

The Austin American

Monday, Sept. 9, 1963

Garden Center Earth Turned



Dinosaurs, Cannibals, a Colonel who wasn't a Colonel, Rattlesnake Sandwiches and the Lady who saved the Alamo

The Austin Area Garden Center has been sharing the joy of gardening since 1955. How did it all get started? Well ... ninety nine million years ago, ornithomimid dinosaurs made tracks in what is now the Hartman Prehistoric Garden. Is that history a bit too ancient for you? Fast forward to 10,000 years ago, when the Zilker Park area was inhabited by humans. Fast forward to the time of the early European explorers, who encountered Tonkawa Indians here in the Austin area, notable because the Tonkawa were cannibals! Other Native American residents of Central Texas were Lipan Apache and Comanche.

In 1730, Franciscan monks built a mission on the bank of Barton Creek - what a great location until frequent Indian raids drove them away.

In 1837, William Barton moved to the area and was the namesake for Barton Creek. Businesses in the area included 2 water-powered gristmills, a bath house and an ice factory.

Andrew J. Zilker bought land in the area in the early 1900s. His nickname was Col. Zilker, but he wasn't really a colonel. In 1917, he donated Barton Springs and surrounding acreage to the Austin school district to sell to the city, which in turn paid for a \$100,000 school endowment with the proceeds. This trust continues to provide funding for the school-to-work program. The land became Zilker Park. Features of Zilker Park included a small zoo, riding stables and a reptile farm that sold rattlesnake sandwiches.

You're probably wondering what all this has to do with the Austin Area Garden Center. I'm getting there -

In 1924, Clara Driscoll started the Violet Crown Garden Club. You'll remember her as the lady who saved the Alamo and built Laguna Gloria. There were many garden clubs in Austin, meeting in member's homes and holding flower shows where they could, such as bank lobbies and the City Coliseum.

In 1946, Violet Crown members started saving money from fundraisers to build a garden center. In 1955, seven garden clubs organized the Austin Area Garden Council to build it.

They sent out invitations, wrote a mission statement and bylaws and put together a governing board. Their goals emphasized conservation and inclusion. This was not to be a country club! Their request for a small plot of land was met with enthusiastic approval from the Parks and Recreation Department as well as the City Council. In 1962, the City of Austin allocated land in Zilker Park, and the building was completed in 1964. The Austin Area Garden Council paid off the mortgage in 1965.

The legacy of those 7 clubs continues. Violet Crown Garden Club, the Men's Garden Club (now the Garden Club of Austin), Heart of the Hills and Westlake Hills are still AAGC members. Now we have 30 member garden clubs whose members are still sharing the joy of gardening! More information about the history of the Austin Area Garden Center can be found on the bulletin board in the Greene Room.

The Garden Council and individual members have continued their support of the Austin Area Garden Center and Zilker Botanical Garden with financial donations as well as countless volunteer hours. A more recent donation (1997) of \$125,000 enlarged the gift shop and added an office wing to the building.

The Austin Area Garden Center is the place to be when you want to learn something new about nature, conservation, pruning, irrigation, compost, house plants, vegetables, flower arranging - well, if I were to list every topic covered in our programs this year, that would take several pages! I'm honored to serve as your president, and hope to visit every club this year.

Looking forward to seeing all of you,

Marion Alsup, President, Austin Area Garden Center

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ESPERANZA SCHOOL
(From The Defender 1936)

In 1866 a log house was built just above Spicewood Springs which the people named Esperanza, a Spanish word, they took to mean pretty or beautiful. This name was chosen because of the beautiful scenery made by the hills and evergreens which surrounded the little building. This little log house was used for seven years. The school was then moved to the southeast corner of the old county farm, now owned by the McElroy Estate. The school remained at this location until 1893, when a one-room frame building was constructed at the present location on the upper Georgetown Road. The building was torn down in 1922 to make way for a modern two room building erected to face the west instead of the east. In 1934 a third room was added to the structure to accomodate the enrollment.

Even though the name of the school is a Spanish word, there is no record of a Spanish or Mexican child ever attending the school. The District has neither a Mexican nor a Negro School.

