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PRAIRIE LEA, TEXAS

Caldwell County, Central Texas S
Highway 80
10 Miles SW of Lockhart
6 Miles W of Luling
20 Miles SE of San Marcos
44 Miles S of Austin
Population: 255 (2000)



Prairie Lea Methodist Church
Photo courtesy Barclay Gibson, December 2006

History in a Pecan Shell

The oldest community in Caldwell County, the town was named by Sam Houston for his (future) wife Margaret Lea Houston. Edmund Bellinger, a veteran of San Jacinto became the community's first settler, in 1839. After a grist mill, sawmill and cotton gin were built on the San Marcos River, the town gathered residents. The town got its first store in 1849.

During the Civil War, men from Prairie Lea served with Hood's Texas Brigade and took part in the ill-fated Sibley Campaign in New Mexico. Residents raised money to send for the abandoned and destitute troops. A tax was imposed to raise funds for local families who had lost their breadwinners in the war.

Reconstruction brought so much violence that many residents chose to move to Mexico. By the 1870s things had returned to pre-war tranquility, but in the later part of that decade a disastrous fire destroyed the town's business district.

In the mid 1880s Prairie Lea had a population of 100, growing to 350 by 1914. The town had an economic boost during the 20s from the [Luling](#) oilfield, but that increase in population was short lived. Prairie Lea sat undisturbed for decades and the population remained at 100 as late as 1990.



Prairie Lea Baptist Church
TE photo, March 2008



A cell phone casualty
TE photo, March 2008

