



CITY OF LA JOYA

"JEWEL OF THE VALLEY"

La Joya (The "Jewel") is a community that has a rich and fascinating history. The name was captured from a natural lake just west of the city, and was named by the early settlers of this area. This lake stored valuable water for the early settlers for domestic use, crops and their cattle.

The city's name was derived from a small natural lake just west of the city; the lake was said by the early settlers to shine in the sun like a jewel. The site on which La Joya was founded was part of what was known as *Los Ejidos de Reynosa Viejo*. The ejidos were the shared grazing lands used for the livestock of the settlers of Reynosa Viejo. These settlers had been brought in on March 14, 1749, by Jose de Escandon to form this settlement. To this day, many La Joya residents can trace their ancestry to the Escandon settlers

During the early 1800's, at the site of what is now La Joya, Francisco de la Garza, a descendent of the early colonizers of the area, founded a community, called Tabasco, adjacent to the northern bank of the Rio Grande. It was a prosperous community that died out after flooding in 1908 and 1909. The settlers moved their belongings just north to less flood-prone ground. In 1926 J.H. Smith, a land developer from Houston, came to the community and convinced the residents that they could best be served by having an incorporated city. An election held that year resulted in the incorporation of a new city named La Joya. Felix R. Vela was elected the first mayor; Alejandro Solis and Pablo Treviño were elected commissioners.

By the 1930's the town had two businesses, a school, and a number of scattered dwellings. The Great Depression limited development, and the municipal government lay dormant until 1965, when a community leader and political activist named Leo J. Leo and other residents petitioned for a special city election. (The petition was granted by the county judge, and in April 1965 Leo was elected mayor, with Guadalupe Alaniz and Arnoldo Treviño as commissioners.) By 1940, La Joya had seven businesses and a population estimated 175. The population stayed at about that level until 1972, when it rose to 1,217. In 1982 La Joya had 2,018 residents and thirteen businesses, and in 1990 it had 2,604 residents and six businesses. By 2000 there were 3,303 residents and forty-nine businesses.