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Note by J. M. Owens: The Upper Georgetown Road is now known as the Burnet Road.

ATTACHMENT "D"



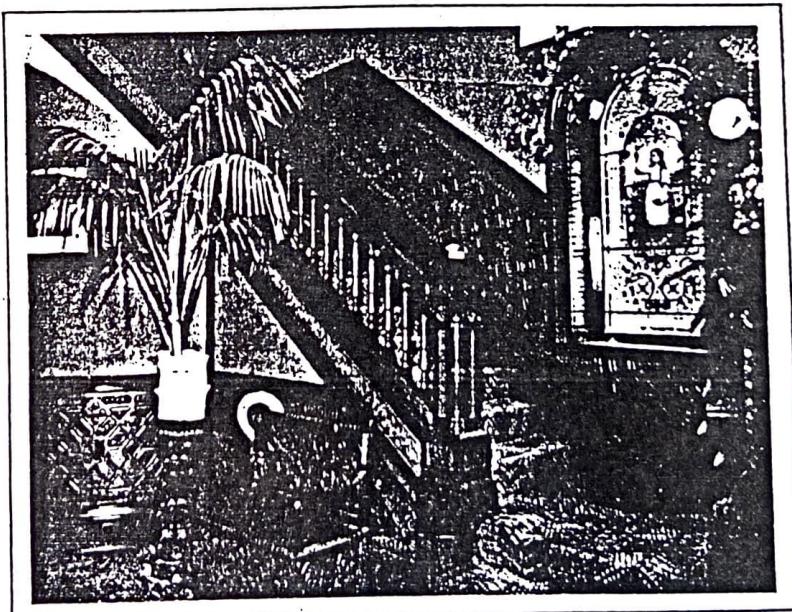
The Butler House was built in 1887 and demolished in 1971. In 1886, Austin experienced the start of many new businesses, among them, the Michael Butler's Brick Company, which employed approximately 100 men, but had begun operation in 1873.

"According to the American Statesman of May 25, 1883, there was excitement at the Congress Avenue bridge when about 600 head of cattle, and J. H. Coleman of Manor, were being driven across; since there was a rise in the river, it was not possible to swim them over, and while on

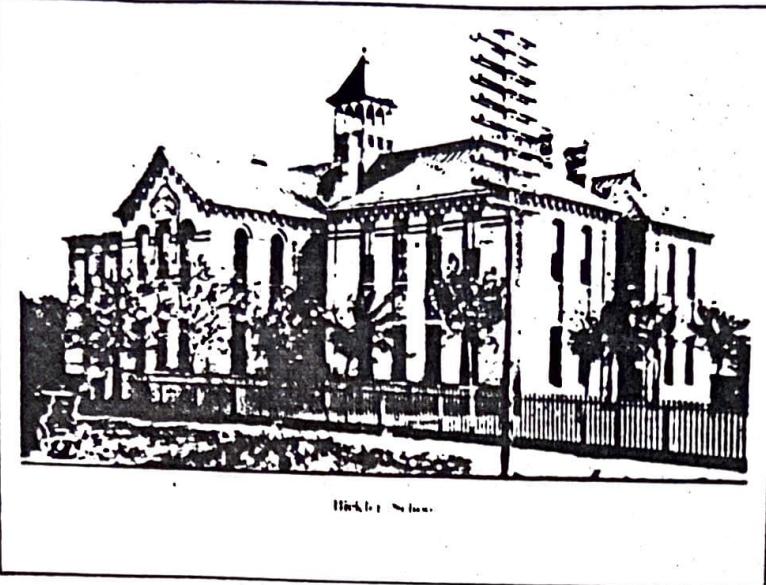
bridge the cattle met a mule-drawn wagon with a load of bricks from Butler's Brick Yards. Stampeding ensued, a span of the bridge gave way; 185 cattle drowned; once again the ferry was back in business."

In 1894, the "Great International Regatta" was held in Austin and among the prizes offered were 5,000 bricks from the Butler Brick Company.

Although the elaborate structure built by Michael Butler in 1887 no longer remains, Butler Brick Company continues its operation under the direction of three of his grandsons.



