

## Dayton Historical Society & Old School Museum

The Dayton History News is produced and distributed by the Dayton Historical Society and the Dayton Old School Museum.

The Society meets in Parker Hall at 6 P.M. the last Monday of each month for a historical program presented by guest speakers. The program is preceded by a Society business/project status meeting and followed by refreshments.

The Old School Museum is located next to Parker Hall at 111 West Houston St. in Dayton and is open Saturdays from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M.

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## Get Your Own Dayton Texas Star!

By now, you are probably familiar with the star statuary project sponsored by the Dayton Historical Society.

The star comes unpainted. You can leave it as is, paint it yourself or use the services of a talented local artist willing to custom paint the star.

Stars can be ordered for either homes or businesses. The 42 orders received to-date include the following businesses:

- American Rice Growers
- AM Donuts
- Chachere Veterinary
- Chicken Express
- Dayton Electric Company
- Dayton Farm & Ranch Supply
- Dayton Sports Bar/Los Compadres
- Dayton Trading Post
- Dr. Wayne MacDonald
- First Liberty National Bank
- Hall's Veterinary
- Kidz Corner
- Kimmie Brown Elementary
- Kwik Kar
- McCoy's Building Supply
- Nena's Child Care
- Pace Stancil Funeral Home
- Pecan Wood Mobile Home Park
- Prosperity Bank
- Sterling Funeral Home
- Sumiden Wire Corp
- Stephen F. Austin Elementary

To request an order form, **contact Caroline Wadzeck 936-258-5414 or Wes Williamson 979-204-1451.** Leave a message and you will receive a call back.

# Dayton History News

## Origins of Eastgate

In December 1907, the Beaumont, Sour Lake and Western Railway (BSL&W) was extended 85 miles from Grayburg (west of Beaumont) to Houston through the towns of Hull, Hardin, Kenefick and Huffman.

Where the dirt road now known as FM-686 crossed the BSL&W railroad track, a gate was erected on the east side to allow farmers with their wagons to cross over the tracks.

Thus, this community located between Dayton and Huffman became known as Eastgate.

A train depot was established and the Eastgate depot agent would stand in the middle of the tracks waving a lantern to signal the train conductor to stop.

According to the 1910 U.S. Federal Census, Eastgate consisted of a store and a population of 10 people. A post office opened there in 1912.

A land broker named I. J. Gallia came from Czechoslovakia to America via Galveston in 1859. He advertised Eastgate land through various Texas Czech publications and was responsible for the sale of many of those land tracts to early Czech settlers. He also donated the land used for the Eastgate cemeteries.

One of the earliest Czech land owners in Eastgate was Adolf Janacek who purchased 181 acres from Gallia in 1911.

Over the next three years, the Janacek family was joined by the Vgoral, Kovalcik, Hajousky, Buchta, Jarma, Smykal, Beran, Krajca and Fisher families.

These were hard-working farmers who built their homesteads and coped with the hardships of farming uncultivated, flood-prone land.

These families were also charter members of Eastgate's St. Anne Catholic Church which was built in 1918 for \$1665 by Joe Krajca as head carpenter.

An important Eastgate business was the cotton gin built by J. E. Navratil in 1926. It continued to operate until the late 1950s.

Adolph Janacek's descendants settled in Eastgate with the most prominent being his son M. F. (Marcel) Janacek.

Marcel built the Eastgate Cash Store which was a hub for food, fuel, farming and fellowship.

His generosity allowed patrons to settle their accounts after the harvest season (or years later).

Church picnics were held at the store with dancing on a wooden platform and church services were held at Marcel's home next door until the church was finally built.

The store closed in 1968 and became a treasured memory of life as an Eastgate resident.

## Dayton Public Schools Evolution

In 1836, one of the reasons stated by Texas residents for severing political ties with Mexico listed in the Texas Declaration of Independence was the failure of the Mexican government “to establish any public system of education, although possessed of almost boundless resources”.

