

## **Democrat Crossing on the Navasota River**

compiled by Bill Page

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This crossing on the Navasota River was located on the road from Bryan to Madisonville, near where Sand Creek enters the Navasota. It appears to be in about the same location as the “New Bridge” built in the mid 1870s. Most likely Democrat Crossing received its name sometime shortly after 1880, since John Diem did not find any mention of it in Brazos County records when he wrote his masters thesis, The Place Names of Brazos County, Texas: 1821 to 1880 (1981). We know its name was in use by 1883. No one knows the source of its name, though it seems likely that it was named after the Democratic Party. This crossing was located in an area where it was hard to build roads, much less bridges. Records note the presence of several sloughs in the area, and it was also necessary to build levees to keep the roads passable.

Henry Kurten and eight others (not named) petitioned for a new road from Bryan to New Bridge on 27 September 1875. J.M. Lawless, John Zimmerman, M. Keolsch, W. White and Harvey Mitchell were appointed a committee of view for that road. (Brazos County Commissioners Minutes, Book B, page 132).

New Bridge crossed the Navasota River at the mouth of Sandy Creek and was on the Bryan to Madisonville Road. [Pressler, Charles W., and A.B. Langermann, Map of the State of Texas, Austin: Texas General Land Office, 1879, as cited in: Diem, John, The Place Names of Brazos County, Texas: 1821 to 1880 (1981), page 80].

On 17 December 1881, Brazos County commissioners approved \$600 to build a bridge at the Democratic Crossing where the old bridge now stands. (Brazos County Commissioners Minutes, Book C, page 223).

On 13 August 1883, County Commissioners appropriated \$175 for repair of the bridges on the Navasota River and sloughs at the Democratic Crossing. Brazos County Commissioners Minutes, Book C, page 315.

Commissioners appropriated \$100 in May 1884 “for the benefit of Democrat Crossing on the Navasota River ...” (Brazos County Commissioners Minutes, Book C, page 365)

In November 1887 an appropriation of \$600 was made to build a bridge across the Navasota River “at Democrat Crossing where the old bridge now stands.” (Brazos County Commissioners Minutes, Book D, page ?)

On 16 August 1888, county commissioners paid J.B. Conway \$305.83 for building a bridge over a slough at Democrat Crossing. (Brazos County Commissioners Minutes, Book D, page 238)

On 12 November 1888, county commissioners instructed Peter Thomas to sell the lumber taken out of the bridge at Democrat Crossing. Brazos County Commissioners Minutes, Book D, page 254

On 18 December 1888, Commissioners Peter Thomas, B. Collins and H.M. Maddox were appointed to inspect the levee work done at Democrat Cross by Lee Edge. Brazos County Commissioners Minutes, Book D, page 621.

On 15 May 1889, county commissioners paid W.L. Edge \$150 for repairing the levee at Democrat Crossing. Brazos County Commissioners Minutes, Book D, page 282

\*The bridge on the Navasota river at the Democrat crossing ... (weekly) Bryan Eagle, 24 October 1889, page 8

On 3 October 1890, Commissioners approved the bill for an iron bridge at Democrat Crossing from the King Iron Bridge Manufacturing Company and bonds for \$3,400 signed. (Brazos County Commissioners Minutes, Book D, page 389)

On 16 September 1891, county commissioners authorized Peter Thomas to sell all the left over lumber remaining of the old bridge at the Democrat Crossing. Brazos County Commissioners Minutes, Book E, pages 24-25.

On 14 April 1894, county commissioners contracted with Joe and Daniel Zimmerman to repair the levee on the Bryan and Madisonville Road in the Navasota River bottoms. Brazos County Commissioners Minutes, Book E, page 304

Jack Shaw has returned from Madisonville ... Mr. Shaw says the levee at the Democrat crossing is very rough and full of holes and hard to get over. (weekly) Bryan Eagle, 26 March 1903, p.5

A report was current here yesterday that the further end of the bridge at the Democrat crossing on the Navasota River and the levee on that side has been impaired by the big rise of that stream. The river has run down we learn. (weekly) Bryan Eagle, 13 August 1903, p.5, col.1

Mr. J.M. Nevills of Cross, Grimes County, started to Bryan one day this week while the Navasota River was so high, and had a terrible experience at the Democrat crossing. He tried to get to the slough bridge, but the current was strong and washed his wagon down below the approach to the bridge. The wagon and contents, including Mr. Nevils' hat, shoes and coat, were lost. He saved his team by five hours hard work. Prof. R.E. Scott followed Mr. Nevils and had a rough experience, but got out. Next morning he reached Bryan minus his watch and coat. (weekly) Bryan Eagle, 13 August 1903, p.5, col.2

County Road Superintendent R.P. McMinn called on the Eagle while in the city yesterday. Mr. McMinn has the road force at work at the Democrat Crossing of the Navasota River on the Brazos and Madisonville road. Bryan Weekly Eagle, 14 March 1907, page 5

“Public Improvement Committee,” Brazos Pilot, 28 May 1908, page 6 “... and assigned to them the duty of looking after their roads and bridges ...” E.R. Lloyd, Democrat Crossing

“Bryan Visitor from Iola Had to Swim Bottom of Navasot,” Bryan Daily Eagle, 7 June 1924, page 6

On Tuesday morning Mr. and Mrs. Walter Lindsey and children and Roy Hudspeth, Reffles King, Mr. and Mrs. John Woodyard and son went to the Democrat crossing where they met Mrs. Lindsey’s brother, Mr. Robert Allphine, his wife and mother Mrs. Henry Allphine of North Zulch and they enjoyed plenty of good things to eat including squirrels, fish, cakes, and pies. Swimming was also one of the features of the day. Bryan Daily Eagle, 6 August 1924, page 1, col.7

“Horse Backed a Vehicle Over Side of Bridge,” Bryan Weekly Eagle, 8 October 1925, page 3

“Chamber of Commerce to Ask Repair of Slough Bridge on Democrat Crossing Navasot,” Bryan Weekly Eagle, 22 July 1926, page 4

“Slough Bridge is Being Repaired on Navasot River,” Bryan Weekly Eagle, 5 August 1926, page 2

“Big Rattlesnake Killed on Navasota River,” Bryan Weekly Eagle, 7 October 1926, page 6.