

Tomball, Hockley, and Klein Texas Historical Marker Tour

Compiled by Will Howard, Heritage Tourism Chair,
Harris County Historical Commission, 2015

City of Tomball, nw of Houston in nw Harris County at junction of
State Hwy 249 (going nw from Loop 610)
and FM 2920 (going w from I-45 & w of US 290)

TO TOMBALL: A driving path from Houston to starting place from Houston, without toll roads:
From Loop 610 go N on I 45 / exit W. Mt. Houston Rd. – St Hwy 249 / pass Beltway 8 / pass FM 1960 /
pass Willow Brook Mall / pass Lone Star College / pass Louetta Rd. / pass SH 99 /after Holderrieth veer
R to avoid toll road to L / Turn Right on W. Main – County Road 2910 / pass Poplar and Magnolia streets
/ L on S. Pine, go forward to 510 N. Pine.

19 markers at 12 locations

Driving Tour: 2 hours, 50 miles

**Gather near: Tomball Museum Center 281 255-2148
510 N. Pine St., between Hicks St. & Oxford**

**Marker site: A - 1 Pilot Family
510 N Pine St. @ Hicks St., in the Museum yard**

Frenchman Claude Nicholas Pillot (1793-1862) came to this area with his family in 1837. He and his son Eugene (1820-1896) worked in the timber business, were active in the community, served as officials of the short-lived Spring Creek County, and owned much of the land in the area. The Willow Settlement formed around the Pillot family and other French settlers. A successful lumberman, Eugene also became a prominent builder in Houston, maintaining homes in the Willow Creek area and in the city. His 1860 home was moved to the current site in 1965 to serve as a reminder of the prosperous Pillot family and their contributions.

**A - 2: Griffin Memorial House
510 N. Pine St. @ Hicks St.: Loc: on the Museum**

Built about 1860 by Eugene Pillot, one of the sons of Claude Nicholas Pillot, early Harris County settler. Taught trade by his father, Eugene Pillot became an outstanding builder in Texas coastal area. Original site of this house (near Atascosita Trail route) was south of Willow Creek, where General Sam Houston often stopped as a guest. Owned by family of John B. Griffin from 1920 to 1965. Recorded Texas Historic Landmark - 1969 Supplemental Plate: Given in 1965 to Spring Creek County Historical Association by Mrs. Ruth Griffin McCourt in memory of her father, Edmond B. Griffin. [RTHL]

*Turn West onto Hicks St 0.2 mi/ Turn Right onto Baker Dr Go 0.2 mi/
Turn Left on Brown-Hufsmith Rd 0.4 mi/ changes at Tomball Pkwy to Brown Rd Go 1.5 mi /
Curve L and R / Enter Spring Creek Park main entrance / Proceed to Pavilion*

**B 1 Spring Creek County
15012 Brown Road, in Spring Creek Park, near Pavilion**

In early Texas, most citizen interactions with government took place at the county seat, so smaller counties were more convenient for the residents, prior to 1841, each county had at least one congressman, but since the Republic of Texas constitution limited Congress to 40 members, Spring Creek and 15 other new counties became “judicial” counties providing all court and government services. Congressional districts, however, remained unchanged, so some congressmen now represented multiple counties.

On January 21, 1841, at the request of 130 male residents of Harris and Montgomery counties, Congress created Spring Creek County, extending from the head of Spring Creek near Waller to its mouth near Humble, and from Lake Creek in the north to just south of Cypress Top. The county seat was to be a new town named Greenville, ¼ mile south of Spring Creek, near today’s Rose Hill.

George W. Cropper, Isaac Decker, William Pierpont, Abram Roberts and Archibald Smith were named county commissioners, and James Cooper was appointed Chief Justice (county judge). On May 8 1841 the following were elected: District Clerk William B. Reeves, County Clerk Thomas M. Hogan, Sheriff Alexander Barron, Coroner Jason Whitney, Surveyor Eugene Pillot, and justices of the peace Nathaniel H. Carrol, Samuel, James Dickson, Henry T. Mostyn, Claude N. Pillot, and John Simmons.

