

The History of the Edge House

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Bryan, Texas
1991

The large red brick home located at 609 South Ennis in the Eastside Historical District of Bryan, Texas is widely known as the Edge House. From 1925 to 1978 it was home to three generations of the Eugene Edge family. Eugene Edge purchased the architectural plans and served as his own contractor.¹ [Editor's note: See addendum, page 5.] The eclectic house was built at the eastern limit of old Bryan's early addition and several blocks from the original town site. The structure was entered in the National Register of Historic Places by the Bryan Historic Resources Survey of 1987.² The structure was recognized for its ambience and for the distinguished family that had lived there.³

The house stands on land that was purchased by Eugene Edge in 1919 from the Baptist General Convention of Texas.⁴ The site had been the location of the Bryan Baptist Academy, formerly the Texas Women's College. The school had closed in 1918 because of war conditions.⁵ Edge converted the two large brick dormitories into apartments. The Edge Apartments became home to many young professionals and their families as well as the families of professors from the A&M College of Texas.

Eugene Edge was born October 12, 1879.⁶ He was the son of Dr. and Mrs. John Edge, a country physician from Georgia, and one of the founders

¹ Parker Lumber Company Ledger, 1924, Bryan, Texas, pp. 332, 369, 399

² Hardy, Heck and Moore, Inc. Historic Resources of Bryan, Texas: A Comprehensive Survey and National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the City of Bryan (Austin, Texas, July 1986. Site No. 757.)

³ "Bryan Houses on National Historic List Get Plaques," Bryan-College Station Eagle, (Vol. 114, No. 291, Oct. 16, 1988), p. 2A.

⁴ Brazos County Deed Records, Book 49, p. 285.

⁵ "B.B.A. Plant Sold to Eugene Edge by Baptist Convention." The Bryan Daily Eagle (Vol. 32, No. 360, June 24, 1919), p. 1.

⁶ "Eugene Edge Dies Saturday." The Bryan Daily Eagle, (Vol. 77, No. 190, Feb. 7, 1954), p. 1.

of the Edge Community.⁷ Eugene Edge practiced pharmacy for a short time before opening a dry goods store with Sam Wilson in downtown Bryan in 1903.⁸ In 1907, Edge became the sole owner of the store located at Main and 25th Street and the store became popularly known as "Eugene Edge on the Corner."⁹ Through the years, Edge and his store earned the trusted respect of the community. In a special business edition of the Bryan Daily Eagle of 1913, Eugene Edge and his store were extolled:

One of the most extensive, modern retail dry goods and millinery establishments in Texas is Eugene Edge's "The Ladies' Store" in this city in which is constantly kept on hand an immense stock of retail dry goods, millinery and ladies ready-to-wear garments, together with every accessory incident to first-class establishments of this kind. Mr. Eugene Edge, proprietor and founder of this extensive and successful enterprise, brings to bear the ripest experience, mature judgment, and accomplished business acumen in the government, supervision and practical control of its phenomenal business, and is known as one of the most capable and substantial business men in the city of Bryan.¹⁰

It's interesting to note that Edge was only 25 years of age when this article was written. [Editor's note: math error – should be 34 years of age.] Through the years, Edge's yearly buying trips to New York provided the ladies of the area the opportunity to keep current with the latest fashions.¹¹ The store is one of the few long-time businesses still operating in the downtown, although it is no longer owned by the family. According to his obituary that was printed on the front page of the newspaper the day after his death, Edge was a leading business man for 51 years.¹²

⁷ Charlene Ragsdale, "A Historical Tour of Brazos County." Compiled by history students of Bryan High School. 1976.

⁸ "We Have Opened Our New Store - Wilson and Edge." Bryan Morning Eagle (Vol. 8, No. 239, Sept. 6, 1903), p. 1.

⁹ "Eugene Edge - Successor to Wilson and Edge." Bryan Morning Eagle (No. 93, March 28, 1907), p. 1.

¹⁰ "Bryan's Business Proclamation." The Bryan Daily Eagle (Vol. XVIII, No. 128, April 22, 1913.)

¹¹ "Spring Styles Lovely Says Mr. Eugene Edge." The Bryan Daily Eagle (Vol. XXVI, No. 172, Feb. 5, 1923.)

¹² "Eugene Edge Dies Saturday," p. 1.

Some of his community contributions included serving as a city official,¹³ serving on the Executive Committee and Board of Trustees of the Bryan Baptist Academy,¹⁴ serving on the Board of Directors of the Commercial Club (the forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce),¹⁵ membership of First Baptist Church of Bryan and the president of the Bryan-College Station Traction Company (formerly the Interurban)¹⁶.

