

Elwell's Fate

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Parish House Museum Director

The community of Elwell began in 1895 with the building of the first church in the area – the Dilley Chapel, in honor of Reverend Cora May (Elwell) Dilley.

Three years later J.W. Purvis built his general store on the corner of what is now Colorado Blvd and Hwy 60. Later, Elwell was also the site of the first commercial dairy in the area – Home Supply Dairy.

The church and store supported the area's earliest farmers and their families within a several-mile radius. The store was the only local resource for everything from shoes to tools and food staples, and the store's second story provided a community hall for meetings, parties, and other social gatherings before Johnstown was founded, and afterward for decades.

Elwell's decline began when the Great Western Railroad couldn't secure land next to Elwell to build a new railway. As a result, the line passed about a mile and a half to the south, and the GW Sugar Company factory was built just east of Johnstown. The factory was completed and began operation in 1926, resulting in that town to prosper and grow.

There were 50 people living at Elwell in 1930, and its residents received their mail in Berthoud; there was never a post office at Elwell.

The lack of a post office also caused the 1924 meteorite fall at the Elwell Cemetery to be named the Johnstown Meteorite, rather than the Elwell Meteorite. The custom for meteorite falls is to name them after the closest town with a post office.

The former Purvis family farm that encompasses the Elwell corner was purchased by a developer and will become a housing subdivision. The street names will honor the pioneer families who invested in the area before Johnstown was founded in 1902. The JHS is preparing to engage with the developer to see if the Elwell corner, designated for commercial development, can be converted into a historic park.

Sources: *A Tribute To Johnstown*, Rebecca S. Healy, 1977; Various area newspaper articles.



The original silos, barns, outbuildings, dairy infrastructure and equipment, and five houses are still intact on the property.



The Historic Parish House and Museum

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Open Wednesdays and Saturdays
9:00 A.M. – Noon, and by appointment