

CANYON SPRINGS

**FROM PREHISTORY TO THE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

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A History of Canyon Springs Subdivision

Paleo-Indians lived in Canyon Springs and the surrounding area as long as 10,000 years ago. Native Americans hunted, camped for short periods, made tools and even baked plant foods in earth ovens in our immediate surroundings. Lipan Apaches traveled in this area in the early 18th century. The fierce Penateka band of Comanches migrated into western Texas in the 1740's, gradually moved south and east and finally drove the Apaches out of the Hill Country. The Penateka are generally considered to have been the last Native Americans to raid in Kerr County. There is no absolute proof, but because of arrowheads and other evidence found at the scene, Comanches are usually blamed for killing four children of the Dowdy family as they were tending sheep not far from Ingram in 1878.

There were Native American campsites close to springs and along creeks and the Guadalupe River. Unfortunately, most have been obliterated by "arrowhead hunters" or other human intrusions. Authenticated artifacts made of chert (flint) collected in and near Canyon Springs include hide scrapers, drills, knives and projectile points. Fire-cracked rocks that once lined an earth oven have also been discovered. High-quality chert, ideal for projectile points and tools, was available here and elsewhere in the Edwards Plateau region. Unfortunately, most of the physical evidence has been obliterated by "arrowhead hunters" or other human intrusions.

The modern history of our subdivision dates back to the large Forgason ranch. (Jim and Mary Forgason also owned Cave Springs Camp, composed of tourist cabins on Forgason Road. In 1946 Forgason sold one cabin at a time to Houston residents for summer homes.) Forgason Road was renamed River Road at some point.

J. W. Colvin moved to this area in 1947 or 1948, after which he began development of our subdivision, according to Paul Colvin, a relative. The Colvins were the subject of Article #78 by Irene Van Winkle in her West Kerr Current sesquicentennial series about important families in Kerr County history. She reported the Colvin family had owned two houses "in the valley by the Guadalupe River," and that one was the "century-old Farguson (*sic*) house."

The land office of Kerr County's records indicate some Forgason family members sold four tracts of land, a total of 890.5 acres, to J. W. and Betty (Elizabeth) Colvin in 1949. Grandson Dick Colvin said two of the Colvins' sons, Ellis and Andrew, participated in buying Forgason land that would become part our subdivision. Additional purchases by the Colvins were incorporated into the subdivision also.

Colvin believes his grandmother gave the ranch the name Brushy Canyon. He explained the name was changed to Cave Spring closer to the time of platting the subdivision because of the existence of caves and springs in the two canyons on the property.

The oldest plat layout drawing we have is based on a survey by Louis Domingues dated July 31, 1963. A black and white copy of the original is attached. It depicts the first three sections of "Cave Spring Addition" as J. W. Colvin must have envisioned them. All references in this history in terms such as "the original/ 1963 plat/ Domingues drawing/layout," are to the Domingues map. The land records office of Kerr County does not have this drawing or a composite map of the subdivision made from the plats that were filed section by section. Consequently, there are differences between the 1963 version of Sections 1-3 and the individual plats on file at the Court House.

Wording on the 1963 plat states this is the "first 125 acre subdivision of an (*sic*) 1,100 acre tract to be developed." An early indication that Colvin had planned a large subdivision was published in the September 22, 1949 issue of the Kerrville Mountain Sun: "...we took a ride with Jay Colvin over his new road that he has built over the hills and mountains in back of Cave Springs... It is about seven miles..." The "new road" was no doubt Cave Spring Drive, the longest road on the plat. We may assume the term "mountains" was more poetic than factual.

Canyon Springs' 98-acre wilderness recreational area was labeled "Brushy Canyon" on the original Domingues drawing. "Brushy Canyon Creek" ran through it. Those who walk in our wilderness area after sufficient rain can see ponds and evidence of a creek.

