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Community History

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No one is certain who was first to come upon the big springs that later gave the town its' name.

It surely was visited by prehistoric creatures seeking water in the arid region and later hunters with pointed sticks and crude stone tools and primitive Indians following herds of bison used for food, clothing and shelter.

Cabeza de Vaca may have been the first white man to look upon the spring which was chronicled in his journals of his journey in 1535.

Captain Randolph Marcy was the first to chronicle his visit to the spring in October of 1849 as he sought to establish a leg of a transcontinental trail. Marcy noted that the spring appeared to be a favorite place of the Comanche Indians. The spring subsequently became the base for many army expeditions to the new territory and remained home of several Indian tribes. Many skirmishes between the two were recorded by several army officers including Col. Robert E. Lee in 1856 later to become commander in chief of the Confederate forces.



Buffalo hunters unintentionally accomplished what the Army had sought to do. The hunters vanquished the Comanche's by destroying the herds of bison that had been the Indian mainstay. Behind the hunters came a few herdsman the predecessors of the first rancher/settles to the Big Spring area. The news that the railroad was soon to push through the area brought the springs first real settlement of buffalo bone hunters which gathered abandoned bones from the vast herds of slaughtered bison. The approach of the railroad became the end of the times when Indians an Army patrols trooped to and from the spring in their migrations.

The Texas & Pacific Railroad named the little village a division point between Ft. Worth and El Paso from which water was supplied from the spring. This meant jobs for shops and road crews, and corresponding growth and stability for the new town. By 1881 the rail had reached Big Spring and beyond creating a sustainable economic base.

Big Spring flourished, local County government was established, businesses sprang up, farming and ranching operations were established all in a short period beginning in the early 1880's.

Big Springs' next big influence came with the discovery of oil in the county. In 1926 the Otis Chalk No. 1 came in after several earlier attempts to find oil and the boom was on. Many of the early wells produced 3,000 to 4,000 barrels of oil a day. Hundreds of workers came to the area for work and new oil related businesses sprang up along with refining.

Today oil, rail, farming, and ranching still provide the economic base for the community and Big Spring remains poised for the next influence, perhaps wind energy.

Sources: "Howard County...In the Making" John R Hutto "Getting Started Howard County's First 25 Years" Joe Pickle