

# FRIENDS

OF GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK  
HONEY CREEK SNA

## WINTER NEWSLETTER 2023



### A Message from the President

by Bob Morris

Howdy Folks,

This is a season for thankfulness, reflection, and renewal for many groups and individuals and that includes our Friends of GRSP/HCSNA. We have much to be thankful for.

The most significant event in 2023 was the 515-acre parcel acquisition of Honey Creek Ranch by Texas Parks & Wildlife from Terry and Ronnie Urbanczyk. We are grateful for their generosity that gives the opportunity for the public to enjoy this beautiful land in addition to protecting the Honey Creek watershed. We also appreciate the Gass Family members, Cynthia Gass Martinez and Joyce Gass Moore, who entered into a conservation easement for the 600-acre Honey Creek Springs Ranch that also protects the Honey Creek watershed.

We have also been blessed with the generosity of relatives, friends, and organizations who have made significant donations to the Friends. These include Janice Pieper who donated in memory of her husband, J.W. Pieper, a long-time Board Member and Honey Creek Guide; Laird Ingram, a retired physician and Honey Creek Guide who with his wife moved to Kansas to be close to children and grandchildren; Sara Weidner Turner in memory of her father, Oswald Weidner, to support programs at the old Doeppenschmidt-Weidner Ranch; and the HEB Foundation's gift of \$25,000 in memory of Tom Anderson, a remarkable educator who helped establish the Friends Group.

We are also grateful for our Board Members, Park Staff, and Volunteers who donate their their time and effort to further the success of the State Park and State Natural Area. I encourage all of us in this season of thanksgiving and the holiday spirit to renew our commitment to the Friends and to the Park and Natural Area. Currently the Friends Group has several areas in which we need more engagement and volunteers. These include a need for additional Board Members who will help with plans for next year, publicity, new educational programs for children and adults, and fund-raising. If you have expertise or interest in any of these areas, please contact me, Bob Morris ([bxxmorris@frontier.com](mailto:bxxmorris@frontier.com)), or Vice President Ed Van Reet ([etvr@gvtc.com](mailto:etvr@gvtc.com)), to volunteer or provide advice.

Wishing everyone great joy this holiday season,

Bob Morris, President

### From the Superintendent's Desk

by Brandon Lopes-Baca (Photos by Mackenzie Brown)

On October 11, the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration awarded Texas State Parks this year's National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management. Rodney Franklin, Director of Texas State Parks, commented: "It's no secret to the more than 9 million people who visit Texas State Parks every year that we have one of the nation's premiere systems. However, it is touching and fitting to receive this prestigious award during our centennial year, truly substantiating the progress we have made over the past century to fulfill the vision laid out by Gov. Pat Neff of providing places where the people of Texas could enjoy the beauty of this great state." Franklin added that in applying for the award, "We really tried to highlight for the judges the extensive amount of work we have done in recent years to increase accessibility and diversity in our parks."\* The award plaque was displayed at the Regional Roundup, held at our Honey Creek Ranch Barn on October. 26.



Award shown to Regional Roundup attendees (above). Franklin hands plaque to Lopes-Baca (below L). Attendees in the Barn (below R).



\*TPWD News Release, October 11, 2023.

What the Projectile Points Found in Texas Tell Us about the Point-Makers

by Charleen M. Moore and Mackenzie Brown

In our last newsletter we heard from Jim Weidner about his search for projectile points on his grandparents’ ranch at Honey Creek. In this and the next newsletter, we shall look at what those points can tell us about the ancient peoples who left those points scattered around Texas and in Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area. Who were they? When were they here? Why were they here? How did they sustain themselves? What changes can we see in their lifestyles as reflected in the points they left behind?

