

## The Legend of the White Cibolo

by Dee Hruska



This was written many years ago by Ms. Dee Hruska for Clean Houston's (now Keep Houston Beautiful) education program in area schools. Some slight adjustments have been made for authenticity.

Once upon a time, in the long-ago days

before Harris County came to be,

a proud and brave people walked the land.

They made friends with the trees that grew There and with the animals that walked there.

The people gave names to the trees – names like “sweet gum”

and “dog wood.” They gave names to the flowers – names

like “paint brush” and “blue bonnet.” They called the birds

“blue jay” and “mocking bird.” The water that carried their Canoes and that gave drink to them

and to the animals was called “bayou.”

One animal was a special friend to the people. This animal gave its meat for food to the people.

This animal gave its skin and fur for clothes for the people to wear and home in which to live.

Every part of the animal was used by the people. This animal was called Cibolo.

There were many, many Cibolo in the land. All of them could be used for food and clothes and homes --- all except One. This One was the beautiful Great White Cibolo.

The Great White Cibolo walked beside the bayou and drank its clear water. Its favorite spot to rest was beside a great green tree that grew there.

When the people saw the White Cibolo, they were reminded to take care of their beautiful land and its waters and the air all around – to keep them always clean.

And so, the people lived happily by the bayou with the trees And the flowers and the birds – and the White Cibolo.

One day, something happened that would change the way of the people forever.

One day, some different people came to the land. They did not know the ways of the people who lived by the bayou.

They did not know about the Great White Cibolo. They carried guns and before long, most of the Cibolo were gone.

One day, the Great White Cibolo was gone, too.

The people of the land were sad and afraid because the Cibolo were gone. They were especially sad because the Great White Cibolo was gone. For many moons, they offered prayers and dances to the Great Spirit for the return of the Cibolo.

Then one day -- as the sun rose beside the bayou – the people saw a wondrous thing! The great green tree that had been the favorite of the beautiful White Cibolo was changing! Between the leaves were appearing magnificent white blossoms!

Their sweet smell was everywhere!

The people were filled with joy because they felt that the Great Spirit has sent the beautiful white flowers in place of the lost White Cibolo to remind them to care for the land and its waters and

the air that surrounds them – to keep them always clean.

The people named the tree “Cibolo Tree” and the water beside which it grew – “Cibolo Bayou.”

Land surveyors came to the bayou to lay out parcels of land for settlement by the new people from across the great water.

The surveyors wrote that the name of the clear water flowing through the land was Cibolo, but in English was “Buffalo.”

The Great White Buffalo was never seen again in the land, but each year in the springtime – even now – the great Buffalo Trees beside the Buffalo Bayou burst forth in beautiful white blossoms!

Today we call the Buffalo Tree – “Magnolia.”

Today we call the land where the Great White Buffalo walked – East Harris County!

And today, if we remember and follow the message of the Great White Buffalo, maybe – just maybe – we will see him walk beside Buffalo Bayou, once more.

*Edited by Janet K. Wagner*