701 East 11th Street



The Bickler School Building was built in 1894. It was named for Jacob Bickler, a native of Sobernheim, Germany.

He earned both his B.A. and M.A. degrees in three years at the University of Wisconsin; came to Texas in 1872 on a visit. Bickler was so impressed with Austin that he made his home here.

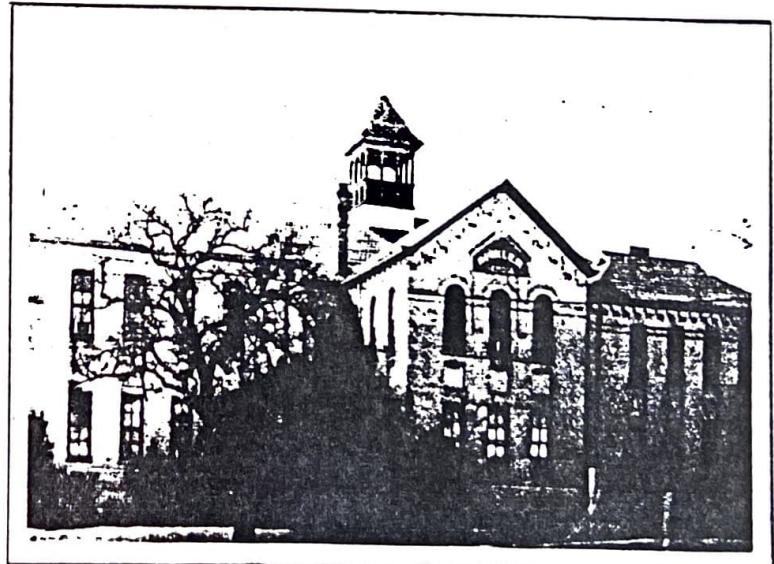
Jacob Bickler established an academy in 1877 to prepare boys and girls for college. His theory combined a respect for established principles of

traditional education with progressive educational theories.

A son, George Bickler, who is 82 years old is the only one of nine children still living. The Bickler School served as a neighborhood elementary school from 1894 to 1936. With population relocation, and under the leadership of A. N. McCallum, a program of special training was offered for pupils throughout the city.

As a result of development, the Bickler School was closed in the Summer of 1947 as a teaching facility. An annex was added, and the structure was remodeled and served as the administrative center for the Austin Independent School District until March, 1966.

The structure was demolished in 1968. In a program for an open house of the Bickler Administration Building, dated March 21, 1948: "The Bickler School served as a neighborhood elementary school from 1894 to 1936. A list of the names of all the people who attended Bickler during this period would approximate a roll call of the City."



The Story of the Swedish Log Cabin

Zilker Garden's Swedish log cabin at Austin, Texas, is an authentic frontier home of the 1840's, built by Swedish pioneers in the tradition of their ancestors who had come to Delaware in 1638.

Immigrant Scotch-Irish pushing westward used logs widely. The American Revolution found settlers along the whole western frontier living in log cabins. Abraham Lincoln and other noted Americans were born in log cabins, which came to symbolize the American dream of opportunity--of being able to improve one's place in life.

This incentive brought the first Swedish settler, S. M. Swenson, to Texas in 1838. In 1850, he bought ranchland east of Austin and named it Govalle--from "Go Vall," meaning "good grazing ground" in Swedish dialect.

Built there about 1840 of big cedar logs, the cabin is among the best preserved in the U.S.

