

Longhorn building moved, repurposed

By DD Turner, News Messenger

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Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant employees passed through the guard house daily on their way to and from their jobs.

Now, that guard house will become the Caddo Lake Ramsar Wetlands Visitors Center as part of the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge.



Courtney Case/News Messenger
[\(ENLARGE\)](#)

"It's the last original remaining building from the plant that opened in 1942," said Jack Canson, with the Caddo Lake Coalition that includes the Caddo Lake Institute, city of Uncertain, Caddo Lake Chamber of Commerce and Tourism and the Greater Caddo Lake Association.

The coalition obtained permission from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to move the building and donated \$12,000 to move it to the visitor's area of the refuge as well as prepare the slab and various improvements. L.W. Oney House Movers was hired to move the building.

L.W. Oney House Movers work on transporting a guard shack, the last remaining building from the Longhorn Ammunition Plant, Thursday in Karnack. The structure was moved to the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge visitor's area, where it will serve as the Caddo Lake Ramsar Wetlands Visitors Center.

"Now, we are trying to raise \$15,000 to modify the building," said Canson. "This is going to be a huge addition to attract tourists to the refuge.

The lake is one of only 26 sites in the United States recognized as a "wetland of international significance" under Ramsar and Canson says that is a huge draw that brings international tourists to the lake.

According to a coalition press release, wildlife refuges do not maintain guarded gates and the guard house would have been removed or destroyed before the refuge opened to the public. Destruction of this historic building would have been tragic, considering it is the sole remaining symbol of an era in which Longhorn was Marshall's largest employer and executives from companies working at the plant played vital roles in the civic, cultural and political life of this community, according to the release.

The octagonal building will now contain educational displays that help people learn more about why the refuge and parts of Caddo Lake are an internationally significant habitat for migratory birds and other animals and why the wetlands are important, according to the press release.

The land was owned by the U.S. Army until 1997, when the plant was decommissioned and transfer began to the Department of the Interior. From there, the land was made available to the refuge, which has been working on cleaning the site.

Plans call for the refuge to open to the public Sept. 26.

Organizations and individuals who wish to help with this project can contact Jack Canson at 903-938-8966 or jackcanson@gmail.com. The institute is a 501(c)3 foundation and donations are tax-deductible.