

The Ranches of Horseshoe Bay

How Rural Land in the Texas Hill Country
Was Transformed into Exurban Enclaves

Author's Note

This so-called Version One is posted on the City of Horseshoe Bay website as a partial document. This is being done in order to quickly provide information currently available about the ranches that have been researched to date. It is the author's intention to fully complete the story of all the ranches listed in the Table of Contents. But, for a number of reasons, that may never happen. Hence, this early version captures what is now available.

"... a wise Italian says that the best is the enemy of the good." Voltaire

For questions or comments, feel free to contact the author at jrjorden@verizon.net

researched and written by
James R. Jorden

Horseshoe Bay, Texas

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Prologue

This history begins with the formation of the Republic of Texas in 1836 and the creation of the Texas General Land Office that same year. In order to attract so-called Anglo-Americans to emigrate from the United States and populate and develop the largely uninhabited land of Texas, the Republic enticed potential settlers with low-cost (sometimes free) land. That process continued after the Republic was annexed into the United States and became the State of Texas in 1845.

Figure P.1 illustrates all the original land grants that are now within and surround Horseshoe Bay. This map displays these properties in relation to county lines, the Colorado River and Lake Lyndon B. Johnson, all major creeks, major roads, and the city limits of Horseshoe Bay. These grants were made under several schemes; **Figure P.2** summarizes those.

Finally, **Figure P.3** (for Llano County) and **Figure P.4** (for Burnet County) give details about each specific land grant. As these data tables show, the earliest land grants were issued in 1841 and the latest in 1888. These tables also list the so-called Abstract Number for each property. Using this Abstract Number, one can access – on the Texas General Land Office website – a digitized PDF copy of the original handwritten documents describing each grant.¹

For almost all these land grants, the surveyor’s “field notes” (included in the original handwritten documents package mentioned above) used the Spanish system of land measurements. For convenience, those Spanish terms and their definitions are reproduced here:

- The basic unit of measure for surveying in Texas in the early days was the *vara*, which is equal to 33 1/3 inches.
- One *league* is 5,000 varas squared, or 4428.4 acres.
- One *labor* is 1,000 varas squared, or 177.1 acres.²

Starting with these original owners,³ possession passed through many hands in subsequent years. In the chapters that follow, each of which describes a particular ranch, land ownership is traced back through several owners prior to acquisition by Horseshoe Bay area developers.

¹ To access a document: From the GLO homepage: click **HERITAGE**; click **LAND GRANT SEARCH**; enter County, enter Abstract Number; check **I’M NOT A ROBOT**; click **SEARCH**. On next page: click **FILE NUMBER**. Scroll the document and read. Download if you wish.

² See *Categories of Land Grants in Texas*, p 2. See Annotated Bibliography on page 57 for a complete bibliographic citation and notes on availability.

³ In most cases, the original owner was the original grantee. In some cases, the owner was the original patentee, who had obtained ownership from the grantee in return for some financial consideration.

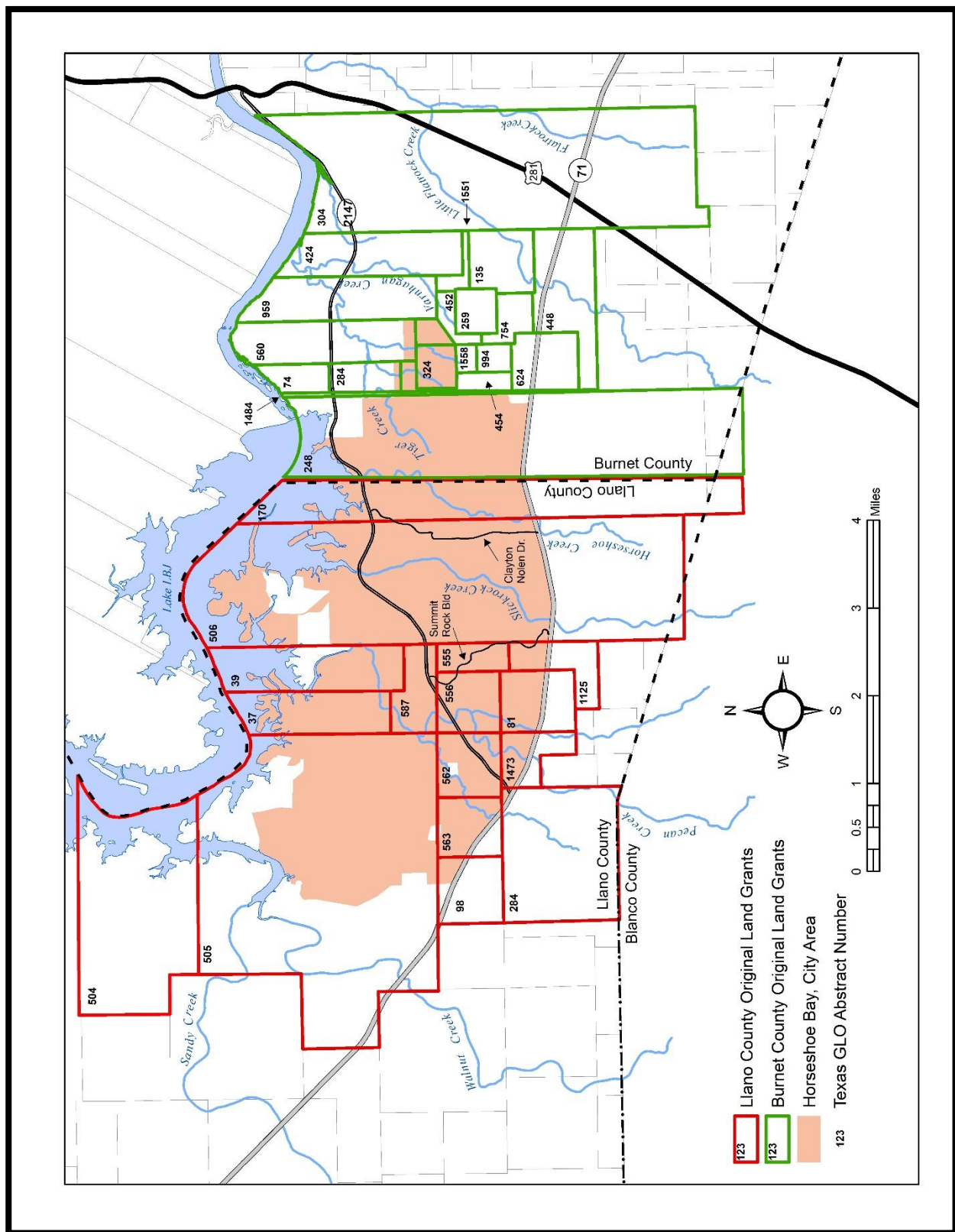


Figure P.1 Original Land Grants from the Republic of Texas or State of Texas, now Within and Surrounding Horseshoe Bay
(Image created by Charles Hixson, Llano Uplift Archaeological Society.)

Type	Eligibility	Acreage	Comments
Headrights			Granted by Republic. In force 1836 – 1845.
First Class Single Married	Arrived in Texas before 2 March 1836.	1/3 League 1 League + 1 Labor	
Second Class Single Married	Arrived in Texas between 2 Mar 1836 – 1 Oct 1837.	640 acres 1280 acres	
Third Class Single Married	Arrived in Texas between 1 Oct 1837 – 1 Jan 1840.	320 acres 640 acres	
Fourth Class Single Married	Arrived in Texas between 1 Jan 1840 – 1 Jan 1842. Required to farm 10 acres.	320 acres 640 acres	
Preemption Grants			Granted by Republic and State from unappropriated public domain lands
Individuals	Required to live on land for 3 years and make improvements.	320 acres	In force 1845 - 1854
Individuals	As above	160 acres	In force 1854 - 1856
Individuals	As above	160 acres	In force 1866 - 1898
Bounty Grants			Granted by Republic from public domain lands.
Individuals	Must have served in the military in Texas Revolution or enlisted before 1 Oct 1837	320 ac. per 3 mo. service; max 1,280 acres	
Donation Grants			
Individuals	Must have served in specific battles of the Texas Revolution.	Highly variable acreages.	Granted by Republic from public domain lands.
Individuals	Must have been vet of Texas Revolution or signed Declaration of Independence.	640 acres. 1,280 acres after 1881.	Granted by State from public domain lands. Program ended in 1887.
Scrip			Issued to repay loans or sold for cash by Republic and State to obtain public domain lands.
Individuals		Highly variable acreages and cost per acre.	

Figure P.2 Types of Land Grants Employed by the Republic of Texas/State of Texas
(Notes: For more detailed explanations, especially for various Scrips, see *Categories of Land Grants in Texas*.⁴)

⁴ See Annotated Bibliography on page 57 for a complete bibliographic citation and notes on availability.

Grantees	Patentees	Date Patented	Acres	Abstract Number	Survey Number	Type of Grant	
Mendez, Nicholas	Haynie, J A	18 Jan 1841	4605.50	506	3	Bastrop 1 st Class	
Darlin, John H	Ables, Joseph S	11 Dec 1841	4604.60	170	4	Bastrop 1 st Class	
Borden, P P	Borden, P P	04 Aug 1844	320	98	3	Bastrop Bounty	
Bratton, Robert	Bratton, Robert	06 Dec 1845	640	37	1	Bastrop 2 nd Class	
Bratton, George	Bratton, George	06 Feb 1846	320	81	85	Travis 3 rd Class	
Mercer, Elijah G	Mercer, Elijah G	20 May 1846	320	562	3	Bastrop Bounty	
Mercer, Eli	Mercer, Eli	20 May 1846	320	563	4	Bastrop Bounty	
Bratton, John	Bratton, John	20 May 1846	640	39	2	Bastrop 3 rd Class	
Mercer, Levi	Mercer, Levi	15 Jun 1847	4605.50	505	2	Bastrop 1 st Class	
Mercer, Elijah	Mercer, Elijah	03 Jul 1847	1476.13	504	1	Bastrop 1 st Class	
Peckering, John	Borden, Gail	03 Jul 1847	320	995	6	Bastrop Bounty	
Gallagher, Charles M	Bush, John T	25 Jul 1853	1476	284	98	Bastrop 1 st Class	
Murchison, Aaron	Gooch, Benjamin	29 Jun 1854	320	556	85	Travis 3 rd Class	
Jones, Ellis J	Putman, Madison	14 Dec 1855	200	1473	86	Travis 3 rd Class	
McFarlin, John	McFarlin, John	02 Feb 1860	160	555	1005	Travis 3 rd Class	
Putman, Madison	Putman, Madison	31 May 1875	2984	587	672	Travis 3 rd Class	
Gibson, John H	Ebeling, Edward	09 Aug 1878``	320	1368	57	Travis Scrip	
Backus, A	Backus, A	18 May 1887	247	1125	99	Bexar Scrip	
Ebeling, Edward	Ebeling, Edward	31 May 1897	320	1562	58	School	

Figure P.3 Summary of Original Land Grants in Southeastern Llano County

Grantees	Patentees	Date Patented	Acres	Abstract Number	Survey Number	Type of Grant	
Flores, Guadalupe	Haynie, James A	07 Apr 1841	4605	304	7	Bastrop 1 st Class	
Darlin, John H	Ables, Joseph S	11 Dec 1841	4604.60	248	4	Bastrop 1 st Class	
Hunt, Lydia	Hunt, Lydia	26 Mar 1847	640	424	6	Travis 3 rd Class	
Wormsley, James	de Cordova, Jacob	17 Aug 1853	640	959	601	Travis 2 nd Class	
Dorr, John (dec'd)	Dorr, John (heirs)	20 Oct 1853	160	259	118	Travis 3 rd Class	
Leuders, Ferdinand	Leuders, Ferdinand (Heirs)	23 Feb 1854	530	560	602	Travis Bounty	
Engleking, Ferd	Engleking, Ferd	07 Nov 1855	205.50	284	611	Travis 3 rd Class	
Barton, Jefferson	Barton, Jefferson (Heirs)	01 Apr 1862	300	135	418	Travis Bounty	
Fuchs, C L	Fuchs, C L	15 May 1862	160	324	419	Milam Scrip	
Harrell, Joseph	Vanhagen, Adolph	20 Feb 1867	160	454	510	Travis Scrip	
Worrall, J R	Varnhagen, A	20 Feb 1867	80	994	511	Travis Scrip	
Harrell, Joseph	Ebeling, Edward	03 Aug 1870	90.50	452	514	Travis Scrip	
Harrell, Joseph	Ebeling, Edward	03 Aug 1870	69.50	453	513	Travis Scrip	
McKinney & Williams	Vanhagen, Adolph	01 Oct 1872	306.70	624	834	Travis Scrip	
Houston Tap & Brazoria RR	Vanhagen, Adolphus	02 Jun 1873	640	448	1	Travis Scrip	
Ragsdale, N H	Vanhagen, A	01 Jul 1873	160	754	512	Travis Scrip	
Brooks, John W	Brooks, John W	05 Sep 1876	134	74	1059	Travis 2 nd Class	
Fuchs, F R	Fuchs, C L	28 Sep 1887	35	1483	1451	Travis Preemption	
Fuchs, A C	Fuchs, A C	29 Sep 1887	80	1484	1448	Travis Preemption	
Reimann, W R	Reimann, W R	03 Mar 1888	58	1558	1488	Travis Preemption	
Giesecke, Walter	Giesecke, Walter	06 Jun 1888	54	1551	1508	Travis Scrip	

Figure P.4 Summary of Original Land Grants in Southwestern Burnet County

Horseshoe Bay – and indeed none of the smaller, adjacent communities – would not exist were it not for the presence of Lake Lyndon B. Johnson (formerly Lake Granite Shoals). This lake, as well as the other five lakes in the so-called Highland Lakes chain on the Colorado River, was created by the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) for the primary purposes of flood control, water supply control, and electricity generation. But another consequence of these lakes was the creation of sites for water recreation.

By many accounts, Adam Rankin Johnson, founder of Marble Falls, was the first person to have a vision of a dam and a lake on the Colorado River.⁵ In 1854, he identified a site known as Shirley Shoals and marked it on a map for future reference.

The City of Austin completed a dam across the Colorado River near the city in 1893, using public funds; this dam was significantly damaged by the massive flood of 7 April 1900.

Meantime, Johnson connected with a C. H. Alexander Sr., of Dallas. Together they collaborated to build a series of five potential dams in the Marble Falls area, using private funds. The first of these was to be just downstream from Marble Falls; construction actually started in 1909, but Alexander ran out of money before the project was half complete. Alexander later formed a private entity (Syndicate Power Company) to pursue the building of six dams.

Simultaneously, government officials from the lower reaches of the Colorado River were attempting to secure public funds for building dams. This group (Colorado River Improvement Association) sought Federal funds from the Corps of Engineers to “improve the navigability” of the Colorado River. Among the participants was U.S. Congressman James P. Buchanan. Ultimately, the Corps would not approve this project for Federal funding.

In 1926, the Syndicate Power group discovered a possible source of private funding for their dam-building project. Through a convoluted series of business and legal transactions, another group, styled as Emery, Peck, and Rockwood Development Company, received the assets of Syndicate Power and additional funding from Middle West Utilities, owned by the Insull family of Chicago. Alvin Wirtz, Columbus, Texas native, attorney, and state senator, was instrumental in bringing these arrangements to conclusion.

The following quotation appeared in the *Burnet Bulletin*, August 27, 1931, edition, anticipating the future of recreational opportunities in the Texas Hill Country:

“...A ten or 12 hours trip from the Coast to the Hamilton Dam which is being constructed on the Colorado River, which forms the boundary of Llano and Burnet Counties, will be worth while to any tourist who desires to take a short vacation. It is doubtless one of the largest and most important pieces of construction work going on at the present in the State of Texas, or perhaps in the United States, with the exception of the building of the Hoover Dam in the far West.

⁵ The next thirteen paragraphs that follow are an interpreted summary of the earliest history of the Highland Lakes as found in *The Untold Story of the Lower Colorado River Authority*. See Annotated Bibliography on page 57 for a complete citation and notes on availability. Later cited herein as *Untold Story*. Readers are encouraged to study *Untold Story* for themselves to appreciate the deals made and bargains struck necessary to complete these projects in the face of competing business and political interests and attitudes. See also *Corralling the Colorado* for additional detailed vignettes about the business and political personalities who guided the LCRA through its first fifty years.

“But it is thought that the dam, when finished, will prove an immense benefit to that section of the State; already highways are being mapped with a view of tapping this section; primarily it is being constructed as a power proposition, but it is thought that there are other possibilities, and some will probably be made a recreation center which will be alluring to tourists from all parts of the State and nation. Mr. Editor, there is no necessity of spending from \$23 to \$25 for gasoline with which to tour the mountains of the State of Colorado, when, for much less in money and time, one can visit the hill country a short distance from San Antonio and Austin, and can surfeit in scenery: the hills of central and west Texas are just as purple, and the valleys are quite just as colorful, as those of far off Colorado or New Mexico; there are limpid and rippling streams at every turn, where camping and fishing are excellent; the mountain air is bracing and healthy...”⁶

Following site preparation early in 1931, construction began on Hamilton Dam (so named for the chief engineer of Middle West Utilities) in November 1931 at the site of Shirley Shoals. In April 1932, Middle West Utilities was placed into receivership – the result of excess indebtedness of the Insull family and consequent calls for collateral from creditors during the Great Depression. Construction on Hamilton Dam stopped, and it joined the Alexander Dam near Marble Falls as an incomplete, unusable project.

Alvin Wirtz was named receiver for Central Texas Hydro-Electric (the presumptive transferee of Emery, Peck, and Rockwood Development Company assets once Hamilton Dam was completed). Not finding private funds available, he looked to governments for public funds. Once again, Wirtz orchestrated a complex set of deals involving 2 years/10 months of time, several state and federal agencies, and the support of numerous state and federal officials, including Texas Governor “Ma” Ferguson, U.S. Congressman James Buchanan, Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Finally on 10 November 1934, the Texas State Legislature passed enabling legislation for the Lower Colorado River Authority.

