

Context (me)...

- Austin for 44yrs, 'hood for 25 & Shoal Creek another 6
- Two kids & step-son did their time at day-cares, Doss, "Murchitraz" & Anderson
- Retired Computer Geek, now History Nut
 - **"Tracing native trails across Austin" Austin American Statesman**
 - **Austin host for Texas Historic Tree Coalition, Comanche Nation Rep 2014**
 - **"Dues paying" member Travis County Archeology Society**
 - **Have "gimme-cap" from Paleoamerican Odyssey Int'l Conf. 2013**
- Contact info
 - Rich Denney
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 - History blog *txcompost.blogspot.com*

Spicewood Springs History

“Sacred places become sacred
only after some transforming
experience has occurred there”

Carney Saupitty, Comanche Elder Council, from *Believing in Place*

- Spicewood Springs has been a destination for travelers and homesteaders since prehistory. Native Americans, early Texas pioneers and homesteaders, even a Texas Governor have called this area home.
- As with so many old communities – Jollyville, Fiskville, Duval, McNeil, Merriltown, Montopolis, Saint Elmo, Sprinkle, Anderson Mill -- before Spicewood Springs was absorbed into Austin it was a community peoples called home, with a separate and individual identity.
- Today's neighborhood organizations are today's settlers in that continuum of prehistory & history of this place, simply wanting to preserve the character of what has drawn people here since prehistory.

Maps; 1880 Land Survey

This is a historical land survey map from 1880. The map shows several land parcels with their owners' names and various geographical features. Key features include:

- Land Owners and Parcels:**
 - James P. Wallace (Parcel 18, 2500)
 - James M. Mitchell (Parcel 32, 2219)
 - Robert Compton (Parcel 1823)
 - George W. (Parcel 1870)
 - Fisk (Parcel 1870)
 - Davis (Parcel 2109)
 - Round Rock (Parcel 57)
- Geographical Features:**
 - Spicewood Spring
 - Sheep or
 - Round Rock
- Other Labels:**
 - Wm. Bell (Parcel 1674)
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 - 1880



Maps; 1885-86 USGS



Springs of Texas

- Gunnar Brune author; advisor to the TX Water Development Board
 - Was resident of NW Hills; lived on Ceberry, in close proximity to the springs
 - Spicewood Springs listed in his *Springs of Texas*
 - Springs were “a stop on an old Indian trail [and] Later they provided water for one of the first schools in Travis County”.
 - The prehistoric utilization of the springs by Indians is both archaeologically and historically confirmed. And more on the school shortly.
 - Discharger rates
 - Between 1940-1980, “large fish and crawfish live in the pools, amid water cress, ferns and elephant ears .. Deer came here for water in dry periods until about 1975, when the surrounding area was covered with apartment and office buildings and superhighways”.

Prehistory; Archeology

- Archeological survey near the springs in 2013 part of current MoPac work
 - My understanding from talking with one of the archaeologists who wrote the report is that the 2013 survey was done as "catch-up" because of the poor job done in preserving archeological sites when MoPac was developed in the first place, but also to reevaluate the state of some previously known sites that were a bit out of the MOPAC ROW (e.g. the sites below)
- From *Intensive Archaeological Survey of the MoPac Improvement Project, 2013*
 - 41TV61 *"was recorded [initially in 1959] as a prehistoric site located on the southwest corner of Spicewood Springs Road and MOPAC ... the site was impacted by commercial development in 1973 .. most of the site has since been destroyed by commercial development.."*
 - 41TV61.2. The 2013 report quotes earlier reports from 1973 for this second site which say *"..construction plans call for the intersection of two streets, Executive Center and Wood Hollow to be in about the center of the site .."*.
- Sites are "archaic" (6000 BC - 750 AD); both appear to be in Austin Oaks rezoning area. The commercial development mentioned is I presume the original Austin Oaks development.

Prehistory; Archeology

- Reasons to suspect there are more sites around the springs, and in NW Hills in general
 - Report said 41TV61 at the springs was "extensively pothunted" suggesting a tradition of abundant artifacts known to locals
 - Other sites up & down MoPac in report, including 41TV62 "*..recorded as a prehistoric site in 1959 ..*" near Far West and MoPac
 - .. And keep in mind, the survey was ROW only
 - (and we'll see why MoPac may be a hot spot shortly)
 - Proximity to Bull Creek; Shoal Creek (I-35 for Indians); archeological sites on both; springs around mesa and on mesa; the mesa itself ("*.. they escaped into the cedar brakes of the mountains*")
 - Possible "Indian Marker Trees" in area
 - ... And Spicewood Springs was on Brown's "Trail Going North"

“Indian Marker Trees” Along MoPac ?