Since each county did not have its own congressman, the Republic of Texas Supreme Court declared the judicial counties unconstitutional on February 4, 1842, and their lands reverted to their parent counties. Many former judicial counties were re-created after statehood; Spring Creek County is the only one whose territory remains almost entirely within its parent counties.

By car proceed forward to end of park road / exit car / cross broad grassy area

**B 2 Confederate Powder Mill
15012 Brown Rd (nw corner Spring Creek Park)**

Established in 1861. Cannon Powder for the Confederate Army was made here until 1863, when the mill was destroyed by an explosion, killing William Bloecher, Adolph Hillegeist and Peter Wunderlich, employees of the mill. The site was donated by Mrs. E.G. Hillegeist and her sons, Earl and Roy Hillegeist. Erected by Harris County Historical Survey Committee, Spring Creek County Historical Association and the descendants of those killed in the explosion.

Reverse to park entrance, R on Brown 0.9 mi / R on Lutheran Cem Rd 0.5 m

**C Salem Lutheran Cemetery
23555 ½ Lutheran Cemetery Rd.**

This burial ground began as the Scherer Family Cemetery. The Scherers were among the early settlers of Rosehill, a rural community in northwest Harris County. The first German settlers began arriving by way of Galveston in 1846. Through the efforts of founding pastor Johann Heinrich Braschler and local residents Jacob and Henry Theis, C. W. Winkler, and George Scherer, Salem Lutheran Church was established as a congregation in 1851. By the late 1880s, in addition to the church, the area also had a post office, seven cotton gins, three general stores, a sawmill, a gristmill, a blacksmith and a wagon maker.

The first burials here were of Helena Scherer (d. 1859) and her brother, Reinhardt Johann Scherer (d. 1860). The first non-family member buried here was Eva Achenback Theis (d. 1861). In 1864, three men who died in the Spring Creek Powder Mill explosion were interred here. In 1869, George Scherer transferred property including the cemetery to Salem Lutheran Church; the cemetery changed its name at this time. Those buried here include veterans of military conflicts dating to the Civil War. Others interred include many early Rosehill residents and other individuals who attended the church but lived in nearby communities such as Cypress Top, Decker Prairie and Willow Creek. Cemetery features include vertical stones, obelisks, interior fencing, grave slabs, statuary and German-language markers. Set among trees

and vegetation, Salem Lutheran Cemetery remains active while continuing to serve as a record of the area's early settlers.

*Reverse, go south on Lutheran Cem Rd 0.4 m/
(at corner, Brown Rd changes to Lutheran School Rd) /
/ Turn R 0.5 mi on Lutheran School Rd, curve L at "Jane Rd" /
Turn R onto Lutheran School Rd Go 0.2 mi / L onto Lutheran Church Rd / Enter grounds on the L*

**D-1 Old Salem Lutheran Church Site
22604 Lutheran Church Rd.**

A number of German immigrants who arrived in Galveston during the 1840s and 1850s settled in the Rose Hill community. The families of George Sherer, Henry Theiss, Jacob Theiss, and C. W. Winkler founded Salem Lutheran Church in 1852, with the Rev. Gottlieb Ebinger as their first pastor. They worshipped initially in private homes, then erected a church building at this site on land donated by C. W. Winkler in 1857. The congregation affiliated with the Missouri Synod in 1868. The following year, George Sherer gave his family cemetery, situated about one mile northeast of this location, as a church burial ground. The fellowship established a parochial school about 1870 and later built a schoolhouse on adjacent land given by Henry Theiss. In 1880 a frame edifice with steeple was constructed here to replace the original church.

Until the 1930s, men customarily sat on the left side of the church and women on the right, and services were conducted in German. Additions to the cemetery in 1943 and 1954 increased its size to five acres, which members of the congregation tended on cleanup days scheduled twice a year. The old frame church was destroyed by fire in 1964 and replaced by a new edifice, dedicated Feb. 5, 1967.

