



CYPRESS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Girl Scout Troop Visits Cypress Top

by Michelle Christie

The Girl Scout Troop 110167 from Wells and McGown Elementary Schools in Cy-Fair ISD visited CHS on Friday, February 17th to learn a little history of the town they live in.

The troopers had the opportunity to learn that most of the settlers in the area came from Germany, arriving through the Galveston port. We discussed the day to day living of the era, which focused on the cattle dairy ranches and general ranching as a whole.

One of the most surprising facts they learned was that Cy-Fair High School had a full-blown live rodeo on Friday nights for the students to compete until the 1980's.

One of the goals for the group was to find an artifact on site that was over a 100 years old. They chose and loved the Rumpel family steamer trunk that was brought here from Berlin, Germany in the 1870's by Fredericka Rumpel, which was donated to CHS by Frank Litt.

The Troop also toured the park that included the Juergen store, the Hall, the House and the Humble Gas Station. They took notice of several antique items on the tour, like the antique wall phone, shopping carts, the antique cash register in the store, the musical instruments, the radio, and the leg power sewing machine in the house. They will return for a beginner genealogy workshop on April 8 at CHS.



The girls from Troop 110167 learn about local history at the Cypress Top Historic Park.



The Scouts take a seat at the Juergen bar!

CHS Scholarship 2022-23

by Becky Martin

The Cypress Historical Society looks to raise awareness of local history in the Cypress-Fairbanks community. To this end, CHS is proud to offer the annual Gene and Delphine Zaboroski Scholarship (up to \$1000) for the 2022-2023 school year.

The Scholarship may be awarded to a student interested history, Social Sciences, Library Science or Education. Eligibility requirements are as follows:

- GPA of good standing
- Cypress-Fairbanks area resident
- Volunteer work at CHS office/events or other Cypress-Fairbanks historical related activities
- Currently enrolled as a senior in the Cy-Fair ISD school; or
- Cy-Fair ISD graduate, currently attending a 4-year university or 2-year college

Applicants need to submit a completed Application, Official Transcript, two Letters of Recommendation, and a 500-word essay.

All information and forms may be found on our website www.cypresshistoricalsociety.com. Applications are due by April 14, 2023 and scholarship(s) will be awarded in May.

New 2023 Hours CHS Darline Roth Research Library

Tuesday 9am -4pm
Thursday 9am – Noon
Friday 9am - Noon

An Overview of the Life of J. H. G. Becker **Germany-Cypress-Hockley-Houston-Africa-Austin**

by Sonia Dupré Ph. D.

January 17, 2022 was the 100th anniversary of the death of Johann Heinrich Gustav Becker (b. 1859 - d. 1922) He was best known as J. H. G. Becker, or just Becker in his business affairs, or as *Gus* Becker around his circle of friends. Many of our readers may be familiar with the name of the Becker Road, in Hockley, Texas. The land for this road, which is located on the north and south side of Highway 290, was donated by his son Edward Roeder Becker. Some of you probably drive by or live around the area.

Several people have contributed to this research since its conception in 2020 when Fred Collins suggested the project, especially Jim Sigmund and Hunter Hamill. It is a pleasure to write for our readers this short biographical information about J. H. G. Becker and his life contributions.

Throughout his life, J. H. G. Becker pursued endeavors in farming, ranching, commercial, as well as in political activities to serve the communities of Harris County, Austin, Texas and Africa.

J. H. G., the first of seven children, was born in Sawade, near Gruenberg, Germany on July 2, 1859 to Christ and Pauline Becker. The family emigrated from Bremen, Germany and arrived in the United States in the Port of Baltimore, Maryland in 1875. Records indicate he went directly to live with Ernst Carl "Eduard" Roeder and his wife Emily Isenbiel, (who once was a lady in waiting for the Queen Victoria of England). They were a couple of immigrants who owned land that was part of the J. H. Callihan land grant, now known as Longwood Country Club-Golf Course in Cypress, northwest Harris County, Texas. A small private family cemetery is maintained there, and Becker is buried there.

We have not found records about the other members of his family settling in this area or whereabouts. On January 18, 1882, J. Gustav Becker married Emily Roeder, daughter of Edward Roeder in Houston, Texas. On November 18, 1889, Becker became a United States citizen.

