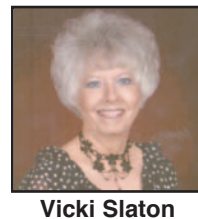




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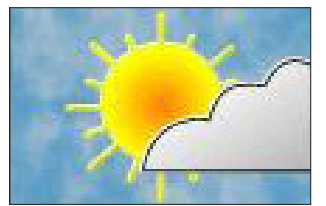


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Officials tout new era for city's 'grand old lady'

Settles survival assured

By **STEVE REAGAN**
Staff Writer

After decades of broken promises and dashed hopes, Big Spring's "grand old lady" is getting the facelift she deserves.

Led by Gov. Rick Perry, state and local officials joined forces with developer G. Brint Ryan to kick-start a \$20 million Settles Hotel renovation project Thursday afternoon.

The groundbreaking ceremonies marked the beginning of a two-year renovation that Ryan said will restore the 78-year-old building to its former glory.

The building, erected for \$500,000 in 1930, was a destination of choice for travelers for many years — as well a center of activity for the community — but has been vacant and in an advanced state of dilapidation for more than two decades.

During Thursday's ceremonies, officials expressed hope that the renovation will do more than just restore a landmark.

"This is the type of urban development that can revitalize the downtown area," Gov. Perry said. "This isn't just about renovating a building, it's about revitalizing an entire community."

Perry, who recalled thinking the Settles was "the biggest building in the world" when he first visited the area as a youth in 1957, said the renovation project will herald a rebirth for Big Spring.

"This hotel is a reminder of when Big Spring was ... a vibrant community," he said. "Well, it can be again — and it



will be again."

Perry and others laid most of the credit for the renovation on Ryan, a Big Spring native who has spearheaded a two-year effort to bring the project to fruition.

"Brint Ryan is the type of visionary that every community wants to have," Perry said. "Brint, giving back to this community is a great legacy you'll leave for Big Spring and Texas and we thank you."

"One thing I've known since the day I met Brint Ryan is that this thing was going to get done," Big Spring Mayor Russ McEwen said. "A lot of us have dreamed about this day for a long time ... People with pas-

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HERALD photos/Thomas Jenkins

From left above, Big Spring Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Terry Wegman, Developer G. Brint Ryan, Big Spring Mayor Russ McEwen, State Sen. Kel Seliger, State Rep. Joe Hefflin and City Councilman Troy Tompkins participate in formal groundbreaking ceremonies for the \$20 million Settles Hotel renovation project Thursday afternoon. Below, the restored Hotel Settles sign, and at left, Gov. Rick Perry talks about the importance of the restoration project to Big Spring.



Landmark hotel stirs many fond memories

By **STEVE REAGAN**

Staff Writer

First-time visitors to Big Spring might have a hard time understanding the connection residents have with the Settles Hotel.

To newcomers, the old building is little more than a glass and brick monolith that dominates the downtown area.

To Big Spring natives, however, it is much, much more.

Several long-time residents shared their feelings for the Settles during groundbreaking ceremonies Thursday to mark a \$20 million renovation of the historic building.

"I drank a gazillion cups of coffee in the coffee shop there. I'm delighted (about the restoration). This will be one of the biggest boons this community has seen in years"

—Pat Porter

W.R. Settles built the hotel in 1930 for the then-considerable sum of \$500,000, money he earned in the oil boom of the 1920s.

During its heyday, the hotel was a destination of choice for travelers and hosted such luminaries as former U.S. President Herbert Hoover, band leader Lawrence Welk and the King himself — Elvis Presley.

For many local residents, however, the hotel is more than just a place to stay.

For Burr Lea Settles, great-nephew of W.R. Settles, the hotel is like a family heirloom.

"In 1926, my great-uncle owned some land near Forsan ... and he got wealthy during the oil

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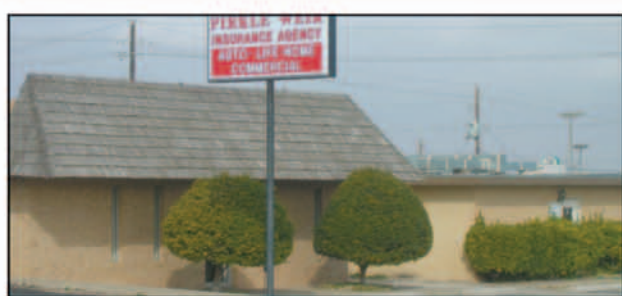


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