

WINTER 2008 NEWSLETTER

Friends of Guadalupe River, Honey Creek, Inc.

A non-profit organization



President's Letter

by Nancy Gray

Board of Directors

What a good year this has been for the Friends, the park and Honey Creek. Our park interpreter, Craig Hensley, has continued to provide many informative and interesting programs. He has also been an integral part of our Friends group and has offered special learning opportunities for our members. The Friends have supported Craig with new interpretive tools and volunteers. A few great people have joined the core of active members in the Friends group and we are all enjoying and benefiting from their involvement. Several of them have become certified Honey Creek guides and are leading hikes on a regular basis. We just finished a banner Halloween at the park event; thank you everyone who helped! We are working on native landscaping plans for the Rust house and the interpretive center and have a great donation to help us continue that activity. There are exciting plans to enhance the interpretive center and the Friends will be involved in both fundraising and implementation of those plans. The trails on the park property on the north side of the river have been cut and we have all been waiting for rain so that we can burn the brush and start helping with that area also. We have had several general meetings for all Friends members and plan more for next year. Our park and Honey Creek are truly all year round, so come out this winter and enjoy the park. If I haven't mentioned something that grabbed you and made you want to come join us and be more active, please call us and tell us your ideas for supporting the park. There is still a need and room for many more of you to support the Friends with your time and energy as well as your membership fees and donations. It is a privilege and a joy to work with the interesting and dedicated people in the Friends group. We are looking forward to another exciting year in 2009.

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Halloween at the Park

by Terry Urbanczyk

Once again our Halloween event was a tremendous success. The weather was perfect and the new parking area helped visitors come in and out of the area safely. There were a total of 1552 adults and children who attended this year, including 219 volunteers; that's an increase of 35% above last year's attendance. The amount of donations collected was also up \$160 above last year, for a total of \$1356. All proceeds will of course go toward the park Friends' organization to fund park programs and needed improvements.

All this success is due in large part to the wonderful organizations and individuals who sponsored stations and donated food and supplies for the event. Special thanks go to HEB for again providing the food and beverages, and Randy Eman for supplying a majority of candy. The following groups decorated and provided candy and "spooks" along the trail: Broadway Bank; Bulverde 4-H Club; Cordillera Nature Club; Girls Scout Troops 4577, 445 and 1136; Smithson



Halloween at the Park

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by Terry Urbanczyk



Valley HS FCCLA; and Smithson Valley HS Junior PALS. These families and their friends also sponsored stations and decorated the trail: Holly Camero's family, Terry Urbanczyk's family, the Abolafia-Rosensweig family and the David Shaw family. Our special guest Susan Kuntz was a real treat for the parents and children alike with her story telling skills. She was honored this year with the HEB "Teacher of the Year" award for the state of Texas. We've always known she was a wonderful educator, now she has the recognition to go with the praise!

We felt some growing pains this year as well. Due to a change in rules from the State of Texas Auditor's office the park was required to permit each car and charge for each person over age 12 in the cars. This caused a major back-up at the park entrance, with some guest waiting up to an hour or more to gain entry to the park. Even though headquarters staff was processing cars at 31seconds per car, that still was not fast enough to get 1200 people through the gates in about a 2 hour time frame. Some guests became rather upset over the lengthy wait with a car load of anxious trick-or-treaters in tow, but most took it all in stride and had a very good experience over all. The Friends and Park management will be looking at ways to expedite the check-in process for next year.

As popularity of this event increases the need for more volunteers will also increase. Speaking from personal experience, volunteers have as much or more fun as the guests do, so keep us in mind for next year if you're looking for a great volunteer opportunity.

**Boy Scouts Clean Up the River**

by Dave Kibler

On Saturday, 25 October 2008, an enthusiastic group of Scouts from Troop 285, sponsored by Coker Methodist Church in San Antonio, arrived early on a beautiful, sunny, fall morning to walk the banks of the Guadalupe River inside the park boundaries to pick up trash and litter left by park guests throughout the busy summer months. The



banks on both sides of the river yielded about 150 pounds of trash, although the job was made somewhat easier this year due to the lack of flooding which had brought down excessive amounts of trash in 2007. One contingent of five Scouts and a leader floated down to the park in canoes, provided by the Bergheim Campground, from the Edge Falls crossing, collecting trash from banks along the way. A number of abandoned vehicle tires were collected in this process. Late in the morning a fine lunch of grilled sausage, tortillas, chips, and cookies was prepared for all participants. This lunch was provided compliments of the Friends of Guadalupe River State Park. A grand total of 86 Scouts and parents participated in this semi-annual cleanup effort, which is supported and encouraged by the "Keep Texas Beautiful" effort of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The next cleanup event will be held in April 2009.

