

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Growing Up In Bandera

By Glenn Clark

The Bandera Prophet

Imagine you are standing on the corner of Eighth Street and Maple in the early 60s. Eighth Street is a dusty gravel seldom maintained city street. Maple at that location would best be described as a dirt trail with potholes where a big ditch coming out of the bamboo lot begins as it takes runoff water to the river. Maple pretty much disappears to the west at that point with no less than four dirt roads heading off in different directions toward the river.

The teens favorite hangout on the river was just below this intersection. The Swing was the place to swim for the older kids and some of us younger ones too except when the older guys were there doing flips and dives and unwilling to let us take turns.

The recently built Scout Hut was located nearby adjacent to the St. Joseph's Mustang football field where the Boys and Girls Club is located in our present day Bandera. The spectator bleachers built into the caliche bank are still there. The northwest corner of the old football field had a baseball diamond laid out with a big backstop made with tall utility poles and net fencing wire.

Any city map will show Maple Street extending west beyond this intersection but back in the day just like today in reality it doesn't exist. From this area everything going around the river loop was a huisache and mesquite covered flat with rough dirt roads cutting a path in several directions. It was a popular area for parking with your girl.

In between the roads that split just above Dripping Springs, one going along the river bank and the other across the flats, is where the mill race was still very visible. It was lined with huge native pecan trees that

produced more than enough nuts for the few squirrels living on the river at that time. Squirrel on the menu in some homes was not uncommon back then. As kids looking for some income we did our share of thrashing and bagging the remaining pecans to sell.

Along the millrace near the the Silver Spur bridge was the site of a big bbq pit and a screened-in shed where the St. Stanislaus Catholic Church Festival event meat was cooked in the early days of my Growing Up In Bandera. A majority of the land from Eighth Street around to the area of First and Pecan was owned by the Catholic Church. At some point it was donated to the city for development into a park. The discussions and controversy surrounding that decision rages on even today.

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