

## ROANOKE WATER TOWER

Historical Narrative researched and written by Kate Singleton for Texas Historical Commission (THC)  
Recorded Texas Historical Landmark Marker Application, Denton County. 2010

**Roanoke Water Tower**  
**100 Block South Oak Street, Roanoke**  
**Denton County, Texas**

**1. Context**

The community of Roanoke is located in North Central Texas in Denton County at the intersection of U. S. Highway 377 and State Highway 114. The water tower, located on Oak Street, is a local landmark that signifies the development of the community. It is also a USGS Benchmark signifying its importance as a regional landmark.

Roanoke replaced two earlier settlements, Elizabethtown and Garden Valley. The town of Roanoke was the center of community life and a commercial hub for this prosperous ranching region between Fort Worth and Denton, The town served as a major shipping point for the large cattle ranches of southern Denton County.<sup>1</sup> It was platted in 1881 as part of the expansion of the Texas and Pacific Railway through North Central Texas out of the D.O. Hoover Survey. The orientation is southwest to northeast along Oak Street, the main street through the community. The Roanoke Water Tower, located in the 100 block of South Oak Street in the center of the commercial district, represents a period of transition and growth for the community. Built with Public Works Administration funds during the Great Depression, it was the community's primary water source. It has also served as a local landmark in the community since constructed in 1936.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ron Emrich, *National Register of Historic Places Continental Bank Building , Roanoke, Texas* (1986), p.3

<sup>2</sup> "Water Towers of Power", Fort Worth Star Telegram, clipping, no date or page given.

Although the area was settled in 1847, the town of Roanoke was not established until 1881 when the Texas and Pacific Railroad came through and founded the community to serve as a major shipping point for the cattle ranches in the vicinity. Local historians believe the town was named by one of the railroad surveyors who came from Roanoke, Virginia. The railroads had a profound effect on the establishment of new towns and the economic growth of existing communities and these new towns.

## **2. Overview**

In 1930, Roanoke, with a population of 400, boasted three grocery stores, a café, a theater, a hardware store, a barbershop, a cream station, and a truck line. Oak Street, the main road through town, was lined with these businesses as well as the homes of community leaders. The town had grown considerably since it was established by the railroad and consideration was given to incorporating the city and establishing a permanent city government to help continue the town's expansion. Obviously, an important aspect would be the development of utility systems such as water works. The main water well and tower were situated in the middle of Oak Street. This water well and tower had been in this location since approximately 1885. It was used by the commercial businesses and residences. Some of the residences had their own wells. Of course, the farms and surrounding ranches had their own wells. However, the well in downtown Roanoke was often used by people, including the farmers and ranchers, as a secondary water source or when water was scarce.

To continue and foster community growth, an election was held on November 7, 1933, to incorporate the city and adopt the commission form of government. Jack Medlin and J.H. Seagraves were the election judges. In April of 1934, the city adopted the commission form of government and elected their first mayor and commission members. The election was held at the Continental Bank<sup>3</sup> H. W. Jenkins was elected as mayor. Mr. Jenkins, a prominent local businessman, proceeded to apply to the Public Works Administration for a loan to build a new water system in the community.<sup>4</sup> The first contract with the federal government was dated September 18, 1934, Public Works Administration Docket #7351 for \$21,000.<sup>5</sup> The city requested more funds from the PWA from \$21,000 to \$22,000 in September 1935. As Mayor Jenkins stated in his letter, this was to extend service and connections to all the houses being served by Interstate Utility Company, a private company. He did not want the city and a private utility company to be competing in the delivery of water.<sup>6</sup> The consulting engineer was F. J. Von Zuben from Fort Worth.<sup>7</sup> The amount was increased and the work was completed by Shinslett and Friday, Fort Worth contractors.<sup>8</sup> At this time the city also purchased the existing water works system from Interstate Public Utility Company.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Resolution No. 28 dated April 2, 1934, City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

<sup>4</sup> Ordinance 34-103 August 28, 1934, City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

<sup>5</sup> Federal Contract P.W.A. Docket #7351 dated March 18, 1934, City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from H.W. Jenkins to Julian Montgomery, Acting State Director of PWA dated September 23, 1935, City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from F.J. Zuben to the Committee of the Community of Roanoke, dated September 26, 1933, City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

<sup>8</sup> Commission Minutes April 30, 1935, City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

<sup>9</sup> Commission Minutes November 17, 1934, City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