The history of the Indigenous Peoples in North America is usually divided into four different cultural periods based upon significant lifestyle changes due to technological developments (see Fig. 1). All period dates used here represent years before present, abbreviated B.P. The earliest is the Paleoindian Period (beginning perhaps as early as 18,000 B.P.), followed by the Archaic (8,800—1,300 B.P.), the Prehistoric (1,300—250 B.P.), and the Historic (post European arrival, around 250 B.P.). Cultural changes in any one region or locale may vary considerably, as technological innovations may spread slowly or rapidly from other places or may arise independently in a given location. These changes occurred at different times in the various regions of Texas. The technological changes are reflected in distinct or unique assemblages of material artifacts, including projectile points and pottery types. In this article we shall only look at the first three periods, as they are the most relevant to the points found in the State Park and State Natural Area.

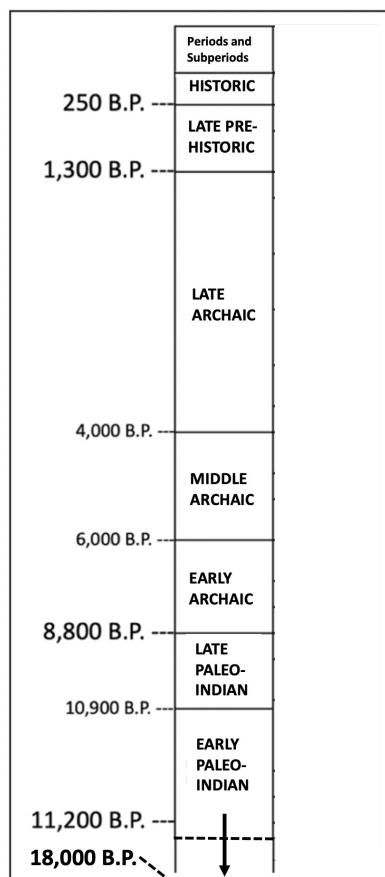


Fig. 1. Central Texas Chronology<sup>1</sup>

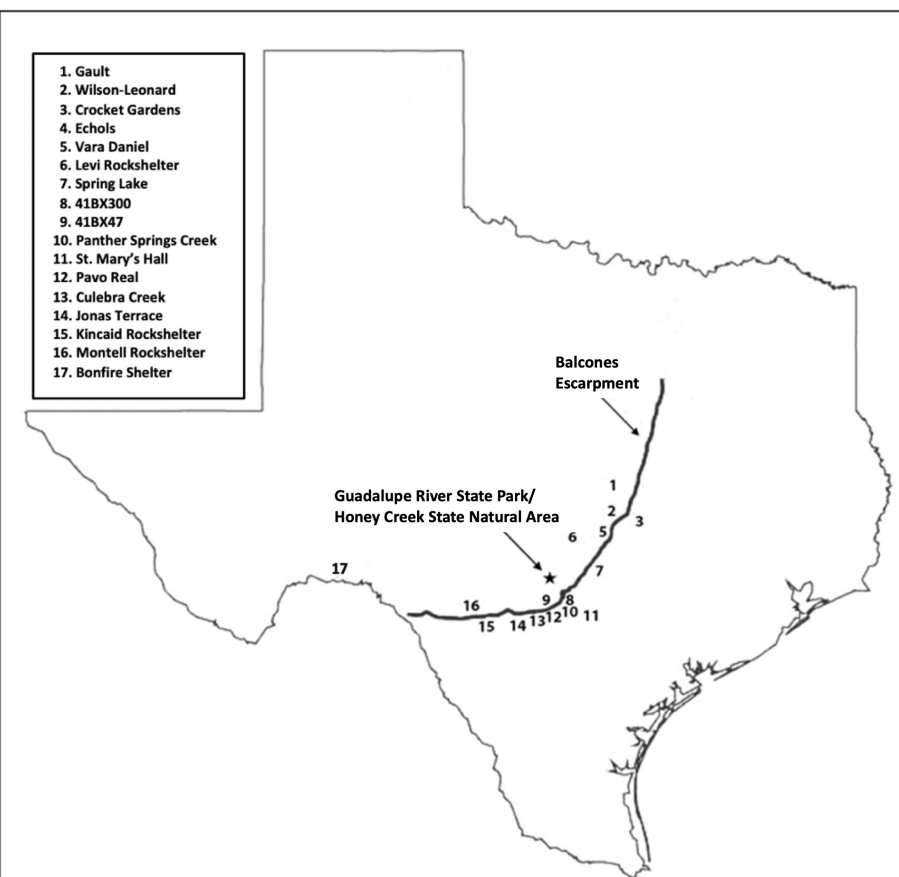


Fig. 2. Location of Important Paleoindian and Archaic Archeological Sites Along the Balcones Escarpment and into West Texas.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the earliest archeological sites of Native Americans in the contiguous United States are found in Central Texas, including the Hill Country and the Coastal Plains just east of the Balcones Escarpment. Fig. 2 shows a map of Texas with the location of several important Paleoindian and Archaic archeological sites. You can readily see that many of these early sites are located along the Balcones Fault Line, either on top of the Edwards Plateau or just below it in the Blackland Prairie, in ecotone zones that are a melding of ecosystems—the Edwards Plateau consisting of a mosaic of live oak savannahs and Ashe juniper to the west, and the extensive prairie grasslands of the Coastal Plains to the east. The early inhabitants were thus able to