Trails to the Past ~ Leaving the Past Behind

by Bryden Moon

Rare is the immigrant pioneer whose story can be reconstructed from his own words. Thus it is with gratitude to his descendants in Germany for saving the documents, and his Texas heirs for sharing the translated letters that we can gain insights into the life and times of a real German homesteader and his family. This homesteader happens to have settled on lands that would end up being in eastern Kendall County. Starting out with 320 acres and Guadalupe riverfront access that was so vital to early success, Christian Friedrich Bergmann settled on land just a few miles up river from Guadalupe River State Park.

Mr. Bergmann's insights of his family's experiences & travails during their trip over and time spent in San Antonio prior to



homesteading are just as interesting as their life on the land – they came over in 1854, leaving behind family & friends in Ebersbach, a textile community in the Kingdom of Saxony. Saxony sits in the southeast corner of Germany near the present day countries of Poland and Czechoslovakia. When they began their journey to America, Mr. Christian Friedrich Bergmann was 37, his wife Johanna, Christiana, Louisa was 36. Their 3 sons - Christian Friedrich Jr., Karl Heinrich, & Christoph Wilhelm, were 12, 9, and 5 respectively. Their first route took them north to Bremerhaven, where they boarded a ship that would bring them to Texas.



From family records we learn that they left Germany on August 19, 1854, sailing on the ship "**Mina Blumenthal**." They finally arrived in Galveston on November 3rd (77 days at sea to this point) only to find that there was yellow fever in Galveston and they could not disembark (can you imagine

the disappointment), so they continued by boat to Indianola finally stepping on land on the 6th of November...after 80 days at sea. This was not a pleasure voyage: during this trip, which Mr. Bergmann describes as "**my difficult and hard journey**," all the family members are sick and even worse, 7 fellow passengers die.

After staying in Indianola for 2 days, on November 9th in 1854 the Bergmann family was into the first day of a 9- day overland trip to San Antonio "**...they start out with 5 mules, three other parties and a wagon driver named Schlein**". Mr. Bergmann simply noted about the first day "**we saw only prairie.**" However, the remainder of the overland trip was eventful – and I quote: "**On the 4th day (of the overland trip) we felt a 'northerner' with ice ...the second day after the northerner came the locusts, so many that everything was covered with them, so that they almost scratched our eyes along the road.**" On the 18th of November they arrived in San Antonio. They have been on this odyssey for over 4 months.

Mr. Bergmann wrote to his family back in Germany starting soon after his arrival into Texas. And the picture he paints of San Antonio is not a pretty one.

What they found in San Antonio was just as "**difficult and hard**" as their journey. This was not the River Walk and hospitality town of today. On New Years Eve 1856, Mr. Bergmann writes: "**today a man was shot or stabbed to death; at the dances shooting is frequent...because here the life of a man is worth not more than the life of a dog, and a real investigation is not done, especially if the life lost is that of a German or an Irishman. ... I also have to say that there are many thieves & bad people and also drunkards.**" "You cannot trust anyone." He also grumbles that "**In San Antonio, more than 150 new homes are built every year and yet there is not much work for me this winter...when there is work the Poles get it because they work for less than the Germans ...**"

Well, Mr. Bergmann did find work in San Antonio, and on surrounding, close-in farms. He also worked as a rock mason; he even slaughtered hogs, and found time for growing his own crops and a small menagerie of his own animals (probably at first on rented land). The two youngest boys are going to school at a "monastery" and the oldest is working, as is Mrs. Bergmann.

Six months later, on June 21, 1857, he writes that "**the area of San Antonio and the land around San Antonio are haunted by thieves and murderers.**" In a note that the now 15 year-old C.F. Jr. adds, he really details the chaos: "**In the city is much upheaval because of a band of robbers was discovered that roamed all of Texas – often Indians are blamed in their stead, but they are really not often involved – now they started to rob in the city and murdered a farmer not far from the city on an open road. A secret society had formed that now follows them and as soon as they catch one of the men, they hang him from a tree or shoot him, as was done in mid-May. Three were shot in the street, one of them was a leader of the group; on the 11th of this month eleven were hanged...**"

While we will never know for sure, most believe that Mr. Bergmann came to Texas to make a better life for his family. I'm sure to this point he was having second thoughts, wondering if his decision to bring his family here had been the right one. We'll catch up with Mr. Bergmann and his family in a future edition.

