

Kemah-Seabrook Area Pays Off in Pleasure and Dollars



STEADY GROWTH OF SEABROOK-KEMAH AREA is attested to by O. S. Key, who operates Key's Food Market at Seabrook. He has been there 15 years and his business has multiplied seven times during that period.

BY DON HINGA
Chronicle Roving Editor

Drive into the Seabrook-Kemah area and you get the idea that the whole district is devoted to just having a good time on the bay, Clear Creek and bayous.

That's true, in part. Practically everyone around here enjoys life in a leisurely sort of way, but it pays off to the tune of thousands of dollars.

Wes Muecke, who has operated Muecke's fishing camp since 1920, estimates that sportsmen who fish and go in for other water sports, spend around \$250,000 in the area every year.

Joe DeGeorge, who until recently operated DeGeorge's fishing camp, famous along the bay as headquarters for fishermen, gives another slant on what keeps this section going. The commercial shrimp fleet will market some 250,000 pounds a year for another \$150,000 of income.

Then, too, you can't overlook the cattle business. J. M. West has ranching interests that will market an estimated 7000 head a year. A. L. Ballantine and Walter Wetzel are other big cattlemen.

And all along the prairies back of the bay are other smaller herds that add up to sizable figures in the bank every year.

Seabrook and Kemah draw their permanent residents from a radius of 25 to 30 miles, from the big refineries and chemical plants along the Ship Channel, from Houston and from plants that operate in the Baytown area.

This whole part of the bay is growing steadily.

O. S. Key has operated a grocery store in Seabrook for the past 15 years, and he knows.

"I'd say that my business has multiplied seven times since I came here," he says. "We haven't had any of the spectacular growth that some towns have enjoyed, but the growth has been slow and sure."

It would be hard to estimate the number of boats that are kept along the Seabrook-Kemah shore. Muecke alone has storage space for 100.

That makes the building, repairing and storing of boats along the bay big business.

There are two major shipyards—the Albert and Ernest Fay Shipyard at Seabrook and the Kemah Yacht Basin in Kemah. The Fay shipyard has storage for around 150 boats, and repair facilities for all types of small boats.

The Kemah Yacht Basin is owned by a corporation headed by Tom Tirado. It is on the site of the original Platzer boat yard where Herman Platzer had ways before the 1900 storm. His brother, Dan, had a yard on the Seabrook side of Clear Creek. This basin repairs and stores boats of all kinds.

Both Kemah and Seabrook have new school plants. The Clear Creek Consolidated Independent School District has just completed a \$230,000 school at Seabrook. The Kemah school is in a new subdivision called West Kemah, being developed by Miller Brothers.

Unusual School Set-Up

The Seabrook school's primary division is divided into levels instead of grades, with the idea of giving pupils a chance to progress in the level of their own ability, to eliminate as far as possible grade levels and to set up an organization where a child can do his best and not be required to work beyond his ability.

"All children are different," says J. F. Bay, principal. "The growth pattern includes more than mental achievement. Children grow physically, emotionally, morally and in many other ways. An individual needs to be developed in all phases of total growth."

"Children should be evaluated on how they progress in comparison to their ability to progress, and not in comparison to the ability of some other pupil."

Instead of giving the student report cards, the school invites the parents to come in and spend a day with their children once every nine weeks. The parents sit at the children's desks and watch the work their children have been doing for the period of the last, and hear the comments

the key is gone you know someone has beaten you to it. But the door is always open to my friends."

Joe DeGeorge started out in Houston as a deputy tax collector, switched to working for the Houston National Bank, and then decided that operating a fishing camp at Seabrook was the life for him.

Widely Known Name

That was in 1923. When he sold out in 1946 he had made a name widely known along the Texas coast as a fishing operator. During World War II he endeared himself to Ellington Field personnel by giving them fishing trips at half price. And he didn't have the price tag along free.

He got a kick out of the boys would sidle up to him and recall. "They all had a package of cigarettes from the exchange for me. That's why they were mighty hard to

He is proud of the men who have fished out of his camp. They include former Mayor Baldwin Rice of Houston; the late Gen. Jacob F. Wolters; John T. Scott, of the First National Bank; C. Pilot; Ernest Coker, owner of College Inn; J. Howard West; Dr. Harry Knowles, First Christian Church; Rev. John DeWolfe, New York, and formerly of Houston, and many others.

Joe is a director of Conservation of Texas Fish and Game, Inc., better known as "Cotfag," and chairman of shell dredging and salt water fish in this area.

Operating a fishing camp is a job with long hours and arduous duties. In 1946 Joe sold out, hit oil at Friendswood, but still hangs around his old camp, which is operated by Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Dolney.

