

SCOTT MCGEHEE
PRESIDENT/GENERAL MANAGER

January 30, 1986

Ms. Frances Rickard, Historian
Research and Markers
Texas Historical Commission
P.O. BOX 12276
Austin, Texas 78711

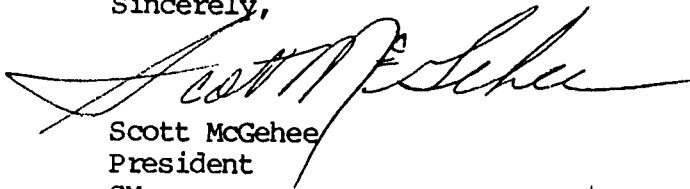
Dear Ms. Rickard,

We are pleased to re-submit our Marker Application for the San Marcos Mill Tract along with additional information in answer to the questions you raised in your letter of December 10, 1985. The narrative section has been amended and re-constituted, beginning on page 4. Additional footnotes and bibliography have been provided and some reference material appended to support the narrative.

Again, our apologies for the delay in responding to your request for additional information. We look forward to finalizing this project with another event to enhance San Marcos' Sesquicentennial celebration.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,



Scott McGehee
President
SM:gg
Enclosure



CURTIS TUNNELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 12276

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

(512) 475-3092

December 10, 1985

Mrs. W. A. Wyatt
P.O. Box 447
San Marcos, TX 78666

Dear Mrs. Wyatt:

Our staff has made a preliminary review of the marker application for the San Marcos Mill Tract. While it appears that the site may be eligible for a marker, we need some additional information from you in order to be able to complete our evaluation. Any assistance you can give us with regard to the following will be appreciated.

We need additional information on the grist mill, the saw mill, the cotton gin, the water supply system, and the electric power generating plant. Is there any documentation to support the claim that these were all "firsts" for San Marcos? Most of the narrative history was devoted to a very good presentation of General Burleson's relationship to the early years of San Marcos, but the section devoted to the mill site was primarily a record of the chain of title. The State Marker Committee will need to know the history of the businesses on the tract of land in order to assess what made this particular piece of property significant and unique to the community.

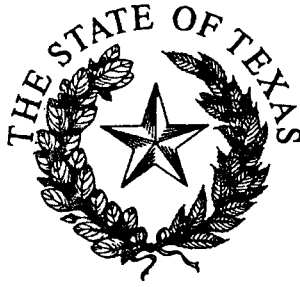
Please let me know if you have any questions. We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Frances Rickard
Historian
Research and Markers

cc: Scott McGehee

The State Agency for Historic Preservation



CURTIS TUNNELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 12276

September 9, 1985

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

(512) 475-3092

Mrs. W.A. Wyatt
Box 447
San Marcos, TX 78666

RE: SAN MARCOS' MILL TRACT
27" x 42" Subject Marker with Post

Dear Mrs. Wyatt:

This letter is to notify you that we have received the above referenced marker application.

The application first will be reviewed and evaluated by the Texas Historical Commission staff. Should additional information be needed, you will be contacted. After any deficiencies have been corrected, copies of the application will be sent to the members of the State Marker Committee, who will make the final determination of the topic's acceptability for marking.

You will be notified as soon as the committee makes its decision. If the topic is approved for marking we will request payment at the time of notification. If not approved, the application will be returned along with a letter of explanation.

Because of the variables involved in the marker process and because we must coordinate our orders with the schedule of a contracting foundry, we would ask that the dedication dates not be set until you have received notice that the marker has been shipped.

We appreciate your interest in preserving the history of Texas.

Sincerely,

Dan K. Utley, Director
Research and Markers

DKU/cy

cc: Aquarena Springs, Inc.
Scott McGehee

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

San Marcos' Mill Tract

Here, in 1849, Texas patriot, soldier and colonizer, General Edward Burleson (1793-1851) built the first dam on this San Marcos River, to provide power for his grist mill and saw mill. Before his death, he added a cotton gin to this growing "industrial park"...Also the site of San Marcos' first ice factory, water works and electric power generation system, the Mill Tract has served the community continuously until the third and last ice factory built here was closed in 1976.

(Suggested Narrative for Plaque)

San Marcos' "Mill Tract"

by Albert Scott McGehee II

The small grist mill that gave the tract its name and pointed in the enterprising direction of its continuing use, is no more. But the tract has stood the test of time, and its use today is a salute to the Texas pioneers whose public-spirited enterprise brought the Mill Tract into being.