The nine-member LCRA board first met on 19 February 1935. In early August 1935, LCRA received a check for \$5 million from the federal government, part of a \$20 million commitment on its part. Acquisition of the Hamilton Dam (then commonly, though technically illegally, called Buchanan Dam) soon followed, and the restart of construction occurred in July 1936.

Formal dedication ceremonies for both Buchanan and Inks Dams were held on 16 October 1937, and both were physically completed in mid-1938. Of course, area residents enjoyed the benefits of flood control, water supply control, and electricity generation. Additionally, though, they also became vendors and suppliers to out-of-area people who converged on the lakes to enjoy recreational opportunities.

Subsequently, Mansfield Dam (forming Lake Travis near Austin) was completed in 1942. The occurrence of World War II brought a pause in the construction activities of the LCRA.

Before and during the war, the demand for electric power generated by the dams proved to be more robust than LCRA anticipated. So, after the war, LCRA proposed two additional dams between Inks Dam and Mansfield Dam, whose primary purpose would be generation of electric power. These were Granite Shoals (later Wirtz) Dam and Marble Falls (later Max Starke) Dam; the lakes thus formed were named Lake Granite Shoals (later Lyndon B. Johnson) and Lake Marble Falls, respectively.

⁶ Quoted from *The Burnet Bulletin*, August 27, 1931, Section One, p 4. See Annotated Bibliography on page 57 for complete bibliographic citation and notes on availability.

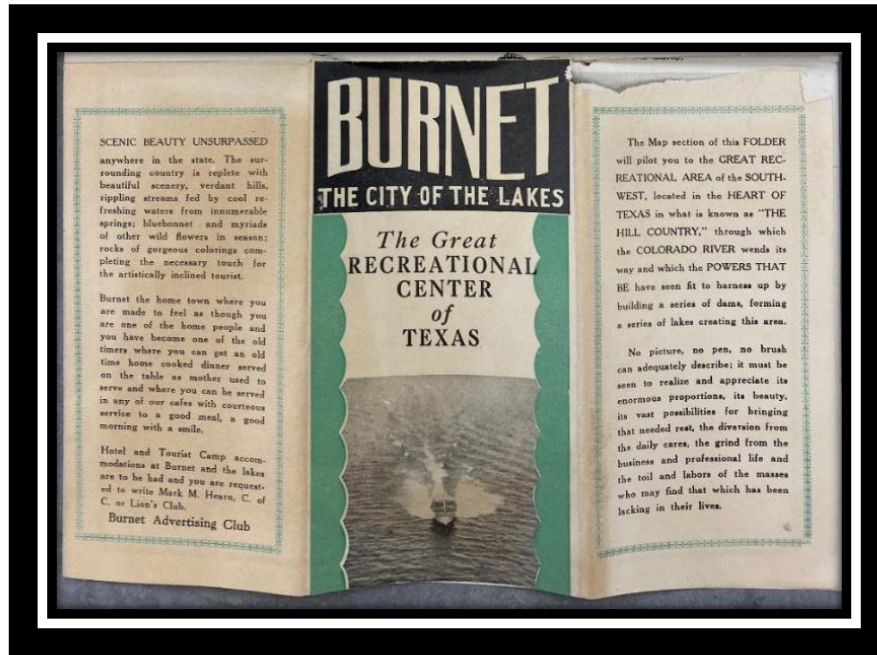


Figure P.5 Advertising Brochure from Burnet, Texas, Date Unknown
(Image courtesy of Herman Brown Free Library)

Granite Shoals Dam was completed in 1951. According to *Untold Story*, Lake Granite Shoals was two-thirds full by August 1951.⁷ It seems reasonable to assume that the lake was completely full by year end. Thus, some 135 miles of shoreline⁸ were formed on the south shore of the lake; the lakefront property so created soon gained value for residential and commercial purposes.

It is difficult to overstate the economic impact of a recreational lake on its shoreline. Sites for homes, lakeside restaurants, marinas, and all manner of infrastructure are in high demand and are priced accordingly. The following quote from a history of the T – P Ranch emphasizes the point:

“Jim Crownover owned the land adjoining the T-P on the north boundary including the northern portions of both the Darlin League and the Mendez League beginning at the Colorado River. Jim Crownover placed this portion of his ranch on the market in 1938 [*sic*]. Dr. J. C. was approached as a prospective buyer. However, he was still paying out his mortgage and was in no mood to take on new obligations after the Depression wring out. Dr. J. C. tried to interest some of his friends, but they were all of similar constraint.

“The asking price was \$25.00 an acre with about 3000 acres involved. **No one was aware at the time that a lake would subsequently adjoin the property** (emphasis added). Ultimately, a Mr. Lupton from Fort Worth purchased the Crownover property. He was a Coca-Cola distributor, and the ranch was known by that name.”⁹

⁷ See *Untold Story*, p 72. Website for the Texas Water Development Board states that impoundment began in May 1951.

⁸ See https://tpwd.texas.gov/publications/pwdpubs/lake_survey/pwd_rp_t3200_1322. Accessed 26 Mar 2023. This source cites 270 miles of shoreline for the entire lake. It is assumed the south shore contains one-half of that amount.

⁹ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, p 79. See Annotated Bibliography on page 57 for complete bibliographic citation and notes on availability.

Sure enough, after completion of Buchanan and Inks Dams in 1938, residential subdivisions began to appear along the Highland Lakes, as noted in **Figure P.6**.

Date	Number of Subdivisions	Number of Lots	Number of Dwellings	Number of Residents
1950	35	2,716	213	
1958	103	13,046	1,317	
1966	213	50,035	5,244	7,200 permanent 10,500 part-time

Figure P.6 Summary of Growth in Recreational-Residential Developments on the Highland Lakes, 1950-1966¹⁰

Following the opening of Lake Granite Shoals in 1951, it was almost inevitable that lakeside recreational-residential developments would appear along its shores, the first being Castle Acres in 1952. **Figure P.7** summarizes the subsequent development along the shores of Lake Granite Shoals (later Lake Lyndon B. Johnson after April 1965) before 1970.

Name	Location	Size	Date	Developer	Status
Sunrise Beach	South Shore Llano Co.	??? acres 1,425 lots	1958	David Miller	
Blue Lake Estates	South Shore Llano Co.	350 acres 400 lots	Jul 1959	Blue Lake Properties, Inc	~150 homes a/o Mar 1970
Sherwood Shores	North Shore Burnet Co.	2,800 acres 12,000+ lots	Mar 1962	No data	650+ homes a/o Mar 1970
Deerhaven	South Shore Llano Co.	165 acres 351 lots	Jul 1964	Nunnally,Griffin & Dockery	
Castle Acres	South Shore Burnet Co.	No data	Apr 1952	J J Nunnally	No data
Castle Terrace	South Shore Burnet Co.	No data	No data	No data	No data
Oak Ridge	South Shore Burnet Co.	252 acres 337 lots	No data	T G Houston D B Polk	No data
Granite Shoals Lake Estates	North Shore Burnet Co.	No data	No data	No data	No data
Highland Haven	North Shore Burnet Co.	No data	No data	Jones & Pike Real Estate	No data

Figure P.7 Summary of Recreational-Residential Developments on Lake Lyndon B. Johnson, as of March 1970¹¹

(Notes: Blue = data from other sources.)

Available data indicate that Castle Acres, on the south shore of Lake Lyndon B. Johnson, was the first waterfront development on the lake. It is probable that this development was modest in terms of size and cost of the homes built there.

¹⁰ Data from Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas, Austin, as found in *Analysis – Development Potential “Coke Ranch” Resort Community Lake L.B.J. – Texas*, March 1970, p. 7. See Annotated Bibliography on page 57 for complete bibliographic citation and notes on availability.

¹¹ Data from *Analysis – Development Potential “Coke Ranch” Resort Community Lake L.B.J. – Texas*, pp. 17-18.

Almost twenty years later, the Hurd family would visualize the opportunity to develop a luxurious, high-end resort/retirement community in the Highland Lakes. The search began for a tract of land of sufficient size to accommodate their dreams.

Chapter Two The Hedges Ranch

Timeline

Jan 1846	Conrad Fuchs immigrates to Texas from Germany, as an 11-year-old accompanying his parents.
1861	Conrad marries Anna E.J. Perlitz. They have eight children, of whom six survive into adulthood.
Jun 1862	Conrad acquires 160 acres of land from the State of Texas, situated immediately south of his father's 530-acre property.
1880	Conrad builds the (now-called) Fuchs House.
22 Oct 1888	Conrad designates his 200-acre homestead, including his original 160 acres.
16 Feb 1898	Conrad dies in an accidental fall.
Xx Mar 1899	Conrad's heirs sell the 200-acre homestead.
Mar 1899- Jul 1947	Eight subsequent owners sell varying amounts of property, always including the Fuchs homestead.
11 Jul 1947	Claud T. Hedges acquires 855.44 acres of land (including the Fuchs homestead) and creates the Hedges Ranch.
Nov 1951	The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) completes Granite Shoals (later Wirtz) Dam, creating Lake Granite Shoals (later Lyndon B. Johnson).
28 Apr 1952	Claud Hedges subdivides acres of his ranch into waterfront lots known as Castle Acres, available for lease only.
29 Apr 1961	Claud Hedges sells 78½ acres of his ranch to Morris Elms, who subdivides the land into town lots known as Castle Terrace.
24 Aug 1971	Claud Hedges sells 675 acres of his ranch to Kings Land, Inc. This property becomes Horseshoe Bay South.

Contained within the Hedges Ranch were/are the Fuchs House and the Tiger Mill community – the earliest known Euro-American settlement in what is now Horseshoe Bay. During the Hedges family’s ownership of this property, a transition was made from classic Hill Country ranch operations to the formation of – two actually – waterfront residential communities, which were among the earliest such entities in the Highland Lakes.

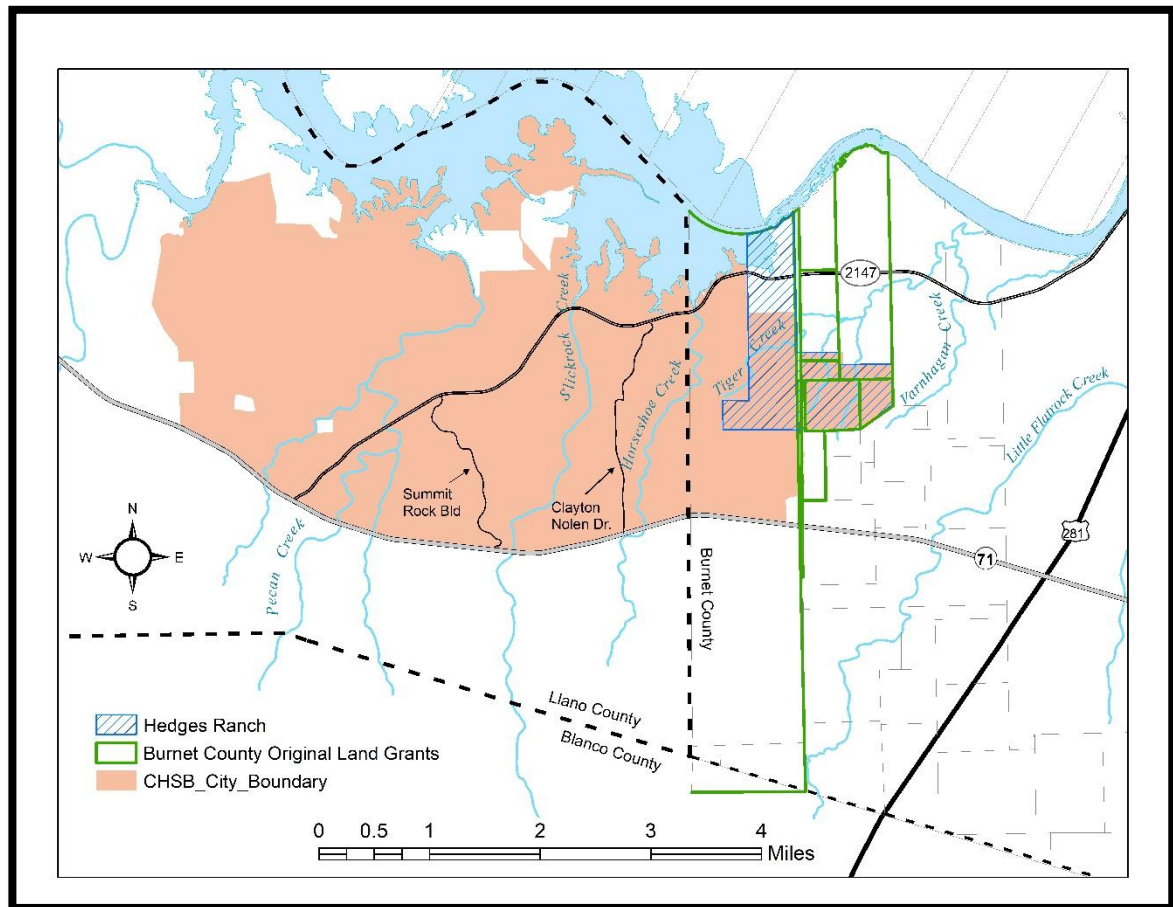


Figure 2.1 The Hedges Ranch, in Relation to Its Surroundings
(Image created by Charles Hixson, LUAS)

Figure 2.1 shows the position of the Hedges Ranch with respect to the original land grants, county lines, major highways, creeks, and the City of Horseshoe Bay.

The People At one time in history, all the land that became the Hedges Ranch was owned by Conrad L. Fuchs. The story of the Fuchs family has been well recorded in several publications:¹²

- *The Story of the Conrad L. Fuchs Family and the Fuchs House, Burnet County, Texas*
- *Burnet County History: A Pioneer History 1847-1979, Vol I & II*
- *Memoirs of a Texas Pioneer Grandmother (Wäs Grossmutter Erzählt) 1805-1915*
- *Reminiscences Louise Romberg Fuchs 1927*

¹² See Annotated Bibliography, p. 57 for complete bibliographic citations and notes on availability.

Briefly stated, Pastor Adolph Fuchs, wife Luise, and seven children arrived in Burnet County in January 1854 from Cat Spring, Austin County, Texas. Pastor Adolph and Luise lived and died in the 1880s on his land grant, part of which is now Cottonwood Shores. Two of the children (Ottillie, Wilhelm) moved to Blanco County as young adults. The other five (Ulricke, Conrad, Adolfine, Hermann, Benjamin) lived and died in Burnet County and surrounds. Today many people living in the area can trace their ancestry to Luise & Pastor Adolph because the numerous German families in the area tended to intermarry. Pastor Adolph named Castle Mountain; it reminded him of castles he had known in Germany. As will be shown below, Castle Mountain figured prominently in the Hedges' stewardship of this property.

Conrad Fuchs was 19 years old when he arrived in Burnet County with his family in 1854. He married Anna E.J. [Perlitz] in August 1861; they had 8 children, two of whom died as young boys from diphtheria. Conrad and Anna separated in about 1888; she moved away; he remained on his ranch. Conrad died in August 1898 in an accidental fall from a tree on his property. His heirs sold his 200-acre homestead as detailed in the following section.

Paragraph here on Yetts family ??????

Unlike many of the other ranches chronicled in this study, many of the families who owned this property between the Fuchs/Yetts families and the Hedges family were not well known as early settlers in the area.

Claud Tillman Hedges was born 30 January 1902 in DeWitt County, Texas as a second-generation Texan.. We know little of his childhood, teenage years, or young adult years. Neither do we know how he met and courted Jimmie Willis Rathke, who was born 29 August 1908 in Hardin County, Texas.

They were married on 8 August 1925 in Wichita County, Texas (his age 23; her age 17) and had two children. [Figure 2.2](#) summarizes the births, deaths, and other information about these children.

Child	Birth	Death	Spouse	Other Comments
Celtyn Claud	25 Nov 1928 [redacted] Co, TX	21 Dec 1959 Eastland Co, TX	Carolyn Parker	Married 1948, Travis Co, TX. Had 2 children. Carolyn later married Robert Fanning.
Onabeth	30 Jul 1944 Young Co, TX		Theodore Duncan, Jr Donald K Boswell	Married 7 Mar 1970, Clay Co, TX. Had 2 children. Married 20 Sep 1992, Clay Co, TX. Had 2 children..

Figure 2.2 Children of Jimmie Willis [Rathke] and Claud Tillman Hedges

Hedges owned and operated shallow oil leases in Archer and Young County for 50 years. He had land holdings in North Texas¹³ and purchased 855 acres in Burnet County in July 1947. Claud died 28 April 1992 (age 90) in Young County, Texas and Jimmie Willis died almost 5 years later, on 3 March 1997 (age 88) in Wichita County, Texas. Both are buried in Restland Cemetery, Young County, Texas.

The Land Conrad Fuchs first acquired 160 acres of land in May 1862 from the State of Texas as a Preemption Grant. Following the Civil War, he began to acquire other property adjacent to his original 160 acres. By 1879 he owned at least 4,500 acres.¹⁴ Conrad filed a deed in October 1888 designating a certain 200 acres as his homestead.

As detailed in **Figure 2.3**, T.M. Yett and J.R. Yett acquired the 200-acre Conrad L. Fuchs Homestead in March 1899. Subsequently, J.R. Yett gained sole ownership of this property in October 1914 through a "...division of interest heretofor jointly held..." Then, in October 1925, Yett sold 918.8 acres – including the Fuchs Homestead – to H.T. Ellison. This transaction is recorded in Burnet County Deed Records, Volume 71, Page 236, and the location of the property is shown on **Figure 2.4**.