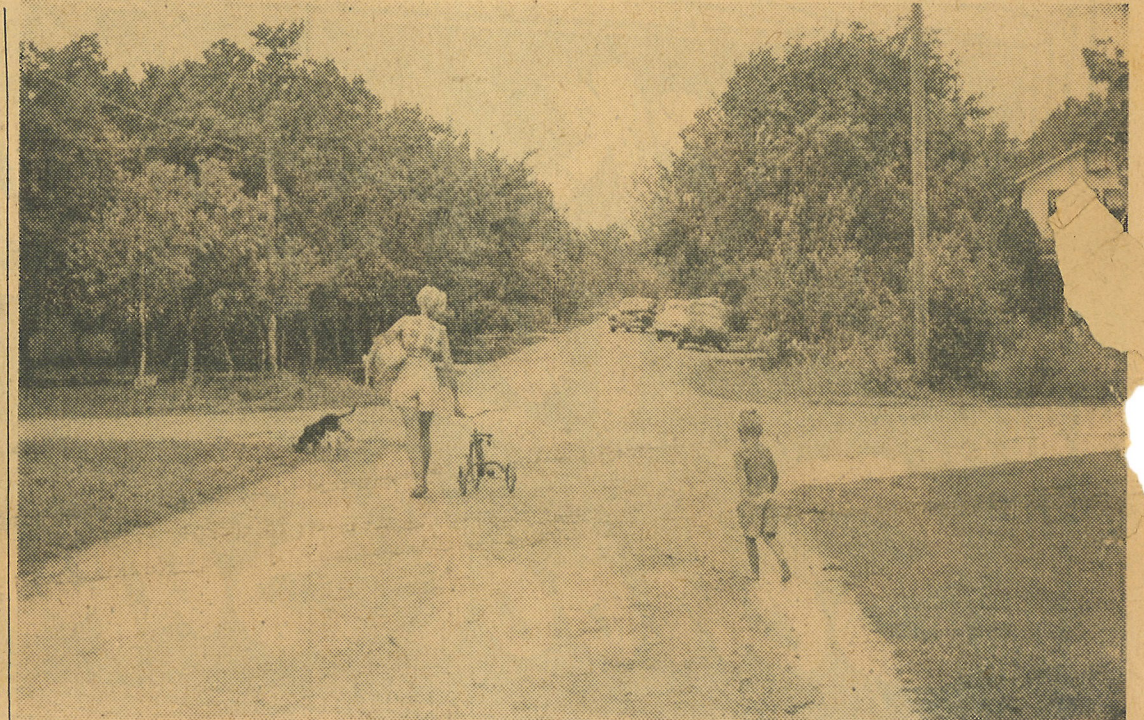
Scores of Camps

There are scores of camps along this area. Oddo's, The Trading Post, operated by Joe Herrle and F. J. "Pete" Short, to name a couple. There's just not enough room to name them all.

You can get anything you want to eat in the Kemah-Seabrook neighborhood, but naturally seafood is tops on the menus. You can't name them all, either, but Seliner's Cafe, operated by Mr. and Mrs. M. R. Pretty, is the oldest in Seabrook, having been there for more than 30 years.

When you cross Clear Creek you cross into another county, Galveston, and the "free state of Galveston" atmosphere is as prevalent here as on the island itself.

Kemah abounds with clubs and places to eat, lounges where you can refresh yourself after a hard day's fishing, dance a little



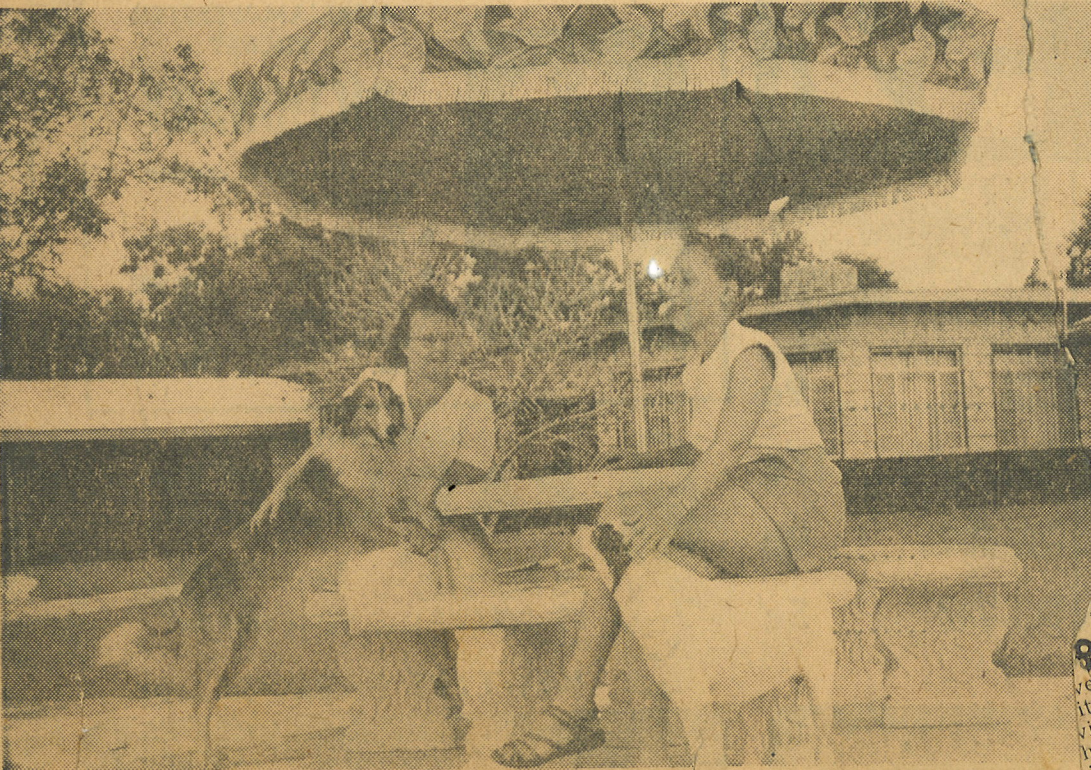
THIS IS A TYPICAL STREET SCENE in Kemah during the summer. Mama, clad in cool shorts, has been to the store. Sonny rode his tricycle to the store but tired on the way

back. Now Mama, groceries in one hand and trike in the other, leads the way home with Sonny trailing and the family dog investigating a ditch.



THIS IS A SIGHT you can see almost any day at Seabrook, along the Clear Creek channel. "Red" Meyerhoof, holding the rod and reel, is one of the oldest fishermen along the

bayshore. His fishing buddies, who look a little bored at his luck, are Grover Smith at the left and Paul Craig leaning against their fishing camp.



SHOWPLACE of the Kemah area is the picnic area.

Stamper, Chronicle correspondent for this part.