### **3. Historical /Architectural Significance**

The implementation and development of the water system is important to the growth of Roanoke. The tower and water works system are attributed to the farsightedness of Hugh Jenkins. Hugh W. Jenkins, who came to Roanoke from Tennessee in 1905 and served as manager of the Reynolds-Hanna Lumber Company and later bought the hardware business of Hise and J.H. Seagraves. He owned his hardware store at 200 N. Oak Street and his house, located at 111 S. Oak. Over the years, Jenkins participated in a variety of activities to benefit Roanoke. In 1912, Jenkins and several other local businessmen started a “Board of Trade” (precursor to a Chamber of Commerce) for Roanoke. Jenkins was elected the first president of the organization and W.P. Davis, J.M. Medlin and J.R. Norton were also involved.<sup>10</sup> He also served as a vice-president of the Northwest Highway Association.<sup>11</sup>

Roanoke incorporated and Jenkins became the first mayor at the height of the Great Depression. He realized it was important to develop the well and water system in Roanoke if the community was to continue to grow.<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that Roanoke had a water system owned and operated by Interstate Public Service Company. Jenkins did not like having two competing systems in the community. In December of 1933, the attorneys for Interstate Public Service Company responded to the city, through the city’s attorneys, that they were willing entertain a “reasonable offer” for the purchase

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<sup>10</sup> “*Board of Trade*”, Dallas Morning News, October 24, 1912, p.15.

<sup>11</sup> “*Governor Scheduled Speaker*”, Dallas Morning News, , May 8, 1932, Section III, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Information provided from notes of H.W. Jenkins and Mrs. Alberta Lincecum, provided by Ann Clark.

of the water system.<sup>13</sup> Jenkins was able to buy the water system in 1934 while seeking funding for expanding the system. One of the reasons for applying to the PWA was to consolidate the ownership of the water system under the city and out of private hands. Jenkins probably felt that city ownership and control of the water system would help the community with its economic development efforts.

The federal government had established the Public Works Administration under the National Industrial Recovery Act in June 1933 to provide funding for construction projects that would create jobs, stabilize purchasing power, revive industry and improve workers' lives. Between July 1933 and March 1939, PWA spent more than \$6 billion and funded more than 34,000 construction projects.<sup>14</sup> In 1934, the PWA gave loans and/or grants to eighty water works projects in Texas, totaling \$7.7 million.<sup>15</sup> According to the PWA survey for 1935, Texas had 6,305 non-federal projects.<sup>16</sup>

Apparently, Jenkins began his quest for the water works system funds in late summer or early fall of 1933. In a letter dated September 26, 1933, F.J. Von Zuben, a Fort Worth engineer, is responding to the Committee of the Community of Roanoke about the "feasibility of constructing a Water Works System". The letter goes on to state that Von Zuben will help prepare information for an application to the Federal Emergency

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<sup>13</sup> Letter to Mr. Fred Minor from Kenneth D. Horton, dated December 8, 1933. City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

<sup>14</sup> The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers. "Public Works Administration." *Teaching Eleanor Roosevelt*, ed. by Allida Black, June Hopkins, et. al. (Hyde Park, New York: Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, 2003). <http://www.nps.gov/archive/elro/glossary/pwa.htm> [Accessed September 28, 2009].

<sup>15</sup> "\$95,000 of PWA Funds Given to Texas", Dallas Morning News, August 12, 1934, Section 1, p.12.

<sup>16</sup> "PWA Survey", Dallas Morning News, March 4, 1935, Section 1, p.7.

Administration of Public Works.<sup>17</sup> The city signed a contract with Von Zuben on October 12, 1933 and it was ratified April 2, 1934.<sup>18</sup> In August of 1934, the town and the federal government signed an agreement for a loan and grant to build the water works system.<sup>19</sup> The bid notice was completed and passed on February 5, 1935.<sup>20</sup> In 1936, the contract was amended to give the city more funding to complete the project; a total of \$22,000. As part of the agreement with the federal government, Roanoke had to pass an ordinance for water rates so that they could ensure they had sufficient funds to pay off the bonds. This ordinance also noted that the current water system was inadequate to provide fire protection for inhabitants and businesses. An adequate water supply was also important to the health of the community—literally. The water rates were set at \$1.00 for 1,500 gallons or less; a dollar for the next 1,000 gallons and a seventy-five cents for every 1,000 gallons until 5,500 gallons. After 5,500 gallons, the cost was fifty cents per 1,000 gallons.<sup>21</sup>