take advantage of varied plants and animals available at different times of the year from one or the other ecosystem. Studies of the sites in these areas indicate that the first groups of Native Americans arrived here during the very earliest **Paleoindian Period**, about 16,000 B.P., near the end of the Pleistocene Epoch. The Late Pleistocene was an “ice age,” a time of glaciers



and a cold, wet climate. There were still very large herd animals such as the ancient bison and mammoths.

These early migrants were nomadic groups of 15-30 individuals, hunter-gatherers who spent short periods encamped in one place and then moved on. Where would they have chosen to set up their temporary camps? What would they have considered a suitable site? First and foremost, they would have looked for water. The Hill Country has numerous springs, rivers, and creeks, many of which flow in all seasons. Second, they would have looked for food, both edible plants and a variety of large and small game to hunt, including the bison (the ancient *Bison antiquus* and later the modern *Bison bison*), deer, and smaller animals. The rivers, creeks, and springs would have attracted game and provided moisture for the plants. Shelters were made from Ashe juniper, cypress, and other trees and bushes. In addition, by the streams there were often limestone cliffs that had rock overhangs that could be used for shelters.

One of the most attractive elements of the Hill Country and surrounding region for the Paleoindians and later Indigenous Peoples was the presence of high-quality chert (flint) for making scrapers, awls and other tools, as well as spear, dart, and, in later periods, arrow points. The finest chert was found in Edwards Limestone or in stream beds where cobbles of chert eroded from outcrops (see Fig. 3). The Paleoindians used the chert to manufacture lanceolate projectile points that tapered at one end and were attached to spears. They were often thrown with atlatls.

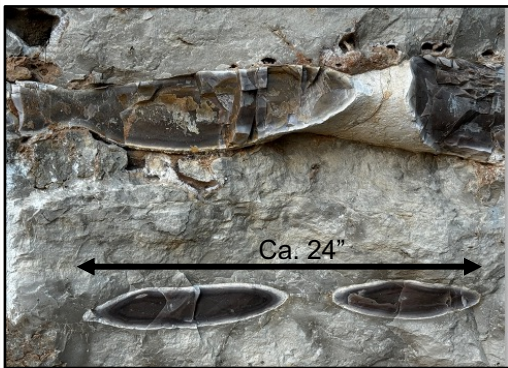


Fig. 3. Seam and oval-shaped nodules of chert near Pavo Real site. Photo by Mackenzie Brown