"Cave Spring" was the original plat's spelling for both the subdivision and the road. However, the spelling "Cave Springs" was also used in some newspaper references and documents through the years. One example comes from the January 17, 1979 Kerrville Mountain Sun, in which a list of real estate transactions referred to both "Cave Springs Addition" and "Cave Spring Addition."

As shown on the 1963 Domingues plat, part of today's Ranch Rim Drive West was originally called "West Drive." Implementation of the 911 addressing system in the 1990's was responsible for the name change. Ranch Rim Drive West now extends from River Road to the Doty property at the end of Section 4.

On the attached copy of the 1963 plat drawing, a very short road segment called "Brushy Drive" was located close to the intersection of Cave Spring Drive and the start of Ranch Rim Drive. It was to extend into Brushy Canyon, but the extension was not developed. Currently Brushy Drive W. continues as Pond Creek, but not where Brushy Drive was on the 1963 plat. The present road may be the point at which Brushy Drive was to have exited the canyon.

Neither Indian Trail nor Sky Line Drive was extended as the Domingues map indicated would occur. A section of seven lots had been planned, with Sky Line Drive cutting through it. The acreage designated for the seven lots and the rest of Sky Line Drive was sold and the homes there now are not part of Canyon Springs. Indian Trail W. is presently a short dead end, rather than intersecting the intended extension of Sky Line Drive. Bridle Path W. today is one short road that leads to the wilderness area, with the other end intersecting Cave Spring Drive W. The original drawing called for a second, discontinuous part that would have intersected Ridge Road.

Finally, the 1963 plat showed two lots of one acre each at the foot of Canyon Drive where it intersected Forgason Road/River Road. Those lots are now outside the platted area of Canyon Springs.

A short summary of Canyon Springs history appeared in the March, 1999 Canyon Springs newsletter. Luke Gournay, then President of the Board of Directors, wrote that a wilderness area of 100 acres was deeded to the property owners association. It remains recreational land that contains miles of walking trails begun by Starkey family members, who expanded and maintained them for years at their own expense.

Jeanne Schumacher Sutton's father was the contractor who constructed Cave Spring Drive and Canyon Drive, plus three of the subdivision's earliest houses (on Cave Spring) in the 1960s. She has a post card from the '60s that advertises Canyon Spring, a copy of which is attached. One photo on the card shows a Cave Spring house under construction; a second is of a car coming up Canyon Drive. The third is of Ingram Lake, no doubt intended to illustrate the attractions near the subdivision.

The Section 1 plat filed at the Court House in 1963 originally consisted of 11 lots owned by Ellis B. and Amy J. Colvin. A "park" was included. A loop road named Ellis Drive adjoined lots 2 and 3, but if it was ever constructed, it no longer exists.

The plat for Section 2, filed in April, 1964, called the subdivision "Cave Spring Addition." Ellis Colvin was listed as President of "Cave Spring Development Company" and President of Cave Springs Water Supply Corporation, organized in 1964. It hired Edmonds Drilling Company to put in the water wells. Jack Tucker's Tucker Pump Company, Inc. installed the water distribution system. Tucker's house of greenish brick was built in Canyon Springs in 1964 or 1965. After Mrs. Tucker died and the house had been vacant for some time, Peni and Bake Foster bought and extensively remodeled it. Peni shared two entertaining anecdotes. She learned that Jack and a friend who lived on River Road used to shoot deer through the Tuckers' bathroom window! The Fosters found a pair of copper water divining rods in a drawer in the house. When they tested them using a known water source, they worked. We will never know whether Mr. Tucker found the rods useful in operating his pump company or whether they were simply a hobby.

Bill Vlasek, owner of Vlasek Pump Company, bought our water system from Walter Hailey in 1982 or 1983. He is the present owner and maintains the system. To give an idea of standard materials when the system was first installed, iron pipes were found some years ago while repairing a leak in our riverfront park.

