

Howard Gallemore Hartzog, Sr.

1901-1968

I. Context

In the mid-twentieth century, Calhoun County was beginning an unprecedented period of growth. Howard G. Hartzog, Sr. was an active community leader who guided Calhoun County as a private citizen, as county judge, and as a state representative by working diligently to promote county growth and pass laws that continue to benefit the area and the state.

II. Overview

Howard Gallemore Hartzog was born April 11, 1901 in Tolosa, Texas the son of J.O. and Sybil Hartzog. He graduated from San Marcos Academy, attended Southwest Texas Normal School (now Texas State University), obtained a B.A. Degree from Baylor University (1926), and a Law Degree from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. in 1928. After a season of professional football with the New York Giants, he returned to Port Lavaca to practice law. In 1935 he married Anna Paul Allen of Marlin, Texas. Howard and Anna had two children. Martha was born on March 8, 1940 and Howard (Howdy) Jr. on January 23, 1945. Howard and Anna continued as man and wife until her death in 1967.¹

In 1933, he was elected representative for the 69th district (then composed of Calhoun, Goliad, and Victoria counties). For fourteen years he actively contributed to writing bills. Among them were bills that encouraged the development of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority and the authorization to establish county-wide school districts (of which Calhoun County was among the first). He sponsored the Seawalls

Act which granted the building of numerous seawalls to help slow erosion and conserve coastal lands in Calhoun County and other coastal areas in Texas. He was also responsible for the certification of Title concerning automobile registration.²

After he left the Texas House of Representatives in 1947, he served on the Calhoun County Independent School District Board of Trustees and served as the interim city attorney for the city of Port Lavaca.³

In 1950, Howard Hartzog ran for County Judge, was elected, and was sworn in on January 1, 1951. Judge Hartzog served six consecutive terms in office, seventeen years, longer than any other person in Calhoun County history. It was a position he held for the rest of his life.⁴

As county judge, he presided over the commissioner's court. During his tenure, numerous projects were accomplished. A new courthouse was completed,⁵ a new Lavaca Bay causeway was built, and a new library was built. The county hospital underwent two major expansions. A new airport was constructed and opened to traffic, a new agriculture building was completed, and a new county fairgrounds was completed. Calhoun County became a leading county in the number of miles of Farm-to-Market roads per capita in the state because of the creation of new roads.⁶

During his years as County Judge, there were weather-related challenges faced by the people of Calhoun County. In late June 1960, heavy rains dumped more than twenty-nine inches on the county in a matter of only three days. In his role as County Coordinator, Judge Hartzog led the recovery efforts. In September 1961, Hurricane

Carla ravaged Calhoun County causing millions of dollars in damage to homes, crops, livestock, and roads. Once again, Judge Hartzog led the rebuilding efforts.⁷

As County Judge, he regularly held court where he adjudicated hundreds of criminal, civil, and probate cases.⁸ Another aspect of the County Judge's office was his role as Ex-Officio County School Superintendent, a job which required considerable time. Judge Hartzog was the last person to serve in that position. It was finally abolished at the end of 1966 its duties having been absorbed into the Calhoun County Independent School District.⁹

In addition to his duties as County Judge, Howard Hartzog was instrumental in promoting the future economic well-being of his county. Community leaders wanted to expand industry in Calhoun County. The development of the Matagorda Ship Channel would allow that to occur by connecting Calhoun County to almost every port in the world. As Vice-President of the Mid-Coast Water Development Association, he was able to bring the ship channel to fruition in 1966.¹⁰

Judge Hartzog was a member of the Masonic Lodge, the Rotary Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the Civic Theater, was a director of the Guadalupe River Watershed Development Association, and was vice chairman of the Gulf Coast area of the Economic Development Authority and the American Bar Association.¹¹

Judge Hartzog devoted his life to service and worked tirelessly to promote growth, well-being, and industry in the county. Howard G. Hartzog, Sr. died in Marlin, Texas on May 18, 1968 and is buried next to his wife in the Port Lavaca Cemetery.¹²

III. Significance

Howard G. Hartzog, Sr. was a leading figure in Calhoun County from the 1930's through the 1960's. Through his ongoing efforts as County Judge, State Representative, charter member of the Mid-Coast Water Development Association, and private citizen, the positive results of his contributions to the community can still be felt today. As stated in House Simple Resolution Number 17, "...Judge Hartzog was something of a living legend, and his personality and drive were identified with just about every public undertaking as the city moved from a sleepy shrimping village to a bustling industrial port."¹³

IV. Documentation

¹ Interview with Howard G. Hartzog, Jr. and Frances Wedig Hartzog on July 18, 2012

² Calhoun County Historical Commission, Shifting Sands of Calhoun County, 1981, p.169-170

³ House Simple Resolution, Number 17, 60th Legislature June 12, 1968.

⁴ H.S.R. #17 1968

⁵ Port Lavaca Wave, July 1,1959 p.1

⁶ Calhoun County Times, May 1, 1962

⁷ Houston Post, June 28, 1960, p. 1-A

⁸ Minutes County Court, vol. C; Minutes County Court Vol. E; Probate Record, vol. Q.

⁹ Victoria Advocate, February 28, 1963

¹⁰ Water Development (Official Publication of Texas Mid-Coast Water Development Association), vol. 5, No.1, Spring 1961

¹¹ Victoria Advocate, July 29, 1966

¹² Victoria Advocate, May 19, 1968, p. 1-A

¹³ H.S.R. #17, 1968

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Legislative Reference Library Of Texas

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas: Correspondence between Judge Hartzog and Senator Lyndon B. Johnson from 1955-1959.

Calhoun County Commissioner's Court Minutes Vol. I, J, K, L, M.