One of the oldest sites in the Americas is the Gault Site (no. 1 in Fig. 2), 85 miles northeast of Guadalupe River State Park. It is this site that has produced artifacts from over 16,000 B.P. (see Fig. 4). Many of these artifacts are thus much older than the famous Clovis and Folsom points from New Mexico, usually dated between 13,500 and 12,700 B.P. The Gault Site, as well as the Pavo Real Site (no. 12 in Fig. 2) located in northwest San Antonio on the edge of Leon Creek near Loop 1604 and I-10, have produced Clovis and Folsom projectile points as well as earlier artifacts from the very Early Paleoindian Period. The Clovis and Folsom points were also found in Texas at some of the oldest bison jumps in North America, such as the Bonfire Shelter in Val Verde County near the town of Langtry [no. 17 in Fig 2]. Other sites in or bordering on the Hill Country have produced different projectile point styles indicative of the Late Paleoindian period between 12,700 and 8,800 B.P. Such

sites include the Wilson-Leonard (no. 2 in Fig. 2), the Kincaid Rockshelter (no. 15 in Fig. 2), and St. Mary's Hall (no. 11 in Fig. 2). The beginning of the Holocene Epoch about 11,700 B.P. brought a warmer and dryer climate with the gradual disappearance of the glaciers and megafauna. Such transformations in the environment are often the main drivers of technological innovation as people seek adaptations to changing environments.

The **Archaic Period** beginning around 8800 B.P. is defined by the appearance of rock hearths and ovens with burned rock indicating an increasing reliance on heating plants in earthen ovens surrounded by rocks that often fractured from intense heat and were routinely replaced. The Paleoindian Period began in a moist period allowing for growth of plants requiring moderate amounts of water. These plants were relatively soft and easily chewed in their raw state.

But in the warmer and much drier Holocene Epoch that followed, vegetation became drought-tolerant, more fibrous, tougher, and with less water content, thus needing to be cooked. The Archaic Indians in Texas invented or began utilizing earthen ovens heated by rocks to cook such drought-tolerant plants as sotol and yucca, as well as many types of roots. The many earthen ovens used over long periods of time provide evidence of a substantial change in diet that involved a greater consumption of plants, such as roots, nuts, and fruits. Hunting methods and technologies also needed to adapt to the changing climate and the significant decrease in megafauna. Hunting of necessity became more focused on medium and smaller animals, including deer, rabbits, raccoons, and squirrels. Projectile points were produced to match the smaller game.

The **Late Prehistoric Period**, from 1,300 to 250 B.P., showed a remarkable change in projectile points with the development of the more accurate bow and arrow. Toward the end of the period, bison were again a more substantial part of the diet due to being driven southward by a drought in the Plains. Trade items between various groups were also introduced including bone-tempered pottery pieces such as the Leon Plain and Doss Red pottery made in the Hill Country.

Several Archaic and Late Prehistoric sites have been identified near GRSP and HCSNA in Kendall and Comal Cos. Bexar Co. also has numerous Archaic and even older Paleoindian sites. Several archeological surveys have been conducted in the Park and SNA since the early 1970s, the latest a study in 2018. We will discuss their findings in the next newsletter. Stay tuned!

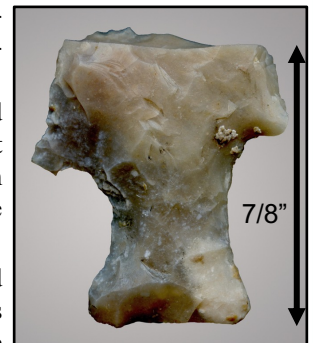


Fig. 4. Pre-Clovis projectile point at least 16,000 B.P. Courtesy of the Gault Site Collection.

#### References

- <sup>1</sup> Based on M. B. Collins, 2004, "Archeology in Central Texas," in *The Prehistory of Texas*, T. K. Pertulla, ed., p. 113.
- <sup>2</sup> Map modified from <https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/pavoreal/images/general-location.html>.

