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STAFF

Melinda McCutchen, Publisher
Morgan McCutchen Brigham, Editor

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Essays from West of 98: The Good Old Days Again

By James M. Decker

The Grand Theatre reopened in Stamford on November 23, 2018. After being dark for the better part of the last decade, the neon lights of the theatre marquee again light the downtown skyline. Downtown parking spaces have more demand on weekend evenings than they used to.

Since the theatre's re-opening, excitement has been palpable. In reading comments on Facebook and hearing discussion in town, I've noticed that the excitement transcends generations in an interesting manner. From teenagers to the elderly, each age group is excited based on *their* memories of the theatre.

The youngest groups remember the theatre in the last period before it closed. They grew up with it open and its closure took one of the most notable forms of social entertainment from their community. My generation remembers its re-opening when we were children, when the abandoned downtown theatre suddenly came alive. We frequented it growing up and we used it as adults until it closed. Generations before us remember the theater as a staple of their childhood and teenage years. They remember it closing the first time, in the 1980s, and their joy of its 1990s reopening. The oldest generations remember the theatre in its early days. They remember a booming post-war community of over 5,000, with the Grand and multiple other theatres helping make downtown Stamford a teeming hub of business and social activity.

I've written in the past about the inherent flaws of the "good old days" discussions. Which ones were the actual good old days? Are your memories overly tinged by nostalgia? Were they actually good for everyone?

The Grand Theatre beautifully sums up why the

"good old days" are a complicated thing. Memories of the theatre span eight decades. Each generation remembers a different version of the theatre, each of which took place in a different era of the town's history. But to that generation, their memory is the "good old days," and guess what? Each group is exactly right.

Each generation remembers a different time period, but they all remember the same big picture ideal (whether they realize it or not). They remember a thriving social hub, which attracted people came from miles around, that gave each of them something fun to do, and made their community the "place to be."

When we talk about revitalizing our communities, it is



Beautiful But Cold! A sudden snow storm blew across parts of Coke and Nolan counties Thursday afternoon with huge, wet flakes and high winds. Highway 70 between Blackwell and Sweetwater was closed and one of the Blackwell CISD buses was among the vehicles stranded for awhile. Above is the Methodist Church in Blackwell. Photo - Facebook.

human nature to desire bringing a specific era back to life. As I have written before, that is neither practical nor possible. But as I've learned about the enthusiasm for the Grand, the "good old days" isn't about a specific era. It's about the big picture ideal. It's about the feelings that people have for the community in the era that they remember. It's about people

being fondly connected to their community and wanting to keep those feelings alive, or if needed, revived.

Those feelings still exist in our communities and about our communities. Whether it's a theatre renovation, the restoration of another historic piece of our community, or an entirely new business that creates new jobs and new

enthusiasm, we can give people a reason to view this era in our community just as fondly as the eras of the past.

James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and mayor in Stamford, Texas, and the creator of the forthcoming "West of 98" podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at facebook.com/james.decker.



Utility Assistance

Concho Valley Community Action Agency will begin accepting mail-in applications for our entire service area for utility assistance beginning February 4, 2019. Please check our website for the application and required documents needed at <http://www.cvcaa.org> or call 325-653-2411 to have one mailed to you. If you have a disconnect notice, please call the office for details.

Area Churches Invite You to Worship

Bronte

Bronte Church of Christ

PO Box 346
118 S. Jefferson • Bronte
Preacher David Lewis
Sun. 10 am & 6 pm, Wed. 7 pm

Central Baptist Church

324 S. Franklin • Bronte
(325) 473-4811
Dale Patterson, Pastor
Sun. 10 am Sunday School
11 am & 5 pm Worship

First Baptist Church

424 S. Washington • Bronte
(325) 473-2331 • Pastor Lee Bevil
Sunday 9:45 am Sunday School,
10:55 am Worship, 6 pm Bible
Study & Worship

First United Methodist Church

Corner of Washington & Holmes
Bronte
(325) 473-3281

Rev. Everette Boyce, Pastor
Sun. 10:00 am Sunday School
11:00 am Worship

Forgiven Ministries

117 W. Main, Bronte
Russ Frasier, Pastor
Sun. 10 am
Tuesday 6 pm Table Time

St. James Catholic Church

215 N. Washington, Bronte
(325) 365-2687
Rev. Yesu Mulakaleti, Jr., Pastor
Sunday Bilingual Mass 8 am

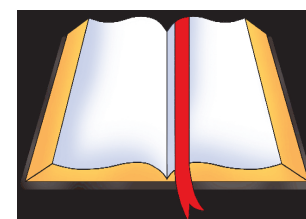
4C Cowboy Church

Texas Theater, Downtown Bronte
Pastor James Brunson
Sunday, 10:30 am

Coke County

Pecan Baptist

PO Box 542 • 12 miles West of
Robert Lee on Sterling City Hwy
(325) 453-2065, Bill Hood, Pastor
www.pecanbaptistchurchrl.com
Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
11 am & 7 pm, Worship



Robert Lee

Bible Baptist Church

PO Box 938 • 9th & Austin
Robert Lee, Brandon Broadbent, Pastor
Sun. 10 am Sunday School, 11 am
Worship, Wed 5:30 pm Bible Study

Emmanuel Pentecostal

PO Box 683 • 1019 Colorado City Hwy
Pastor Kevin Millstid 453-2360
Sundays 10 am, Wednesdays 7 pm

First United Methodist Church

PO Box 144 • 9th & Chadbourne
Robert Lee • (325) 453-2417
Cyndi Weidner, Pastor
Sun. 10 am Sunday School
11 am Worship, 5 pm Choir Practice

Iglesia Bautista Betel

101 Houston • Robert Lee
Sun. 9:45 am • Sunday School
11 am Service • Bible Study Wed. 6 pm

Southside Church of Christ

PO Box 698 • 8th & Houston
Robert Lee (325) 453-2176
Recardo Reyes, Preacher
Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
11 am & 6 pm, Worship

Northside Church of Christ

PO Box 508
9th & Chadbourne • Robert Lee
(325) 453-2685, (806) 543-2118 or
(325) 473-1053

Services: Sun. 10 am

Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church

601 W. 10th, Robert Lee
(325) 365-2687
Rev. Yesu Mulakaleti, Pastor
Saturday Vigil Mass 5 pm

Robert Lee Baptist Church

PO Box 493 • 22 W. 11th
(325) 453-2724
Chris Walls, Pastor
Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
11 am & 7 pm, Worship

Wed. 7 pm, Prayer Meeting

Victory Assembly of God

(325) 453-2208, PO Box 638
6th & Houston, Robert Lee
Rev. Irving Smith, Pastor
Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
10:45 am & 6 pm, Worship

Wed. 6 pm, Bible Study

Tennyson

Tennyson Baptist Church

Hwy 277 • Tennyson
(325) 473-2040
Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
11:00 am & 6 pm, Worship
Wed. 6:00 pm Prayer Meeting