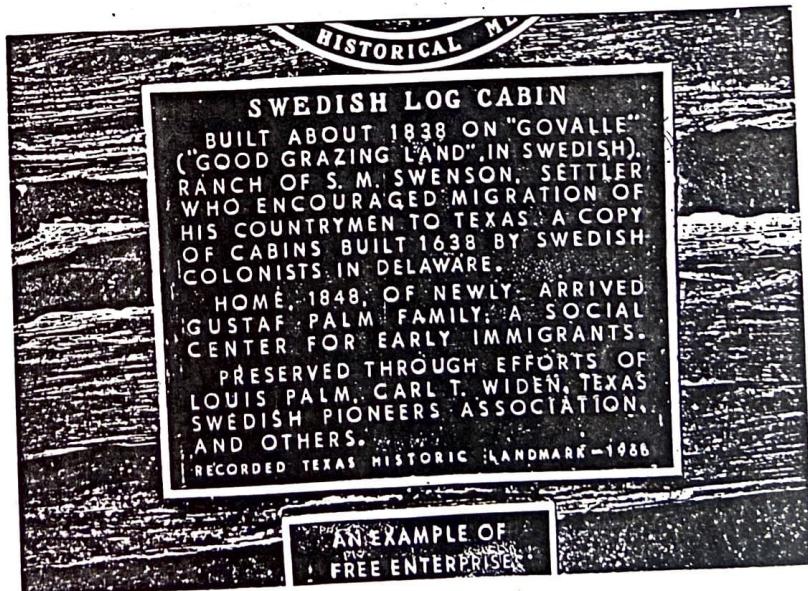
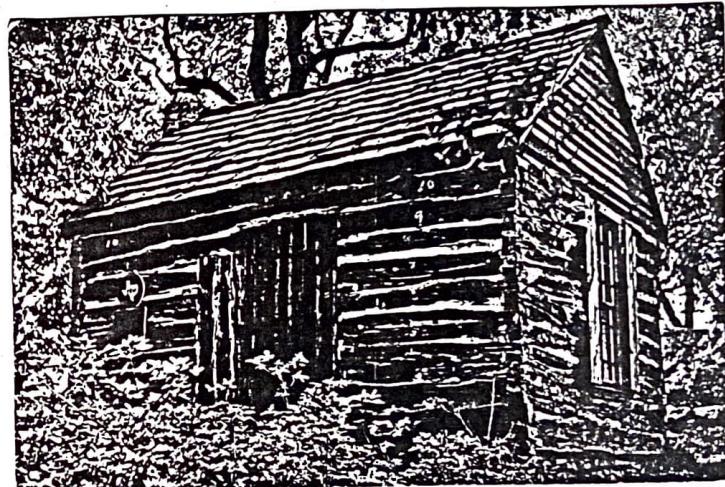
Until after the Civil War, it was the home of Swenson's uncle, Gustaf Palm, who arrived with his family about 1848.

Preservation of the cabin was initiated by the late Louis Palm of Round Rock, who numbered the logs and hauled them from the Austin location (1401 San Jacinto) to Round Rock's Nelson Park. There the cabin was re-assembled by Carl Thornquist, and financed by Carl T. Widen of Austin.

In May, 1965, the cabin was moved intact to its permanent location in Zilker Park. The Texas Swedish Pioneers Association, affiliated groups, and Swedish descendants provided funds. R. J. Lockhart was general contractor.

This log cabin stands as an example of the individual enterprise that built America. In 1966, it was awarded a historical Medallion by the Texas State Historical Commission.

*Older
home in
Tarrant Co.*



Authentic Furnishings In The Cabin

The interior of the Swedish Pioneer log cabin contains many household articles of pioneer origin. Looking from the right, counterclockwise around the room, you will see:

Handmade trunk.

Dresser, which is easily converted into a writing desk.

Framed portraits of Swedish King Oscar II and his queen. These popular monarchs reigned during the periods of heaviest immigration during the 1870's.

Military map of Sweden, showing exact location of the community in Smoland from which the Texas Swedish pioneers came.

Curling iron (to left of dresser).

Handmade cradle.

Swedish national costumes.

Grandfather clock, completely hand carved and donated by the Swedish cabinet-maker, Gustaf Flodquist.

Needlepoint footstool.

Reed organ, made by C. J. Swahn and used as a trunk for clothing when he came to Texas in 1867 with 100 other young people from Smoland, Sweden. The railroad from the coast terminated at Brenham, and the group walked the 100 miles to Austin in four days. The organ was transported by ox wagon.

Swedish Bible (above the organ), about 100 years old and formerly owned by the late Capt. Anderson, superintendent of the Galveston Wharf Company.

Framed photos of Mr. and Mrs. S. M. Swenson, made from the original oil paintings. Mr. Swenson was a leading merchant in Austin, was senior warden and chairman of the building committee at St. David's Episcopal Church, and promoted immigration by advancing travel funds.