Date	Grantor	Grantee	Acres	Additional Information
25 Mar 1899	Anna E J Fuchs, <i>et al</i>	T M Yett & J R Yett	200	Yett & Yett purchase the land of the C L Fuchs Estate, <i>i.e.</i> , the C L Fuchs Homestead.
				Yett brothers continue to acquire property in the vicinity of the C L Fuchs Homestead.
29 Oct 1914	T M Yett	J R Yett	3,179½	J R Yett acquires sole ownership of Fuchs Homestead in a "division of interest heretofor jointly held..."
26 Oct 1925	M/M J R Yett	H T Ellison	918.8	Ellison buys property from J R Yett. This purchase includes the C L Fuchs Homestead.
01 Jan 1929	H T Ellison	J A Holland, <i>et al</i>	918.8	Holland purchases land from Ellison.
03 Mar 1932	J A Holland, <i>et al</i>	M/M H T Ellison	918.8	M/M Ellison re-possess land from Holland during Great Depression.
25 Aug 1934	M/M H T Ellison	George Waits	918.8	Waits purchases land from M/M Ellison.
26 Aug 1940	George Waits	M/M Roy F Gunn	918.8	M/M Gunn purchase land from Waits.
09 Sep 1941	M/M Roy F Gunn	M/M John A Nieman	855.44	M/M Nieman purchase land acres from M/M Gunn.
11 Jul 1947	M/M John A Nieman	M/M C T Hedges	855.44	M/M Hedges purchase land from M/M Nieman.
07 June 1970	M/M C T Hedges	Kings Land, Inc	674.905	Kings Land, Inc purchases land from M/M Hedges. This purchase includes the C L Fuchs Homestead.

Figure 2.3 History of Ownership of the Conrad Fuchs Homestead and Surrounding Property

¹³ See www.findagrave.com ID 69009305

¹⁴ This includes 4,028 acres owned in the name of his wife, Anna E.J. See *A History of The Conrad L. Fuchs Family and The Fuchs House*, p. 120.

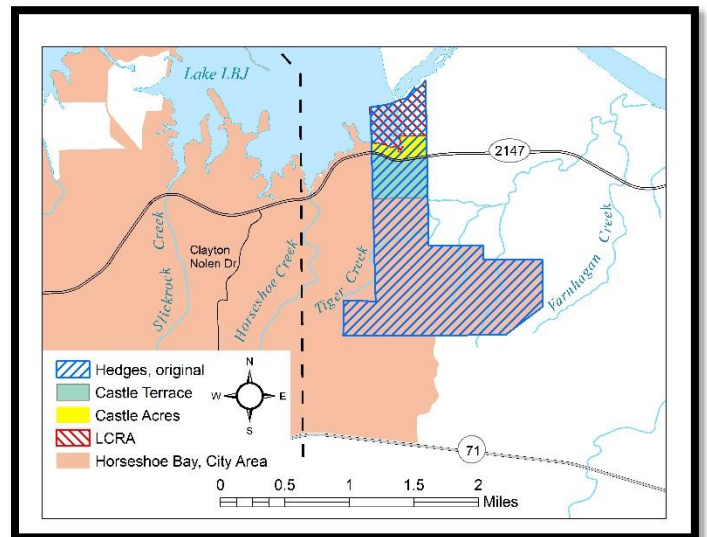
Recall that Conrad Fuchs had received 160 acres of this land from the State of Texas in April 1862 under a Prescription Grant and had owned much of the remainder of the 918 acres.

Following Ellison's ownership, this tract passed through five additional owners in 22 years.¹⁵ Then in July 1947, Mr. & Mrs. John A. Nieman sold 855.44 acres to Mr. & Mrs. C.T. Hedges. This transaction is recorded in the Burnet County Deed Records, Volume 99, Page 514, and the location of the property is shown on **Figure 2.4**.

Following the creation of Lake Granite Shoals (later Lake Lyndon B. Johnson) in 1951, C.T. Hedges soon thereafter subdivided the waterfront segment of his ranch as Castle Acres (town lots, available for a 99-year lease), as shown in **Figures 2.4** and **2.5**

Figure 2.4

The Hedges Ranch, showing a segment subdivided in 1952 and segments conveyed to Elms in 1961 and to Kings Land, Inc. in 1971



Date	Grantor	Grantee	Acres	Deed Record	Additional Information
5 Aug 1949`	C.T. Hedges, <i>et ux</i>	LCRA	62.5	V103 P234	Deed Records are from Burnet County.
	C.T. Hedges, <i>et ux</i>	LCRA	51.8	V104 P545	
28 Apr 1952	C.T. Hedges			V108 P653	Hedges created Castle Acres Subdivision.
29 Apr 1961	C.T. Hedges, <i>et ux</i>	Morris A Elms	78.58	V129 P14	Elms created Castle Terrace Subdivision.
24 Aug 1971	C.T. Hedges, <i>et ux</i>	Kings Land, Inc	674.905	V190 P703	
23 Jul 1975	C.T. Hedges, <i>et ux</i>	Barry Hedges Fanning & Marc Hedges Fanning	42.18	V221 P199	Deed of Gift to two grandsons,
			909.965		Total acres. The 8.835 acres not accounted for is probably RM 2147.

Figure 2.5 Summary of Land Sales by Claud T. Hedges

¹⁵ Note the discrepancy between the amount of land that Roy F Gunn bought in August 1940 (918.8 acres) and then sold in August 1941 (855.44 acres). It appears that the 918 acres and the 855 acres are the same piece of property. The 1941 deed (from Gunn to Nieman) contains this interesting statement: "It is understood, however, that this sale is of land in bulk and that no warranty is made to the number of acres so conveyed." As shown in **Figure 2.5**, the actual acreage appears close to 918 acres; this discrepancy is not well understood; research is continuing.

The Ranch House and Other Infrastructure Dick Schieffer, a child and young teenager during the 1940s, recalls visiting the Hedges home. (At this point the Hedges must have occupied the Fuchs House.) Dick remembers entering through the kitchen; this would have been using the iconic circular stone steps, now removed following the February 2024 fire. The children generally stayed in the lower level with its granite gravel floor, while the adults had the main floor to themselves.¹⁶

Around 1950, C.T. Hedges built a “cut-stone house on the mountain summit! This is now the Morris Elms home. ...”¹⁷ This high ground was historically known as Castle Mountain but is now designated as Thanksgiving Mountain within Horseshoe Bay. This house still stands and is located at 645 Knights Row in the Castle Terrace subdivision of the City of Cottonwood Shores. We do not know if Hedges had any ranch outbuildings (barn, corral, etc.) near this house. Perhaps not, since we do know that Hedges “... used the basement of the house [i.e., the Fuchs House] for a goat shelter and for housing a tractor.”¹⁸

Ranch Operations We do not know if the Yett family operated this property as a working ranch. It seems reasonable that they did, because Esther [Richter] Weaver’s history of the Fuchs House comments that:

"From 1899 on, foremen and their families and various other tenants resided in the sturdy rock house at Tiger Mill. Among them were the Ernest Odiorne, Carl Jay, Ed Hardin, Will Penny, and Murphy Crider families."¹⁹

Weaver’s comments suggest that at least some of these men served as ranch foreman.

Moreover, Weaver further states that during World War I (the period of Yett ownership of the property), “...lumber and iron works of all the mill outhouses were hauled away for use in the war effort.”²⁰ So it seems reasonable to assume that ranching operations under the Yetts’ ownership was reduced dramatically in about 1918, more or less.

We do not know if the six families that owned this land between October 1925 and July 1947 operated it as an agricultural ranch. Given the short duration of these ownerships, it seems reasonable to assume they did not. Almost immediately after Lake Granite Shoals was formed, C.T. Hedges created lakeside lots for lease, known as the Castle Acres Subdivision. Hedges later sold 78.58 acres in 1961, which became the Castle Terrace Subdivision.

Hedges probably operated the remaining 675 acres as a working ranch until it was sold to the Hurd family in 1971.

Family Activities at the Ranch At this remove in time, we know nothing about how the Hedges family might have used the ranch for any sort of family gatherings or activities.

¹⁶ Information from a face-to-face conversation with Dick Schieffer, 19 Aug 2024.

¹⁷ See undated memorandum on C.T. Hedges’ letterhead. Available at HSB City Hall archives. Although undated, this memo was probably written about 1972-1973.

¹⁸ Quoted from *History of the Conrad Fuchs Rock House*, pp. 12-13, by Esther [Richter] Weaver. See the Annotated Bibliography on p. 57 for a complete bibliographic citation and notes on availability. Hereinafter cited as *Rock House*.

¹⁹ *Rock House*, pp. 12-13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Vestiges of Former Times The Hedges Ranch was home to two of the most significant historic sites in Horseshoe Bay, namely the Fuchs House and the Tiger Mill community. The Fuchs House was the subject of a 2018 book, the cover of which is illustrated in [Figure 2.6](#).²¹

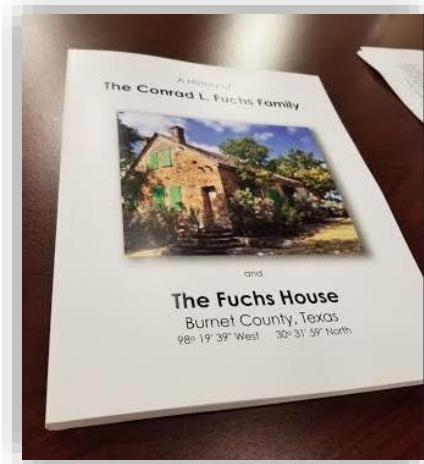


Figure 2.6
History of the Conrad Fuchs Family and Fuchs House

And the Tiger Mill community was memorialized in 2024 with the placement of a City of Horseshoe Bay historical marker shown in [Figure 2.7](#).

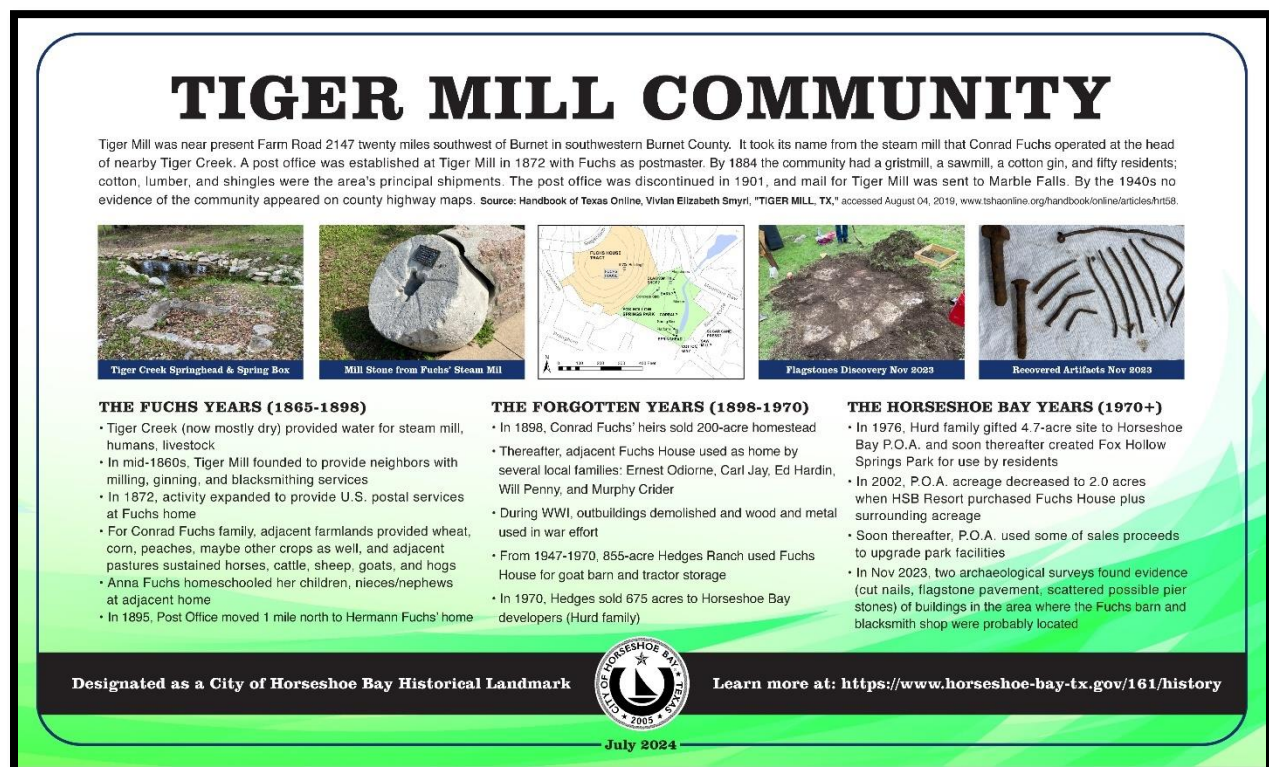


Figure 2.7 Historical Marker for Tiger Mill Community,
located in Fox Hollow Springs Park, Horseshoe Bay South

Reflections Every ranch in this survey offers a different perspective on the main themes of this story. In the case of the Hedges Ranch, Horseshoe Bay residents are blessed to have received two historic sites on this property. The community has responded appropriately by preserving and recording both.

²¹ See Annotated Bibliography on page [57](#) for a complete bibliographic citation and notes on availability.

Chapter Four The T – P Ranch

Approximately 1,174 acres of the former T – P Ranch are now contained within the city limits or extraterritorial jurisdiction of the City of Horseshoe Bay. This ranch is yet another example of how lonesome, hardscrabble land of the Hill Country was transformed into exurban communities, stimulated mainly by the presence of recreational lakes.

In 1982, Dr. John Fulton Thomas published a memoir, *T – P Ranch*,²² detailing activities on this land for the (then) 53 years of family ownership. That invaluable document has provided many clues in the development of the following story. Readers are encouraged to read the memoir for themselves to appreciate the challenges involved in owning and operating a Hill Country ranch during the middle of the 20th century. Excerpts are occasionally quoted here to define key milestones in the history of the ranch.

The People: In September 1629, one Tristram Thomas was born in Kent County, England. Sometime in the early 1650s, he emigrated to the State of Maryland, where he married Anne de Coursey (born in 1633 in County Dublin, Ireland) in Talbot County in about 1655. For purposes of this story, Tristram is here designated as the “immigrant ancestor” for the Thomas clan. He was the sixth great-grandfather to John Calhoun Thomas, founder of the T – P Ranch.

Starting from Maryland in the late 1700s, later generations of the Thomas family worked their way south and west through North Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas, arriving in Texas sometime in the 1860s.²³ Specifically, William Wade Thomas (born 8 April 1821, Jones Co., MS – d. 23 May 1898, Bell Co., TX) was the first Thomas in Texas, moving from Arkansas. Among the children in that family was James E. Thomas (b. 30 Jan 1850, Drew Co., AR – d. 26 Jan 1911, Bell Co., TX), father to John Calhoun Thomas.

Figure 4.1 shows the descendants of John C. Thomas through the next two generations; great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren do exist but are not shown here.

Figure 4.1
Descendants of
John Calhoun Thomas
(Note: An additional three generations exist but are not shown here.)

Outline Descendant Report for John Calhoun Thomas	
1	John Calhoun Thomas b: 26 Jun 1884 in Bell Co, TX, d: 17 May 1954 in Travis Co, TX + Mary Fulton b: 24 Dec 1885 in Glasgow, Scotland, m: 05 Nov 1911 in Bell, Texas, USA, d: 24 Aug 1961 in Travis Co, TX
...2	Elizabeth Berry Thomas b: 12 Dec 1912 in Travis Co, TX, d: 24 Mar 2002 in Shelby Co, TX + Edwin Brown Booth b: 12 Feb 1912 in Shelby Co, TX, m: 30 Apr 1938 in Travis, Texas, USA, d: 19 Apr 2006 in Shelby Co, TX
.....3	Mary Elizabeth Booth b: 09 Oct 1939 in Travis Co, TX + Edward Bouchard
.....3	Thomas Brown Booth b: 12 Dec 1942 in Travis Co, TX
.....3	Margaret Ann Booth b: 16 Jan 1945 in Travis Co, TX + James Edmund Babcock b: 21 Mar 1943 in Travis Co, TX, m: 26 Aug 1967, d: 25 Jun 2023 in Burnet Co, TX
.....3	Edwin Fulton Booth b: 03 Jun 1949 in Travis Co, TX + Louise Kathleen Reeves b: Abt. 1952, m: 15 Jun 1973 in Harris Co, TX + Frances Louise Moore b: 15 Sep 1951 in Galveston Co, TX, m: 14 Dec 1984 in Harris Co, TX
...2	John Fulton Thomas b: 13 Jan 1916 in Williamson Co, TX, d: 26 Apr 1993 in Travis Co, TX + Helen Martha Hall b: 13 Nov 1917 in Athens Co, OH, m: 21 Jun 1941 in Wyomissing, PA., d: 04 Mar 2011 in Travis Co, TX
.....3	Mary Helen Thomas b: 25 Oct 1942 in Olmsted, Minnesota, USA + Claude James Davenport b: 15 Jun 1941 in Brazoria, Texas, USA, m: 31 Oct 1965 in Brazoria, Texas, USA
.....3	John Hall Thomas b: 22 Oct 1944 in Travis Co, TX, d: 23 Nov 2014 in Culberson Co, TX + Margaret Sue Peace b: 23 Jan 1941 in Bexar Co, TX, m: 28 May 1971 in Bexar Co, TX
.....3	Susan Reed Thomas b: 26 Nov 1947 in Travis Co, TX + Kenneth Michael Jastrow II b: Abt. 1947, m: 01 Sep 1968 in Travis Co, TX
.....3	Sarah Fulton Thomas b: 26 Nov 1947 in Travis Co, TX + Charles Michael Smith m: 17 Oct 1970 in Travis Co, TX
.....3	James William Thomas b: 26 Jun 1951 in Travis Co, TX + Christina C Cordes b: Abt. 1953, m: 25 May 1997 in Travis Co, TX
...2	Infant Thomas b: 1920, d: 1920

²² See Annotated Bibliography on page 57 for a complete bibliographic citation and notes on availability.