The Interurban (and the Edge Apartments) helped to shorten the distance between Bryan and "the College." In 1919, the situation of overcrowded living on the campus required professors and other employees to seek housing elsewhere.¹⁷ The Interurban provided the means to put them on the campus relatively quickly. The increased availability and popularity of the automobile brought about the end of the Interurban in 1925. An editorial in the newspaper of May 22, 1925 encouraged the local people to use the trolley and pleaded with automobile drivers not to pick up potential trolley users along the way. "One hundred persons are making themselves professional beggars and third degree highwaymen by actually holding up motorists and beseeching them for free rides everyday."¹⁸ Although short-lived, the Interurban had a dramatic impact on Bryan and College Station, bringing them together into the cooperative entities they are today.

Edge was married to the former Cora Zulch. They had two children, Jean Edge (MacGregor) and Charles Edge. Charles, displaying the same talent for business as his father soon joined his father in what was then known as Edge and Son. After the death of Cora Zulch Edge, Charles and his wife Laura James Edge moved into the family home and raised three children there, Eugene III, Gail and Mary. Eugene Edge died on Saturday, February 5, 1954. Edge and Son continued to grow under the gentle and wise leadership of Charles Edge. He and his family continued to live in the

¹³ Lois Alyne Wilcox, *The Early History of Bryan, Texas*. (Master's thesis, Graduate Department, The University of Texas, 1952), p. 180

¹⁴ Brazos County Deed Records, Book 8, p. 283.

¹⁵ "Bryan's Business Proclamation," *The Bryan Daily Eagle*.

¹⁶ "Is the Interurban to Die?" *The Bryan Daily Eagle*. (Vol. XXVIII, No. 269, May 22, 1925, 1925), p. 1.

¹⁷ Henry C. Dethloff, *A Pictorial History of Texas A&M University, 1876-1976*, (Texas A&M University Press. 1975), p. 50.

¹⁸ "Is the Interurban to Die?" p. 1.

home until 1978 when it was sold to Dr. and Mrs. Don McLarey.¹⁹ In 1988, the home was sold to its present owners, Dr. and Mrs. Edward Allan Hiler.²⁰

The home has remained virtually unchanged through the years. A picture of it appears on an early brochure of the Bryan-Brazos County Chamber of Commerce of about 1929.²¹ The house appears just as it is today. The house identified as one of the "magnificent homes" of the area is considered to be eclectic in design, incorporating elements from styles popular at the time, Georgian, Renaissance and other Classic Revival styles. It is a 2 1/2-story frame structure with a basement, which is unusual for the area. The foundation is of pier and beam construction. The exterior walls are dark red brick. It has a tin hip roof that appears to be Spanish tile. Three hip dormers are centered over the facade. It has box eaves and stick brackets. There are two brick chimneys with corbelled caps. Balusters line the balconies on both sides of the house. The front doorway is raised a few steps. The door, sidelights, and fanlight feature leaded, beveled glass. Tuscan columns and paired pilasters frame the entrance. Stone detailing includes quoins, sills, keystones, impostes and belt course. There are arched patterns in brickwork over the French doors that flank the entry. Arched entrances are featured on the sun porches. The original garage which included servant quarters is located behind the home.^{22,23}

The interior of the house is light and open. One of its most elegant features is the ornate plasterwork ceilings with multiple moldings. Since the house was built with central heating, there is only one fireplace and it is faced with Rookwood Pottery tiles. Beveled glass pocket doors close off the arched formal entrance where a gracious staircase rises to the second floor. Oak floors with mahogany trim enhance the downstairs living area. There are 4,486 square feet of heated area dividing into 13 rooms and 3 1/2 bathrooms. The use of oversized windows, French doors and wide

¹⁹ Brazos County Deed Records, Book 237, p. 330.

²⁰ Brazos County Deed Records, Book 781, p. 138.

²¹ "Bryan, Texas - A School Town." Bryan and Brazos County Chamber of Commerce, 1929. (Brochure in the possession of Patricia Burke Hiler, 609 S. Ennis, Bryan, TX 77803)

²² Hardy, Heck and Moore, Inc. (Austin, Texas, July 1986. Site No. 757.)

²³ William Dudley Hunt, Jr., Encyclopedia of American Architecture, (McGraw Hill, Inc. 1980). pp. 92, 212-214.

connecting passages facilitates cross ventilation. Two sleeping porches on the second floor provide the opportunity to capture cool evening breezes.

This elegant home reflects the strong personality of its builder who contributed so much to Bryan-College Station -- Eugene Edge.

Addendum 2007

Approximately five years after the filing of this document with the Texas Historical Commission, the author received the cost sheets associated with the construction of this home from the original owners' grandson. These indicate the house was constructed by noted local contractor Charlie E. Jenkins in 1926, at a cost of \$23,583.25. See the second research document associated with this marker for further details regarding construction. Additional information on Charlie Jenkins can be found on this website in connection with the Texas Historical Marker bearing his name.

Editor

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