At that point in time, West Liberty [Dayton] was still considered part of the city of Liberty in spite of the two parts of town being separated by the Trinity River.

After gaining freedom from Mexico, one of Texas’ actions during its nine years as a sovereign nation was to enact the public school law of 1840 which set aside four leagues (17,712 acres) of land in each Texas county to support public schools.

On December 29, 1845, Texas was granted statehood within the United States. The Texas state constitution then allocated 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the annual state tax revenue as a perpetual fund to support free public schools.

The first known record of local action occurred less than 2 years later on August 6, 1847 when the Liberty Board of Trustees met to discuss the subject of West Liberty [Dayton] schools. According to the meeting minutes:

*“Be it resolved by the Board of Trustees of the town of Liberty that land in West Liberty be set aside for the purpose of building a school house on – and that a committee of three be appointed to make a selection of said land.”*

During the 1800s, the United States education system was known as “common schools” and Texas adopted this framework with statehood.

In compliance with the Common Schools curriculum, children were taught “the three Rs” (reading, ‘riting, and ‘rithmetic) along with history, geography and math and there was a strong emphasis on spiritual and moral lessons that were overtly Christian and involved use of a Bible.

There were at least 25 different Common Schools that operated within what is now Dayton Independent School District between 1900 and 1936.

The first Dayton public school was located where the Dayton saw mill formerly stood (Waco @ FM-1960); however, the bad roads and lack of a drainage system caused school closures a great part of the year when students could not get to school.

In 1901, land was purchased for a public schools site. It was a lot bounded by Hwy 90, Main Street, Houston Street, and Cleveland Street – the current location of Walgreens Pharmacy and Dayton’s Post Office.

The school was a two-room building with two teachers and 35 students ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grades and served Dayton’s children from Fall 1900 to Spring 1910.

It was sold to W.T. Jamison and Joe Entzminger who moved it across the street where it was eventually restored and is now known as the Old School Museum which houses a wide variety of Dayton’s historical artifacts.

## Rotary Club

As a club, Rotary International has over 1.2 million members and 35,000 clubs. The first club was formed on February 23, 1905 in Chicago, Illinois by Paul Harris, a Chicago attorney.

The Dayton Rotary Club was admitted into Rotary International membership on March 19, 1926 with 20 charter members whose surnames are a legendary who’s who of Dayton families including Farmer, Ford, Friedman, Moreau, Jamison, Neal, McCarthy, McGinty, Sterling, etc.

Rotary members are professionals who desire to give back to their community and make the world a better place.

One of their local service projects is partnering with Dayton ISD to facilitate Rotary’s Early Act First Knight (EAFK) character education program at schools.

The EAFK program theme is gallant knights and chivalry. Elementary school students learn and practice traits such as Honesty, Compassion, Citizenship and Respect while middle school students learn traits such as Courage, Humility, Loyalty and Justice.

Reward ceremonies are facilitated by the Rotary EAFK focal to honor students who best demonstrate the focus trait of the month.

Dayton’s Rotary Club list of past contributions is lengthy. A few examples include purchase 6.5 acres for baseball park, \$500 scholarships for seniors, \$5000 to build library, and banquets for school personnel.

## Ripkowski Memorial

The military memorial located at Dayton’s Civic Center has several aspects – a seating area, a memorial fountain and a wall of honor memorial as well as a memorial dedicated to the Ripkowski family which includes a memorial stone and a Liberty County Historic Landmark sign.

Stash and Mattie Ripkowski were 1st generation Americans who moved to Dayton in 1932 and became sharecroppers of a 200 acre farm in the Eastgate community. They were blessed as parents with 16 children including 12 sons.

When the United States entered World War II, nine of the Ripkowski sons volunteered to serve. All nine saw war action and several were severely injured but all survived and returned to Dayton.

The younger sons, John and Mike, served in the Korean War and Stanley enlisted during peacetime.

Although large families were fairly common in the early 1900s, no other family in American history has sent that many sons to serve in the armed forces and the family was honored as an inspiration to all Americans.