2013 – 2014 members of the Texas Historic Tree Coalition visited Austin to inspect *possible*, "Indian Marker Trees". One trip included Jimmy Arterberry, Comanche Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Officer.

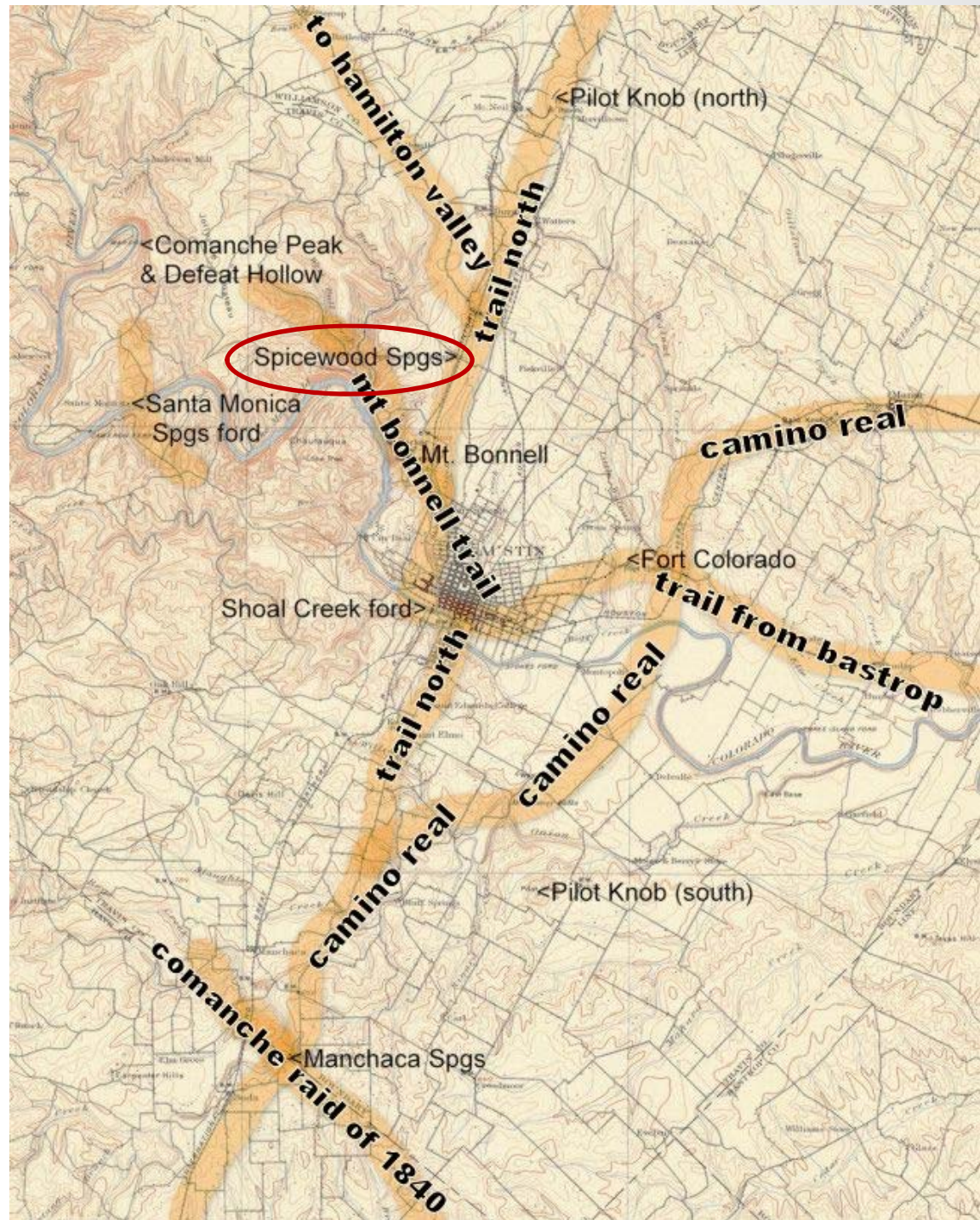
All the trees visited were up and down MoPac along what early Austin historian Frank Brown called the **“Trail Going North”**