There are more stories to be told!

Mr. A. J. Bergmann of Comfort, TX provided some of the resource materials.

Park Update

by Craig Hensley

With the approach of the winter months, the staff at the park is beginning to be able to breathe a bit more following our busiest year ever. Nearly 150,000 people visited the park and natural area this year, representing a significant increase from last year. Even with the river at near historic lows during much of the summer (or perhaps because of it), people came to the park to enjoy it in droves. And while here, guests were able to participate in a wide variety of programs now being offered in the park from the long-standing and always popular Honey Creek Hike hosted by the Friends group to the Saturday morning, afternoon and evening programs as well as Friday night astronomy programs.

The park also made progress in preparing for the opening of the Bauer Unit, a 600+ acre area north of the Guadalupe River that will provide an additional seven miles of hiking trails for hiking, biking and horseback riding. While the drought slowed progress during the summer months, hopes are that we will be able to proceed within the coming months so that our guests can begin to enjoy the area by next spring or summer.

Finally, the long-anticipated evolution of the Interpretive Center has begun. This building, located adjacent to the amphitheatre, was originally constructed to serve as a visitor center with exhibits and more. Within the past several months, work has begun to develop interpretive exhibits that will provide our guests with wonderful opportunities to learn more about the nature of Guadalupe River State Park while encouraging children to use their skills of observation to discover the wonders that make our park such a special place. To find out more about this project and/or to make a donation to it, check out the plans that will be posted on the Friends website within the next month.

On behalf of the park staff, I wish to thank the Friends Board of Directors and each member for your contributions throughout the past year. Your dedication to Guadalupe River and Honey Creek is vital to our success and on behalf of all the staff of the park, we wish you all a happy holiday season and a great 2009!

General Membership Meeting

Please make plans to attend the next

Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek Inc. General Meeting

To be held at the Rust House, in early January

A special program is planned for members only.

Date and time will be posted on the web site and emailed to all members.

Food and beverages will be provided by the Friends.

We look forward to seeing you all here!

Homesteaders' Homecoming Rescheduled

by Bryden Moon



Our 3rd annual Homesteader Homecoming will be rescheduled to a spring date*.

When we do gather again, everyone will find a few changes from past events. First of all, the day of week and time will be different – Sunday @ 2:00. Also the venue will move from the amphitheater to the Rust house



(built circa. 1917) in the park.

Finally, the format for our Homesteaders' Homecoming will include a segment in which each family member is allotted 5 minutes to talk about any facet of their forebear's heritage. We are encouraging "show and tell", which might include old photos, documents, or artifacts – even passages from old letters.

As in keeping with past events, at the close, every one will share in pot-luck desserts – the Friends group will provide the drinks.

*This year many of our past participants had prior commitments and last minute conflicts that would have keep them from attending. To avoid a scheduling problem for the rescheduled event, Bryden Moon will attempt to contact as many past homesteaders to insure a clear date. When we do finalize a date, everyone will be called or e-mailed or both.



Homesteader Remembered

by Terry Urbanczyk



Mr. Adolph Scheel

I'd like to take a moment to remember a good friend to the park and a valuable resource to us all, Mr. Adolph Joseph Scheel. Mr. Scheel left us this fall at the ripe old age of 96, but before he passed, I was privileged to hear him tell stories of his life here at Honey Creek in the not so distant past.

"You know all those old stone walls you see all around the countryside here? Those walls weren't built to keep animals in, they were meant to keep things out!" He reminded me that all cattle, sheep and goats used to be free ranging, so farmers built these walls to protect their gardens and crops back before the barbed wire fence.

While out walking the fields to check on his fathers' cattle he often stopped at his favorite fishing hole to catch some fish for dinner:

"The best fishin' hole in the county was down along the river where there was this very tall cliff on one side of the river as it makes a turn.

The ground at the top of the cliff hung out over the river and birds always built their nests on that overhang. I figured out that a bunch of big ol' cat fish sat there under those bird nests just waitin' for the baby birds to fall out of the nest so they could get a nice dinner!"

That old favorite fishing hole is still there today but it is now the day use area of the park and there are more children swimming there than big cat fish. This and many other wonderful tales give us a glimpse into the past; a simpler, tougher way of life that has all but disappeared. What a wealth of knowledge and experience he was. It was a true blessing to have known him even for a very short while.

