

The Bandera PROPHEET

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The new old Pipe Creek General Store

by Vicki L. George
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What was previously known as the Pipe Creek Junction Cafe now has a new name and a new purpose. Local resident Dr. Bruce G. Martin renamed the two main buildings the Pipe Creek General Store and Dance Hall, according to their original purposes. Like the Phoenix rising up out of its ashes, the old buildings at the corner of Hwy. 16 and FM 1283 have been lovingly restored and brought back to life.

The dance hall was built in 1930 as an addition to the original general store, which had been constructed in 1911. However, when Hwy. 16 was widened for paving, a new store building replaced the older structure in 1936.

Martin loves history and appreciates all older things. He bought the property in 2014 and has restored the two buildings to their 1930s condition. He said that more than 80 percent of the store and dance hall is original in materials and appearance.

Martin has been ably assisted by his manager Sandy Wenk. Wenk has been Martin's office and property manager for many years and she is the one who answers the phone and sets up appointments. She has also assisted Martin in this endeavor.

Martin said his goal was to preserve the local history and to continue to use the property as a community gathering place. It is intended to be a family friendly place, where children are welcome.

To that end, he has stabilized the foundations, upgraded the electricity, the plumbing, and the septic and water systems. He also remodeled the restrooms, ensuring they meet ADA requirements.

“The kitchen was not part of the building in the 30s,” Martin explained, “so we took it out. Any events held here now will have to be catered.” A buffet bar now stands where the kitchen was located.

Martin also added covered decking between the store and the dance hall so that people can move freely between the buildings without being exposed to the weather. That has also provided a deck in the front where patrons can sit outside.

He added ceiling fans and a bar in the dance hall and plans to get his license to sell wine and beer.

He remodeled the storage area behind the general store with a fireplace and a chandelier to give it the look and feel of an old lodge, complete with comfortable couches and chairs.

Martin also bought the little farmhouse behind the dance hall and has restored that as well. It, too, can be rented for very small special events. It has the 1930s look and a feminine feel to it.

Martin came from Iowa and moved to Texas over 35 years ago. He bought land in the Pipe Creek area in 1996 and built his home there. He is a quiet, soft spoken man who prefers to be called by his given name, Bruce. He currently works full time in San Antonio but has begun to cut back on his hours. His passion is restoring history and that is why he chose to gift Bandera County with this endeavor.

Martin said that his goal is to restore the whole three-acre property for the community to use and enjoy. In the meantime, he will use the general store and the dance hall as an event center for Bandera County residents. The Pipe Creek General Store and Dance Hall, located at 9878 Hwy. 16 South in Pipe Creek, will only be open on weekends and by appointment. To schedule a special event, call 210-912-7663 or email pipecreekdancehall@gmail.com.