Walter Hailey purchased Canyon Springs in the early '70s. He bought J. W. Colvin, Sr.'s house on Ranch Rim for his residence and had it remodeled by Mr. Ray Sweat some time between 1972 and 1975. A sign now at the entrance driveway reads "Hailey Loop." Mrs. Sweat said they came here in 1972 and Hailey's house was their first project. Hailey used buildings on the 15-acre property for his business.

Canyon Springs has a unique gate at the entrance on Highway 39. Barbara Hailey summarized its origin in a phone conversation. Hailey told Dallas landscaper Clint Smyers, who had landscaped the Ranch Rim Drive house for him, that he wanted the subdivision to have a gate. The landscaper replied he had always wanted to build a gate that looked like "an old, bombed-out fort." Hailey felt that would create a suitable rustic look. The result is the gate we see today. Although our homeowners association owns the entrance property and contracted for the landscaping there, the gate will be preserved as Hailey wanted it.

The Section 3 plat was filed in 1972. The earlier "Cave Spring Development Company" had been replaced by "Canyon Springs Ranch, Inc." A road named Sleepy Lane shown on that plat was not constructed. Instead, Circle View was lengthened to connect with the cul-de-sac portion of what would have been Sleepy Lane.

The "front" and "back" halves of Canyon Springs, as the Colvins and most others referred to them, were once separated by a fence with a red bumper gate about where the "Y," or small roundabout, is. Dick Colvin explained the first roads put in were on the back side of the bumper gate, so the gate was removed. The exact fence and gate location have disappeared. The "front half" was Sections 1-3, developed by the Colvins, while the "back half" consisted of what would become Hailey's sections four, five and seven. (The Section 6 plat was filed in the '80s; that section is on the south side of Sections 1 and 2.) Colvin described the "back half" as having begun about where our Hunt Fire Department's auxiliary station is, adding he didn't think the two "halves" were equal in size.

Mrs. Maria Butler was familiar with the "back half" before it was developed. (The River Road house she and her husband bought was previously the summer home of Ria Gable, once married to Clark Gable.) She shared a memory from her childhood. She and a friend used to pack sandwiches in the morning and ride their horses there all day. Their parents knew it was safe, she recalled, and never worried about the children's riding alone as long as they were home before dark.

Jeanne Schumacher Sutton remembers what the "back half" looked like before its development. She used to travel through it in a Jeep. Her paternal grandfather, John Schumacher, leased land there from Jim Forgason for livestock grazing and Ben Nolan "Pete" Schumacher, her father, leased it from J. W. Colvin to run cattle.

The Section 4 plat was filed in July, 1978. Hailey was listed as President of "Canyon Springs Ranch, Inc." A small platted "park" of 1.73 acres is still vacant land. The Ranch Rim water well in Section 4 is an important water source for the subdivision. Part of an old ranch road is still visible in this section.

Hailey filed plats for Sections 5 and 6 in the early 1980s. A plat was filed for Section 7, Phase One in 1997. One home has been built on its single road, Live Spring Lane, as of this writing.

At the termination of Ranch Rim Drive West a fence and gate separate the subdivision from a large property owned by Mark and Beth Doty. The 176 acres that Domingues included in his 1963 drawing were intended to be part of Canyon Springs at some future time, but were sold and eventually became part of the Dotys' land.

It is hoped that these highlights of Canyon Springs history will be of interest to property owners.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for the time and information they contributed to this history. Some generously agreed to help a stranger and all trusted their statements would be accurately represented. This project could not have been completed if a number of them had not kindly supplied names and contact information for individuals whose knowledge was essential for an understanding of how our subdivision grew.

Jon and Sandy Wolfmuehler for Paul Colvin's name and phone number. Jon and Sandy are themselves encyclopedias of historical lore.

Clare Trowbridge for the link to a Colvin cousin in California who facilitated communication with Paul Colvin. (Yes, Clare, I did say hello to her for you!) His memories of Canyon Springs development were vital to the writing of this history.

