

# Progressive City Once Partly Financed By Elected Officers

Chronologically the City of Sweeny is in its adolescent years — too young to escape the agonies of growing pains — yet, also not old enough to have reached the golden years of full maturity.

Becoming a municipality governed by a Mayor-Council type of government just 15 short years ago, the city has experienced a steady growth that has seen the population grow from 1,393 to 3,187 in the last 10 year period.

Guiding the city that has outgrown the immaturity of childhood, and vigorously seeking the stature of manhood, is Mayor A. M. Anderson, who, being young enough to understand the turbulent quality of youth while old enough to have gained a background of experience that comes with mature years.

Mayor Anderson, who took the oath of his new office less than a month ago, is not a newcomer to Sweeny, nor is he a novice at city governmental affairs.

A businessman in the city for 21 years, he has also served on the City Council for seven years. His fellow councilmen have elected him to serve as mayor pro-tem all of those years.

Directing the affairs of city government with Anderson are men whose services range from many years to two brand-new men holding public offices for the first time.

In private life they are employees of industry, independent businessmen, and ranchers, allowing a blending of experience with new ideas, and backgrounds of understanding of every facet of properties and related industry that provides the economy of the city.

They are Councilmen M. R. Heickmann, mayor pro tem; A. B. Cahoon, R. R. Stevenson Sr., Bobo Arrington and Randy Tolbirt. Also, City Secretary Paul Baker, who is serving a second term as city tax assessor-collector.

Because of his astute perseverance toward the duties of his office, Baker's collections have been recorded as high as 102.54 per cent in a single year.

Of course, the figure boosting the collection over the 100 per cent mark represented back taxes collected. However, the records also reveals that there are less taxes in arrears now on the rolls than there ever has been since the city government was organized.

Mayor Anderson sees for the City of Sweeny a continued growth that will bring the population total to the 5,000 figure within the next 10 years.

He said, "Tax-wise we're in an advantageous position. We have a very low rate, good collections, and an extremely low bonded indebtedness for a city of this size."

"City officials have not had to resort to stop-gap measures to provide necessary facilities to meet the growth needs of its citizens, thereby given the opportunity to plan our expansions in an orderly manner that has allowed for plans on a long-range basis," he continues.

"Oil and gas properties and related industry accounts for more than 50 per cent of the city's assessed valuations, providing for the city a economic climate that is very favorable.

"Based on the patterns of the past, coupled with the prospects of the future, I can see nothing but a bright future for the City

"Besides an economic background that has allowed the city to operate on a pay-as-you go plan, other assets that has added to city's development picture is a first-class school system and fine churches that are building for the present and future," he concluded.

The city's financial picture, viewed from the onset of organized city government in 1945 to its current status, draws a parallel of the past and present.

Assessed valuation for tax purposes in 1960 were \$4,752,940 with a tax rate of \$1.45. Records also reveal that a total of 98.35 per cent of all current taxes have been collected. Valuations for tax purposes are based on about 25 per cent of actual values.

The waterworks and sewer system are owned by the city and are financed by revenue bonds.

The city has increased the value of the waterworks-sewer system from an original value of \$180,000 to \$535,000 with a water treating facility just completed within the system.

The city has three deep water wells that provides an excess of water for all city needs.

A modern City Hall and Fire Station, equipped with modern equipment, police protection with a radio-equipped patrol are other assets afforded the city's patrons.

But, back when the government was first organized, the picture was not so bright, and J. R. Smith, Sweeny's former mayor who served in this capacity for 10 years,

would be the first to attest to this fact.

To sum up the situation at that time Mr. Smith told the Facts reporter, "When the first city officials were elected — we had no chair to sit on, no desk to write from, no money and no credit."

Smith said that a utility company paid their taxes in advance that first year, enabling the city officials to have a little operating money.

Smith did not tell the reporter, but additional information was gained from another source which revealed that "Mayor Smith paid the city's secretary's salary out of his own pocket for the first six months of that year back in 1945. Many other expenses incurred in his taking care of the city's business came from his own pocket,

also," the person revealed.

An interim report on operations of the city's business reveals that \$581.50 was donated to the fire truck fund, and the general fund also received a donation of \$500. The sources of this income was not revealed.

Figures revealed that total revenue for the 1946-47 year was in the amount of \$9,135.67 and total expenses were in the amount of \$21,059.71.

The city has come a long way since those very lean years. Improved services and a sound financial status hasn't just happened.

Its citizens have elected men of ability and a great dedication to community service that have served them well in the past, and are shaping current events that will spell out Sweeny's destiny.