Framed photo of Louis Palm.

Chair with cowhide seat.

Photograph of descendants of the pioneers (above window), taken at the annual June meeting of the Texas Swedish Pioneers Association in Round Rock.

Leather money belt and wooden shoes.

Century-old spinning wheel and thread reel; wool, cotton and flax carders, all donations from Barkeryd Parish, Sweden.

Kitchen utensils--authentic wooden bowls, churn, butter mold, meat grinder, rolling pin, Dutch oven, candle holders, tea kettle, copper milk can, bucket, coffee mill, wooden lemon squeezer, etc.

Heavy oxen yoke and picture of an immigrant ship (over fireplace).

All-cedar bed and century-old patch quilt.

Picture of early religious leader in beautiful, hand-carved frame.



SWEDISH LOG CABIN
ZILKER BOTANICAL GARDEN
AUSTIN , TEXAS

This pioneer log cabin was built around 1838 - even before Austin was a town! First owned by J. J. Grumbles, and located in Govalle, east of Austin on 400 acres of farm land which Sven M. Swenson bought around 1850. He named that property: "Go vall" meaning "good grazing" in the Swedish dialect.

Swenson and his uncle, Svante Palm, were mainly responsible for promoting the immigration of many thousands of their Smaland countrymen to Texas helping to settle the frontier. Immigration to Texas aided both countries - Sweden had a crucial shortage of both food and land. Texas land was the potential solution to the problems of the hardworking Swedes who came to Texas with such high expectations. Many of them became very successful in this country. Swenson paid for their passage to Central Texas and the newcomer worked one year or more to repay him. The men worked on his many properties located near Austin , or in West Texas on his vast ranches - where they became cowboys. This one room structure of heavy hand-hewn cedar logs with a shingle roof (originally had a dirt floor) likely is a replica of those first log cabins built in Delaware by Swedish colonists in 1638. Those Swedes are credited with bringing the concept of building houses of logs to this country. This idea worked very well and was widely used in all parts of America where trees were found.

Gustav Palm, another uncle of Swenson, arrived in 1848 - and, lived in this cabin in Govalle along with his wife and eight children. Four of these children were born in Sweden and 4 in Texas . Palm was a watchmaker by trade. After some years the Palm's moved to a larger home in Austin at E. 14th and San Jacinto Streets and brought this log cabin with them to be used as a wash house. Years later the cabin was dismantled, the logs numbered and the cabin rebuilt on Louis Palm's ranch in Round Rock. When that property was sold Louis Palm moved the cabin - intact - to Nelson Park in Round Rock, Texas . When that property was sold in 1965, the log cabin was moved - intact - here to Zilker Botanical Garden by Carl T. Widen, President of the TEXAS SWEDISH PIONEER ASSN., Louis Palm and others. Today the cabin stands in this lovely setting of oak trees and flower gardens as a true reminder of Texas 's earlier days and giving us every reason to be extremely proud of our Swedish heritage.

Inside the cabin; which is listed among the best preserved in the USA are displayed: furniture, tools and other authentic items commonly used by the early settlers in this area. Many of the things were brought by the Swedish immigrants and were used by them here in Texas. Now, they are preserved and seen by visitors of today.

In 1966 this log cabin was awarded a historical Medallion by the Texas State Historical Commission

ADDITIONAL GARDEN FEATURES

In 2006, the Austin Area Begonia Society built the **Begonia Bed**, which it also maintains. Begonia are found growing throughout the tropics and subtropical regions of the world in numerous ecological environments. Begonia need some protection from the light freezes here in Austin and many varieties can tolerate our hot weather if grown in some shade.

Dedicated May 1, 1966, the **Willie Birge Memorial Pond** was donated by the family of Miss Willie Birge, one-time Director of Biology at Denton College. Due to the efforts of the Austin Pond Society, the water is remarkably clear even though the pond is unfiltered and non-circulating. Mosquito larvae provide some of the food for the small fish who live in this pond.

The **Freda Bodine Caladium Garden** was endowed in June 1992 by Dr. Willis Bodine in recognition of his wife's efforts to promote the use of caladiums in Austin landscaping. During the cool season this area is planted with annuals.