### **Architectural Significance**

The Roanoke water tower was constructed in 1936 with Public Works Administration funds and was part of an expansion of the community's water works system. The project included the elevated steel tank that had a 100,000 gallon capacity. There was also a pump jack, electric motor and small pump station. The tower has four steel legs with steel lattice in between. There are two sets of braces between the legs and the standpipe that

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<sup>17</sup> Letter to the Committee of the Community of Roanoke from F.J. Von Zuben, dated September 26, 1933. City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

<sup>18</sup> Contract dated October 12, 1933, City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

<sup>19</sup> Ordinance No. 34-103, City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

<sup>20</sup> Commercial Union Assurance Co. Limited copy of the Bid dated February 5, 1935. City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioner of the City of Roanoke, Texas, held on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1935.

extends in the middle to the bottom of the tank. According to the USGS Benchmark information, the tower is approximately 150 feet tall. The information lists the first date it was observed as 1947 although it was built in 1936.<sup>22</sup> There is a fire siren located on the northwest corner leg at one of the cross bars.

The steel leg trusses were provided by Inland Steel. Inland Steel was founded in 1893 by financier Philip Block. Inland was headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. The company competed with U.S. Steel from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. The company was acquired in 1998 by ArcelorMittal.<sup>23</sup> The turnbuckles were provided by Cleveland City Forge, a company founded in 1864. They began by providing marine equipment but by the 1920's began to furnish clevises and turnbuckles for the construction market. The company is still in business at this time.<sup>24</sup> It cannot be confirmed but the tank itself may be from Chicago Bridge and Iron, a company that built water tanks all over the United States. CBI was founded in 1889 in Chicago. In 1894, Chicago Bridge & Iron erected its first steel plate elevated water storage tank in Fort Dodge, Iowa. The tank was the first built with a full hemispherical bottom, one of many technical innovations that have marked the company's history. This is very similar to the Roanoke water storage tank, although CBI could not confirm if they had built it.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> USGS Benchmark CS2910

<sup>23</sup> Wikipedia, Inland Steel. *en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inland\_Steel\_Company*, accessed September 30, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Cleveland City Forge, "About Cleveland City Forge", [www.clevelandcityforge.com](http://www.clevelandcityforge.com), accessed September 30, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Chicago Bridge and Iron, "About CBI", [www.cbi.com/about/history.aspx](http://www.cbi.com/about/history.aspx). Email from Marilyn Rutkowski, September 24, 2009.



**Conclusion**

The Roanoke water tower is historically significant for its association with the growth and development of the community. Constructed in 1936 with funding from the Public Works Administration, it is one of two federally funded Depression era projects in Roanoke. (The school, a WPA project, was torn down.) The water tower is a benchmark for the United States Geological Survey, meaning it is used to triangulate and measure distances. Although no longer in use, the water tower is a landmark for the local community and as a benchmark for the USGS.

#### **4. Documentation**

Chicago Bridge and Iron, "About CBI", [www.cbi.com/about/history.aspx](http://www.cbi.com/about/history.aspx).

Cleveland City Forge, "About Cleveland City Forge", [www.clevelandcityforge.com](http://www.clevelandcityforge.com), accessed September 30, 2009

"Board of Trade", Dallas Morning News, October 24, 1912, p.15.

"Governor Scheduled Speaker", Dallas Morning News, May 8, 1932, Section III, p. 7

"\$95,000 of PWA Funds Given to Texas", Dallas Morning News, August 12, 1934, Section 1, p.12

"PWA Survey", Dallas Morning News, March 4, 1935, Section 1, p.7

"Water Towers of Power", Fort Worth Star Telegram clipping, no date or page given.

Ron Emrich, *National Register of Historic Places Continental Bank Building, Roanoke, Texas* (1986), p.3

The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers. "Public Works Administration." *Teaching Eleanor Roosevelt*, ed. by Allida Black, June Hopkins, et. al. (Hyde Park, New York: Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, 2003).

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/elro/glossary/pwa.htm> [Accessed September 28, 2009].

Wikipedia, Inland Steel. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inland\\_Steel\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inland_Steel_Company), accessed September 30, 2009.

USGS Benchmark CS2910

<http://www.geocaching.com/mark/datasheet.aspx?PID=CS2910> 9/30/2009

Information provided from notes of H.W. Jenkins and Mrs. Alberta Lincecum provided by Ann Clark.

Email from Marilyn Rutkowski, archivist for Chicago Bridge and Iron, September 24, 2009.

#### **City of Roanoke Records**

Letter to the Committee of the Community of Roanoke from F.J. Von Zuben, dated September 26, 1933.