**D-2 Salem Lutheran School
22604 Lutheran Church Rd**

Founded by area German settlers, Salem Lutheran Church is one of the oldest Lutheran congregations in Texas. First led by church pastors, the associated school was in operation by the 1850s. Coursework was taught in both English and German until World War II, and it remained a one-room schoolhouse until 1947. The Salem Lutheran School combined with Zion Lutheran School and in 1957 moved to a campus in Tomball. The collaboration between the two churches ended in 1982, and Salem returned to new facilities at its former location. The school's history, which includes significant individuals such as longtime teacher Herbert Buescher, is an important part of the community's past. Loc: Off F. M. 2920 about 3 m W of Tomball across from old church site

*Continue south on Lutheran Church Rd 0.8 mi /
R on FM 2910 (aka Waller Tomball Rd) 5.7 mi /
Pass Rose Hill and Mueschke / R onto New Kentucky Park Rd 0.1 m*

**E 1 Site of New Kentucky
21710 FM 2920, Hockley, New Kentucky Park**

Established before 1831. A thriving town until its trade was captured by the present city of Houston, established 30 miles away in 1836. Abandoned about 1840.

**E 2 Abraham Roberts Homesite
21710 FM 2920, Hockley, New Kentucky Park**

Texas Army Route - April 16, 1836. Abraham (Abram) Roberts (1773-1850), a native of Georgia, came to Texas as a widower in 1827 and settled at this site on Spring Creek about 1829. His home was located at a prominent crossroads in the sparsely populated community of New Kentucky about three miles east of his neighbor Samuel McCarley.

On March 21, 1836, the interim government of the Republic of Texas stayed at Roberts' home overnight while enroute to Harrisburg to establish the Republic's new capital. On April 16, 1836, the Texas army under Sam Houston left McCarley's home and arrived here about midday. Houston's soldiers, aware that the Mexican army was advancing on Harrisburg, were concerned that Houston would continue to retreat east to the Trinity River.

Still uncertain about Houston's chosen route, the Texas army paused upon reaching the crossroads. Soldiers in the army asked Roberts, who was standing on his gate, to show the way to Harrisburg. A great shout arose as Roberts pointed southeast. Houston took the Harrisburg Road and on April 21 his army defeated the Mexicans at the Battle of San Jacinto. The decision to take the Harrisburg Road became famous as a turning point in the campaign for Texas independence. (1993) Sam Houston Bicentennial 1793-1993 Inscribe on base: Project of Jeffrey D. Dunn and Edward W. Turley, Jr.

Exit Park / R on FM go 0.5 m / R on Roberts Cem Rd / L at Decision Dr.

**E 3 Roberts Cemetery
20000 block of Roberts Cemetery Road, Hockley**

Abraham (Abram) Roberts (1773-1850), a member of Stephen F. Austin's Colony, came to Texas in the late 1820s with his children, naming the area in which he settled New Kentucky. By the 1840s the area was known as the Spring Creek community and was settled by German immigrants. The first burial on this site is thought to have been that of Abraham Roberts. Though it is uncertain when the Roberts land began to be used for community burials, the earliest was probably that of infant Mary Schultz, who was born and died in 1858. The oldest surviving headstone is that of her young mother, Elizabeth M. Schultz, who died in 1859. Other notable graves include that of Abraham Roberts' son George (1811-1874) and those of the Montgomery family.

A separate burial ground nearby is thought to have been given to the slaves of the Montgomery plantation by Abraham Roberts. C. A. Montgomery, who acquired the land from Abraham Roberts, deeded 202 acres to Henry Klabe (Kleb) in 1887, reserving two acres as the Roberts graveyard. The two-acre tract, often called "The Old Roberts Burial Ground," and an additional acre were deeded to the community for continued use in 1919. A 1997 count revealed 258 marked and 15 unmarked graves in the cemetery. Cared for by family members until the Roberts Cemetery Association was formed in 1971, the graveyard continues to serve the community. (1998)