Plantings of the **Tropical and Subtropical Garden** can be found amid the parking islands, with additional bromeliads often placed in front of the Garden Center. Some plants are moved into greenhouses for the winter, but most are left out to determine winter hardiness in our area. Many of these plants have been donated from the private collection of AAGC member Joe Montgomery.

The **Daylily Beds** were designed and installed by the Austin Daylily Society, which also maintains them. Since spring 2000, this garden celebrates the beauty of daylilies, the hybridizers who created them, and the gardeners who love to grow them. New varieties are introduced each year.

Since 1992, the Iris Society of Austin has been caring for the **Iris Bed**, a collection of tall bearded iris, spuria iris and Louisiana iris.

The **Information Kiosk and Meander's End** provide a shady place to sit and view the gardens, and learn about upcoming events at the Garden Center. The Kiosk was donated by Dr. Norman Wagner in 2000. Meander's End was created in 1996 in memory of Colonel Oren Poage, whose Austin area home was referred to by the same name.

The **ADA Trail of Passages** meanders back and forth through beds of both native and introduced plantings, leading to the Rose garden. Future plans call for a series of arbors (passages) to span this walkway at seven points. The Fern Team, members of the Garden Club of Austin, maintains the **Fern Beds** along this trail.

The **Antique Light Standards** found in the parking area graced Lavaca Street from 1926 through 1976. In 1975, the City of Austin Electric Department donated them as a Bicentennial Project and the Austin Area Garden Council donated funds toward their installation.

The **Escarment Trail and Oak Grove** are open for hiking and special events.

Kate's Arbor was dedicated May 12, 1998 to the memory of Kate Kelley and donated by her family. It was designed and built by Lars Stanley.

The **Hamilton Parr Memorial Azalea Garden** was donated and built in memory of Mr. Parr by AAGC members.

The **Front Entry Gate** was a donation from the Austin Area Garden Center and was designed and constructed by Lars Stanley in 1996.

The **Back Rose Gate** was a donation from Claudette and David Hartman in 1997 in honor of his mother.

The Austin Area Garden Council (AAGC) is composed of ²⁵ ~~31~~ clubs representing approximately 1400 members. Come join a club!

Austin Area Begonia Society

[Austin Area Creative Designers](http://www.austinbegoniassoc.org)

Austin Bonsai Society

<http://www.austinbonsaisociety.com>

Austin Butterfly Forum

www.austinbutterflies.org

Austin Cactus & Succulent Society

<http://austincss.com/>

Austin Daylily Society

<http://www.austindaylily.org>

Austin Herb Society

www.austinherbsociety.org

Austin Organic Gardeners

www.austinorganicgardeners.org

Austin Pond Society

<http://www.austinpondsociety.org>

Austin Rose Society

<http://www.austinrosesociety.org>

Barton Hills Garden Club

Capitol City Judges Council

~~Decents of Zilker Botanical Garden~~

zilkercdecents@aol.com

East Austin Garden Club

First Austin African Violet Society

www.faavs.org

The Garden Club of Austin

<http://www.thegardenclubofaustin.org>

Heart O'Texas Orchid Society

www.hotos.org

~~Heart of the Hills Garden Club~~

Ikebana Study Group

Iris Society of Austin

http://www.kenfuchs42.net/isa_index.html

The Optimistic Garden Club

Porcelain Art Club of Texas

Texas Bamboo Society

www.bamboocentral.net

~~Town Lake Garden Club~~

Travis County Beekeepers Assn.

~~Travis County Master Gardeners Assn.~~

www.tcmastergardeners.org

Violet Crown Garden Club

www.violetcrown.gardenclub.org

West Lake Hills Garden Club

~~Western Trails Garden Club~~

Yaupon Garden Club

Zilker Garden Club

For more information about the Austin Area Garden Council (AAGC) member clubs, please visit our website www.zilkergarden.org. Volunteers are essential to Zilker Botanical Garden, assisting with fundraising, visitor reception, administrative duties, horticulture and education. For more information on volunteering, please contact us at 512-477-8672, ext. 14 or email info@zilkergarden.org.