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FENTRESS, TEXAS

Caldwell County, Central Texas S
On the San Marcos River
Highway 20 and Highway 80
8 Miles W of Luling
11 Miles SE of San Marcos
42 Miles S of Austin
Population: 291 (2000)



Photo courtesy [Barclay Gibson](#), December 2006

History in a Pecan Shell

The town began in the late 1860 with the appropriate name of Riverside.

It was renamed in 1892 to honor James Fentress, the town's first physician. The following year the town was granted its first post office. The community was fortunate to be on the mail route between San Marcos and Luling, so the mail was received daily.

The population in the mid 1890s was 150 residents.

A waterworks was set in place in 1898 and the town was electrified four years later.

In 1915 the population had doubled to 300 people. That same year a resort was built to take advantage of the riverside location. Facilities included bathhouses and camping amenities.

The facilities were sold within two years and expanded under the new ownership. Dancing was permitted, which greatly concerned local churches. Soon after the churches expressed concern, the town's water tower collapsed onto the bank. Was it divine intervention or an early case of money laundering?

The population peaked in 1929 with 500 residents and the community had a shared experience with Luling with oil exploration. It became an important source of income during the 30s. But the Great Depression hit the town hard and by 1940 there were only 250 people left.

The local school merged with neighboring Prairie Lea in the 1940s. One of the casualties of the decline was the closing of a hog farm that had supplied driving pigs for Aquarena Springs, the once famous tourist attraction.

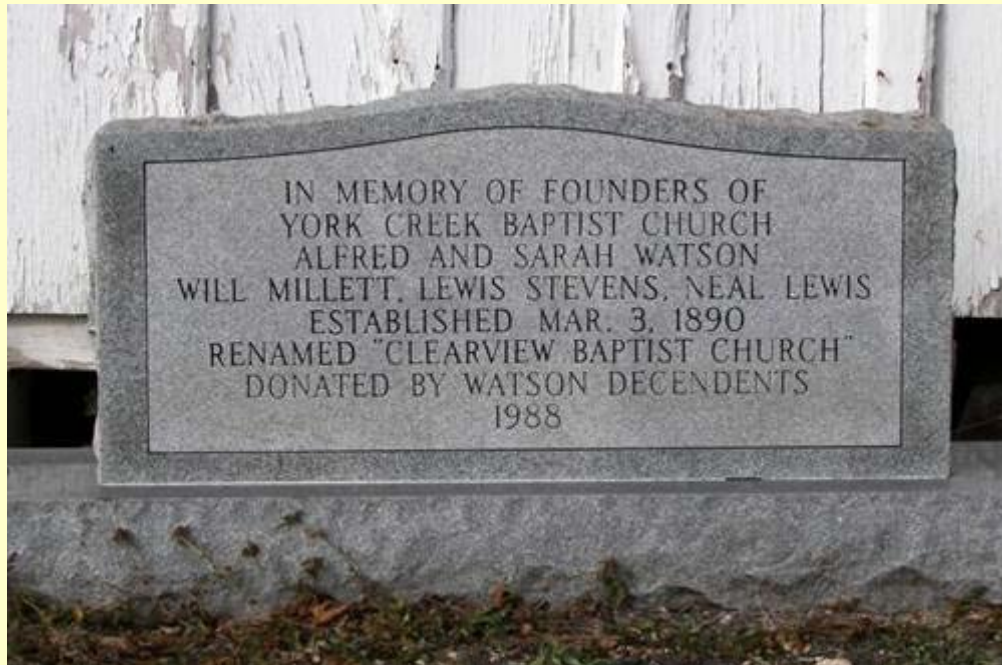
The population was reported as 85 in 1990 and has since increased to 291 for the 2000 census.



Fentress Methodist Church
Photo courtesy [Barclay Gibson](#), December 2006



Clearview Baptist Church (just South of Fentress)
Photo courtesy [Barclay Gibson](#), December 2006



Marker for the Clearview Church
Photo courtesy [Barclay Gibson](#), December 2006



Mysterious Markings on Corrugated Iron
TE photo, March 2008



The old swimming hole
TE photo, March 2008



Remains of the old low-water crossing over the San Marcos River
TE photo, March 2008