

JUSTICEBURG WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM
Justiceburg
Garza County
Texas

HAER TX-131
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
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JUSTICEBURG WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM

HAER No. TX-131

- Location:** Justiceburg, Garza County, Texas
- Dates of Construction:** 1911-1912
- Engineer:** J.B. Skeen, Chief Engineer for Construction
- Original Owner, Use:** Santa Fe Railway, railroad water supply
- Current Owner, Use:** Justiceburg School District, irrigation
- Significance:** The Justiceburg Water Supply System is an example of the type employed by railroads in the Southwest at the beginning of the twentieth century.
- Description:** The Justiceburg Water Supply System was designed to provide steam locomotive boiler water. The system consists of a reservoir formed by an earthen dam, a pump station at the reservoir, a pipeline from the reservoir to the town of Justiceburg, and a steel cylindrical water tank beside the railroad tracks.
- Lake Justiceburg was constructed on the channel of an intermittent stream near the junction of the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos River. The lake was formed by an earthen dam about 500' long with a maximum height of 25'. The upstream face of the dam is protected by a layer of concrete. When full, the lake covers 76.5 acres. Silting during the years has seriously decreased the capacity of the lake.
- One of the most striking features of this system is the red brick inlet tower located in the middle of the lake. The tower is about 30' high and 12' in diameter. Three intakes were placed at various levels on the tower to draw water from the lake to the pump house. The inlet tower is not in use and has been replaced by a steel pipe that now carries water to the pump house.
- A 100' catwalk connects the tower to the pump house. Railroad rails anchored in concrete support the catwalk, which has few sound wooden planks left.

The concrete pump house is two stories high and houses an electric pump. Originally, a kerosene-powered pump was used to send water to a steel tank at the Justiceburg railroad siding.

The steel tank at Justiceburg is 20' in diameter and 56' high, which was the standard size used on the Santa Fe Railroad. The capacity is about 130,000 gallons. The tank is now used to store water for community use.

The system is basically as it was when built except an electric pump is now being used to pump water from the lake. The water spout on the steel tank has been removed.

History:

On April 17, 1911, the track-laying gangs of the Santa Fe Railway arrived at Justiceburg, Texas. Probably before this time, work had begun on the construction of water supply system to supply water to the steam locomotives that would be using the new track. Much work had to be done to build the earthen dam, lay the pipe, and erect such structures as the pump house, lake attendant's house, steel water tank, and water spout for locomotives.

However, on June 16, 1912, J.B. Skeen, the chief engineer for construction in Amarillo, Texas, wrote to C.A. Morse, chief engineer of the Santa Fe system in Chicago, that the dam was scheduled to be completed the next day. It may be assumed that as soon as pumping equipment was operational and the lake began to fill with water, the system went into use supplying water to steam locomotives traveling along the Santa Fe route from Coleman, Texas, to Clovis, New Mexico.

The Justiceburg Water Supply System was used by the Santa Fe Railway until its steam locomotives were phased out in the mid-1950s. After its use ended, the Santa Fe gave the entire system to the Justiceburg school district to be used for irrigation.

Sources:

Harper, Carl. "Building the Santa Fe Railway through the South Plains." *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook XI* (1935): 73-92.

Marshall, James. *Santa Fe, The Railroad that Built an Empire*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1945.

Morgan, Lee, Custodian of Lake Justiceburg, Justiceburg, Texas. Interview by field team, May 20, 1971.

“Santa Fe Splinters.” 34 vols. Microfilm. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

Historians: Steve Rae and T. Lindsay Baker, May 20 and October 22, 1971

Project

Information: The Justiceburg Water Supply System was inventoried for the Historic American Engineering Record as part of the Southwest Water Resources Project, a joint project with the Texas Tech Water Resources Center. The survey was subsequently published as *Water for the Southwest: Historical Survey and Guide to Historic Sites* by the American Society of Civil Engineers in September 1973.