Contract dated October 12, 1933, City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

Letter to Mr. Fred Minor from Kenneth D. Horton, dated December 8, 1933, City of Roanoke records, City Hall.

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Letter from F.J. Zuben to the Committee of the Community of Roanoke, dated September 26, 1933, City of Roanoke records, City Hall

USGS Benchmark

CS2910 \*\*\*\*\*  
CS2910 DESIGNATION - ROANOKE MUNICIPAL TANK  
CS2910 PID - CS2910  
CS2910 STATE/COUNTY- TX/DENTON  
CS2910 USGS QUAD - COLLEYVILLE (1982)  
CS2910  
CS2910 \*CURRENT SURVEY CONTROL  
CS2910 \_\_\_\_\_  
CS2910\* NAD 83(1993)- 32 59 53.64864(N) 097 13 45.19245(W) ADJUSTED  
CS2910\* NAVD 88 -  
CS2910 \_\_\_\_\_  
CS2910 LAPLACE CORR- 3.00 (seconds) DEFLEC99  
CS2910 GEOID HEIGHT- -27.49 (meters) GEOID99  
CS2910  
CS2910 HORZ ORDER - THIRD  
CS2910  
CS2910.The horizontal coordinates were established by classical geodetic methods  
CS2910.and adjusted by the National Geodetic Survey in February 1996.  
CS2910  
CS2910  
CS2910.The Laplace correction was computed from DEFLEC99 derived deflections.  
CS2910  
CS2910.The geoid height was determined by GEOID99.  
CS2910  
CS2910; North East Units Scale Converg.  
CS2910;SPC TXNC - 2,148,375.453 718,742.856 MT 0.99987305 +0 41 35.1  
CS2910;UTM 14 - 3,652,483.892 665,432.969 MT 0.99993745 +0 57 52.6  
CS2910  
CS2910 SUPERSEDED SURVEY CONTROL  
CS2910  
CS2910 NAD 83(1993)- 32 59 53.65041(N) 097 13 45.17854(W) AD( ) 4  
CS2910 NAD 83(1986)- 32 59 53.65306(N) 097 13 45.17687(W) AD( ) 4  
CS2910 NAD 27 - 32 59 53.20700(N) 097 13 44.12100(W) AD( ) 3  
CS2910  
CS2910.Superseded values are not recommended for survey control.  
CS2910.NGS no longer adjusts projects to the NAD 27 or NGVD 29 datums.  
CS2910.See file dsdata.txt to determine how the superseded data were derived.  
CS2910  
CS2910\_MARKER: 53 = ELEVATED TANK  
CS2910  
CS2910 HISTORY - Date Condition Recov. By  
CS2910 HISTORY - 1947 FIRST OBSERVED CGS  
CS2910 HISTORY - 1955 GOOD TXHD  
CS2910 HISTORY - 19950629 GOOD USPSQD  
CS2910 HISTORY - 19980224 GOOD USPSQD  
CS2910  
CS2910 STATION DESCRIPTION  
CS2910  
CS2910"DESCRIBED BY COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY 1947 (FRG)  
CS2910"THE STATION IS LOCATED ABOUT 120 YARDS SOUTH AND EAST OF  
CS2910"THE POST OFFICE IN ROANOKE. IT IS A 4 LEGGED, SILVER PAINTED  
CS2910"STEEL WATER TANK ABOUT 150 FEET HIGH.  
CS2910"  
CS2910"THE POINT INTERSECTED WAS THE APEX OF THE TANK.  
CS2910"

CS2910"TO REACH FROM THE POST OFFICE IN ROANOKE GO SOUTH ON THE MAIN  
CS2910"STREET FOR 100 YARDS TO STATION 50 FEET EAST OF THE STREET.

CS2910

CS2910 STATION RECOVERY (1955)

CS2910

CS2910"RECOVERY NOTE BY TEXAS HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT 1955 (HWH)

CS2910"INQUIRY MADE AND IT WAS DETERMINED THAT THIS WAS THE SAME TANK

CS2910"THAT WAS ORIGINALLY CUT IN.

CS2910

CS2910 STATION RECOVERY (1995)

CS2910

CS2910"RECOVERY NOTE BY US POWER SQUADRON 1995

CS2910"RECOVERED IN GOOD CONDITION.

CS2910

CS2910 STATION RECOVERY (1998)

CS2910

CS2910"RECOVERY NOTE BY US POWER SQUADRON 1998

CS2910"RECOVERED IN GOOD CONDITION.

<http://www.geocaching.com/mark/datasheet.aspx?PID=CS2910> 9/30/2009