Brown's "Trail Going North" & MoPac

- Did you know, Austin has running through it a National Historic Trail?
 - *"El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail"*
- Frank Brown's *Annals of Travis County and of the City of Austin from the Earliest Times to the Close of 1875*. Brown came to Austin in 1846
 - "This trail was found here by the first white explorers that visited the site now occupied by the capital city ... The old trail went up the valley of Shoal Creek, passing out above and near the residence of the late Gov. Pease; thence on the **nearly level plateau between the creek [Shoal] and the mountains, near the foot of the hills**, almost one north to the Indian village at Waco and beyond.."
- Brown's trail was a branch of the Camino Real (actually a prehistoric trail) hugging the Balcones Escarpment from spring to spring, notably San Pedro, Comal, San Marcos, Manchaca, Barton .. **and Spicewood Springs ..**
- Spicewood Springs is right on Brown's "Trail Going North"

1895-96 survey
(1902 folio)
USGS topo
showing trails
likely utilized by
Indians of
Austin



Spicewood Springs and the Abduction of the Simpson Children

- That Spicewood Springs was a stop on an old Indian trail was tragically confirmed in 1844 when early Austin suffered what one might call the “Yogurt Shop Murders” of its day

Spicewood Springs and the Abduction of the Simpson Children

- In 1844 a Mrs. Simpson living West Pecan (6th) had two children* – a daughter 14, a son 12—abducted by Indians while the children were in the adjacent “valley” (Shoal Creek).
- The Indians “seized the children, mounted their horses and made off for the mountains .. going in the direction of Mt. Bonnell”
- “.. After the Indians had gone some six miles from Austin and had arrived at **Spicewood Springs**, which is situated in the edge of the mountains ..they brutally murdered the little girl in a horrible manner .. after remaining at the springs a while, [they] took [her] up on a hill some distance and in a short while came back with her scalp ..”

* Accounts vary on date, and even name of children

Spicewood Springs and the Abduction of the Simpson Children

Texas National Register. (Washington, Tex.), Vol. 1, No. 7, Ed. 1, Saturday, January 18, 1845

Normal Display

Sequence: 8

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Highlighting: Off

JOINT RESOLUTION

Making an appropriation for the redemption of William and Jane Simpson.

SECTION 1. *Be it resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Republic of Texas in Congress assembled, That the sum of three hundred dollars be, and the same is hereby appropriated and placed at the disposition of the President, for the redemption of William and Jane Simpson, (children of Mrs. Simpson,) now held in captivity by the hostile Indians.*

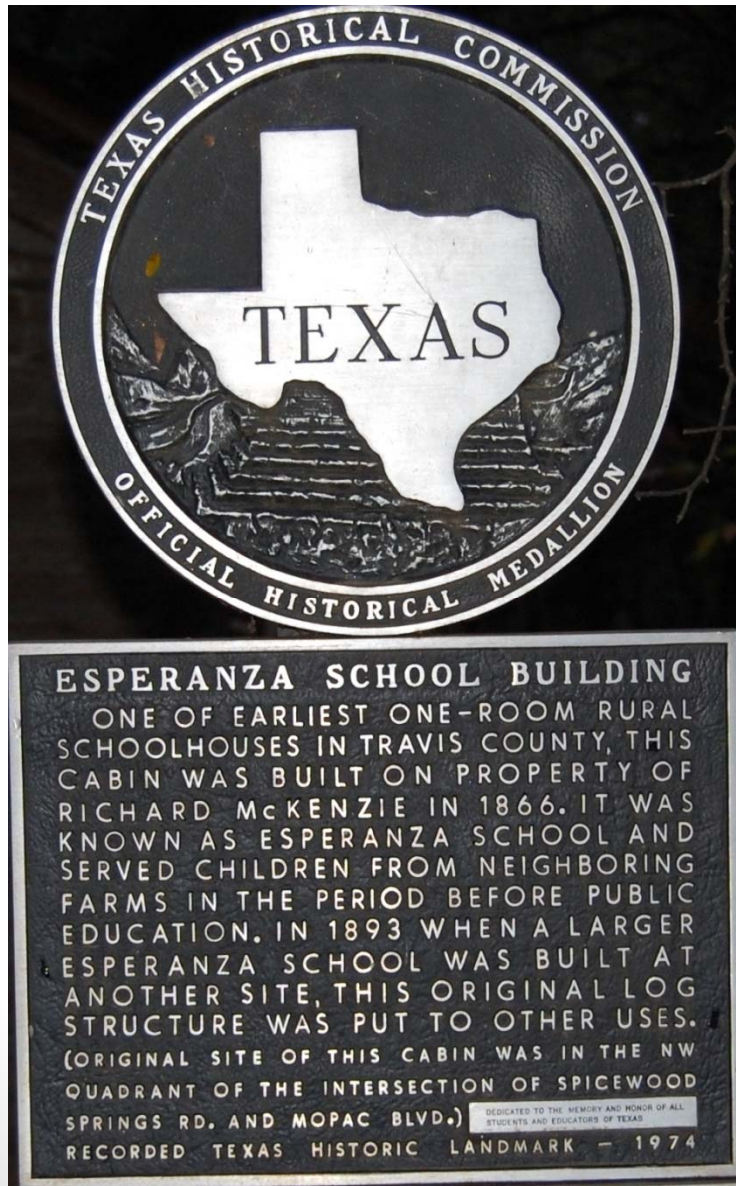
SEC. 2. *Be it further resolved, That this Joint Resolution take effect from and after its passage.*