Continue west on FM 2920 2.8 mi / R onto A. J. Foyt Road / Stop

**F Samuel McCarley Homesite
FM-2920 & A J Foyt Rd, Hockley**

Texas Army Camp - April 15, 1836 Samuel McCarley (1775-1838), his wife Celia (1794-1873), and their ten children settled near here on Spring Creek in 1831. By 1836 the McCarley home was located on a well-traveled road linking Washington-on-the-Brazos (30 mi. NW) with Harrisburg (40 mi. SE). Their neighbor, Abraham Roberts, lived about three miles east at a fork in the road. One fork led east to the Trinity River and the other southeast to Harrisburg. On April 15, 1836, the Texas army led by General Sam Houston left camp near the Brazos River and marched east, arriving here at dusk. Overnight, Houston's 1100 hungry soldiers consumed cattle, corn, and bacon belonging to the McCarleys and burned about 4,000 of their fence rails for fuel. According to post-war accounts, many in the Texas army strongly suspected that Houston was unwilling to engage the Mexican army, known to be advancing toward Harrisburg. On April 16, however, Houston and the Texas soldiers took the Harrisburg Road at the fork and on April 21 defeated the Mexican army at the Battle of San Jacinto to win Texas independence. Samuel McCarley died in 1838 and in 1858 the state of Texas awarded his widow, Celia, \$460 as compensation for damages caused by the Texas army. Sam Houston Bicentennial 1793-1993

*Reverse direction, go back east on FM 2910 4.0 mi/ R onto Mueschke Rd 0.5 mi /
to Draper Road and Kleb Woods Nature Preserve*

**G Kleb Family House
Draper Rd near Mueschke, Tomball
(in Kleb Woods Nature Preserve)**

Constructed c. 1890s, the Kleb Family Home and its location in the wooded northwestern part of Harris County represent a time of dispersed rural settlement in the area. Edward Kleb, a descendant of German immigrants who arrived in Texas in 1846, built the house on property acquired from his father, Andrew.

Elmer "Lumpy" Kleb (1907-1999), son of Edward and Minnie (Willmann), was born in the house and inherited the property when his mother died in 1967. (Edward passed away in 1951.) Deeply attached to the family land, Elmer planted many of the trees in the area and cared for wildlife, often nursing injured birds. Elmer lived a unique existence - a life without utilities in the natural setting. He also did not pay taxes and amassed a debt of more than \$150,000 by 1986. Over Elmer's wishes, a court-appointed law firm worked to sell a portion of the property, which had grown significantly in monetary value, to cover the amount owed. Elmer, however, wanted to donate his land to the Audubon Society.

The situation attracted national attention and soon lawyers, county officials, charities and other agencies began work to find a way to pay the bills and preserve the habitat. In 1991, a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department grant enabled Harris County to buy the land. The county paid the debt and created the Kleb Woods Nature Preserve. Kleb's determination, as well as help from others, led to the preservation of a wildlife refuge in a rapidly urbanizing area. The county started a trust fund to cover Elmer's needs until he passed away. Later, restoration began on his house, a vernacular hall and parlor style home featuring side gables with returns. [RTHL]

*Back to & R on FM 2920 go 0 1.7 mi/
R on Rose Hill Church Road 0.8 mi /*

**H 1 Rose Hill Methodist Church Building
21014 Rose Hill Church Rd.**

In 1887 the congregation of Rose Hill Methodist Church made plans to build a new sanctuary to replace the original frame one built in 1876. Special offerings were taken, and this building was completed in 1888. The vernacular Gothic sanctuary served as the principal place of worship for the congregation until 1968. Features include arched windows and an arched transom over the front door. Due to storm damage, the steeple was rebuilt in 1962.[RTHL, Georgian Revival]

**H 2 Rose Hill United Methodist Church
21014 Rose Hill Church Rd.**

Pioneer German settlers of the Rose Hill area organized this fellowship in 1875. Originally known as Spring Creek Mission, it was established under the direction of the Rev. Friedrich Ries. The earliest services were held in the home of Friederick Oeft at this site. He donated the land to the congregation and the first sanctuary was constructed here in 1876. For over 100 years the Rose Hill United Methodist Church has played a significant role in the development of the community and in the preservation of the area's cultural heritage.

