

Local / State

Downtown Navasota tries to recapture past

Like the grandmother who replaced her beautiful hand-sewn quilts with electric blankets, merchants in Navasota over the years have covered their elegant 19th century storefronts with 20th century plastic and neon.

But with the help of the federal government and Texas A&M University architecture students, Navasota is finding a way to recapture a little of its past.

Navasota was one of five Texas towns selected earlier this year to participate in the National Main Street Project which is funded through the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

David Woodcock, a Texas A&M architecture professor, and 10 of his students started the first phase of the project this summer by taking measurements of seven historic buildings on Railroad Street that will be used to make record drawings

of the structure.

The Main Street project started two years ago as a pilot program when three cities were selected to be studied. Later, Texas was among six states chosen to participate. The University of Texas and Texas Tech University are involved with the other cities selected, Woodcock said. Although glaring plastic signs dominate century-old east-iron storefronts are also present.

Among the seven buildings selected for the record drawing study are the P.A. Smith Hotel, circa 1876, and the Giesel Building, built in 1860, and the oldest commercial structure in Navasota, Woodcock said.

Restoring attractive and appropriate facades to the buildings is just one element of the Main Street project goal — the other is economic re-

vitalization.

The project is aimed at trying "to help historic downtown areas to meet the challenge of contemporary shopping," Woodcock said.

The Highway 6 bypass built around the town about five years ago has become the location for several businesses, he said, which is a contributing factor to declining shopping in the downtown area.

There are several reasons for the decline, Woodcock said, including erratic nighttime store hours, parking problems and an unwillingness on the part of some merchants to dress up their store windows.

But Navasota, which was chosen one of the best small towns in Texas by Texas Monthly last year, has many positive aspects.

"One thing they do have going for them is that

it's a very friendly town," Woodcock said, "and they're becoming very aware of their history."

There have also been several indications that the merchants affected by the Main Street project want to cooperate and ultimately to revitalize the downtown area.

At a special conference held in June two banks and one savings and loan institution announced that they had set aside \$10,000 loans at eight percent interest for merchants interested in storefront improvements, Woodcock said.

"This is the kind of thing the Main Street program has been trying to encourage," he said.

Robert H. Whitten, publisher of the Navasota Examiner and owner of four buildings on Railroad Street including the Giesel Building, said the community is behind the project.

"I think there's a lot of interest in it here," he said, "but I think for it to really work they're going to have to be real practical."

Whitten said even with the low-interest loans a \$3,000-\$5,000 figure for improvements would be "feasible."

Woodcock said the \$3,000-\$5,000 range for the cost of improvements is reasonable and the last phase of the project will include practical suggestions to the merchants such as color schemes.

Although the funds for the Navasota project are initiated at the federal level, Woodcock said, Texas is committed to another nine years of Main Street projects.

Five towns will be selected each year to participate with the nominations coming from town officials. Woodcock said there are already 99 applications for next year's projects.

A&M student to try for Miss Texas title

It's true that the third time is a charm, Miss Texas A&M may be the next Miss Texas.

Sheri Ryman, 19, this week will compete in the Miss Texas Pageant for the third time. She first competed in the pageant at 17 as Miss Big Thicket. Last year she was among the 10 finalists as Miss Bay Area.

This year the sophomore industrial distribution major will compete as Miss Texas A&M. She'll be up with 70

contestants in the pageant held July 8-11 at the Tarrant County Convention Center in Fort Worth. KBTX, Channel 3 in Bryan, will televise the pageant Saturday at 10:30 p.m.

In talent competition, Ryman will perform a gymnastic-jazz routine to the theme from "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." She also will compete in evening gown and swimsuit competition as well as in the preliminary inter-

views.

Miss Texas A&M says the pageant is stiff competition but a trip to Atlantic City, N.J. for the Miss America Pageant would be exciting.

"After coming this far there is no sense in not going all the way," she said. "I feel good about competing for the title again. I'm older, more mature and I'm going to give it my all."

County line dispute causes reapportionment problems

United Press International
AUSTIN — One of the plaintiffs challenging the legislature's reapportionment of the House said the plan is unfair to Mexican-Americans, but that's not why they have filed suit to stop it.

Rep. Al Luna, D-Houston, said the suit was filed because of the cutting of county lines, which the suit claims violates the state constitution.

Attorneys for the plaintiffs said Tuesday the plan illegally divides 4 counties in forming the new legislative districts.

The plaintiffs in the class action suit, including three Hispanic legislators and six private citizens, are trying to convince Travis County State Judge Harley Clark to issue a temporary restraining order blocking implementation of the redistricting plan.

The state constitution says that county lines are not to be cut during apportionment unless it is necessary to form equal representative districts or adhere to federal law.

George Korbel, a lawyer with the Texas Rural Legal Aid, said that districts with populations within acceptable ranges could have been created in most cases without cutting county lines.

He also maintained that several counties with sufficient popula-

tion to form one district were cut for no apparent reason.

In particular, Tarrant and El Paso counties, both with large populations, could have been redistricted without making cuts, he said.

However, Rick Gray, an assistant attorney general defending the state, said the legislature was only using its power to "move the surplus population" in the coun-

ties when the county lines were cut.

Gray also said many of the county lines were cut so that the overall plan would conform to federal regulations for treatment of minorities and equal representation.

He said that if the county lines were not cut, in many cases urban districts would become overpopulated and as a result would not be represented adequately.

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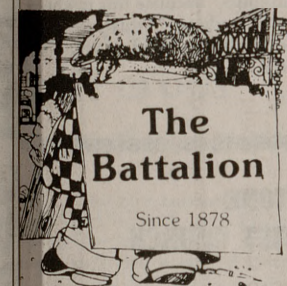
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<p style="text-align: center;">THURSDAY EVENING SPECIAL</p> <p>Italian Candle Light Spaghetti Dinner SERVED WITH SPICED MEAT BALLS AND SAUCE Parmesan Cheese - Tossed Green Salad Choice of Salad Dressing - Hot Garlic Bread Tea or Coffee</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">FOR YOUR PROTECTION OUR PERSONNEL HAVE HEALTH CARDS.</p>		
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down-home program

Coupon clipper fights for stach

THIS WEEK