## An Exceptional Fruit-Eating Bird: The Cedar Waxwing

by Linda Gindler

And before you know it, the seasons have changed, and we have winter again. Summer residents are long gone with some even leaving early because of the drought. Plus, the extended summer drought resulted in fewer winter grass seeds which may impact winter residents. This winter, it will be interesting to see which of our feathered friends call Guadalupe River home. We'll see. On a positive note, long range weather forecast points towards above average winter rain which may yield a good berry crop. Many birds eat berries, but for one winter resident, Cedar Waxwings, they are a favorite. So, let's keep an eye out and see what happens.



Cedar Waxwing (Photo by Ken Butler)

Cedar Waxwings have a huge range that covers much of North and Central America. Only missing in that range is Alaska and far northern Canada. During the winter they are found through the lower 48 states, Mexico, and Central America. Cedar Waxwings begin to arrive at the park in November and will stay for the winter with some lingering as long as May if food is plentiful. They are social birds, and you are likely to see them in flocks cheerfully filling the air with their high-pitched whistles. They are one of two waxwing species found in North America, but the only one that visits the park. They are a treat to find with their sleek well-kept appearance, swept back crest, rakish black mask, and pale brown, gray, and yellow bodies highlighted by a bright yellow tail tip and bright red wing tips. They are 6" to 7" in length.

The Cedar Waxwing is one of North America's few bird species that specializes in eating fruit. They love fruit and can survive on a fruit only diet for several months. An interesting tidbit about their fruit eating is that Brown-headed Cowbird chicks unlucky enough to be raised by

Cedar Waxwing parents typically do not survive because cowbirds need a varied diet, a fruit only diet is deadly. At the park, Cedar Waxwings love berries from Ashe juniper, mulberries, mistletoe, possumhaw, and hackberries to name a few. They pluck single fruits and swallow them whole.



Cedar Waxwing eating Hackberries (Photo by Ken Butler)

The word *cedar* comes from a favorite food – the cedar berry from eastern red cedar trees. Likewise, *waxwing* comes from the waxy red secretion found on the secondary wing feathers. The red tips are an accumulation of an organic red pigment called astaxanthin that comes from berries. The size of the red tip increases with age and quantity of fruit eaten. Immature birds may show very small or no red wingtip at all. The Cedar Waxwing's bright yellow tail tip is also influenced by fruit eating. In the 1960s orange tipped birds began to show up. Research found it was a result of birds consuming fruit from the introduced Morrow's honeysuckle.

Sometimes Cedar Waxwing's berry eating can cause strange behaviors. Especially when they happen to eat berries that have fermented on the vine, birds display an inebriated behavior. Although their drunken antics can be amusing, it does make them more prone for window collisions.

During the winter and spring, you might encounter Cedar Waxwings anywhere in the park where there are fruiting trees or shrubs. Start your search in the Day Use Area and look for Hackberries, Ashe Juniper, or Mulberry trees. They frequent the Woodland Blind on warm sunny winter days where lucky visitors are treated to flocks bathing at one time. A joy to watch. Cedar Waxwings are easy to attract to your yard too by planting fruiting trees and shrubs.



Cedar Waxwings at Bath Time (Photo by Ken Butler)

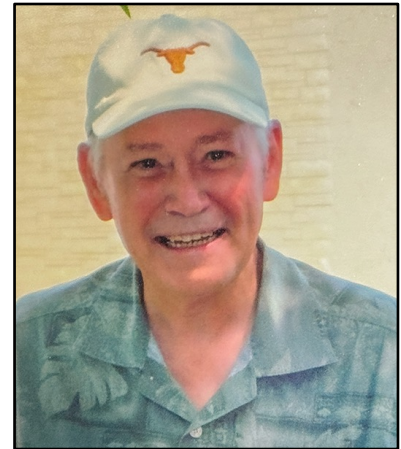
Be sure to look for Cedar Waxwings on your next park visit. To learn more about birds in the park, pick up a birding checklist at the entry ranger station, Discovery Center, or viewing blinds. Watch the park calendar and join in on a birding program or take a seat in one of the two wildlife viewing blinds. Checkout Cornell Lab "All About Birds" webpage and their app eBird for more in-depth knowledge.



