

Local

Cities' policies, residents differ

Merger of Bryan, C.S. unlikely

By LAURA YOUNG

Battalion Reporter
If you miss the sign that reads "Leaving College Station — Entering Bryan" while traveling down South College Avenue you'd never know you were in a different city.

Over the years, Bryan and College Station have grown together so that only a sign marks the line separating them. However, like Siamese twins, the joining has not exactly been a happy one.

When College Station incorporated in 1938, it was located five miles south of Bryan. A five-mile stretch of trees lay between the two cities.

The incorporation of College Station included an area of about two square miles. Included were the residential sections to the south of campus, the west boundaries of railroad properties to the west of campus, the business section to the north and 1,000 feet to the east of the newly built Highway 6.

In the period before World War II, the College Station area was known as the fastest growing city in Texas. Today, this area is within one of the 10 fastest growing areas in the nation.

With the city of College Station now nudged up against the city of

The last push Bryan made towards merging was in September 1977. College Station refused.

A major difference between the two cities is their zoning laws.

The city of College Station has strict zoning laws and guides development with a firm hand. Bryan, on the other hand, has let its city grow when and where it wants to.

However, the differences between the cities may run deeper than zoning laws. The two cities have been working with Brazos County and the Humane Society to build an animal shelter but the project is now in its third year.

"A merger between Bryan and College Station would be like merging Texas A&M (University) with the University of Texas," Richard Smith, mayor of Bryan, said.

Bryan, it may seem only natural for the two cities to merge into one.

But some people disagree. "A merger between Bryan and College Station would be like merging Texas A&M (University) with the University of Texas," Richard Smith, mayor of Bryan, said.

"The cities are just not going to be merged. You have to show some strong positive benefits from the merger and there's no strong urge on either side; not with the officials and not with the citizens."

Bryan has proposed the merger several times but College Station has always refused.

"The attitude values of the council in College Station are much less 'free enterprise.' Not that College Station is opposed to free enterprise, but that government regulation has a place to play. Whereas in Bryan, there's much less support for that idea."

College Station has also felt that if it merged with Bryan, its government would be dominated by the larger Bryan government.

A merger would require a referendum vote in both cities. That means simply that the decision would be up to the residents of the two cities.

However, the issue has never reached a vote.

"I think one of the reasons it will never be is a fear of the unknown," Halter said. "People don't know what the future brings but they know what the present is."

"The only cases that I know of when it happened were very, very small towns. In every case, one city at least or in some cases, both cities had gone down in population... There has to be something there to motivate it, some reason to bring it about."

Would there be any benefits to the citizens if the two cities were to merge?

"In some cases there would be, but overall I'm not sure there would," Halter said.

Many public services could be combined if the cities were to merge.

"Nobody is going to be put out of a job," Halter added. "You'd just change their title."

"You could say there would be only one police chief but then there would be six assistants instead of three."

Dr. Albert Schaffer, professor of sociology at Texas A&M, said, "When two cities or a city and a township have existed historically side by side for a long period of time, they each tend to have their own identity."

Schaffer, along with his wife, Ruth, wrote "Woodruff," a book about the struggles of a Michigan city and a township when they attempted to merge.

"They usually have families and groups who have been within each municipality that are closely identified with the municipality," Schaffer said. "And they'll fight like the dickens any proposal to rearrange the political structure, particularly if it involves a loss of identity."

"College Station has an identity that's distinct and different from Bryan and vice versa. These differences are based on differences in economy and differences in population."

"Historically in the United States, very few mergers of this kind have taken place. In the North, laws in most of the states are such that it is very difficult for the cities to annex outlying territory — whether incorporated or unincorporated."

"The pattern that exists here is

more or less the typical pattern. There's nothing unusual about it."

There may be basic differences between the residents of Bryan and College Station.

College Station has a special group, headed by city bankers, whose main purpose is to bring high technology, electronic and research-oriented firms to the area.

"I suspect that if we had the latest census data the people of College Station are of a higher socio-economic level than the people in Bryan," Schaffer said.

"Their economies are somewhat different. The industry that Bryan has is different from the industry that College Station has. College Station is working very hard to get what we speak of as technology-type companies. They're clean, they don't produce pollution, the people that they hire to some degree have to have a certain kind of skill. Whereas you'll find a lot of blue collar industry in Bryan."

In some cases, differences that have taken place over the years "can cause a legacy of bitterness," said Schaffer, that may never be resolved.

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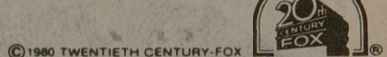
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