

# BRAGG

## Bragg Road

Ghost Road is also called Bragg Road locally. The Ghost Town of Bragg named for Confederate General Braxton Bragg, a railroad engineer who surveyed the area. In 1901 John Henry Kirby operated a sawmill at the site. In 1903 the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad (GCSF) ran a spur line to Saratoga with a depot and hotel at Bragg that served rail traffic of people, merchandise, oil, logs and staves. In 1934 the branch line was discontinued and dismantled.

The Bragg Hotel was built by Otho Head during oil boom days. In 1910 Henry McClain, a Santa Fe bookkeeper, and his wife Margaret acquired and operated the hotel, and Margaret also served as postmistress for a population of more than 200 until 1921.



In a 1970 interview, Mrs. Ayers said the hotel had 14 rooms with three dormers. Each room, one bathroom upstairs on the porch, and all on about six acres of land. At the time we had forty-one boarders. Each day I served three full meals and prepared lunches for the men to take to the job."

After McClain's death, Margaret married Walter Ayers, and she ran the hotel again in 1930. When rails were pulled from Saratoga branch line, business dried, but Mrs. Ayers continued to rent rooms occasionally until 1968.



R.E. Jackson

In 1927, R.E. Jackson, a railroad conductor whose route carried him through a portion of the Big Thicket, organized the East Texas Big Thicket Association. The goal was to preserve for posterity a sizable portion of the Big Thicket in its natural state.

Jackson personally attempted to preserve a portion of the Thicket by leasing 18,000 acres of land. Regarding this tract as a nucleus, Jackson and his followers agitated for both state and federal action to save at least 430,000 acres of the Big Thicket as a wildlife preserve. In early years, Jackson and his group were unable to generate enough widespread interest in the Big Thicket to gain political support necessary, but gradually attitudes changed.

James Cozine, 1976