²³ This date is inferred from William Thomas’ residence, as found in the 1860 and 1870 U.S. Census records.

The Land The T – P Ranch sat on land that was part of ten original Land Grant Surveys in three counties. **Figures P.3** and **P.4** (pages 4-5) shows a summary of those original land grants.

Beginning with the original recipients of those land grants, numerous individuals bought and sold the land from the 1840s to July 1901. At that time, Edmund Ebeling (1880 - 1963) acquired 3,759 acres as an inheritance from his father, Edward Ebeling (1827 - 1897), who had emigrated from Germany in 1857. The warranty deed closing this transaction is recorded in the Llano County Deed Records, Volume 36, Page 184.

Edmund married Della Collins in December 1902 and lived, ranched, and raised a family of three children on this ranch, acquiring an additional 1,202 acres²⁴ in March 1914. He moved his family off the ranch and into Marble Falls in 1914 but continued to own and work the ranch²⁵ until he sold the property to George and William Beakley in March 1921. The warranty deed closing this transaction is recorded in the Llano County Deed Records, Volume 54, Page 240.

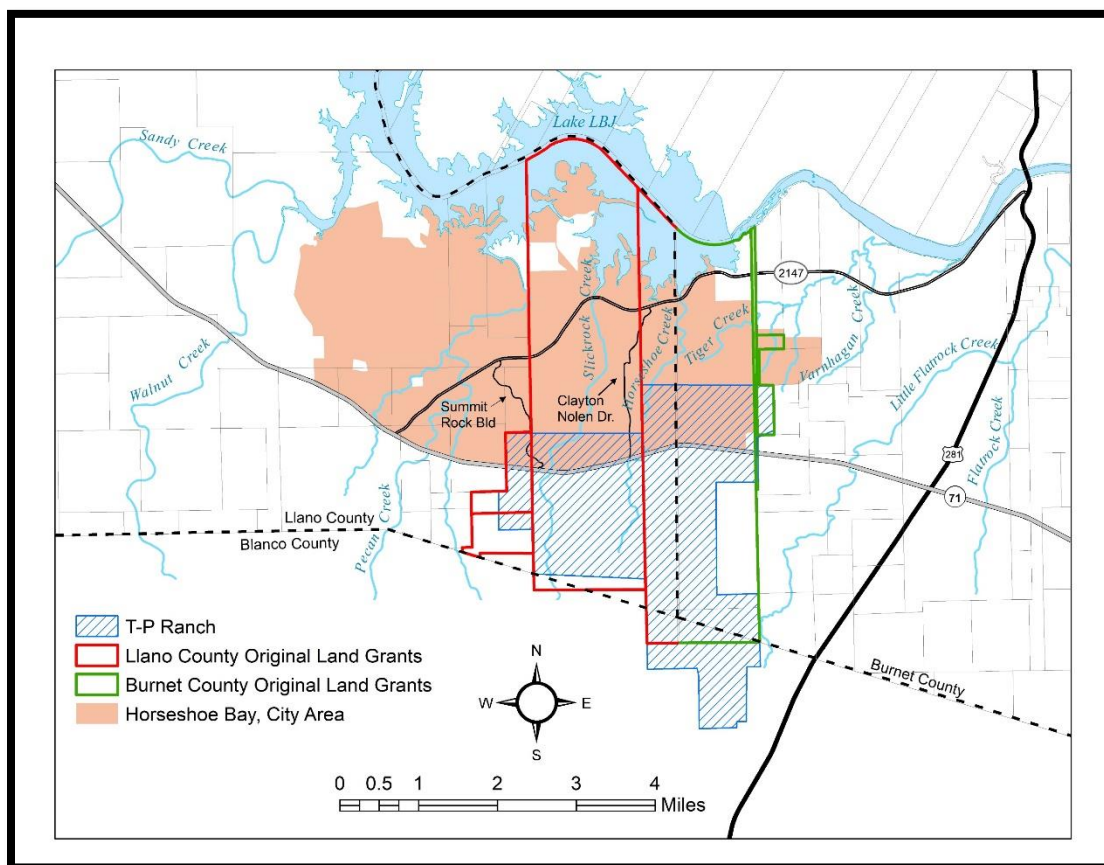


Figure 4.2 The T – P Ranch, in Relation to Its Surroundings
(Image created by Charles Hixson, LUAS)

²⁴ The total acreage (4,961 acres) apparently owned by Edmund Ebeling in 1914 is different than the acreage (5,080.43 acres) conveyed to the Beakley family in 1921. This difference (119.43 acres) may be due to a disagreement between brothers Max Ebeling and Edmund Ebeling over the boundary between their adjoining properties; see *T – P Ranch*, p. 37; research is continuing.

²⁵ See *Burnet County History*, Vol II, p. 81.

The T – P Ranch derives its name from the two principals – Dr. John Calhoun Thomas and Moses C. Parrish – who acquired 5,080.43 acres from Mr. George C. Beakley, *et ux*, and William B. Beakley on 15 April 1929. The warranty deed closing this transaction is recorded in the Burnet County Deed Records, Volume 76, Page 622. **Figure 4.2** shows the position of the T – P Ranch with respect to the original land grants, county lines, major highways, creeks, and the City of Horseshoe Bay.

The ranch was purchased with cash and ten promissory notes. Within 6½ months of closing, America was plunged into the Great Depression following the stock market crash of Black Monday, 29 October 1929. The following quotations from the *T – P Ranch* memoir summarize the challenge of retaining the property during those bleak economic times:

“Dr. J.C. was able to pay off notes number one through four due 1929-1933. He was urgently seeking re-financing to prevent loss of the ranch.

“M.C. Parrish filed a Quit Claim Deed on September 16, 1933 completely ‘renouncing any further right, title and interest in and to that certain tract or parcel of land lying and situated in the Counties of Burnet, Llano and Blanco.’ ”²⁶

Whereupon Dr. J.C.²⁷ became the sole owner. The *T – P Ranch* memoir describes the first sale of ranch property as follows:

“On June 30, 1952, Dr. J.C. transferred title to acreage to the respective counties for a highway right-of-way. Purchase price was \$50.00 per acre. Burnet County took 17.84 acres and Llano County obtained 41.14 acres for a total of 58.98 acres.”²⁸

This effectively cut the ranch into two pieces and impacted the operation of the ranch. Apparently this road – originally dubbed RR 93 – went through the ranch as early as 1949, probably earlier. It was redesignated as State Highway 71 in August 1965.

The T – P Ranch passed from Dr. John C. Thomas and wife Mary [Fulton] Thomas to their children John Fulton Thomas and Elizabeth [Thomas] Booth in a life estate.

Several years after the death of Dr. John Fulton Thomas on 26 April 1993 at age 77, the Thomas and Booth families decided to partition the land between the two families. **Figure 4.3** summarizes that partition. Note that the five heirs of Dr. John Fulton each received an undivided interest in a specific segment of the land; **Figure 4.3** illustrates the approximate location of each of these five segments.

²⁶ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, p. 65.

²⁷ This was the fond nickname bestowed by family. See *T – P Ranch*, p. 2.

²⁸ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, p. 77.

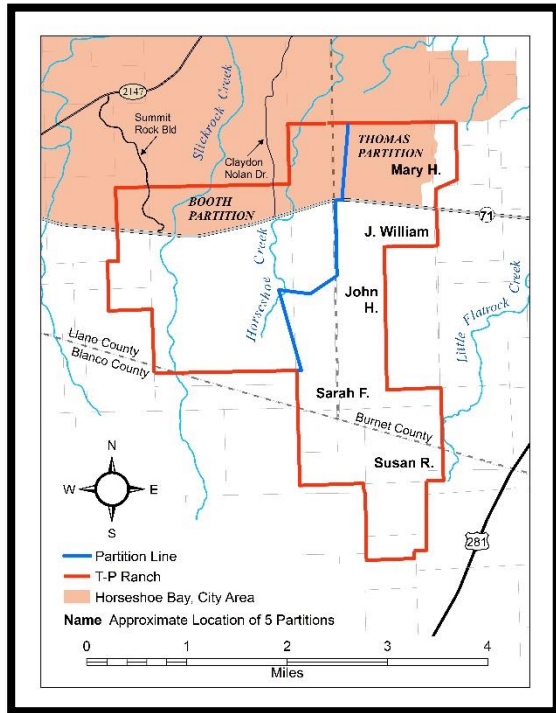


Figure 4.3

The T – P Ranch, showing the 1996 Partition between the Thomas and Booth Families
(Image created by Charles Hixson, LUAS)

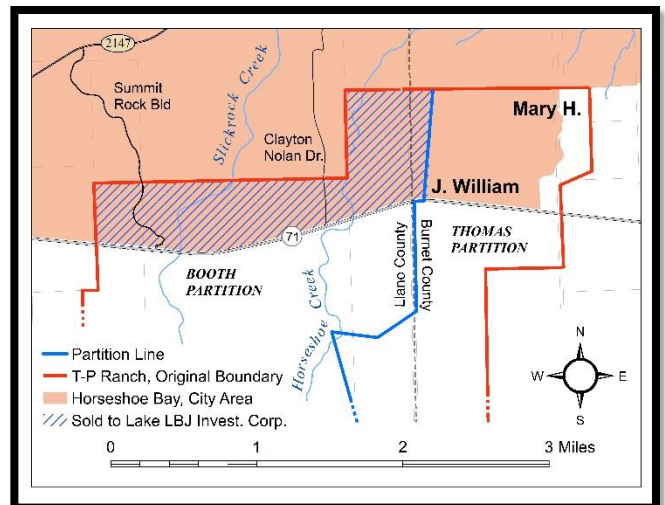
Because Elizabeth [Thomas] Booth was still living at the time of the September 1996 partition, her four heirs each received an undivided quarter interest in the other portion of the T – P Ranch, while she retained a life estate in this portion.

On 19 May 1998, the Booth family sold 607.97 acres of the (then-called) Booth Ranch to Lake LBJ Investment Corp. – a part of the Jaffe interests. All this acreage lies north of State Highway 71 and is shown on **Figure 4.4**. The warranty deed closing this transaction is recorded in the Llano County Deed Records, Volume 898, Page 146. Lake LBJ Investment Corp. subsequently sold this acreage; the Jaffe interests later purchased it again; this acreage is now part of the Summit Rock Communities development.

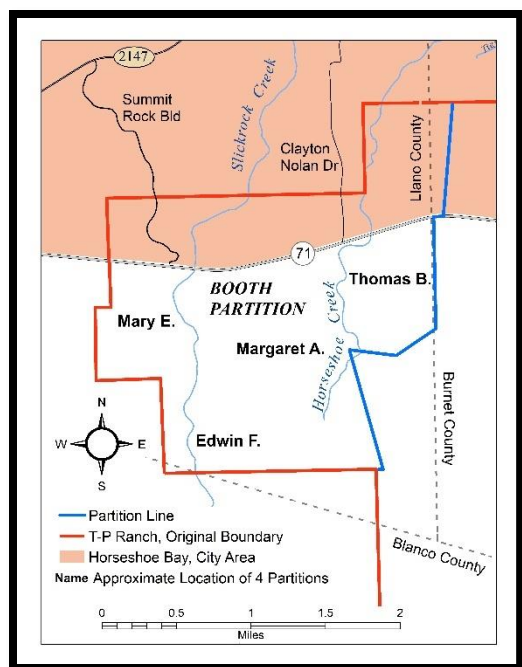
Two of the Thomas heirs – James William Thomas and Mary H. [Thomas] Davenport – received land north of State Highway 71, as shown in **Figure 4.4**. None of this land was ever acquired by the Hurd or Jaffe interests. However, one parcel is now home to the Phoenix Center and is part of the City of Horseshoe Bay. Another parcel has been annexed into the City of Horseshoe Bay as the so-called Monarch Ridge subdivision.

Figure 4.4

The T – P Ranch,
showing Sales of Portions lying North of SH 71
(Image created by Charles Hixson, LUAS)



With the land sales detailed in the two paragraphs immediately above, control of the parts of the T – P Ranch that now lie within the current city limits or extraterritorial jurisdiction of Horseshoe Bay passed from the Thomas and Booth families to other entities.



Shortly after the death of Elizabeth [Thomas] Booth on 24 March 2002 at age 89, her four heirs also partitioned the Booth Ranch into four segments. **Figure 4.5** summarizes that partition and indicates the approximate location of the four segments.

Figure 4.5
The T – P Ranch,
 showing Partition of the Booth Ranch
 among the Third Generation
 (Image created by Charles Hixson, LUAS)

So, each of the nine grandchildren of Mary [Fulton] and John Calhoun Thomas each received a portion of the original T – P Ranch. Of the nine segments, four have been sold to other entities and five remain in the family and are actively used as ranches and homes. Interestingly, conservation easements, which significantly limit urban development, are in effect for three of these segments.

Having traced the evolution of land ownership of the T – P Ranch over time, this story now reverts to the years 1929 to 1996, when the ranch was operated as a total family undertaking with the goals of being economically self-sufficient as well as providing a venue for family gatherings. The story that follows is a melding of information from the memoir *T – P Ranch* and recollections from the grandchildren, i.e., “third generation” family members.

The Ranch House and Other Infrastructure The memoir *T – P Ranch* mentions evidence (house remains, well and pump, dipping vat and pens) of an early, abandoned homestead on the southern part of the ranch on the west side of Slick Rock Creek about a mile south of Highway 71. This site is likely the location of the Edmund Ebeling ranch house.

The Beakley family constructed a new ranch house for their use. This was the house in existence when Thomas and Parrish acquired the ranch in 1929. *T – P Ranch* describes it as follows:

“At the time the T-P Ranch was established, the house had no underpinning, and hogs bedded down in the shade under the house. The first project was to close off the hog haven.

“Development of a water system was of high priority. The water well east of the house was drilled, and the windmill and tank installed. There was no electricity, however, so only cold showers under the tank were available.

“The cabinets and drawers in the kitchen were of wooden construction. Rats had chewed large niches in most of the drawers to allow themselves easy entry. Considerable renovation in this area was required.

All cooking was done on a wood-fired stove, the last of which is still in place as a memento. In this were baked Fred Hall’s cornbread, Rob Roy’s ‘Pazo biscuits,’ and Bob Stiles’ ‘sky-high pies.’ Heat source consisted of the kitchen stove and the fireplace. Light source was kerosene lamps and gasoline fueled Coleman lanterns.”²⁹

Soon the ranch house was sufficiently comfortable to be a venue for gatherings of Dr. J.C.’s friends. The first of these was held in November 1930 and included Dan Moody (Governor of Texas 1927-1931) on the guest list. Subsequent gatherings included J.P. Buchanan (U.S. Congressman 1913-1937 and namesake for the uppermost lake on the Lower Colorado River Authority system), and Lyndon B. Johnson (President of the United States 1963-1969 and namesake for the eponymous lake that abuts Horseshoe Bay).³⁰

Further enhancements to the ranch house over the years prior to 1982 are described in *T – P Ranch* on pages 86-89. Serious students of history and family lore are invited there for additional information.



Figure 4.6 Painting of T – P Ranch House by Jon Lippons in 2002

(Image courtesy of Susan [Thomas] Jastrow)

Although the T – P Ranch was often used for family and friend gatherings, and hunting retreats, it was also a working ranch. Thus, necessary improvements to the ranch infrastructure were made to improve the efficiency of ranch operations. Water supply, fencing, and brush control were the major focus of these efforts. The objective of all these infrastructure improvements was to make the pastureland as amenable as possible to raising quality cattle for sale.

²⁹ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, pp. 81-82.

³⁰ Information from *T – P Ranch*, pp. 81-82.

Evidence of human habitation in the Hill Country by Native Americans and the earliest Euro-American settlers is most often found near the creeks and rivers that lace through the Hill Country. It is axiomatic that water is necessary for human survival. **Figure 4.7** shows the drought and non-drought conditions in Llano County since 1895; we assume the conditions at the T – P Ranch were the same as the overall county.

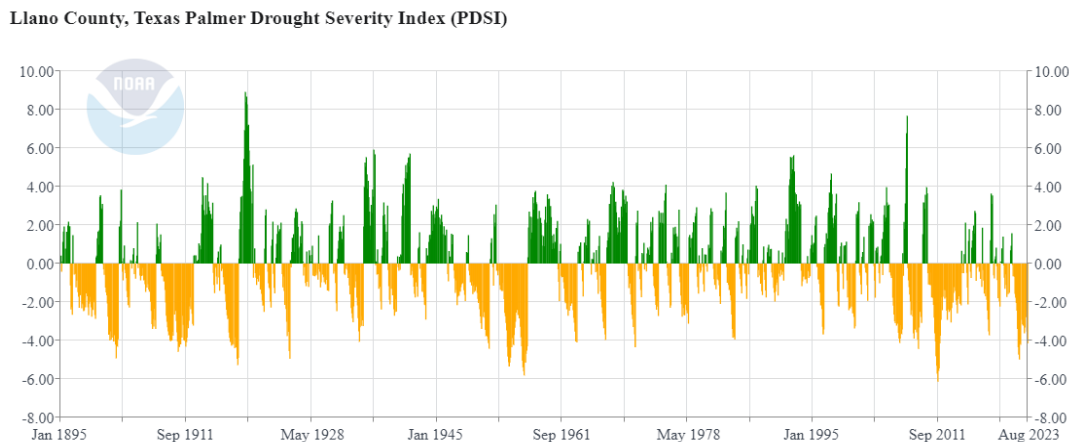


Figure 4.7 Drought Conditions in Llano County, Texas, 1895-2023

The only water sources available in the times before the Thomas family purchased the property were Horseshoe Creek and Slick Rock Creek. These creeks, which also traverse current-day Horseshoe Bay, ran through West No Man’s Land (Horseshoe) and Creek Pasture (Slick Rock). These locations are shown on **Figure 4.8**.

