

= Green Lake ( Texas ) =

Green Lake is a natural tidal lake in Calhoun County , Texas , on the Guadalupe River flood basin . Known for its greenish waters , from which its name derives , the lake is located 12 miles ( 19 km ) west of Port Lavaca and 22 miles ( 35 km ) south of Victoria on the Gulf Coastal Plain . Despite being less than 3 miles ( 4 @. @ 8 km ) from the coast of San Antonio Bay , its waters are fresh . It is the largest natural freshwater lake entirely in Texas , covering an area of approximately 10 @, @ 000 acres ( 40 km <sup>2</sup> ) .

Separated from San Antonio Bay by the Guadalupe River delta around 2 @, @ 200 years ago , a wetland ecosystem supporting a wide variety of waterfowl developed along the lake shore and the Guadalupe River delta . Archaeological evidence supports claims of Karankawa settlement .

An affluent 19th @-@ century agricultural community of the same name established near the lakeside in the mid @-@ 19th century , but dwindled in status , becoming virtually abandoned in the aftermath of the American Civil War . It was strategically important during the early stages of the war , due to its proximity to fresh water and the Gulf of Mexico . After reaching its low point during the Great Depression , the lakeside community modestly rebounded in 1947 following the nearby discovery of oil . A fictional lake of the same name and with a similar history is featured in the 1998 novel Holes .

= = Hydrology = =

Green Lake is about 13 miles ( 21 km ) in circumference and about 2 miles ( 3 @. @ 2 km ) wide . The water level is shallower near the shoreline , but is deepest towards the center of the lake several hundred feet from the shore . The bottom is generally flat and averages about 4 feet ( 1 @. @ 2 m ) in depth . The nearby Guadalupe River frequently floods the plain , and is the main source of fresh water renewal . The shoreline is naturally grassy and poorly drained with coastal marshes between the lake and San Antonio Bay .

To improve drainage , a levee was constructed in 1967 , separating the lake from the Victoria Barge Canal , which runs along the bay 's northern and eastern shores ; cutting off several bayous from the lake . The canal begins north at an industrial plant outside Victoria and empties in San Antonio Bay in Seadrift . Hog Bayou runs along the western shore of Green Lake , through the Guadalupe Delta Wildlife Management Area to the south , before its confluence with Mission Lake .

= = History = =

= = = Formation = = =

Green Lake formed initially as a northern inlet of San Antonio Bay . As the Guadalupe River shifted westward about 2 @, @ 500 years ago , it deposited silt , developing a delta that prograded into San Antonio Bay . Around 2 @, @ 200 years ago the delta discharge extended completely across the bay , severing the northern extension from the system , which formed present @-@ day Green Lake . Pottery and burial grounds found in the area suggest a presence of Karankawa Indians at the time of formation . Middens uncovered north of the lake contained shells from the brackish water @-@ species of rangia clams ( rangia cuneata ) .

= = = Settlement = = =

Wealthy cotton farmers from Kentucky established plantations and settled the fertile lands near the lake during the 1850s , establishing the town of Green Lake , Texas . First @-@ hand accounts described it as " the locality of a neighborhood characterized by [ the ] wealth and social standing of the residents . "

After the American Civil War , returning residents found that their slaves , livestock and farm

equipment had been taken . Most residents relocated . However , in the early 20th century , farmers returned and the town of Green Lake modestly grew to an approximate population of 300 in 1914 . At the time , much of the land in the vicinity was used for livestock grazing . The only profitable commercial uses for the lake itself included transportation of lumber and fishing . Approximately US \$ 100 @, @ 000 worth of fish were caught in the lake from 1900 to 1915 . Nevertheless , the lake bed remained dry for extended periods and vegetation covered certain areas . Local residents soon began to use the bed to grow cotton .

In 1917 , Texas filed a trespass to try title suit to reclaim the lake bed for the state . In *Welder v. State* , the Texas Court of Civil Appeals in Austin declared the lake permanent and navigable @-@ in @-@ fact , granting the bed to the state under the purview of the Texas Game , Fish and Oyster Commission ( later Texas Parks and Wildlife Department ) . Without permission from the Texas Attorney General , the Texas Land Commissioner then sold the bed to a private buyer for agricultural use in 1918 . In the 1948 case of *State v. Bryan* , the Texas Court of Civil Appeals in Austin upheld the sale as valid under color of law , and immune from a trespass to try title suit due to the one @-@ year statute of limitations on land sales . However , under the Texas Water Rights Adjudication Act of 1967 , Green Lake was classified as a public body of water . The Supreme Court of Texas affirmed this classification in 1988 , rejecting the argument of the bed 's then @-@ owner that it was not a lake by definition , but a natural depression flooded with surface runoff .

During the Great Depression , the population of the Green Lake settlement dwindled to 25 . It remained low until the discovery of oil in 1947 . Twenty wells were constructed at the Green Lake oilfield , although as of 1984 , only one still operated . By 2000 , the population of Green Lake was 51 , the same number reported in 1970 and 1990 .

= = = Civil War = = =

The lake played a role in the evacuation of federal troops from Texas at the onset of the American Civil War . As Texas considered whether to secede from the United States , General David E. Twiggs , commander of federal troops in Texas negotiated with state leaders concerning the transfer of federal property . After learning of such negotiations , the United States military moved to decommission Twiggs , and replace him with Colonel Carlos Waite . Texas viewed this move as a rejection of the negotiations and proceeded to forcefully claim the federal property . Twiggs , while awaiting relief from Waite , surrendered the property on the condition that federal troops could peacefully evacuate . They were allowed to depart , but only from the Texas coast . Waite arrived and relocated troops near Green Lake , where they could await coastal departure near an adequate source of freshwater . During the stay , Fort Sumter fell under siege , and Texas grew concerned about the concentration of armed federal troops in the area . With their respective nations now at war , Texas considered the deal with Twiggs void , and began to capture federal troops to force them to either join the Confederacy or be Prisoners of War . Some of the remaining uncaptured companies elsewhere in the state attempted to flee to Green Lake . Several regiments camped by the lake later in the war , and complained about mosquitos .

= = Flora and fauna = =

In the area around Green Lake there are forests of pecan , black willow , cedar , American elm , hackberry and green ash . To the south , the Guadalupe Delta Wildlife Management Area serves as a wetland habitat for thousands of permanent egrets , and other birds , including the brown pelican , reddish egret , white @-@ faced ibis , wood stork , bald eagle , white @-@ tailed hawk , peregrine falcon , and the whooping crane . American alligators reside in the area as well .

Redfish and trout were once the main species of fish living in the lake , until the construction of an embankment reduced their populations . A large quantity of silt is now deposited in the lake from the Guadalupe River , after the dredging of a freshwater channel that supplies farmers and the Union Carbide plant in Seadrift . The channel has negatively affected the delta ecosystem by diminishing the river 's nutritional input .

= = In popular culture = =

Green Lake , Texas is the setting for Louis Sachar 's 1998 novel Holes , and the 2003 film adaptation . It is described as a dry lake that had once been the largest in the state , surrounded by an affluent community . After a long drought , the lake dried up and the area became a ghost town . Juvenile delinquents were sent to Camp Green Lake to dig holes in the lakebed as punishment .