The destiny of the Mill Tract was foreordained 30 million years ago in that geological era of upheaval that fractured the Balcones Escarpment, forming the caves two miles to the southwest, and releasing to the surface the clear, cool water stored in the porous limestone strata beneath the foothills. Here was water to slake the thirst of animals and man, who came much later to settle, to colonize near the riverhead. The river, and the settlement, Villa de San Marcos de Neve, got their names on St. Mark's Day, early in the 19th century (1807).¹

On November 18, 1831, impressario Juan M. de Veramendi of San Antonio de Bejar was granted (by the State of Coahuila and Texas) two leagues of land (about 8,860 acres) straddling the headwaters of the San Marcos River, and including the "Mill Tract".²

It was left for an Indian fighter, soldier, Texas patriot, and colonizer named Edward Burlèson to establish the tract and to provide its purpose.

Edward Burleson was born in Buncombe County, North Carolina, in 1793. The son of James Burleson, an early colonizer of the

San Marcos' "Mill Tract" -- 2

Bastrop settlements on the Colorado River, Edward moved with his family to Tennessee, Alabama, Missouri, Tennessee again, and in 1831, the family took up headrights of land in Texas in what is now Bastrop County.³

In the time span of only 20 years, Burleson etched his name into the turbulent history of this Mexican colony, this Republic, this State of Texas, through his protection of frontier settlers, his continuing zeal in the defense of his adopted homeland, and through his countless civic endeavors.

"No portion of Texas suffered more from Indian outrages than that part now known as Bastrop County, and on no part of her long-suffering frontier were their forays repelled with more constant valor and firmness. Burleson, by his activity, promptness and courage, soon rose to be acknowledged a leader, while his plain and unpretending deportment and natural dignity won friends as fast as he made acquaintances."⁴

Burleson's report as Commander in Chief of the Volunteer Army to Provisional Governor Henry Smith, dated Dec. 14, 1835, was quick to heap praise on all his officers and men. Leaving the garrison in San Antonio and disbanding his army, he returned to his home on the Colorado River to receive the plaudits of his neighbors. There he stayed until news of Santa Anna's approach brought him to the defense of Texas.⁵

Although Edward Burleson's literary education was negligible, his common sense was unimpeachable. . . . His election to positions of responsibility in government was a natural sequence to his leadership on the field of battle.⁶

In 1837, he was elected to the house of representatives of the Texas Congress. He served on the committees of Post Offices and Post Roads, and also the committees on Military and Indian Affairs.

He took an active part in the deliberations, particularly in the areas of military pensions, taxes, the site selection for the seat of government, and numerous matters of organization.⁷

Elected to the Senate in 1838, again serving in matters of Military and Indian Affairs, banking, and improved education, he participated actively in all the work of the Senate.⁸

Burleson resigned his place in the Senate on Jan. 21, 1839 to fill an important place in President Lamar's plans for border defense.⁹

He ran for the office of vice president only at the urging of friends, and drew his support from friends of both Houston and Burnet.¹⁰ He was elected by the sizeable majority of 6,141 votes to Hunt's 4,336. He carried 30 of Texas' 36 counties.¹¹

It was during Burleson's unsuccessful campaign for the Presidency in 1844 that he started a settlement in what is now Hays County.¹²

In an enterprise of colonization, associated with Merriman and Lindsey, he bought a large tract of land in the fertile valley of the San Marcos River. . . In 1848, General Burleson moved his family to a newly-built log and lumber cabin, located upon a hill 200 yards northwest of the San Marcos Springs.¹³

In 1849, Burleson built the first dam to be constructed on the San Marcos River, and there at the damsite, a grist mill. He quickly extended his operation to include a saw mill, thereby enabling the settlers in San Marcos and environs to obtain cheap lumber with which to build their homes, and grist or meal to supplement their diets.¹⁴

And, also in 1849, he helped lay out the town of San Marcos, and was one-third owner of the plot of land set aside for the townsite.¹⁵

On March 1, 1848, while a Senator in the Third Texas Legislature, General Burleson secured the passage of a bill incorporating the county of his new home from portions of Travis and Bastrop Counties. He succeeded in getting it designated as Hays County out of respect and admiration for Captain Jack Hays, one of his friends of the Mexican War.¹⁶ The first county election was held on Aug. 7, 1848, and Caton Erhard was elected County Clerk.¹⁷