As noted on page 23, the first water well and windmill were placed near the ranch house in the early 1930s. Subsequently, additional wells and windmills were strategically placed around the ranch, as described in *T – P Ranch*:

“The next well was in the Tank Pasture, and the rock reservoir was constructed. This was used as a swimming hole in those days, even if a bit mossy.

“The then existing stock tank was enlarged with assistance of Soil Conservation funds. With the new windmill, this tank was not needed for stock water, but Dr. J.C. envisioned a large fishing tank. There it sits today, never capable of holding water for any length of time.

“The third windmill well was placed on the hill in the House Pasture and serves four pastures.

“The fourth windmill was located in the Middle Pasture and the fifth in West No Man’s.

“The mills in the South Pasture and East No Man’s were put in later in order to further decentralize watering places to allow better grazing utilization by the livestock. The East No Man’s well is the deepest at about 175 feet. A ‘water witch’ was always utilized in locating a well.

“Finally, when electricity became available, a second well was drilled at the house to provide a pressurized system rather than the gravity flow used in the original water system.”³¹

The locations of these wells are also shown in **Figure 4.8**.

³¹ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, pp. 96-97.

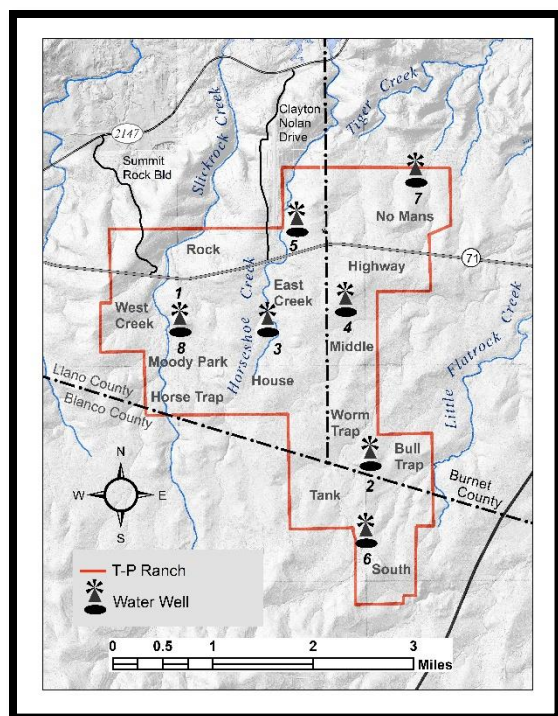


Figure 4.8

The T – P Ranch,

showing Creeks, Traps, Pastures, and Water Wells
(Image created by Charles Hixson, LUAS)

At the time the T – P Ranch was purchased in 1929, its perimeter was completely fenced, with just a few interior fences in place. The perimeter fence was quickly upgraded in order to protect the existing whitetail deer population. (Local poaching was a problem in the 1930s, possibly caused by the tough economic times of the Great Depression.)³²

Over time, considerable interior fencing was added along with additional water sources (see paragraphs immediately above). The ultimate goal – eventually achieved – was to create a number of smaller pastures.

“The reason for these further reductions in pasture size was to have pastures small enough that only one bull need be used in each pasture. This provision was needed to allow the collection of viable performance data on the cattle herd.”³³

Cedar, mesquite, live oak, scrub oak, and persimmon were brush species that needed to be controlled to enhance the growth of grass in the pastures. The following quotes describe the pervasiveness of these species:

“Virgin cedar brakes infested the T-P at its inception, and it was particularly heavy on the northern three-fourths of the acreage. The pasture called No Man’s Land was so named because it was a large pasture covered with large cedar under which were lots of rocks and not much grass. ... The cedar was so thick it was difficult to find the livestock and even more difficult to gather at shipping time.”³⁴

“Liveoak and scrub oak overgrowth can also interfere with good utilization of pasture land. When Casey arrived³⁵ as foreman, he was told there were twelve bulls in the Bull Trap. The oak brush was so thick, it took Casey a day and a half of horseback riding to see all of the bulls.”³⁶

Perhaps the most fascinating method of control was the use of “Mexicans” as “cedar choppers.”³⁷ Other methods of control were chaining, herbicides, shredders, and hand cutting.

³² Information from *T – P Ranch*, p. 97.

³³ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, pp. 98-99.

³⁴ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, p. 99.

³⁵ Approximately 70 years ago.

³⁶ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, p. 100.

³⁷ It is interesting that “Mexicans” were used as cedar choppers rather than the Scots-Irish clans which dominated that activity in the Hill Country at that time. See *The Cedar Choppers Life on the Edge of Nothing* for stories about these families that flourished as renegade citizens from the 1860s to the 1950s. See Annotated Bibliography on page 57 for a complete bibliographic citation and notes on availability.

As noted on page 46, electricity came to the adjoining Schieffer Ranch in 1949; presumably the T – P Ranch received power at about the same time. *T – P Ranch* notes: “...electricity was finally available for the amenities that are taken for granted.”³⁸ without specifying a date.

Ranch Operations Simultaneously with improving the infrastructure, revenue-producing activities were undertaken to offset the expenses of operation and capital improvements. These activities mostly involved cattle raising and goat raising. Revenue was supplemented with occasional leasing to deer hunters.

Being an absentee owner, Dr. J.C. engaged the services several men over the years to serve as ranch foreman. **Figure 4.9** lists their names, terms of service, and a few remarks on each, as paraphrased from *T – P Ranch*.

Name	Term of Service	Interesting Comments ³⁹
Fred Hall	1930-1932	Native of Eden, TX. Bachelor while at T – P, but friendly with neighboring ranch families. Made home brew during Prohibition. No electricity available, thus no radio. Unanticipated strong ‘norther’ in Spring 1932 killed many freshly-shorn Angora goats.
Rob Roy	1932-1936	Sixty-year-old life-long cowboy and bachelor. Hosted his two (spinster, school-teacher) sisters during summers. Separate house for foreman built during his time. Austin sub-division “Rob Roy” was developed on his ranch land.
John Dodgen	1936-1939	Blanco County native and bachelor when arrived. Soon married Lillian Aust. Current (as of 1982) foreman house built then. Later associated with Fitzsimmons Land & Cattle Co.
J.R. Phillips	1939-1942	“...a cattleman of high caliber.” Later foreman of ranching interests of Lykes Steamship Co. in Cuba. Later returned to ranching in Llano Co. and suffered financial reversals in that enterprise.
Carlos Tate	1942-1950	Carlos and wife Gertie had no children. “...took good care of the stock.” Salary was \$115 per month. The Tate family owned ranches in Llano County.
Ray Volmering	1950-1954	Bee Cave area native and married when arrived. Later separated and a bachelor during his last year of service. Released for cause in July 1954.
Casey Jones	1954-1983	Blanco native and married when arrived. During his tenure, two daughters graduated from high school, married and started families. “...rather tense, hardworking ... really took care of the livestock.” “... remembered for his dislike of city dudes ...”

Figure 4.9 Foremen of the T – P Ranch, 1930-1983

Casey Jones remained as ranch foreman until 1983. He held that position longer than any other man and was the best known to the “third generation” family members who were children and teenagers during his tenure. Following him were Philip Pressler and Bill Gibson.⁴⁰

³⁸ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, p. 86.

³⁹ Information from *T – P Ranch*, pp. 89-94.

⁴⁰ Coincidentally, Bill Gibson was the brother of “Hoot” Gibson, foreman of the Lupton Ranch, which was the original core property of early Horseshoe Bay. Bill later became foreman of the PT Ranch, a partition of the original *T - P Ranch* and owned by Susie [Thomas] Jastrow and husband, Kenneth Jastrow.

It appears that there were no cattle on the ranch when it was acquired in 1929. The cattle business on the ranch was started by stoking a herd of white-faced Herford cows and leasing the services of bulls, when needed. This activity got off to an inauspicious start. In 1933, during the midst of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl era, the U.S. Department of Agriculture initiated a program to provide food to hungry people and financial support to the cattle business. *T - P Ranch* tells the grim details:

“It was an extremely hot day in June 1933. The cattle herd had to be gathered and sorted. A portion of the herd was to be purchased and sent to the packing house to be canned for distribution to the food lines. It was recognized that some cows would be in too poor condition and some calves too young to stand the trip to the packers. The ill-suited cows and calves would be killed on the premises. Cows that went to the packer brought \$16.00 a head, cows killed received \$12.00. Calves sufficiently large to travel were worth \$8.00, those too small \$4.00.

“The killer cows were driven to the ridge in the House Pasture, shot and burned. The calves were shot dead in the pen.”⁴¹

Dr. J.C. chose to market his calf crop approximately 1 September of each year. Calves from most of the ranches in the Marble Falls area were shipped by rail car to Oklahoma or Kansas for further fattening. This business pattern was followed by the T – P Ranch for about a quarter century. Financial records about this business during these years are scarce, but profitability was generally negative until 1939 and mostly positive thereafter.

Dr. John Fulton Thomas assumed control of the cattle business in about 1958, following the settlement of the estate of Dr. J.C. During the preceding four years, he had closely observed the performance of the cattle herd. His memoir *T – P Ranch* gives evidence of an intellectually curious and scientifically trained man reporting on several maladies that afflict the Hereford breed, including:

- Cancer-eye is the common name for bovine ocular squamous cell carcinoma. Hereford cattle, often lacking pigment around the eye, are especially susceptible and probably even more susceptible in the Texas sun. Obviously, the occurrence of cancer-eye in a cow diminishes, perhaps destroys, the market value of that animal. According to *T – P Ranch*, a late 1950s-early 1960s program of early detection and enucleation (i.e., removal of the eyeball) on more than seventy cows was undertaken, with apparent good success. Also, selective breeding to enhance the occurrence of pigmentation in future generations was apparently undertaken.⁴²
- Dwarfism in cattle (mainly Angus and Hereford) is a genetic defect transmitted by a recessive gene. Both parents have to be carriers of that gene. And only about 25% of the offspring will exhibit dwarfism.⁴³ In the 1950s and 1960s, about the only way to control dwarfism was to cull the herd – obviously a financial setback, if not disaster. *T – P Ranch* relates that in 1956 some purebred Hereford bulls from Graham Ranch were purchased and added to the herd; two years later “...the T – P Ranch had its first dwarf born. ... The Graham bulls were shipped to the packer.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, pp. 104-105.

⁴² For more details about cancer-eye, see <https://www.producer.com/livestock/cancer-eye-requires-early-detection/> and <https://www.americancattlemen.com/articles/cancer-eye-%E2%80%93-ugly-issue>, both accessed 4 Aug 2022.

⁴³ For more details about dwarfism, see https://hereford.org/static/files/0710_ManagGeneticAbn.pdf, accessed 4 Aug 2022.

⁴⁴ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, p. 108.

T – P Ranch also reports on two practices in cattle management:

- Performance Testing is a data-gathering scheme wherein calves are individually identified, their dates of birth recorded, and their weights recorded between 160 and 240 days of age. All weights are normalized to a standard 205 days of age. This database easily identifies the better-performing steers and heifers and, by extension, the better-performing bulls and cows. It appears that Dr. John Fulton employed this Performance Strategy. This may have been the justification for creating the very small pastures, as described on page 26 above.
- “Crossbreeding is a system of mating that provides the commercial producer the opportunity of increasing total production of beef per cow in the breeding herd. Crossbreeding is not a substitute for good management, nor is it a cure-all for unproductive cattle.”⁴⁵ So, in 1959, the T – P Ranch acquired three Charolais bulls from the Max Michaelis Ranch in Kyle, Texas to begin a crossbreeding experiment. The initial results were disappointing, as described in the following vignette:

“The beginning of this new program in 1959 was not auspicious. The three bulls were too young to use when the breeding program began in February. Michaelis loaned a mature six year old bull to turn out. This bull was observed doing lots of breeding; and, after 60 days, it was presumed he had the cows settled and he was returned. The young bulls were turned out as clean-up. For whatever reason, it ultimately became apparent that the mature bull was infertile while breeding the T-P cows. The few calves resulting that first year were late and were sired by the young bulls. It took about three years to get that group of cows back to calving at the regular time.”⁴⁶

Ultimately, this crossbreeding experiment was a success – both technically and commercially. Performance Testing data presented in *T – P Ranch*⁴⁷ demonstrate that the Charolais crossbred steers consistently outperformed the Hereford steers, as measured by their pay weights.

Dr. John Fulton continued with his crossbreeding experiments. In the early 1970s, some cows were artificially inseminated using Simmental sires, but problems with infertility and difficult calving occurred – as with the Charolais program. Starting in 1978, only Tarentaise bulls were used in the breeding program. Also, in 1980, experiments were run using Longhorn bulls to breed yearling heifers; results showed a decrease in calving problems.

As the above paragraphs show, Dr. John Fulton’s philosophy on managing a cattle business was: “Cattle raising is not a static process. When deficiencies are noted or opportunities presented, an operator should be willing to make a change should it be deemed judicious to do so.”⁴⁸ His business success in cattle management was recognized in an article published in the April 1973 issue of *The Cattleman*, entitled “Pounds Mean Money.”

Although cattle were the most important livestock for generating revenue for the T – P Ranch, hogs, sheep, and goats were also raised – intermittently. The latter-day ecology of the Edwards Plateau is not well suited for raising sheep, but goats thrive there. So not surprisingly, goats were the only other “cash crop” at the T – P. An early Angora goat herd was wiped out during

⁴⁵ Quoted from <https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/crossbreeding-beef-cattle-i.html#:~:text=Crossbreeding%20is%20a%20system%20of,cure%2Dall%20for%20unproductive%20cattle>. Accessed 4 Aug 2022

⁴⁶ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, pp. 109-110.

⁴⁷ See *T – P Ranch*, pp. 111-112.

⁴⁸ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, p. 116.

the severe winter of 1932. Apparently the herd was not replaced until about 1954, when Casey Jones became the ranch foreman. The profitability of the goat operation varied widely over the years, depending on fashion trends which controlled the mohair market. Coyote predation caused some Texas goat raisers to leave the business in later years; *T – P Ranch* does not record whether this was a local problem.

Hunting for doves, quail, and deer was intermittently practiced on the T – P Ranch, sometimes as a revenue-generating program, but more often just as an exercise in family togetherness.

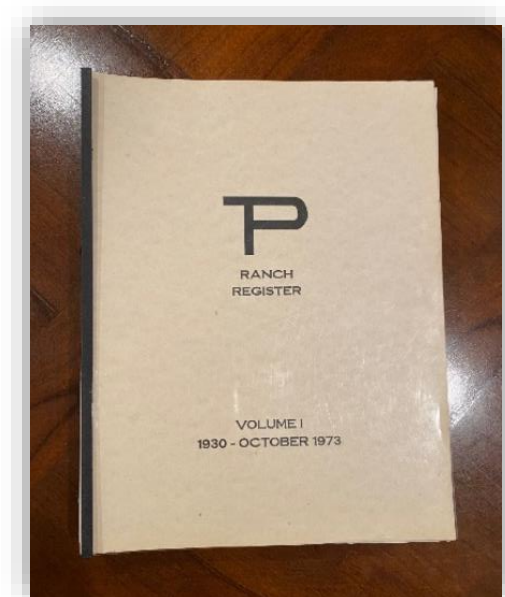
Throughout the 17 pages of the *T – P Ranch* memoir that deal with animals, it is obvious that Dr. John Fulton approached the challenges of animal husbandry with the mind of a scientist and the heart of a theologian – as any good medical doctor would. By studying pages 104-120, readers can appreciate for themselves his approach to animal management.

The T – P Ranch was not a profitable enterprise during the Great Depression years. From 1939 through 1982 was generally profitable with occasional years of net loss. Those years were directly correlated with years of significantly lower prices in the cattle market.⁴⁹

Family Activities at the Ranch Dr. J.C. acquired the T – P Ranch in 1929 to serve as a self-owned venue for hunting retreats, family gatherings, and other social events. At that time, his two children were teenagers. Over the following 25 years until his death in 1954, those two matured, completed their education, married, and started their own families. So, this “second generation” must have had memorable experiences at each stage of their lives. Similarly, his 9 grandchildren constituting the “third generation” were all born during Dr. J.C.’s lifetime. They too must have had their own memorable experiences

Figure 4.10
T – P Ranch Register
Volume I
(Image courtesy of Bill Thomas)

Many of those good times and hilarious happenings were recorded in real time in the so-called T – P Ranch Registers. **Figure 4.10** reproduces the cover of the first of three such volumes. **Figure 4.11** summarizes the dates and contents of each volume.



⁴⁹ See *T – P Ranch*, pp. 121-122.

Volume	Period Covered	Related Events and Summary of Content
I	1930 to Oct 1973	<u>17 May 1954</u> : Dr. John C. Thomas dies. Content is mostly comments from family and friends, remarking on fun times experienced at the ranch during short stays. Late in the period there are a few entries about the cattle business, either show awards won by T – P livestock or general information about business trends in the industry.
II	Nov 1973 to Dec 1988	Content is again mostly comments from family and friends, remarking on fun times experienced at the ranch during short stays. Collected near the back of the volume are newspaper articles of interest to Dr. John F. Thomas, mainly about ranching, cattle breeding, and Texas history.
III	Jan 1989 to May 1996	<u>26 Apr 1993</u> : Dr. John F. Thomas dies. Content is again mostly comments from family and friends, remarking on fun times experienced at the ranch during short stays. The last 10-15% of this volume contains photocopied newspaper articles dealing with historical events. <u>15 Aug 1996</u> : The original T – P Ranch land is partitioned.