Approved, December 31st, 1844.

Spicewood Springs and the Abduction of the Simpson Children

- To further illustrate the impact this incident must have had on Austin at the time, this story was told and retold in virtually every “who’s who” of Austin & Texas history books of the time
 - Wilbarger’s *Indian Depredations of Texas*, Jenkin’s *Recollections of Early Texas*, John Brown’s *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas*, Winfrey and Day’s *Texas Indians Papers*.
- The story still captures the imagination of modern Texas historians, evidenced by republications such as Gregory and Susan Michno’s *A Fate Worse than Death*, and our neighbor Jeff Kerr’s *The Republic of Austin*.

1866 Spicewood Springs and Esperanza School



Esperanza School Building

“One of earliest one-room rural schoolhouses in Travis County .. **Original site of this cabin was in the NW quadrant of the intersection of Spicewood Springs Rd. and Mopac Blvd.**”

The cabin is now located Zilker Park

1866 Spicewood Springs and Esperanza School



1866 Spicewood Springs and Esperanza School



Spicewood Springs; The Community



Spicewood Springs: the Community & in the News

- As evidenced by the need for a school (Esperanza School), a community emerged around the springs with news of everyday events – some serious; some humorous -- appearing in newspapers.
- My take-away from these stories: Spicewood Springs was at one time a separate, unique community, with its own identity, with residents and news distinct from Austin

Not unlike NW Hills today? And some of these remind me of the posts you see on the NWACA Facebook page today 😊

Spicewood Springs: the Community & in the News

- Austin Weekly Statesman Thursday, July 26, 1888 edition of the paper reported status on various county schools: “**District No. 7 - Spicewood Springs**” was up to a whopping 48 children.

School overcrowding is still an issue..

Spicewood Springs: the Community & in the News

- Among prominent residences of the community around **Spicewood Springs** was **O.M. Roberts, Governor of Texas** from 1878-83.
- The Austin Weekly Statesman newspaper from Thursday, August 9, 1883, reported an update on a "**young bandit**" **that had been reported in the area**. The newspaper stated "*Ex-Gov. Roberts owns a large farm in the neighborhood of **Spicewood Springs***" which had apparently been a target of the bandit.

Neighborhood crime then, and now

Spicewood Springs: the Community & in the News

- The Weekly Democratic Statesman, Thursday, September 21, 1871 reported "***A large number of immigrants have been encamped about five miles north of the city, on Spicewood creek (sic), for several days***".

The alert goes out on NWACA Facebook:
“Alert: strangers going door to door on Mesa..”

Spicewood Springs: the Community & in the News

- Austin Weekly Statesman Thursday, September 6, 1888, the paper reported a horse stolen: "Mr. John Miles, living at Luling, had a **horse stolen** from his camp near **Spicewood Springs**, early Saturday morning."

.. And now it's tires stolen from cars over night, and Christmas decorations

Spicewood Springs: the Community & in the News

- The Weekly Democratic Statesman, Thursday, September 21, 1871 reported "*The **surveying party** who are locating the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, camped at **Spicewood creek** (sic), five miles from Austin, last night..*"

A progress report on MoPac road construction ..

Spicewood Springs: the Community & in the News

- The Thursday, December 31, 1874 edition of the Weekly Democratic Statesman reported *"Big Potato. - Mr. George W. Walling, living near **Spicewood Springs** in this county, has brought us a specimen of what kind of potatoes can be grown in our soil. The one shown us weighs six and a half pounds .."*

Yes, I've seen posts on NWACA this interesting ...

What I'd like to see ...

- Historical marker(s) and/or other recognition (park?) to recognize
 - Prehistory of the springs
 - In remembrance of the Simpson girl
 - Esperanza School & early settlers of Spicewood Springs
 - Better yet work with the City of Austin to have the cabin, located at Zilker, restored to the area where it belongs
 - Survey / salvage archeology ahead of areas to be developed



Thank You