

A Brief History of Geronimo Creek

The earliest settlers in the Geronimo Creek watershed were Native Americans belonging to the Lipan Apache, Comanche and Tonkawa tribes who were drawn to the springs. These tribes were mostly nomadic, but evidence of their presence in the Geronimo Creek area is the number of arrowheads, tools and other artifacts found along the creek.

By the late 1700's, Texas was under Spanish rule. Spanish explorers had many clashes with the nomadic, Native Americans in and around the area of Geronimo Creek. Archival Spanish documents from 1780 indicate that the Tio Geronimo Springs near the New Braunfels airport were owned by a Spaniard named Geronimo Flores. The area was a campsite for the Native Americans and visited by the Spanish scouts searching for Native Americans. Mr. Flores was a well-liked common man, who lived in peace with the Native Americans. The Spanish word Tio (uncle) was added to Geronimo Springs, in honor of Mr. Flores.

In the 1820's, settlers, including Stephen F. Austin and Green Dewitt began moving into the region. In a span of 50 years, Texas went from a wide open land of Native Americans and little civilization to a territory beginning to fill with settlers from America. Geronimo Creek and its associated springs were sought after by many settlers for the good water and excellent land for grazing and cultivation. Surveyor notes describe stands of mesquite, pecan, live oak, hackberry and elm, and shrubbery and prairie grasses found along the creek.

Texas born Jose Antonio Navarro became one of the most well-known settlers to the area. Like the Native Americans and soldiers, he was drawn to the area because of the springs. Navarro and his family established a ranch, where he raised cattle and horses, and he is the namesake of the Navarro Independent School District in the town of Geronimo. Other settlers that were drawn to the area were farmers and producers of German descent; cotton was the dominant crop in the area for many years.

Agriculture has always been very important in the Geronimo Creek watershed. The town of Geronimo was the center of the farming and ranching community, with cotton gins, grain storage, markets, merchandise and grocery stores and a meeting hall.

One of the most beloved families from the Geronimo Creek area is the family of William Timmermann. Timmermann had dreams of developing his property into a park for his children and the public. He bought land along the creek in 1901 that included a "waterway lane" which is an easement that allowed settlers to have access to the water in the creek. Timmermann deepened the bed of the creek and constructed two dams that provided flow for a fountain and a pond in the middle of a star formed by sidewalks. There was a fishing pond, a swimming pool with a diving board, and a bath house. Timmermann's dream of the public park came to an end with an outbreak of tuberculosis. However, it was Timmermann that noted that although there were areas in Geronimo Creek that dried up during the historic drought of the '50s, the main spring continued flowing, and the Geronimo Gin water well was able to supply area families with water.

There is a strong sense of community and history in the Geronimo Creek watershed. The Bartoskewitz family has made plans to see the history and heritage of the Geronimo Creek area preserved and passed on to future generations. The Bartoskewitzs opened the Texas Agricultural Education and Heritage Center in 2003. “The Big Red Barn” as it is known is located in the watershed off of SH-123 on Cordova Road, and has exhibits on farming and ranching.

To learn more about what is currently happening in the Geronimo Creek watershed, go to <http://www.geronimocreek.org/>