

# FIRST NATIONAL BANK



The First National Bank in Bronte was established in 1906 when the Orient railroad was built from Sweetwater to San Angelo, passing through Bronte. Organized as The First State Bank, the bank was begun by J.B. Reilly, an Ozona ranchman. Rev. R.M. Cumbie served as President.

The First State Bank served the Bronte community until 1921 and the death of Mr. Reilly. At that time, the cashier, C.R. Golihar, took over the responsibilities of the President and the bank was renamed Guaranty State Bank.

The Guaranty State Bank closed its doors on January 11, 1922. Two weeks later, \$25,000 of new capital was added to the bank and it was reopened with Leonard T. Youngblood as President of the newly organized First National Bank. Mr. Youngblood had been cashier of the bank in Blackwell and drove from Blackwell each day to operate the Bronte bank.

In 1933, the banks of Bronte and Blackwell merged. J.T. Harmon, who had been President of the Blackwell bank, became Vice-President of the Bank in Bronte. He continued to open an office in Blackwell to cash checks, make deposits and carry on other banking activities. This practice was carried on for several years.

The improving economic climate of Coke County was of interest to some less scrupulous people so that on July 1, 1935, the First National Bank was robbed. Virginia Youngblood was the first to see the two felons who entered the bank through a rear door of the building. Brandishing sawed-off shotguns, the

robbers forced L.T. Youngblood, Carrie Williams, J.T. Harmon and Miss Youngblood to lie on the floor as they emptied the cash windows. They retreated from the building and a wild automobile race ensued in which they dropped tacks and nails on the road to flatten the tires of pursuing law officers. They eluded all roadblocks and were able to get away with the \$1,234.44 in cash taken from the bank. The thieves were later captured.

A second bank robbery took place in Bronte January 27, 1953. Bank employees were working in the building after hours when two oilfield workers from San Angelo entered the building. Douglas Snead and Willie B. Millikin were tied up by the bank robbers and forced into the vault while the robbery took place. Approximately \$8,927 was taken, but was later recovered when the thieves were captured in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The old First National Bank building underwent major remodeling in 1943 and again in 1954. After much deliberation by the bank's directors, the decision was made in December 1982 to construct a new building adjacent to the old building in downtown Bronte. The old structure was demolished to make room for a parking area. The grand opening for the new bank building was held November 27, 1983.

The First National Bank in Bronte is now a branch of the First National Bank of Sterling City.



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Branch of the First National Bank  
of Sterling City

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