Figure 4.11 Summary of the Contents of the T – P Ranch Registers

One can only imagine the pleasant memories that family members feel as they relive the experiences chronicled in these registers.

The T – P Ranch, being an absentee-owner operation, usually brought in a cook when family and guests were present. Notable among these was Anna Overton, employed as family cook for Dr. J.C. in Austin and well-remembered and loved by the third generation. Additionally, the several ranch foremen were also formidable cooks, each with his own specialty, as noted on pages 81-82 of *T – P Ranch*.

Dr. J.C.’s birthday was June 26. So, naturally enough, that was a time when his entire family gathered at the ranch for a celebration and reunion. Coincidentally, his youngest grandchild, Bill Thomas, was born June 26, 1951, which made the occasion especially memorable. In those times, the birthday party consisted of a Texas bar-b-que, cooked outdoors on a big pit, and served on long wooden tables under the trees near the ranch house. Friends, as well as family, participated in the celebrations.⁵⁰ The following quotation from the *Austin American* well summarizes one such event:

“But the biggest party every year is June 26th which goes down in the book as the Big Boss’s birthday. And then a goodly crew congregates there beneath the teepee and smokes a bit of peace with Big Boss Thomas. The Hal Armstrongs, the Byron Hammersmiths of Belton, the J.C. Andersons, the Thomas M. Millers – these are the regular birthday callers. New callers this past birthday were the Brown Booths – married in April. Mrs. Booth is the Boss’s daughter, Elizabeth. And Inky Thomas, who is cocker spaniel pet of the clan, attends every birthday party.”⁵¹

Prior to the 1996 partition of the ranch between the Booth and Thomas families (see pages 21-23), the Booths gathered at the ranch during July and at Thanksgiving, while the Thomases did the same during August and at Christmas. But there were also occasions when both families were present.

⁵⁰ Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 surviving third generation Thomases on 26 Feb 2023.

⁵¹ Copied from *Austin American*, July 4, 1938

At this point, the family story will describe two trajectories. The first will trace the story of Elizabeth Berry [Thomas] Booth, her husband, their four children, and 4 grandchildren; the second will chronicle the story of Dr. John Fulton Thomas, his wife, their five children, and 11 grandchildren.

The Booth Family The four Booth “third generation” siblings have a strong recollection of swimming during the hot summers – either in the above-ground, rock-enclosed pool adjacent to the ranch house or in Slick Rock Creek. The pool was preferred because there were no cattle or snakes to contend with at that place. One strict rule in the summers of the 1950s and 1960s was that all children took an afternoon nap as a precaution against polio.⁵²

The ranch house had a large open porch across the front; this was the communal sleeping area, during times when many family members were gathered for the summer visits. (There was one bedroom available, but it offered little privacy because everyone had to pass through it to reach the bathroom.) On the other side of the wall was the living room, where the adults gathered after the children were put to bed. The kids often had trouble getting to sleep, what with the music, dancing, laughing, and general frivolity occurring on the other side.⁵³

Betsy was the oldest of the third generation, so had a longer interaction with her grandparents. She recalls that (grandfather) Dr. J.C. was an early riser and he would invite her on early-morning horse rides. Invariably, he would be dressed and ready to mount up, calling out, “Are we ready??”⁵⁴

Casey Jones was the ranch foreman during much of the time the Booth third generation was growing up. He was apparently an excellent foreman but was also “... remembered for ... his dislike of city dudes ...”⁵⁵. So, perhaps it is no surprise that even today siblings Betsy and Tom recall that their encounters with Casey were “a trial.”⁵⁶



Figure 4.12

Third Generation Booth Siblings, ca.

1971

(l-r: Edwin F., (mother) Elizabeth, M. Elizabeth, Margaret A.; Thomas B., (granddaughter) Laura Babcock) (Image courtesy Tom Booth)

The Booth siblings also remember the first telephone in the ranch house was a four-party “party line,” one party being the Mustang Tavern located on U.S Highway 281. Incoming calls were differentiated by the number of rings (1

or 2 or 3 or 4). No matter though – everyone picked up and listened in on everyone else’s calls. There was no privacy among the four parties.⁵⁷

⁵² Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 third-generation Booths on 9 Oct 2023.

⁵³ Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 third-generation Booths on 9 Oct 2023

⁵⁴ Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 third-generation Booths on 9 Oct 2023.

⁵⁵ Quoted from *T – P Ranch*, p. 94.

⁵⁶ Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 third-generation Booths on 9 Oct 2023.

⁵⁷ Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 third-generation Booths on 9 Oct 2023.

It was common practice for neighboring ranch families to jointly share the work during “round-up” (when the cattle were gathered for branding, medicating, shipping, etc.). Ranchers gathered by riding their horses; wives came in cars bringing food for breakfast and lunch. The work was done, and meals were shared; the process was repeated at another ranch at a later time; and so, the community jointly accomplished its work.⁵⁸

All of the Booth siblings learned to drive using a Jeep on the internal roads and trails of the T – P Ranch. They were probably driving at an earlier age than their city peers and the process was probably less stressful for their parents.⁵⁹

The Thomas Family During the Prohibition era (1920-1933), it was common practice to make moonshine at the T – P. Once when Texas Governor Dan Moody (served 1927-1931), who was an ardent prohibitionist, visited the ranch, it was decided that proper hospitality required that the moonshine be removed from sight. This was done by hiding many bottles under the house. Unfortunately, in the heat of the summer, those bottles exploded. When Moody asked, “What was that?”, he was told that some of the family were shooting rifles down by Slick Rock Creek. Years later, some of the third generation Thomases observed that broken glass covered the crawl space below the floor.⁶⁰

Figure 4.12

Third Generation Thomas Siblings, ca 1964
(l -r: Sarah F., J. William, Mary H., Susan R., John H.)
(Image courtesy Bill Thomas)

In the earliest days when the third generation came to the ranch as children, there was no telephone in the main house – only in the ranch foreman’s home. Later when the children had grown some, a “party line” phone was installed in the main house. The third generation often amused themselves by listening in on conversations from the other parties – especially so because one of those parties was the local watering hole on U.S. Highway 281.⁶¹



The Thomas family returned to the T – P every August for a summer vacation. When children and teenagers, the young Thomases spent a lot of time at the (above-ground) swimming pool near the ranch house or in Slick Rock Creek. In those days, the creek (being spring fed) never ran dry, even during the severe drought in Texas in the 1950s. As young children the Thomas children were required to spend some quiet time indoors in the August afternoons; they passed the time reading comic books gotten from the Michel drugstore in Marble Falls.⁶²

⁵⁸ Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 third-generation Booths on 9 Oct 2023.

⁵⁹ Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 third-generation Booths on 9 Oct 2023.

⁶⁰ Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 surviving third generation Thomases on 26 Feb 2023.

⁶¹ Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 surviving third generation Thomases on 26 Feb 2023.

⁶² Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 surviving third generation Thomases on 26 Feb 2023.

These August vacations continued until the partition of the ranch in 1996. By this time, of course, the third generation were mature adults, and the fourth generation were experiencing the same delights that their parents enjoyed years earlier.

The year 1952 was the worst of an 8-year-long drought, and the pastures were in very bad shape. All ranches, including the T – P, used propane burners to burn off the needles from prickly pear cactus so the cattle would have something to eat.⁶³

During 1953 improvements were made to State Highway 71, including the installation of underpasses to allow cattle to move back and forth from pastures north of the highway.

The Texas drought of the 1950s was broken in 1957 with the occurrence of persistent rains and strong storms. The third generation remembers one occasion when the sound of a freight train could be heard down near Slick Rock Creek. In reality, it was a notorious flash flood - well known in the Hill Country – that was coming down the creek.⁶⁴

Vestiges of Former Times For centuries before Euro-Americans began to colonize the land now known as Texas, it was home to various Native American tribes. Evidence of their presence remains in this area. For instance, several Native American burned-rock middens were discovered during the construction of the Horseshoe Bay Mausoleum and the Horseshoe Creek Hiking Trail.⁶⁵ Additionally, Wilhelm Fuchs and his bride Luise [Romberg] spent their honeymoon in October 1861 establishing their homestead in the north of the C.L. Fuchs Survey 419. They found strong evidence that the site they chose had been a Native American camp shortly before.⁶⁶

In 2007, Elizabeth [Booth] Bouchard, a granddaughter of Dr. J.C. and owner of one partition of the T – P Ranch, invited archaeologists from the Llano Uplift Archaeological Society (LUAS) to survey her property for evidence of prehistoric and/or historic habitation. They encountered three sites (41LL366, 41LL367, 41LL368⁶⁷). The first of these was recognized as a burned-rock midden, but was not investigated further with testing, excavation, or sampling.

The third-generation Thomas siblings recall seeing remnants (cattle dipping pens and a water well) of an early homestead situated near Slick Rock Creek and the ranch house; they do not recall any evidence of a home. Archaeological site 41LL467 (mentioned above) was recognized as the site of Edmund Edwards homestead. The archaeological report states (as of March 2007):

“Only intact feature visible at the site is a stone-lined water well with metal hand pump attached to collar. Stone rubble piles may represent material from chimney or foundation.”

⁶³ Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 surviving third generation Thomases on 26 Feb 2023.

⁶⁴ Information from a face-to-face conversation with the 4 surviving third generation Thomases on 26 Feb 2023.

⁶⁵ Information from *Geology/Archaeology of Central Texas*, p. 29, by Jerry Bridwell. See Annotated Bibliography for a complete citation.

⁶⁶ See *Reminiscences Louise Romberg Fuchs 1927*, pp. 32-33, by Luise [Romberg] Fuchs. See the Annotated Bibliography on page 57 for a complete citation and notes on availability. Hereinafter cited as *Reminiscences*.

⁶⁷ These identifiers are assigned by the Texas Historical Commission to specify known archaeological/historic sites in Texas.

See page 20 for additional information on the Ebeling family and homestead.

Reflections Each of the early ranches in and around Horseshoe Bay offers a different perspective on the history of the area. In the case of the T – P Ranch, its story gives insight into how an urban family used a Hill Country ranch environment to provide life experiences for three generations of children. The story also illustrates how a scientifically trained rancher could use his knowledge to improve the performance and profitability of the cattle business.

Those childhood and young adult experiences must have made a strong impression because five of the nine third generation continue to live on their inherited property and three of those have invoked conservation easements, which inhibit urban development.

The T – P Ranch was never directly adjacent to the Colorado River (and thus Lake LBJ after 1952). Even so, the presence of recreational opportunities on Lake LBJ undoubtedly enhanced the value of these 5,000 acres.

Chapter Five The Schieffer Ranch

Timeline

May 1849	Ferdinand Schieffer immigrates to Texas from Prussia.
Jun 1850	Ferdinand marries Sophia Kooch in Guadalupe County, Texas.
Circa 1866	Ferdinand moves his family from Guadalupe County to Travis County, Texas.
21 Dec 1873	Alexander Schieffer born in Travis County.
18 Apr 1897	Alexander Schieffer marries Annie Ballerstedt in Travis County. They have 2 children.
25 Jan 1901	Annie Ballerstedt dies in Travis County.
25 Dec 1901	Alexander Schieffer marries Bena Mezger in Travis County. They have 3 children.
18 Feb 1903	J. Emmitt Schieffer born in Bell County, Texas.
20 Nov 1920	Bena [Mezger] Schieffer acquires 1,346 acres land (the “Varnhagen Place”) in Burnet County from her father’s estate.
29 Sep 1927	Alexander Schieffer acquires 2,016 acres land in Burnet County, Texas. This plus Bena’s inheritance becomes the Schieffer Ranch.
19 Nov 1927	J. Emmitt Schieffer marries Laura M. Stahl in Travis County. They have 3 children.
Circa 1932	Alexander Schieffer moves to Burnet County and begins operating the Schieffer Ranch.
14 Aug 1936	Dick Schieffer born in Travis County.
Circa 1946	J. Emmitt Schieffer begins operating the Schieffer Ranch, maintaining residences in Austin, Texas and at the ranch.
6 Jul 1947	Alexander Schieffer dies in Travis County.
May 1968	Heirs of Alexander partition the 3,300-acre Schieffer Ranch into three tracts, each tract 100% owned by one heir.
13 Apr 1986	J. Emmitt Schieffer dies in Travis County.
Xxx yy	Dick Schieffer begins operating the Schieffer Ranch, now reduced to about 1,045 acres..

The northwestern boundary of the present-day, 1,045-acre Schieffer Ranch is coterminous with the extreme southeastern city limit of the City of Horseshoe Bay. Although no part of the Schieffer Ranch has ever been part of Horseshoe Bay, it is a classic example of how a Hill Country ranch operated (and a ranch family lived) in the early decades of the 20th century.

Actually, the present-day Schieffer Ranch represents only about one-third of the original Schieffer family land holdings. **Figure 5.1** shows the position of the original ranch with respect to the original land grants, county lines, major highways, creeks, and the City of Horseshoe Bay.

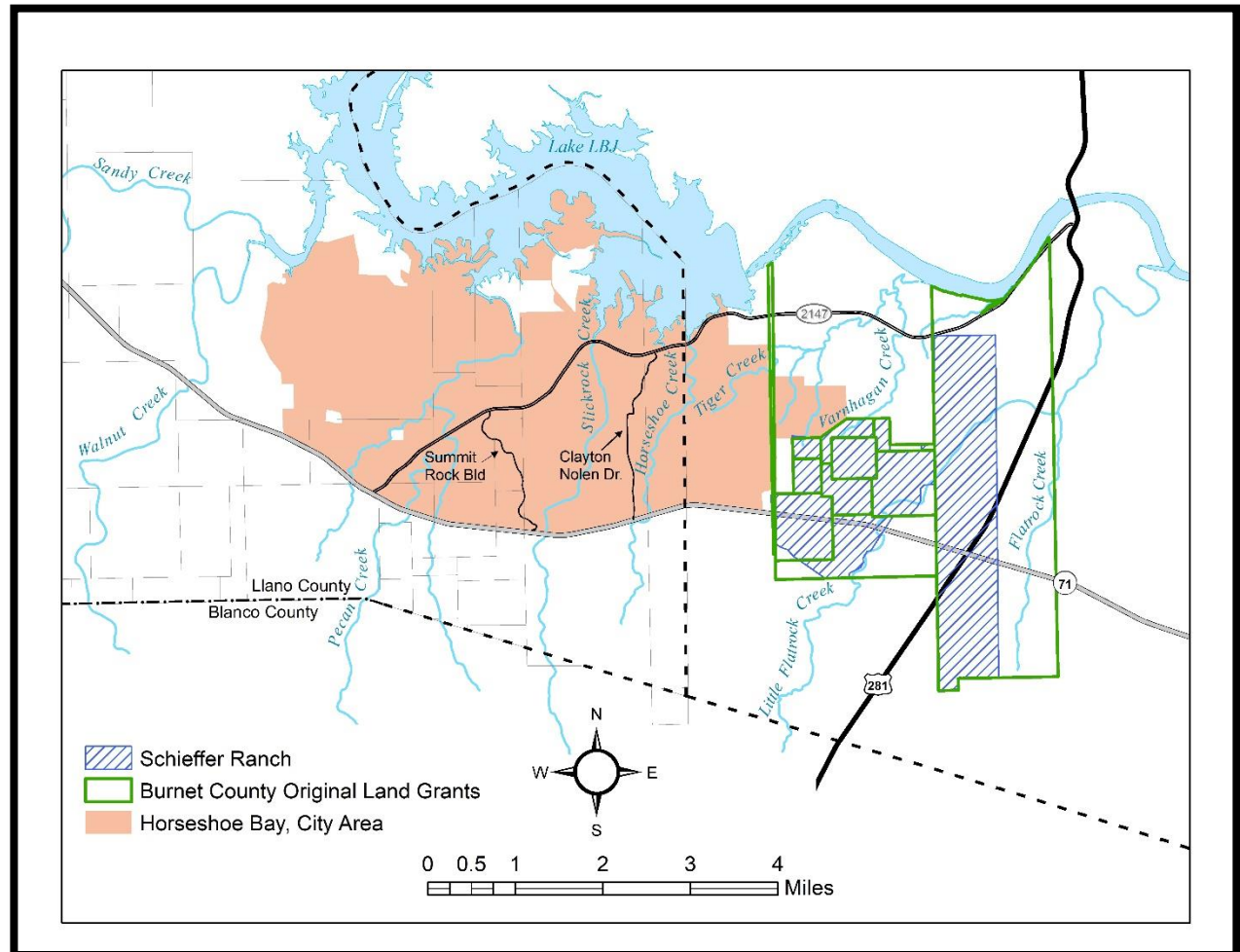


Figure 5.1 The Schieffer Ranch, in Relation to Its Surroundings
(Image created by Charles Hixson, LUAS)

The People Ferdinand Schieffer (1828-1889), the so-called “immigrant ancestor” of the Schieffer family, emigrated from Prussia at age 21, arriving in Galveston, Texas in May 1849. He soon made his way to Guadalupe County, Texas, where he met and married Sophia Kooch in June 1850. They had eleven children, the last of whom was Alexander Schieffer (b. 21 Dec 1873, Travis Co, TX – d. 6 Jul 1947, Travis Co, TX).

Sometime in the 1860s, Ferdinand relocated his family from Guadalupe County to Travis County. It seems plausible that he would not move his family during the American Civil War, so we assume the move was made in 1866 or later. Perhaps a few of the older sons remained in Guadalupe County; they would have been in their middle teens; research is continuing.

The family had resided in Travis County for about 17 years when Alexander was born in December 1873. We know little of his childhood, teenage years, or young adult years. Neither do we know how he met and courted Annie Ballerstedt.