Dick Colvin for the considerable time he took from a full schedule to send e-mails with facts about his family and the origin of Canyon Springs that I could not have learned otherwise.

Paul Colvin for answering questions during the early stages of my research.

Betsy Colvin Feller for sharing her personal knowledge of Colvin ties to Canyon Springs. She is fortunate to be living in her grandparents' home.

Jeanne Schumacher Sutton for details about her father's part in the development of Canyon Springs, an e-mail copy of the photo post card advertisement for the subdivision and an e-mail excerpt from her book, Hunt, Texas: The Early Years, 1857-1959.

Buster Baldwin for information about Cecil Baldwin's house and about the well near Jack Tucker's home.

Sara Schmidt in the Special Collections Department of Logan Library on the Schreiner University campus, for copies of an early map of property owners around J. W. Colvin's ranch and pages from the Kerr County Album. The album contains names of a large number of people who built summer homes near Hunt, on the Guadalupe and on the North Fork. Family summer resorts in West Kerr County are also listed.

Peni and Bake Foster for permission to share information about Jack Tucker.

Barbara Hailey for details of Walter Hailey's purchase and remodeling of J. W. Colvin's house, and history of the Canyon Springs entrance gate on Highway 39 West.

Louis "Bubba" Vlasek for sharing his knowledge of Native American sites in our area.

A. J. Drapela for the loan of the 1963 Domingues plat map of Sections 1-3.

My husband, Rudi Winzinger, for producing a large digital photograph of the 1963 Cave Spring Addition map, as well as the smaller version attached to this history. His conversion of my manuscript to .pdf format made it possible to e-mail copies.

Reid McTaggart and Rudi Winzinger for improvements in the style and clarity of this history.

Richard Blankenship for proofreading, final PDF formatting and for printing of hard copies.

References

The following references are listed in the order the statements appear in the text.

Page 2:

“Paleo-Indians lived in Canyon Springs...” Article in the online Hill Country Archeological Association newsletter, January 10, 2013.

“The fierce Penateka band...” Article by Gelo, Daniel G. in the online Southwest Historical Quarterly, January, 2000. Page 274.

“...killing four children of the Dowdy family...” Excerpt online from Early Settlers and Indian Fighters of Southwest Texas. Sowell, A. J. Pages 740-741. First edition 1900; paperback edition 2013.

Paragraph 2: First-hand knowledge, accounts by HCAA principal investigators and phone conversation with long-time area resident Louis “Bubba” Vlasek.

“Jim and Mary Forgason also owned Cave Springs Camp...” Kerrville Mountain Sun, November 18, 1981: “Mrs. Jim (Mary) Forgason died November 5. She and her late husband owned most of the Cave Springs property now called Canyon Springs.”

AND in the same paragraph: “...Cave Springs Camp, composed of tourist cabins...” ; also, “In 1946 Forgason sold...” Jeanne S. Sutton, e-mail excerpt from her book, Hunt, Texas: The Early Years, 1857-1959.

“Kerr County land office records indicate...” Forgason real estate transactions in June and July, 1949, recorded in volume 86, Pp. 283 and 286 in the Office of Land Records of Kerr County. Mary, J. P. and J. Y. Forgason sold four tracts to J. W. Colvin.

“Colvin believes his grandmother...” E-mail from Richard (Dick) Colvin, 2014.

Page 3:

“Implementation of the 911...” Information provided by the 911 Administrative Office, Kerrville, Texas.

Page 4

“Jack Tucker’s Tucker Pump Company, Inc....” E-mail from Richard (Dick) Colvin.

“The plat for Section 2...” Anecdotes about Jack Tucker are from a phone conversation with Peni Foster.

“Bill Vlasek, owner...” E-mail from Karen Hux in the Vlasek Pump Company office.

“Walter Hailey purchased Canyon Springs...” through sentence ending “...between 1972 and 1975.” Phone conversations with Barbara Hailey and Mrs. Roxie Sweat.