Another of his contributions to his community was the first school house to be constructed in San Marcos' environs, built on another hill near his home. It was moved some months later to a site in the town proper, in order to provide a safer learning

environment for the students. The school house was built of planks sawed at Burleson's own saw mill.¹⁸

Edward Burleson's career was ended by death on Dec. 26, 1851, at the home of N.C. Raymond in Austin. He was the first to be buried in the now-famous cemetery of Texas heroes in Austin, the land for which he had donated to the State of Texas.¹⁹

And so it came about in the administration of General Burleson's estate, as the Records of Probate were set down, that the "Mill Tract" got its lasting designation.²⁰

At this point, the researcher would like to digress from this recitation of facts and dates to point up the use of legal instruments as a source for a number of references that follow. We have at hand the complete Abstract of Title for the Mill Tract, wherein not only dates, but descriptions of structures, usage and repairs, additions made to buildings, loans, liens against equipment, all tell the story and history of the Mill Tract during a period when other references are far from exact, or plentiful. (This Abstract has been excerpted, and various pages thereon are appended hereto for partial verification.)

It is certainly to his credit that General Burleson foresaw the industrial potential of the Mill Tract. His enterprise in the construction of the first dam to afford direct water power for his grist mill and saw mill paved the way for the continuing utilization of the tract as San Marcos' first "industrial park". A cotton gin, three successive ice factories, water works, and the electric light and power plant, each contributed to the history of the Mill

Tract and the economy of San Marcos and environs over the ensuing 121 years (until the last ice factory was permanently closed in 1976).

To re-establish a reference of beginning of this early entrepreneurship, we quote from the book, "Historical Markers In Hays County 1907-76" by Tula T. Wyatt (Chairman of the Hays County Historical Commission):

"In 1848, General Burleson moved his family to San Marcos and built his log cabin on the hill overlooking the beautiful springs and valley of the San Marcos River. . . . He built the first dam across the river in 1849 to obtain power to operate a grist mill and a saw mill."^{21 22 23}

In 1850, the little San Marcos settlement, just a few hundred yards downriver from the Mill Tract, boasted two stores and a tavern and some half dozen dwellings scattered around the square.²⁴

The Hays County census for 1850 listed 387 settlers, representing 259 persons among 41 families, plus 128 slaves.²⁵

This researcher's great grandfather, Thomas Gilmer McGehee, had moved to the San Marcos River from Bastrop in 1846 to settle on his headright league of land and become the first farmer in the area which became Hays County in 1848. (He is listed in the above-mentioned census.) He served as a County Commissioner from Precinct 2 1850-1852.²⁶ Along with Shadrack Dixon and C.R. Johns, he was appointed by the Probate Court as a Commissioner to Make Partition and Distribution of the Edward Burleson Estate.²⁷

San Marcos' "Mill Tract" -- 7

The growing of cotton (in Hays County) began with the first white settlement. Small areas of River valley lands were cultivated to this crop as early as 1847.²⁸

The cotton gin on the Mill Tract was installed during General Burleson's last years. It is first mentioned in the Probate of the Estate of General Burleson. . . First, in the petition of Mrs. Burleson and her son to sell the Mill site and cotton gin and 40 acres of land; and second, the account of sale of the saw and grist mills, cotton gin house, press and all fixtures, etc. together with 40 acres of land adjoining and connected . . . and all the water power connected with the said mills and the cotton gin house. . . .²⁹

One discussion of early settlers included this reference to a gin: "Those first pioneers (in Hays County) clustered their cabins close to the River. The stage line stopped there on the way to San Antonio -- an 18-hour trip from Austin. Major C.R. Johns is another who was there in 1847. (He was one of the Commissioners to Make Partition and Distribution of General Burleson's Estate). . . Edward Burleson built a saw mill and a cotton gin."³⁰

In a "Bond for Title" of the Mill Tract, filed for record October 29, 1860, the Rectors of Hays County sold to Thomas Mooney and part of the consideration was to be paid in cotton (at 10¢ per pound), to be delivered at the gin . . . whenever called for.³¹

The first Chief Justice (Judge) of Hays County was Henry Cheatham. He was born in Virginia in 1798 and migrated with his family to Texas (via Arkansas) in 1847, settling near the point of