They were married on 18 April 1897 in Travis County, Texas (his age 24; her age 19) and had two children before Annie's untimely death on 25 January 1901. **Figure 5.2** summarizes the births, deaths, and other information about these children.

Child	Birth	Death	Spouse	Other Comments
Roger Alexander	7 Oct 1897 Travis Co, TX	10 Jan 1984 Travis Co, TX	Lydia Rogers	Married 17 Dec 1921, Travis Co, TX. Had no(?) children.
Blanche	6 Jul 1899 Travis Co, TX	5 Sep 1979 Harris Co, TX	William E Rogers	Married 2 Feb 1917, Travis Co, TX Had 2 children

Figure 5.2 Children of Annie [Ballerstedt] and Alexander Schieffer

U.S. Census data taken in June 1900 show Alexander living with his wife and two children in Pecan Creek Precinct (J.P. #3) of Travis County. His occupation was *butcher* and he rented the house the family lived in.

Eleven months after Annie's death, Alexander remarried, to Bena Mezger, on Christmas Day 1901 in Travis County, Texas (his age 28; her age 18). They had three children. **Figure 5.3** summarizes the births, deaths, and other information about these children.

Child	Birth	Death	Spouse	Other Comments
Jacob Emmitt	13 Feb 1903 Bell Co, TX	13 Apr 1986 Travis Co, TX	Laura M Stahl	Married 12 Nov 1927, Travis Co, TX. Had 3 children.
Watt	11 Dec 1906 Travis Co, TX	28 Mar 1985 Travis Co, TX	Pauline D Carter	Married 12 Jun 1942, Bexar Co, TX Had no children
Ben Richard	2 Oct 1910 Travis Co, TX	9 Feb 1968 Travis Co, TX	Josephine M Biggs	Married before April 1935 Had 3 children

Figure 5.3 Children of Bena [Mezger] and Alexander Schieffer

U.S. Census data from 1910, 1920, and 1930 show Alexander, Bena, and other family members living in Austin, Texas. Alexander's occupation was *butcher*, as listed in all three Censuses.

Later, 1940 Census data show this couple living in Justice Precinct #4, Burnet County, Texas,⁶⁸ at that time, as well as in April 1935. They were age 66 and 57, respectively, and there were no other family members living in this household. Alexander's occupation was *rancher*. So, the obvious interpretation is that these two "empty nesters" moved to their ranch property (acquired in the 1920s) in the early 1930s.



Alexander died 6 July 1947 (age 73) in Travis County, Texas and Bena died 16 years later, on 30 August 1963 (age 79) in Travis County, Texas. Both are buried in Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, Travis County, Texas.

Figure 5.4
Bena & Alexander Schieffer
(Images courtesy Dick Schieffer)



A Younger Bena

U.S. Census data from 1940 show J. Emmitt Schieffer (age 37) living in Austin, Texas, with his wife, Laura (age 35), and three children, Helen J., Dick, and Dan (ages 11, 3, 3). This family was living in the same location in April 1935. Emmitt's occupation was *manager, retail meat market*. According to Dick Schieffer, his father was employed by Swift & Company.⁶⁹

Emmitt's two brothers, Watt and Ben Richard, were living in Austin, Texas and Travis County, Texas, respectively, in April 1935 and April 1940. These two brothers' occupations were *real estate* and *retail meat market*, respectively.

U.S. Census data from 1950 show J. Emmitt Schieffer enumerated in two locations: Austin, Texas and Burnet County, Texas. Both Census records show the same family members. The Austin record shows the same residence address as in 1940; the Burnet record shows a residence on Double Horn Road, Burnet County, Texas. The Austin record shows Emmitt's occupation as *overseer, 2,600-acre ranch*; the Burnet record shows *rancher, ranch*.

Laura died 2 May 1964 (age 59) in Travis County, Texas and Emmitt died almost 20 years later, on 13 April 1986 (age 83) in Travis County, Texas. Both are buried in Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, Travis County, Texas.

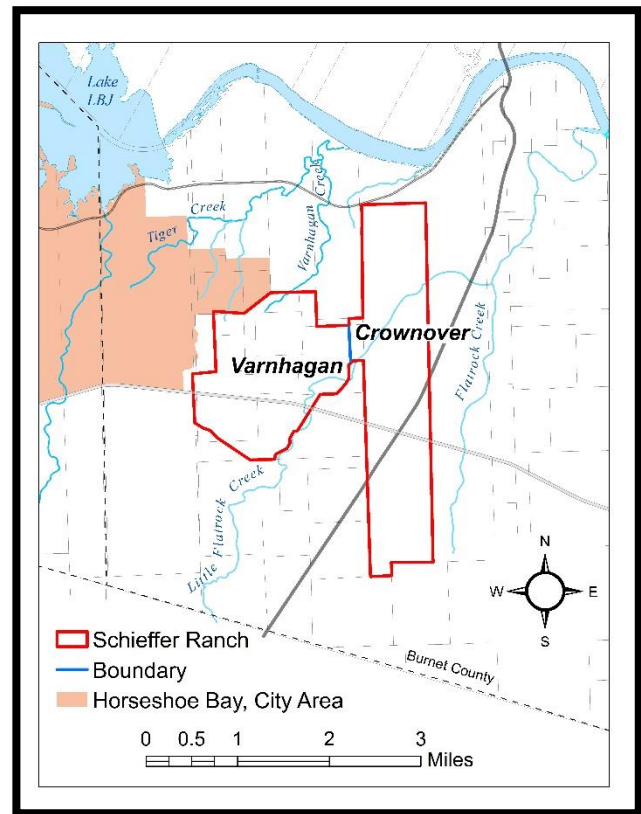
⁶⁸ The 1940 Census enumeration lists the Armin Matern and Carl Krumm families immediately before the Schieffer family and the Aquilino(?) Ochoa family immediately after. The Matern and Krumm families were established members of the community, well known in the history of the area. Census information about Aquilino Ochoa suggests he was a laborer working for (and perhaps living on??) the Schieffer Ranch.

⁶⁹ Information from Dick Schieffer in a face-to-face conversation on 23 May 2023.

The Land On 6 April 1916, Ulrich Varnhagen, *et ux* conveyed to Mrs. J.G. Mezger 1,346 acres of land, consisting of all or part of nine different original land grants. The deed closing this transaction is recorded in the Burnet County Deed Records, Volume 56, Page 173. **Figure 5.5** is a map of this land. Ulrich’s father, Adolf Varnhagen, was the original grantee or patentee for much of this land. So, ownership of this property can be traced back to the very earliest days of the Republic of Texas.

Figure 5.5 The Schieffer Ranch, showing the “Varnhagen” & “Crownover” Tracts (Image created by Charles Hixson, LUAS)

On 20 November 1920, Bena [Mezger] Schieffer inherited 1,346 acres known as the “Varnhagen Place” as her share of the estate of her father, Jacob G. Mezger. This conveyance – as well as similar conveyances to her mother and seven siblings – is recorded in the Burnet County Deed Records, Volume 63, Page 501.



Alexander Schieffer acquired additional land in Burnet County on 29 September 1927, when he purchased 2061.5 acres from Eulah Agnes [Crownover] Johnson, wife of A. Rankin Johnson, **grandson** of the founder of Marble Falls, Texas. The deed closing this transaction is recorded in the Burnet County Deed Records, Volume 73, Page 281.⁷⁰

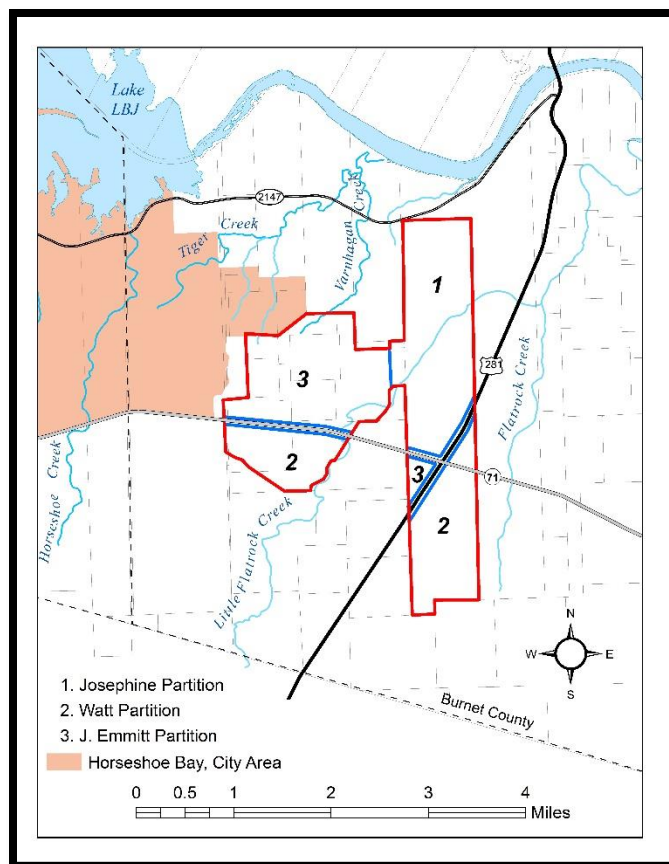
On 11 January 1945, Alexander Schieffer conveyed to his wife Bena [Mezger] Schieffer 2,061.5 acres of land, consisting of 2014 acres from the G. Flores Survey #7, 44.2 acres from the J. Barton Survey #418, and 3.3 acres from the W. Giesecke Survey #1508. **Figure 5.5** is a map of this land, here dubbed the “Crownover Tract.” The deed closing this transaction is recorded in the Burnet County Deed Records, Volume 94, Page 564. Eulah Johnson had received this land in 1926 as a bequest from her father, A.W.M. Crownover.

The two tracts described above constituted the original Schieffer Ranch.

⁷⁰ . Interestingly, this particular tract of land can be easily traced back to the original grant from the State of Texas. The deed found in Llano County Deed Records, Volume K, Page 253, recites all the property owners prior to the conveyance of an adjacent 200-acre tract (a part of the Flores Survey #7) from Edward Ebeling to J.B. Hardin. There were six owners between J.A. Haynie (patentee and first owner) and Ebeling during the period from April 1841 to April 1878 (37 years).

A significant fraction of the original Schieffer Ranch was acquired by the State of Texas as right-of-way for its highway system. A USGS topographical map dated 1929 shows a paved road crossing the Colorado River at Marble Falls and bearing SSE from the south side of the crossing. Similarly, a USGS topographical map dated 1967 shows (now-designated) U.S. Highway 281 bearing SSW after crossing the Colorado River. What is now known as C.R. 401 (a.k.a. Shovel Mountain Road) bearing SSE appears to be the same road as existed in 1929. Hence, we conclude that the right-of-way for U.S. 281 was acquired in the 1930s. This had the effect of dividing the ranch into two tracts and complicating the operations of the ranch as a single unit.

We know that the adjacent T – P Ranch sold land to state and county governments in June 1952 for highway right-of-way for what is now known as State Highway 71 (see Chapter Four, page 21). So, it is reasonable to assume that this same highway further divided the Schieffer property into “quadrants” in about 1950.



In May 1968, shortly after the death of Ben Richard Schieffer in February 1968, Josephine [Biggs] Schieffer (Ben’s widow), Watt Schieffer (Ben’s brother), and J. Emmitt Schieffer (Ben’s brother) divided 3,158 acres of land (which had been jointly and equally held among the three families) into three separate tracts, each owned 100% by one of the three. The three deeds closing this transaction are recorded in the Burnet County Deed Records, Volume 168, Pages 389, 392, and 397, respectively. These three tracts are shown on **Figure 5.6**.

Figure 5.6 The Schieffer Ranch, showing Partition among the Second Generation

(Image created by Charles Hixson, LUAS)

The partitions owned by Josephine and Watt (#2 and #3 on **Figure 5.6**) were eventually sold to third parties. Only J. Emmitt continued to own and operate his partition as the Schieffer Ranch.

Having traced the evolution of land ownership of the Schieffer Ranch over time, this story now reverts to the years circa 1932 to 1968, when the entire 3,100-acre ranch was operated as a single unit. After 1968, ranching operations continued, but now using only the 1,045 acres of the current Schieffer Ranch.

The Ranch House and Other Infrastructure⁷¹ An early ranch house was located near Varnhagen Creek and Cordova Spring. This early structure (which burned down before 1925⁷²) may have been the original home of Ino & Adolph Varnhagen, the first settler to own this property. We know that:

“Ulrich Varnhagen married Hedwig Pressler of Gillespie County November 5, 1893. ... The widowed Mrs. Adolf Varnhagen moved to live with her Matern children so that the young couple could have the home place to themselves. The Varnhagen home was near the abundantly-flowing Cordova Spring.”⁷³



Figures 5.7a and 5.7b

Figures 5.7a and 5.7b show Cordova Spring and Varnhagen Creek immediately below the spring. A short distance downstream (north) of Cordova Spring was a work area for the Schieffer Ranch containing their spring house, a corral, a tack room, a corn crib, and a work shed. Presumably this area contained similar work areas when the Varnhagen family owned the property.



Figure 5.8 shows the remnants of the Schieffer spring house (also the probable remnants of the original Varnhagen home). This early structure (perhaps built by the Varnhagen family) served the Schieffer family as a “spring house,” used to store perishable foodstuffs.⁷⁴

Figure 5.8
Remnants of the Schieffer Spring House
(Image courtesy Dick Schieffer)

⁷¹ Much of the information that follows was obtained in several face-to-face conversations between the Dick Schieffer and the author during late 2022 and early 2023.

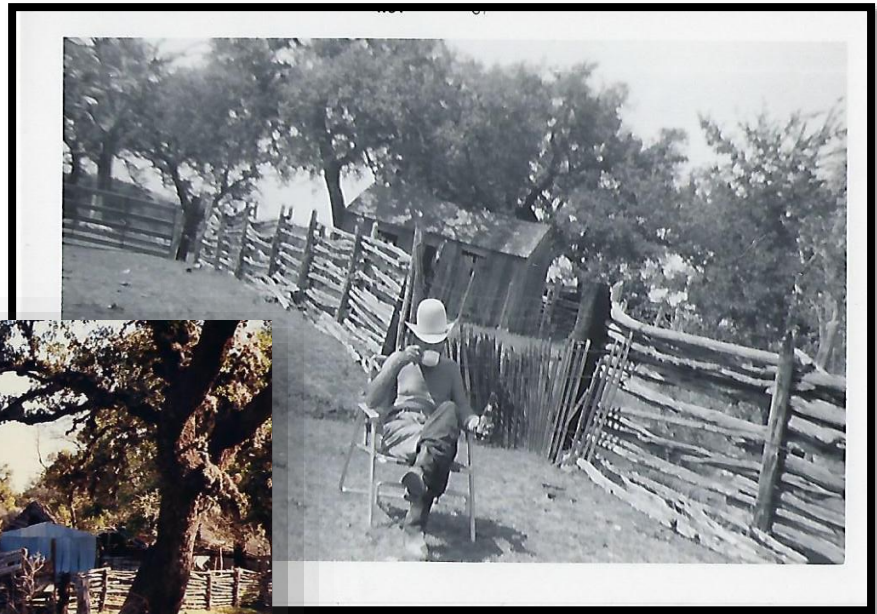
⁷² Information from Dick Schieffer in a face-to-face conversation on 23 May 2023.

⁷³ Quoted from *History of Burnet County, Vol II*, p 321.

⁷⁴ Information from a face-to-face conversation with Dick Schieffer, 10 Feb 2023.

Figure 5.9
Schieffer Ranch Buildings
 (Images courtesy Dick Schieffer)

Corral, then and now



Work Shed

The Work Shed was used as the family home during construction of the ranch house shown in **Figure 5.11**.

Tack Room



Figure 5.10 Early-Day Corn Crib Building,
 located on the Schieffer Ranch
 (Image courtesy Dick Schieffer)

Dick Schieffer and brother Dan used this building to fatten their hogs for family use or for sale. When the building was in active use, the spaces between the timbers were “chinked” with a mixture of clay, sand, straw, etc.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Information from a face-to-face conversation with Dick Schieffer, 23 May 2023

There was no barn on the ranch to house the animals. When severe weather arrived, the cattle would move to the lee side of three, very dense “cedar brakes” located on the property. The cows would lay down as close as possible to the cedar; the calves would position themselves on the lee side of mama. Thus, the animals protected themselves from the storms.⁷⁶



Figure 5.11
Schieffer Ranch House,
built circa 1923⁷⁷
(Image courtesy Dick Schieffer)

The reader needs to be aware of a very significant milestone in the history of this ranch: **Electricity was not available at the ranch until about 1949.**⁷⁸ So, ranch operations and normal living activities before 1949 were conducted much as they had been for several generations prior.

Figure 5.12 illustrates the so-called Hoosier cabinet that sat in the kitchen of the Schieffer Ranch house from the 1930s to the 1960s. Behind the closed doors above and below the work surface sat a flour bin with sifter; sugar bin; bread box; coffee, tea, and spice jars; cookware; and dinnerware. Much as early-day *armoires* served the same function as current-day clothes closets do, so also the Hoosier preceded current-day built-in kitchen cabinets.

Figure 5.12
Hoosier Cabinet,
in the Schieffer Ranch House, 1930s-1960s
(Image courtesy Dick Schieffer)



Dick Schieffer recalls that in the 1930s and 1940s before the advent of electrical refrigerators, the family had an icebox that sat on the back porch. On trips to Marble Falls the family would purchase a 50-lb. block of ice, wrap it, and haul it home for the icebox. The melt water from this ice was collected in a pan below the icebox and was drunk by the chickens and household pets. A 50-lb. block would last about two weeks before a replacement had to be obtained.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Information from a face-to-face conversation with Dick Schieffer, 23 May 2023

⁷⁷ Information from a face-to-face conversation with Dick Schieffer, 23 May 2023

⁷⁸ Information from a face-to-face conversation with Dick Schieffer, 10 Feb 2023.