“Canyon Springs has a unique gate...” Phone conversation with Barbara Hailey.

“The “front” and “back” halves of Canyon Springs...” E-mail from Dick Colvin.

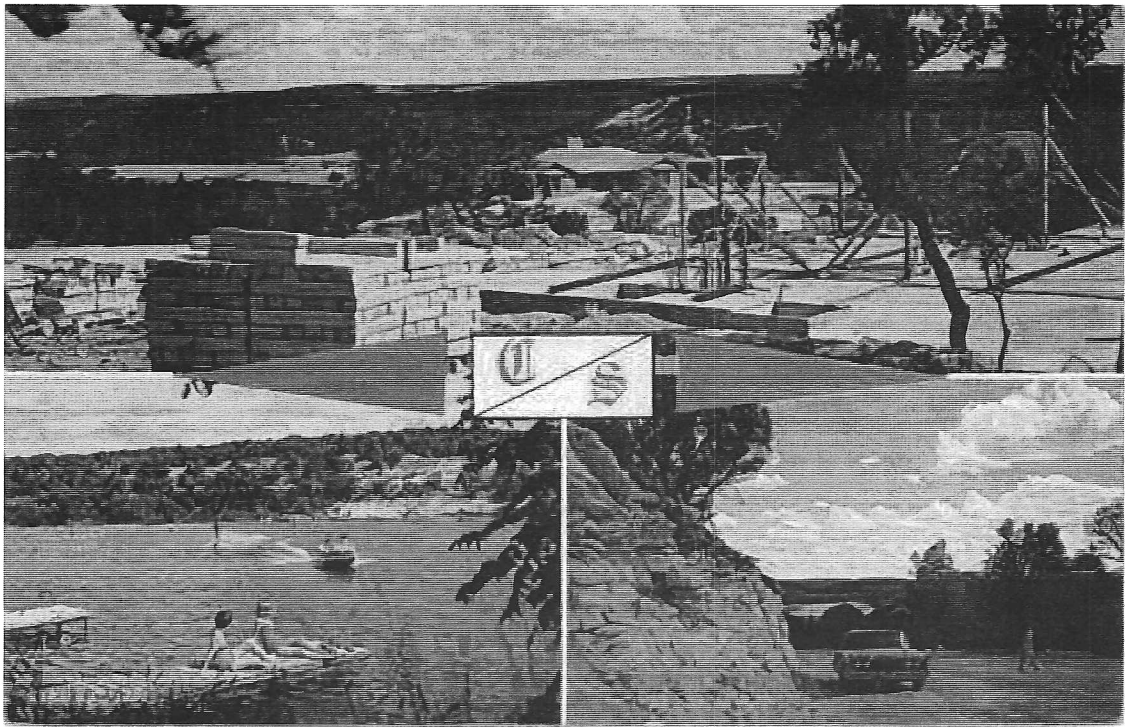
Page 5:

“Mrs. Maria Butler...” Phone conversation with Maria Butler.

“Jeanne Schumacher Sutton remembers...” E-mail from Jeanne Sutton.

“Hailey filed plats for...” Records in the land office of Kerr County.

“At the termination of Ranch Rim Drive West...” E-mail from Dick Colvin.



176 ACRE TRACT

43.36 ACRE TRACT

CAVE SPRING DRIVE

SKY LINE DRIVE

INDIAN TRAIL

CANYON DRIVE

SECTION TWO

SECTION TWO

BLOCK 4

BLOCK 5

1.0 AC.

1.03 AC.

1.07 ACRES

1.03 ACRES

1.06 ACRES

1.05 AC.

1.04 AC.

1.0 AC.

0.98 AC.

0.91 AC.

0.82 AC.

0.68 AC.

0.65 AC.

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0.01 AC.

W E

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NOTE: This plat depicts the first 125 acre subdivision of an 1,100 acre tract to be developed.

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