

**SMITHVILLE, BASTROP
COMMUNITIES FIND NEW
WEALTH IN FOREST SOIL,
TEAM WORK**

**Aroused Citizenship Discover
Assets In Properly Trained
Youth and Leadership**

By Victor Schoffelmayer,
Agricultural Editor of
The Dallas News.

Texas nature lovers, who have not discovered the so-called Lost Forest in Bastrop County, an area where the adventurous East Texas pine seems to have defied natural law and jumped clear over more than 100 miles of space from its original forest home to a sort of biological island, to mingle with the yaupon, live oak and post oak of Central Texas.

It was not wholly an impulse to enjoy the scenery that carried the writer to one of the state's beauty spots, where enough of the original wilderness has been retained to offset the modern improvements in the shape of red sandstone tourist lodges reached over well-kept roads, by an invitation from a group of Smithville businessmen.

Four Cities Are Host.

Last week a full day was spent getting acquainted with the progressive citizens of Smithville, Bastrop, La Grange and Giddings, who are aware that new enterprises are necessary to restore prosperity to their farmers and businessmen. As a guest of Virge S. Rabb and Wade, the writer was whisked from one locality to another, helping to draw attention to the hitherto unusual natural resources of the area. A closer working together of the four small cities concerned, and new spirit instilled into the hinterland might easily result in the launching of a co-ordinated program in which such abundant raw materials as the post oak, yaupon, pines and cedars, deposits of coal and lignite, silica and valuable clays, to say nothing of the rich alluvial soils in the Colorado River bottoms, might be made a source of productive income.

There must come closer cooperation between town and country and new markets for the raw materials of farm, forest and ranch in line with chemurgic industries. He hoped that out of the meeting a new movement to restore prosperity to farmers and businessmen would result.

Bastrop, like many other Texas farming counties, has lost population in recent years. However, the rising generation is being given special advantages in the way of vocational training which fits it for the work.

Baron De Bastrop's Vision.

Long ago, when Baron De Bastrop settled the town which bears his name, he recognized the value of the shortleaf pine virgin forest which occupied the heights above the Colorado and which supplied the early settlers their building timbers. He left in perpetuity a forest

site as a gift to the city of Bastrop, which with proper management, could remain a permanent asset to its citizens. So wisely has the pine forest been managed that to this day its forest resources are not on the point of becoming exhausted. Sawmill operations about each ten or dozen years contribute revenue to the city.

A total of nearly 4,000 acres of mixed pine and oak forest occupy Bastrop-Buescher State Park, the former being the original grant, the latter a gift from the pioneer Smithville family of that name.

At near-by woodworking shops youths are making furniture from black walnut, cedar and oak for the various Texas state parks. The boys are permitted to remain eighteen months.

Visit Goebel's Mill.

It was at Goebel's sawmill, however, that the possibilities of extensive use of native pine, post oaks, live oaks, walnut, cedar, pecan, mesquite and other hardwoods was made clear. R. G. Goebel has built up a custom business which at peak loads reaches 8,000 board feet a day and averages 5,000 feet. Plain sawed timbers and planed boards are supplied to towns within a radius of fifty miles. The wood is air-dried and commands \$40 a thousand feet for mesquite, \$50 for live oak and post oak and \$25 to \$38 for pine. Farmers hauling logs to the mill can either pay cash or pay a part of the lumber for services rendered.

There is a fine stand of old, thick-bodied mesquite trees near Goebel's mill, being cut and shipped to a furniture factory at San Antonio which has developed a special market for its product. The wood is beautifully mottled and ranges in tone from cream to deep red and purplish brown.

There is enough post oak in the surrounding country to supply a paper or pulp mill. This subject will receive the attention of the area's leading businessmen. They were keenly interested when told by the writer that the United States Forest Products Laboratory at Madison, Wis., had found the common blackjack and post oak highly suited to be made into plastics, plywood and pulp.

Cotton Industry Gone.

Bastrop County at one time ginned 28,000 bales of cotton. Those were the days when every one seemed to have some money, when cost of living was less and taxes not so high. Buescher's gin at Smithville annually processed its 3,000 to 3,500 bales compared with 327 last season. That tells a story all by itself. Hundreds of farmers are needing a cash crop to replace lost cotton income. They want to know what they can raise to sell.

Smithville bankers have encouraged raising more livestock, milking more cows, fattening more hogs, raising more mule colts, finishing more beef cattle, all of which has helped greatly. But they are still looking for that big cash crop that might be grown like cotton and sold in bulk any day, any place during the year.

For the sandy lands the Spanish peanut has been recommended as an oil crop which cotton mills can crush in lieu of cotton seed. The same sandy lands of the area might produce sweet potatoes in a big way if farmers learn how to save rainfall in the land itself or if they can irrigate cheaply.

But biggest asset of the territory probably is the forest. The young post-oaks and the other growths are a potential source of cellulose, lignin, starch, resin and alcohol, any

one of which or all together, might become industrially important under an expanded national defense program. Equally applicable are these new industrial crop possibilities to the Fayette and Lee County areas as to the Bastrop section.

Toward that end it is planned to bring together around a table some time soon a gathering of the progressive business and farm leaders of the Smithville-Bastrop-LaGrange-Gilddings area and talk things over.

Why should the cedars not be processed into essential oils and waxes, or made into insecticides or into varnish and paint oils? And then there is the yaupon, which grows all over that country as if it wanted to occupy every foot of ground among the oaks. Nothing really scientific has been done with these wonderful ornamental

bushes, which at times grow into small trees. Their red berries draw the interest of the beholder all winter and far into spring.