Return to FM 2920 go 7.3 mi, back thru downtown, across RR / L on FM 2978 (aka Hufsmith-Kohrville Rd) 1.7 mi / pass Hufsmith-Kuykendahl Road and RR / R on Hufsmith 1.6 mi / Curve L and R / pass Burroughs Park / L onto Zion Lutheran Cemetery Road 0.4 mi /

**I - 1 Zion Lutheran Cemetery
25800 Zion Lutheran Cemetery Rd**

THC: This area of North Harris County was settled by Germans in the 1850s and was first known as Stuebner. Adolph Stuebner was the Postmaster from 1885 until mail service was transferred to Hufsmith in 1911. The International & Great Northern Railroad founded the town of Hufsmith in 1902 on property conveyed by the Bogs, King and Silas families, and it was named after company executive Frank Hufsmith (1853-1927). A post office was established upon the arrival of the railroad; Henry L. Mueller was the first postmaster, and Fred C. Bogs served as postmaster 1912 to 1951. The three postmasters are buried in Zion Lutheran Cemetery.

The cemetery began as a family burial ground in 1873, upon the death of one-year-old Bertha Mueller, daughter of Juliane and Wilhelm Mueller. Additional Mueller and Stuebner family members were soon interred at the site, which was later known as Mueller-Stuebner Cemetery, Stuebner Cemetery, and Hufsmith Lutheran Cemetery.

In 1905, the Muellers and Stuebners and other Hufsmith area families joined together under the leadership of Pastor G.W. Fischer to form the Evangelical Lutheran Zion Church. Henry and Mary Mueller donated approximately three acres encompassing the already existing cemetery to trustees of the church in 1907. Numerous grave markers in the cemetery reflect birth in Germany, and many of the marker inscriptions are written in German. Burials in the cemetery include those of veterans of the Civil War, World War I and World War II. Although Zion Lutheran Church outgrew its 1907 building and relocated to Tomball in 1959, the church continues to care for the cemetery. [Historic Texas Cemetery – 2006 - Also known as the Stuebner Cemetery]

*Reverse direction along Cemetery Rd and Hufsmith, /
to FM 2978, go L 3.9 mi along that FM 2978 (passing FM 2920 intersection
and Country Club on right) / Turn R onto Holderrieth Rd 1.0 mi /*

**J Pillot Cemetery
12317 Holderrieth Rd
Before Cherry St.; turn at Nelson Bostick Cem sign.**

The earliest known settler on Willow Creek was Frenchman Claude Nicholas Pillot (1793-1862), whose family immigrated to the United States in 1832 and to Texas in 1837. He and his wife, Jeanne, established a home and farm in the area, and soon other French settlers joined them. Church services and school classes were held in private homes until permanent structures could be built.

This cemetery began as a family burial ground upon the death of August Pillot, 21-year-old son of Claude and Jeanne, in September 1844. The Pillots also provided burial spaces to their friends and neighbors, but the Pillot family plot remains the focal point of the graveyard. The large monument in the center of the plot was manufactured in France and shipped to Cypress for transportation to the cemetery. Although Claude Pillot died in New Orleans after a business trip, Jeanne died at home in 1866 and is buried in the family plot.

Although there were a few burials over the next several decades, for the most part the graveyard was untended. In 1959, efforts began to re-establish the site as a community cemetery, and the last known burial took place in 1997. There are approximately 70 graves in the Pillot Cemetery, including three veterans of the Civil War. Through its burials and tombstones, the cemetery is an important reflection of the area's history.

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*Continue briefly on Holderrieth Road / R on S. Cherry /
Stop at 2nd driveway on the right / access is unavailable*

I-2 Brill-Mueller House

2503 S. Cherry – marker unavailable, behind locked gate, at end of long driveway

In 1873, German native Johannes Brill (1832-1909) immigrated to Texas with his wife, Anna Schafer, and their daughter, Emilie. They settled near friends in the German community of Big Cypress, later known as Klein. Brill farmed his land and helped organize what is now the Trinity Lutheran Church of Spring. He built this home, originally located eight miles from this site, for his family about 1880. The house later belonged to Friedrich and Emilie (Brill) Mueller and remained in the Brill-Mueller family until 1981. The history of this family home reflects the area's rich German heritage.