Tribute: Duncan Muckelroy

by Mackenzie Brown and Charleen Moore

It had been a long and controversial struggle between local landowners on the Guadalupe River opposed to public access to “their” river, especially to canoers, and those more far-sighted individuals who realized the need for the growing population of a rapidly urbanizing Texas to be able to find spiritual renewal and peace by immersing themselves in nature for a few hours or days (see the Spring 2022 Newsletter for a brief overview of the controversy). Once the State, with the help of the Texas Nature Conservancy, back in the mid 1970s, had finally purchased the land for the future Guadalupe River State Park, there was much to do before the Park could open: surveys of the flora and fauna had to be done, roads and camping areas laid out, residences for Park staff and a headquarters built. And finally, a superintendent needed to be appointed, one who would be passionate about nature and be inspired to introduce the public to a peaceful and safe experience of the river and surrounding highlands with its many trails. And who could also see to the diverse maintenance needs, personnel issues, and unpredictable incidents precipitated by a sometimes capricious public. Who could fill the bill? Who would be Guadalupe River State Park’s first superintendent?



Duncan Muckelroy, ever a Longhorn.

At the time there was available a former history instructor at McMurry College who had worked for the Texas Historical Commission in the mid 1970s, had served as an interpretive ranger at Lyndon B. Johnson State Park in the late 1970s, and had served as historical interpreter at the San Jose Mission in San Antonio in the early 1980s. The TPWD administration in Austin decided it would be well to hire someone who could interpret the new Park to the public. This historically-minded and people-oriented man could surely fill the bill. And he was an avid canoer.



Duncan assisting a canoe party in the Park.

So in the spring of 1983, this personable, historical interpreter, Duncan Muckelroy, with his wife Liz, took up residence in the Park. For a couple of months, they enjoyed the Park as if it were their own private nature preserve. The Park finally opened to the public on June 3, and when Liz went down to the Day-Use Area, she exclaimed, “OMG, there’re people here!”

Duncan was born in Corpus Christi in 1942, married Liz in 1960 just after graduating from high school.

Their first son,

Colby, was born in 1962, and their second, Lance, in 1965. Duncan, meanwhile was earning a BA and an MA, both in history from UT Austin. He then taught at McMurry College for two years, before going to Texas Tech for further graduate studies. He served as Park Superintendent from 1983 to 2001.



Duncan, probably post retirement.

On April 5 of this year, Duncan died at home under hospice care and tended by Liz, his life-long partner of some 62 years.

His love for the Park, and for the people who visited it under his tenure, is a legacy that we all honor.

On Nov. 24, Liz, her son Colby, and her sister Marilyn, returned to the Park, and to Dealin’ Rock at Honey Creek, a place Duncan dearly loved, bringing back many fond memories.



Liz Muckelroy and son Colby, at Dealin’ Rock. Photo by Charleen Moore. All other photographs on this page are courtesy of the Muckelroy family.



## First Public Tour of Doeppenschmidt-Weidner Ranch in Honey Creek State Natural Area, November 4, 2023

by Charleen Moore and Mackenzie Brown

After rain delayed the date for the first public tour of the Doeppenschmidt-Weidner Ranch in the Honey Creek State Natural Area, fourteen participants joined park staff, park volunteers and Sara Weidner Turner on November 4<sup>th</sup> to tour the old Doeppenschmidt-Weidner homestead and Jacob Doeppenschmidt's grave. In addition to Sara Turner, the tour brought together



Sara Weidner Turner telling stories of childhood adventures at the ranch. All photos by Deborah Reason.

The tour included several activities such as measuring the level of the water in the well outside the farm house (14 feet from top of well housing) and the overall depth of the well itself, to the metal bottom (18 feet).



Despite recent drought, there's still water in the well.

