief is Steve Del Bello. There are 4 members still with the Department from the original group that organized the Department in 1953. They are Lt. Jimmie Del Bello, Sr. Fireman Victor Dalmolin, Jackie Reed and Robert Bahler.

The Fire Departments source of income is from an annual barbecue, money allocated by the city and donations received during the year.

MANVEL TRAILRIDERS CLUB

The Manvel Trailriders Club was organized in January, 1969. The club was organized for family participation to help keep children and parents together in family activities. Because of the non-alcoholic rules of the Club has members from Pearland, Alvin and the Houston

area as well as from Manvel. The club is a non-profit organization and makes its money with playdays and fund raising events. The Club now has 30 families in membership. The new arena for the Club is now being built on County Road 100 in Manvel.

MVFD LADIES AUXILLARY

The Ladies Auxillary originated in 1974, after having a fund raising project to buy the Department new and needed equipment. The ladies had such a good time working together that they decided to continue working to raise money and help the Department when needed.

The Auxillary sponsored a beauty pageant as part of their Bicentennial project for the community. The pageant was the first to be held in Manvel and had a total of 83 participants.

The Auxillary makes its money by holding garage sales and other money making projects.

Meetings are held once every month, third Thursday, at 7:30, at the Manvel Fire Station.

MANVEL QUILTING BEE

The Manvel Quilting Bee began in 1966, when Mrs. Todd Furnace had pieced a quilt for each of her grandchildren. She told several of her friends and relatives that she would welcome any type of

help with the quilting. They came to help her quilt and enjoyed the work.

While quilting together on the quilts the group began inviting others to help, and so the Manvel Quilting Bee was born. They quilted in their homes on their own quilts, until others began asking to quilt for them and the working part of the Bee came into being.

The Bee has quilted 122 quilts for others which they call "Pay Quilts", and have donated the work on two quilts for school children during the Bicentennial Year. Customers have brought and sent quilts from as far away as Hollywood, California.

The money earned from "Pay Quilts" have been spent on "fun" trips for the members of the Bee, donations have been made to the Manvel Fire Department and to the Heart Fund. The Bee has made trips to all parts of Texas, Arkansas and Mississippi.

At present there is a membership of 18 ladies.

The Bee made a Bicentennial Quilt which helped to raise money for the Fire Department and The Bee.

The Bee meets on Wednesday mornings in homes of the members.

TOPS

TOPS was first led by Juanita Donahoe, the organization received its charter January 29, 1973. The purpose of the organization is to take off pounds sensibly.

The meetings are held every Monday at 9:00 A.M. at the Manvel Fire Station. The members hold bake sales and garage sales to raise money.

P.T.A.

In the year 1937 a meeting was called to appoint an "executive board". Seven were present at the meeting. In order to affiliate with the state Parent-Teacher Association the state office required 10 members, a secretary and treasurer. No mention in past records show that a chairman was required. At this first meeting officers of President-Mrs. H.N. Gandy, Vice President- Mrs. Olin Wafer, Secretary-Mrs. Pat Moore, and Treasurer-Mrs. H.C. Humphrey were elected, and it was decided at this time to hold a luncheon on the first day of school for the teachers.

The objects of the P.T.A. were:

1. To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, church, and community.
2. To raise standards of home life.
3. To secure adequate laws for the care and

protection of children and youth.

4. To bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the training of the child.

5. To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for every child the biggest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education.

Some of the accomplishments of the P.T.A. during the years were feeding underprivileged children, sponsoring the Halloween carnival, purchasing equipments for the school and teachers, and classroom such as visual aid equipment, record players, records, cassetts, opaque projectors, overhead projectors, filing cabinets, fans for all classrooms, equipment for cafeteria, and outdoor equipment, plus many other things.

The P.T.A. has sponsored the T.B. Test for many years.

Plays, drives and other projects were used to invite new members and raise money.

The P.T.A. supplied a bed and linens for the sick room. A lounge chair was purchased for the teachers to use during their off periods.

In 1963 the P.T.A. started to select a life membership to a member who the committee thought did outstanding service for the P.T.A. The first life member so honored was Mrs. Irene Bahler. Others honored through the years were Frances Bourque, Don Jeter, Marguerite Croix, G.H. Andrews, Florence Callihan, Annie Ruskey, June Henson, Olga Lira, Sibyl Hering, Geneva Rives and Honora Hlinsky.

In 1973-74 the unit voted to change from P.T.A. (Parent-Teacher Association) to P.T.O. (Parent-Teacher Organization) meaning that this organization was no longer affiliated with state P.T.A.

During the 40 year history of the P.T.A. much has been accomplished in material things for the school and in keeping the doors open for a better relationship between teachers, parents and students.

A history of each year with the officers and some pictures of the school years are kept by the school and the P.T.O. displayed the records and pictures at the Bicentennial Festival.

Olga Lira

THE MANVEL HOME DEMONSTRATION CLUB

The Manvel Home Demonstration Club organized in October of 1934 with 18 members. Home Demon-

stration Clubs work in co-operation with the State Extension Service: Mrs. Giles was the first county agent. The first president was Mrs. D. Crainer.

The aims of home demonstration clubs are to: stimulate interest in home making, increase appreciation for home life, develop ideals of true economy and thrift through systematic conversation and elimination of needless waste, by keeping household accounts during the year; to encourage home industries through gardening, poultry raising and dairying; to maintain home sanitation and health; to encourage the wise use of leisure time, to develop leadership for community life; in a world, to develop in women and girls a new enjoyment and satisfaction, that we may find in our environment and community life more happiness.

The first officers and committees were president-vice president, secretary-treasurer, council delagate, pantry demonstrator and wardrobe demonstrator. Many additional committees were added or deleted as the need arose.

Some of the programs from 1934-1976 have been: variety in meals, mattress making, pattern fitting, adequate food supply, potting plants, egg cookery, making feather comforts, glass etching, pom pom rugs, hooked rugs, semi-tailoring, chair reupholstering, cake decorating, leathercraft,

fish cookery, vegetable cookery, food canning and freezing, aluminum etching, knitting, cane chair weaving and many more.

The club has toured many places such as: The Bishop's Palace in Galveston, Dow Chemical in Freeport, Sugar Refinery in Sugarland, Port of Houston, Nabisco bakery where education recommendations were carried out.

The club has held annual picnics for many years sometimes going to different places for picnics such as: San Jacinto Battleground, Hermann Park Zoo, Varner Hogg Plantation, and Texaco Ball Park.

The aims of the club are very much the same today as when Brazoria Home Demonstration Clubs began, in 1931 with programs designed to help carry out these aims.

Olga Lira