Wheatville Named for R. S. Wheat
Naples Moved from Wheatville to Present Site

If you had been traveling by way of railroad through the piney woods of East Texas in the early 1900s, you would have been sure to have heard the conductor say, "All out for Naples!"

Little did R. S. Wheat know in the early 1800s that the small community of Wheatville would be named for him and would be the start of a prosperous trade center.

Wheatville was located three miles northwest of the present location of Naples. It was then a part of Titus County but in 1857 was made a part of the newly established Morris County. The post office was opened in 1868.

The Cotton Belt Railroad by-passed Wheatville by some three miles so the community moved to the railroad. On January 8, 1882 the new community was renamed Station Belden. The only evidence left at the original site of Wheatville is the Wheatville Cemetery and the Senator Morris Sheppard Monument.

The new name of Station Belden caused some problems since there was an already established Belton, Texas. With no significance, new names were submitted by post office officials. On February 16 1895, Station Beldon became Naples, Texas.

One memory of Station Beldon remains – the Beldon Masonic Lodge.

In the late 1890s Naples had its share of livery stables, opera houses, and mud streets. The Wilder Saloon was a popular place in those days. It was a time when men carried guns and hat shoot outs in the streets. Women and children were never seen on the streets after sundown.

After the turn of the century, Naples began to be known for its industry and trade. With three railroads – the Sullivan-Sanford, the Cotton Belt, and the Jefferson Northwestern – shipping was easily done. It is no wonder that a box and crate factory and a hardwood veneer factory would choose this site. The Sullivan-Sanford Lumber Company and the Hardwood Mill at the time was the second largest hardwood mill in the world and shipped lumber to Germany and other countries from Naples.

If you had visited Naples at this time, you would have stayed at the Tabb Hotel or the Harwell Hotel just across from the train station. You could have shopped at over thirty businesses. Business would have been conducted with one of three banks. You could have visited bottling and ice cream plants, the high school, opera houses, and, of course, one of the two churches in town.

Around 1915, a great fire destroyed the Naples industrial dynasty. With the loss of industry, the town dwindled and the economy turned to cotton and other agriculture. The population dropped from 2,000 to 833. Some farmers fought for existence while several foundations flourished.

Morris County bragged with 20 cotton gins, two cotton seed mills, 10 saw mills, and a food cannery. The early 1940s brought the steel industry to this area. The industry not only increased business but also brought new people to the county.

Naples has had her ups and downs in the past, but you can depend on this friendly little East Texas town to continue to fight for survival.