⁷⁹ Information from a face-to-face conversation with Dick Schieffer, 10 Feb 2023.



Figure 5.13

“Coal Oil” Lamp,

in the Schieffer Ranch House, 1930s-1960s

(Note the reflector on the back of the lamp.)

(Image courtesy Dick Schieffer)

Another commodity frequently purchased in Marble Falls was “coal oil,” which was used in many lamps around the ranch house. Each room had its own lamp. Each lamp had a reflector that could be adjusted to illuminate a specific space. One lamp was set aside to light the way during night trips to the outhouse; this lamp was especially useful for spotting rattlesnakes that might be in the pathway to the privy.⁸⁰

Ranch Operations From first acquisition in the late 1920s until the partition of the land in May 1968, the entire 3,100-acre ranch was operated as a single unit, with Alexander Schieffer first in charge, then J. Emmitt Schieffer, then Dick Schieffer. For the most part, three generations of the Schieffer family “lived off the land,” with the sale of cattle providing supplemental cash income.

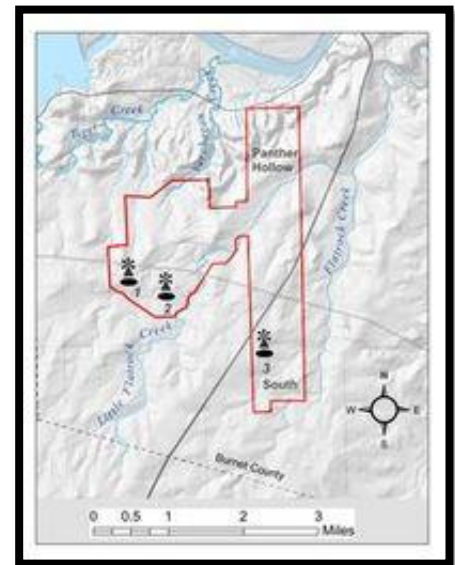
The so-called South Pasture of the original Schieffer Ranch was – logically – located in the southern part of the ranch.⁸¹ This was good grazing ground, and steers were kept there. To fatten the steers to sale weight, the Schieffers fed them cottonseed hulls obtained from gins in the Elgin, Texas area. In the east central part of the original Schieffer Ranch (now northeast of the US 281 – SH 71 highway intersection) were feeding pens and other equipment for cattle handling.⁸² The windmill that was located there still stands.⁸³

Figure 5.14

The Schieffer Ranch,

showing Creeks, Pastures, and Water Wells

(Image created by Charles Hixson, LUAS)



As young boys in the 1940s and 1950s, Dick Schieffer and his twin, Dan, would move cattle from the South Pasture to the feeding pens by crossing US 281. Dick would stand on the roadway and stop traffic going one way, while Dan did the same for traffic the other way. Then the cattle were moved. This was less dangerous than one might imagine, because in those days the highway was narrower and the traffic much less.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Information from a face-to-face conversation with Dick Schieffer, 10 Feb 2023.

⁸¹ This area is now the location of the current Foxwood subdivision and the future Legacy Crossing subdivision.

⁸² This area is now the location of the current Hope Animal Clinic.

⁸³ Information from a face-to-face conversation with Dick Schieffer, 23 May 2023.

⁸⁴ Information from a face-to-face conversation with Dick Schieffer, 10 Feb 2023.

The so-called Horse Pasture, located east of the ranch house, was where the horse remuda⁸⁵ was kept, along with the breeding bulls for the cattle herd. Cattle breeding was limited to May-June of the year so calving would occur in the following January-February. Such timing was necessary because of the presence of screwworm flies, before their eradication in the early 1960s.⁸⁶

When Dick Schieffer was about 10 years old, he had opportunities to observe “Hoot” Gibson, then foreman of the Lupton (aka “Coke”) Ranch, the first property upon which Horseshoe Bay was developed. Dick calls Hoot “a real cowboy.” Hoot could wrestle steers to the ground by grabbing their horns and twisting their necks. Dick and Dan would keep the steers down by kneeling on their necks while Hoot would brand them, treat wounds, or castrate the steers. Dick also describes Hoot as an excellent horseman.⁸⁷

Family Activities at the Ranch The routines and rhythms of Hill Country ranch life were repetitive and predictable in the middle of the 20th Century. There was a time for planting, a time for harvesting, a time for animal breeding, a time for cattle selling, and on, and on.

On the Schieffer Ranch before, during, and after World War II, the family mostly “lived off the land.” Cattle and hogs were slaughtered for meat; rabbits and squirrels were hunted for variety in meat selection; chickens provided eggs on a daily basis; an orchard and a garden provided fruits and vegetables on a seasonal basis. Dick Schieffer recalls that his father would take down the rifle, hand Dick and Dan four bullets, and tell them to come home with four squirrels.⁸⁸ No pressure! A cistern captured rainwater (which was of better quality than the high-minerality water from Cordova Spring and Varnhagen Creek) for home use.

Weekly trips to a Saturday “farmers market” in Marble Falls were an opportunity to barter an overabundance of certain commodities for other commodities in short supply.

Figure 5.15
Native American Arrowheads,
collected on the Schieffer Ranch
by Dick Schieffer
(Image courtesy of Dick Schieffer)



⁸⁵ “A remuda is a herd of horses that ranch hands select their mounts from. The word is of Spanish derivation, for ‘remount’ i.e. “change of horses” and is commonly used in the American West. The person in charge of the remuda is generally known as a wrangler. He provided spare horses during roundup, when cowboys changed mounts 3-4 times a day.” Quoted from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remuda>. Accessed 15 Feb 2023.

⁸⁶ For a more thorough description of the screwworm menace, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cochliomyia>. Accessed 1 May 2023.

⁸⁷ Information from a face-to-face conversation with Dick Schieffer, 10 Feb 2023.

⁸⁸ Information from a face-to-face conversation with Dick Schieffer, 10 Feb 2023.

Vestiges of Former Times The Schieffer Ranch abounds with artifacts and relics that hint at life as it was lived in former times. **Figure 5.15** illustrates the arrowhead collection gathered by Dick Schieffer over the years. These arrowheads were found mostly along creek beds and near springs,⁸⁹ and could be artifacts from burned-rock middens commonly used by Native Americans throughout Texas for millennia.

Figure 5.7 illustrates the remnants of a “spring house”⁹⁰ located near Cordova Spring. This spring house probably was (or located near) the original home built by Adolph Varnhagen.

Figure 5.16 shows an existing gate that sits on the boundary between the City of Horseshoe Bay and the Schieffer Ranch. This location is where cattle were driven off the Schieffer Ranch, down through the Hedges Ranch and Armin Matern Ranch, forded across the Colorado River to Marble Falls, and from there sent by rail to market in Fort Worth.⁹¹ It is also the probable location of the early trail for the freight wagons and stagecoaches.



Figure 5.16
Existing Gate to Schieffer Ranch
(Image courtesy of Dick Schieffer)

During the approximately 30 years after 1872 that the Tiger Mill community had a U.S. Post Office, stagecoaches regularly came from/went to the Double Horn Creek community through Tiger Mill community and then to/from the Click community. The route passed through what is now the Schieffer Ranch. Dick Schieffer recalls that wagon tracks worn into the ground by the passing freight wagons and stagecoaches are still visible near the gate shown above.

Reflections Now – in the year 2024 – it has been almost 100 years since Alexander Schieffer first acquired land that eventually became the Schieffer Ranch. And slightly more than 50 years ago, property development began at adjacent Horseshoe Bay. Amazingly, little has changed on the Schieffer Ranch, even though adjacent Horseshoe Bay has propelled itself into the 21st Century with a vengeance. The Schieffer Ranch remains a time capsule and a window into the past. For those who respect their heritage, the Schieffer Ranch is a priceless treasure.

⁸⁹ Information from Dick Schieffer in face-to-face conversations on 19 Aug 2024.

⁹⁰ “A **spring house**, or **springhouse**, is a small building, usually of a single room, constructed over a [spring](#). While the original purpose of a springhouse was to keep the spring water clean by excluding fallen leaves, animals, etc., the enclosing structure was also used for [refrigeration](#) before the advent of ice delivery and, later, electric refrigeration. The water of the spring maintains a constant cool temperature inside the spring house throughout the year. Food that would otherwise spoil, such as meat, fruit, or [dairy products](#), could be kept there, safe from animal depredations as well. Springhouses thus often also served as [pumphouses](#), [milkhouses](#), and [root cellars](#).” Quoted from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spring_house. Accessed 11 Feb 2023

⁹¹ Information from Dick Schieffer in face-to-face conversations on 10 Feb 2023.

Moreover, the trail of property ownership of what comprises the Schieffer Ranch is clearer and more straightforward than for most other ranches in this survey. The “Varnhagen Place” was formed by Adolf Varnhagen, an early pioneer and the first purchaser of land from the Republic of Texas or State of Texas. Also, the ownership records of the “Crownover Tract” can be definitely traced back to the first purchasers of land from the Texas government.

Chapter Six The Cohen Ranch

Timeline

In the larger, longer history of the ranches of Horseshoe Bay, the so-called Cohen Ranch was created relatively late and existed for only about 25 years. However, this ranch was/is significant for two reasons:

- Its relatively small size (about 100 acres) was a small remnant of the Crownover Ranch – one of the earliest and largest ranches in extreme southeastern Llano County.
- Its development strategy, as conceived by the Hurd family, was an attempt to preserve something of the rural ambience of the Hill Country prior to the creation of the Highland Lakes.

The Land One particular branch of the Crownover family had very large land holdings in southeastern Llano County and northeastern Blanco County. John Boozer Crownover's grandfather, Levi Crownover (b. 2 Nov 1838 – d. 20 Nov 1915), eventually owned _____ acres, acquired between _____ and _____, in this area. Apparently he distributed land to his descendants and heirs over time, including to his son, James E. Crownover. James' widow, Sadie Etta [Boozer], distributed land to her descendants and heirs, including John Boozer Crownover. These distributions are shown in [Figure 6.1](#) and are recorded in Volume 90, Pages 299-304 of the Deed Records, Llano County Clerk Office.

Land Grant Name	Abstract/Survey	Acreage to Morris B Crownover	Acreage to Hugh & James Crownover ⁹²	Acreage to John B Crownover	Total Acreage	Land Grant Acreage
G Bratton	81/83	331.35		1.65	333	320
E J Jones	1473/86	12		170	182	200
A Murchison	556/85	154.56	179	2.2	335.76	320
J McFarlin	555/1005		166.5			
N Mendez	506/3		400		400	4605.50
M Putnam	?/672		144.3		144.3	2984
L Mercer	505/2		0.8		0.8	4605.5
E G Mercer	562/3			325	325	320
Totals		497.91	890.6	498.85	1886.96	
TX 71 RoW		-13.52		-13.52	-27.04	
Cemetery				-1.0	-1.0	

Figure 6.1 Distributions of Land to Descendants and Heirs by Sadie [Boozer] Crownover

As shown in [Figure 6.1](#), John Boozer Crownover (b. 13 Mar 1910 – d. 10 Oct 1985) acquired 498.85 acres of land from his widowed mother, Sadie Etta [Boozer] Crownover (b. 2 Aug 1877, Blanco Co, TX – d. 13 Feb 1959, Burnet Co, TX) in August 1958. This acreage included all 325 acres of the E.G. Mercer Survey 3.⁹³ The eventual Cohen Ranch of 195.158 acres is totally contained within this survey, as illustrated in [Figure 6.2](#).

Research is continuing to define the chain of title between John Boozer Crownover and Wayne J. Riddell.

⁹² James Crownover deeded his inheritance to his brother, Hugh, on the same date in August 1958.

⁹³ The Mercer Survey was granted in May 1846, so it dates back to the earliest days of the State of Texas. See page [4](#) for more details.

Map Not Yet Available

Figure 6.2 Map of the Cohen Ranch,
showing the Original John B. Crownover Land Holdings
And the Portion Retained by the Cohen Family
(Image courtesy of Charles Hixson, LUAS)

Opal & Robert Q. Cohen acquired 195.158 acres of land from Majorie & Wayne J. Riddell in April 1972. This transaction is recorded in Volume 181, Page 615 of the Deed Records, Llano County Clerk Office. During the almost-quarter-century the Cohens owned the land, it was a working ranch. In fact, the Cohen family retained 10 acres of the land (see [Figure 6.2](#) for the location) in order to continue ranching operations on that small remnant of their original ranch.

Property Development In 1995, the Cohens approached Lake LBJ Improvement Corporation with a proposal to purchase their ranch. This property was contiguous with the south boundary of Horseshoe Bay West, so seemed like a good fit. But, how to market such a property?⁹⁴

Coincidentally, at about the same time the Texas Legislature proposed – and the voters approved – an amendment to the Texas Constitution to allow *wildlife exemptions*. Such exemptions offered property tax relief to landowners if they met the requirements enumerated below.⁹⁵

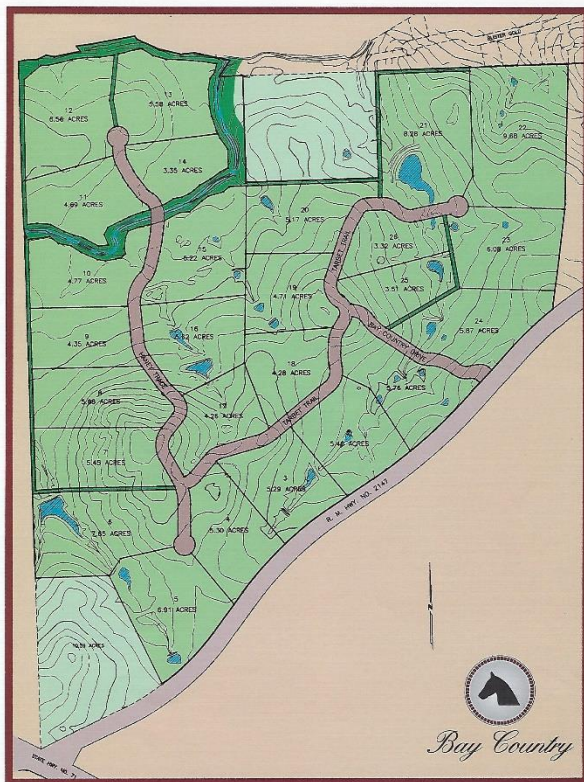
So, Lake LBJ Improvement Corporation saw an opportunity to meld the property tax advantages of the *wildlife exemption* with several unique amenities to create an oasis of quiet country living close to the community and recreational facilities of Horseshoe Bay. Bay Country (as the property was named) was the first development in Horseshoe Bay to: 1) have a gated entry, 2) have a local mail kiosk, 3) have ribbon-curbed streets, 4) be enclosed by white, three-rail fencing. [Figure 6.3](#) illustrates the gated entry

Figure 6.3 Gated Entry to Bay Country, Horseshoe Bay, Texas
(Image courtesy Wayne Brascom)



⁹⁴ Thanks to Wayne Brascom, a Lake LBJ Improvement Corporation executive at the time of Bay Country development, for conversations and written notes that provide the basis for the following five paragraphs.

⁹⁵ “In 1995, Texas voters approved Proposition 11, which allowed for the agricultural appraisal for land used to manage wildlife. This allowed Texas landowners the option of converting their current agricultural exemption to a wildlife exemption if certain conditions were met. The Tax Code, defines wildlife management as: ‘Actively using land that at the time the wildlife management began was appraised as qualified open-space land under this subchapter in **at least three** of the following ways to propagate a sustaining breeding, migrating, or wintering population of indigenous wild animals for human use, including food, medicine, or recreation: a) habitat control; b) erosion control; c) predator control; d) providing supplemental supplies of food; e) providing supplemental supplies of water; f) providing shelter; and g) making census counts to determine population.’ ” Quoted from www.texaswildlifemanagement.com. Accessed 7 Aug 2023.



The property was subdivided into twenty-six 3- to 10-acre tracts; each tract was allowed a small site for a homestead, with the remainder to remain in its native state. Each property owner was allowed to create a fire break along the perimeter of their property. During development a biologist was available to design specific features for each tract and to facilitate the paperwork applications for the tax records. Today the 26 original tracts are owned by 16 different entities, with some tracts being combined to create even larger properties for some owners.

Figure 6.4
Original Layout of
Bay Country Subdivision, 1995
 (Image courtesy Wayne Brascom)

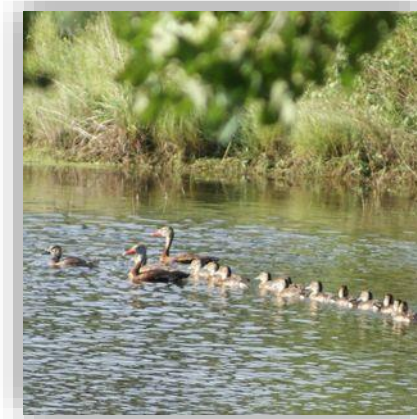
One of the seven actions available for use to qualify for the wildlife exemption is habitat control. Wayne Brascom now says,

“A great example of habitat control at Bay Country is the whistling ducks that migrate to Bay Country each fall. One resident who moved to Bay Country in 2000 said that in about 2013 there were two whistling ducks roosting on their tank, now many more. Recent counts are as high as fifty that shared two tanks in Bay Country. Both residents and visitors can enjoy these creatures of God when they are in Bay Country.”⁹⁶

Figures 6.5 – 6.6 Whistling Ducks in a Bay Country Tank
 (Images courtesy Wayne Brascom)



2013



2015

⁹⁶ Information from Wayne Brascom in a face-to-face discussion on 1 Aug 2023.

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