Participants were also able to examine the square, concrete cistern on the hill that long ago was filled by the Aeromotor windmill that had a 12' diameter set of sails—only the twisted sails remain on the site today, due to Hurricane Carla (1961). We are not sure how deep the windmill well was, but a 12' windmill like this one could raise water around 500' at 200 gals/hour with a 2" cylinder, according to Aeromotor Windmills ([aeromotorwindmill.com/](http://aeromotorwindmill.com/)).

several descendants of the Doeppenschmidts and Weidners, and new relationships were discovered between the cousins. The group had a beautiful day to tour the homestead with Sara giving lively descriptions of her visits to her grandparent's home, including memories of the beautiful flowerbeds, the parlor that could only be visited on special occasions, the account of the bullet-hole in the parlor's ceiling, and other special memories.

June Mitchell and her family came. They soon realized that June and Sara's grandmothers were sisters. June's grandmother, Alma Rust Gass, and Sara's grandmother, Meta Rust Weidner, were the daughters of Henry and Louise Rust who built the Rust House that is now in Guadalupe River State Park where the guided hikes to Honey Creek begin. June's ranch is just the other side of the fence down by Jacob Doeppenschmidt's grave.



June Mitchell and family, property owners next to Honey Creek SNA.



The cistern, now missing its metal roof.





**A Tour of Doepenschmidt-Weidner Ranch (cont.)**  
by Charleen Moore and Mackenzie Brown

Downhill from the cistern is the old, rusting, 1917 Letz threshing machine run by a belt from a tractor. Also seen on the tour was the buried and berm-protected acetylene gas generator (not pictured) that provided light for the home. The berm was to shield the home from an untoward explosion of the generator.



Inspecting the threshing machine.

After examining various farm and ranch equipment, guests drove down to the old cemetery where Jacob Doepenschmidt “lies at rest,” according to his headstone. This grave was very special for Carl Doepenschmidt as Jacob (b. 1807; imm. to Texas from Germany, 1854; d. 1872) was his great-great-grandfather. The clasping hands on the headstone symbolize a final farewell. Jacob’s sons Adam and Peter acquired more land. Later, Peter sold his land to his brother Adam, who later sold the property to



Jacob’s headstone.



Otto Weidner and Fritz Rust. When Fritz died suddenly, Otto and his wife Meta moved in to help her parents, Henry and Louise Rust, run the ranch. After many years in the Weidner family, the land came through several hands to finally become part of the Honey Creek State Natural Area to be enjoyed by many

Carl & Barbara Doepenschmidt at gravesite. Texans.

To submit articles for publication in the Friends Newsletter, email them to one of the Co-Editors:  
Mackenzie Brown, [mbrown@trinity.edu](mailto:mbrown@trinity.edu)  
Charleen Moore, [mackandchuck@gmail.com](mailto:mackandchuck@gmail.com)  
Deadlines are the 20<sup>th</sup> of Feb, May, Aug, Nov.

**\*2023 Membership Dues \***

**Become A Friend / Renew Your Friendship Today:**

Memberships at all levels directly support Guadalupe River State Park /Honey Creek State Natural Area. You will be kept up to date on all the upcoming programs, events and park news as well as information on volunteer opportunities through our quarterly newsletter and park updates. As a Friends member you and your family will also have access to member only events. Membership dues renew in January.

**Fill out the section below and mail to the address below:**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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Student or Senior (over 62) \$20 \_\_\_\_\_ Individual \$25 \_\_\_\_\_

Family \$40 \_\_\_\_\_ Lifetime \$1000 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

If you are also interested in helping the park through volunteering, please tell us your areas of interest: \_\_\_\_\_

Make 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.

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3350 Park Road 31  
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**Visit us on the web:  
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**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, usually on the third Thursday  
at 5:30 p.m. Please join us and bring a friend!  
For meeting venue and possible change of date or time, contact us at:  
[friendsofgrhc@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofgrhc@gmail.com)**