It is for Adolph and others like him that the Friends of GR/HC have established the Honey Creek Homesteaders Homecoming event so that we may all have an opportunity to share in the richness of their living histories while they are still among us. Thank you Adolph, you will be missed.



Guadalupe River State Park/Honey Creek State Natural Area Programs December 2008-February 2009

by Craig Hensley

Honey Creek Hike

Each Saturday trained volunteer interpretive guides lead guests on a hike to enjoy the beauty of Honey Creek as well as learn about the cultural and natural history of this state natural area.

Time: 9-11 a.m.

Dates: December 6, 20, 27; January 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; February 7, 14, 21, 28

Meet at: Rust House

Bird Walk and Talk

Join Park Interpreter Craig Hensley for these bird hikes as we check out the fields and woodlands of Honey Creek. We'll search for winter and year-round residents, from kestrels and kingfishers to a host of native sparrows.

Time: 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Dates: December 7 & 21; January 11 & 25; February 8 & 22

Meet at: Park Headquarters

Prowlin' for Owls

They are mysterious and always a challenge to find. You'll learn about the owls of the park and Texas and then head out in search of these denizens of the dark.

Time: 6:30-8 p.m.

Dates: December 6, January 31, February 28

Meet at: Interpretive Center

Stories in the Stars

The starry sky has long been a storybook for cultures. Join us for an evening of star stories and stargazing at its best, including viewing a host of celestial wonders through our telescopes.

Time: 6:30-8 p.m.

Dates: December 20; January 17, February 14

Meet at: Interpretive Center

Full Moon Meander

Join our Park Interpreter for a walk under the full moon. These walks will take advantage of the light of the full moon as we search for owls and other wildlife, and enjoy wonders of the night.

Time: 6:30-8 p.m.

Dates: December 12, January 11, February 9

Meet at: Interpretive Center

Kids in Nature

Calling all kids and their parents! Join us each Saturday for an afternoon of exploration and adventure as we investigate the natural world. Topics vary and can be found listed on the Friends webpage under the appropriate month.

Time: 2-3:30 p.m.

Dates: December 6, 13, 20; January 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; February 7, 14, 21, 28

Meet at

Bird in the Hand (New Program!)

Join Park Interpreter and bird bander Craig Hensley for a morning of bird banding at its best. You'll see native songbirds up close and personal, learn about bird banding and assist in releasing the birds back to the wild.

Time: 8-10:30 a.m.

Dates: December 13, January 10 & 24, February 14 & 28

Meet at: Rust House

Please note the following for park closings for managed deer hunts:

5 p.m. Sunday, December 7 – Noon Friday, December 12, 2008

5 p.m. Sunday, December 14 – Noon Friday, December 19, 2008

5 p.m. Sunday, January 4 – Noon Friday, January 9, 2009

5 p.m. Sunday, January 11 – Noon Friday, January 15, 2009

Honey Creek will be closed December 13th and 14th for a special youth deer hunt; thus there will not be a Honey Creek hike that weekend.

Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc. Membership

(Membership Renewal date is January 1st)

Name(s): _____ Date _____

Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Email _____ Phone: _____

Membership Type: ___ New Member ___ Renewal ___ Change of Address

Level of Membership: ___ \$5 Education or Youth Organization ___ \$50 Sustaining Member

 ___ \$5 Student (under 18) ___ \$100 Contributing Member

 ___ \$10 Individual (over 18) ___ \$500 Corporate Partner

 ___ \$15 Family ___ \$1000 Life Membership

I would like to help the Friends by volunteering for:

- ___ Interpretive hikes ___ Outdoor Ed. Programs ___ Trail Maintenance
- ___ Historical Drama ___ Evening Programs ___ South Island Beautification
- ___ Trail Ride Event ___ Fundraising ___ Other _____

Send checks payable to "Friends of GR/HC, Inc. Mail to: 3350 Park Road 31, Spring Branch, TX 78070
Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc. is a 501(c)3 organization. All donations are tax deductible.

**Friends of Guadalupe River
and Honey Creek, Inc.**

3350 Park Road 31
Spring Branch, Texas 78070

We're on the web!
www.honeycreekfriends.com

The Friends of Guadalupe River and Honey Creek, Inc. is a non-profit organization working with Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area.

The "Friends" meet monthly at the Park. Please join us on the second Thursday at 7:00 pm.

And bring a friend!