*Reverse on S. Cherry / L on Holderrieth / R on FM 2978 (aka Hufsmith-Kohrville Rd.) 1.0 m /
L on Bourdeaux 0.2 m / cross Grand Pkwy 99 go L onto feeder / R on Champion Forest Dr. 2.4 mi
(passing thru Glennloch Pines Golf Court and across the Spring-Cypress Road) / pass Forest Ridge and
Colony Forest streets / L onto Theiss Mail Route Road / Doerre Intermediate School is on L and marker
is on R*

K Kohrville Community 18218/ 18202 Theiss Mail Route Road, Klein

In the 1870s, former slaves from Alabama and Mississippi, who originally settled west of Houston, relocated to Cypress Creek near a store owned by German immigrants Agnes and Paulin Kohrman. The Kohrville community centered on the farming, ranching, and lumber industries. When area schools consolidated, Kohrville became part of Klein Independent School District and offered education for African American students. In the late 1940s, Klein ISD financed a new school for the community. An architect, probably Alfred C. Finn, designed the new schoolhouse, which was later moved

to the current site. The school district was desegregated in the 1960s. Kohrville and neighboring communities are now part of the ever-growing Houston suburbs. (2003)

Reverse direction back to Champion Forest Dr, turn R on Champion Forest / L on Spring-Cypress Road, go 2.7 mi / cross under Tx 249 / L onto feeder go 0.8 mi / R onto Gatesden go 0.1 mi

**L Kohrville
11000 Gatesden Dr**

Early settlers came to this part of Harris County from distant lands. French-born Eugene Pillot, his son Nick and son-in-law J.C. Sellers operated the Pillot and Sellers Sawmill on Pillot Gully in the 1860s, when the area was known as Pillotville. By 1870, Paul Kohrmann had arrived from Baden, Germany. The following year, he was naturalized, and in 1872 he married Agnes Othila Tautenhahn. Near this site, the Kohrmanns owned a general store, which also housed a post office from 1881 to 1911. Paul Kohrmann was the first postmaster, serving until his death in 1894, when Agnes was appointed postmistress. She served until 1911 when the post office closed. Agnes died in 1932, and both she and Paul are buried here in the Kohrmann Family Cemetery.

The general store and Kohrville post office served as the social center of a widely dispersed population. In the late 19th century, families arrived from Prussia, Denmark, Ireland and England, as well as several Southern states. African Americans also moved here from the Piney Point area west of Houston. The locale had multiple schools, churches, sawmills and a cotton gin in the early 20th century but remained sparsely populated until suburban growth occurred. All that remains today of the original historic Kohrville to remind us of the Kohrmann family and other early settlers and their contribution to the community is an area designated as Kohrmann Park, adjacent to the Kohrmann Family Cemetery. (2006)

END OF TOMBALL MARKERS TOUR

Thomas H. Ball, Jr.

Historical Marker is at Port of Houston.

Text: Son of the Rev. and Mrs. Thomas H. Ball, was born in Huntsville, Texas, on January 14, 1859. He graduated from Austin College in Huntsville in 1877. He married Minnie F. Thomason in 1882, and they became the parents of four children. Ball studied law in a Huntsville law office and in 1887, one year prior to his admittance to the Texas Bar, he was elected mayor of Huntsville. He served three terms. In 1896 Ball was elected to the U. S. Congress. During his four congressional terms he played a key role in gaining Federal authorization and funding for the building of the Houston Ship Channel. He returned to Houston in 1903 as the law partner of Frank Andrews. Ball provided many years of free legal counsel and lobbying on behalf of the Harris County Navigation District and earned local acclaim as the "Father of the Port."

The town of Tomball, established in north Harris County on the Trinity and Brazos Valley Railroad which Ball represented, was named for him. After a narrow defeat in the 1914 Texas Democratic Gubernatorial Primary, Ball practiced law in Houston and in 1923 was appointed counsel of the Harris County Navigation District. Ball died on May 7, 1944, and is buried in Houston's Forest Park Cemetery.