During the early 1890s, J. H. G. Becker started participating in some political organizations in Houston. In January 2, 1891 he became Postmaster of Cypress Top, until April 17, 1893, when he was replaced by Ed Weygand Jr. Becker operated a store in Cypress Top (currently Cypress Top Historic Park) which was also a voting place and the annual tour site for Harris County collecting taxes. He owned the property where the Juergen House sits today. In 1893, Becker also became Deputy Sheriff in Harris County.

In April, 1894, Becker became Postmaster commissioned, in Hockley, Texas. He owned several properties in Cypress Top and Hockley. In August, 1894 Becker put his Cypress land up for sale and purchased a house and a tavern in Hockley, properties that burned down with an estimated loss of \$25,000. Two months later, in October 20, 1894, he built the famous "Becker House" Hotel, which was a two-story



Johann Heinrich Gustav (J.H.G.) Becker
(Photo Courtesy of Tracy Thronburg)



The "Becker House" Hotel in Hockley, Texas circa 1907

building with a café, sleeping accommodations, a saloon and a store. As celebration for the new opening, a "big ball" was given with some well known Houstonians attending.

"The Becker House goes back to the colorful days of the big cattle drives from the coastal areas of Texas to Kansas City. It was inherited by his son Edward Roeder Becker and "it was a focal point or famous spot where the cowboys gathered forces and stopped for a night's refreshment and rest". Edward himself sometimes joined on cattle drives.

J.H.G. Becker was a dealer in general merchandise in Hockley and his store supplies reached many of the residents and farmers in the surrounding area (Cypress, Hockley, and Waller). The store and saloon were closed (continued)

(continued) around 1920 and it was only used sometimes for some court house meetings until it was demolished around 1940.

He was appointed to many committees and attended conventions with the County Judges and Commissioners. He was elected commissioner in 1896 in Hockley Precinct 4, Harris County and reelected for six years until 1902, replaced by Theo Zube. As Harris County Commissioner, Becker worked in many case courts, in addition to overseeing, inspecting and grading many roads in Washington, Cypress, Rose Hill, and Harrisburg. He campaigned to support the ship channel. In August, 1902, Becker accepted a position in the Magnolia Brewery in Houston. During this period Becker acquired properties in various areas of Harris County.

A year later, in September 12, 1903 Becker signed a contract with the German government to go to Dar-El Salaam, in German East Africa (now Tanzania) as a cotton growing consultant with duties to teach the natives the art of raising, planting and gathering cotton. Becker was granted the U. S. passport in September 23, 1903 and traveled to New York in October with Mr. H. J. Kellner, another consultant, and from there to go to Africa. The latter person was attacked by fever and died in Africa. Becker remained in the mission for two years, returned from Africa in October, 1905, and then lived in Hockley. He was the owner of a hotel and he was active in the land and cattle business.

J. H. G. Becker collected African specimens of horns and other artifacts and brought them home. They were beautifully mounted and exhibited at Mr. Edward Malavansos' business in Houston. His artifacts collection was considered one of the rarest at that time, and said it was not for sale.

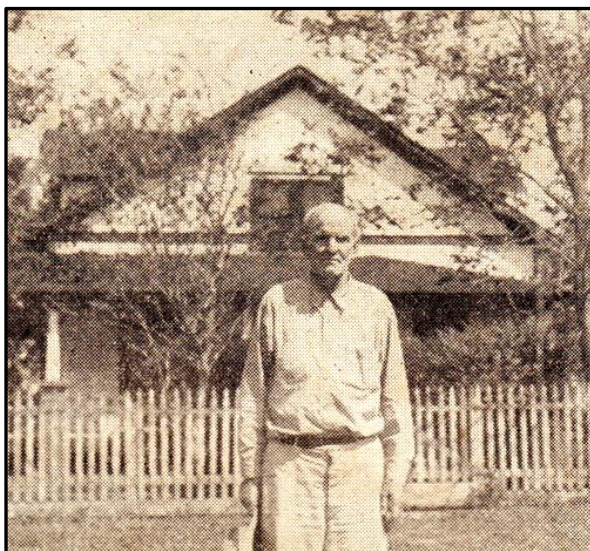
Around 1907, Becker met William E. Hamilton, a railroad Depot agent and his family in Hockley. They had some real estate business and were neighbors and friends. Unfortunately, in 1915 the two men begin to have personal problems due to some talk about Becker's daughter having a close friendship with Wm. Hamilton. Becker and one of his sons suffered attacks from Hamilton and in one occasion Becker had to go to the infirmary in Houston. The conflict continued for months and in September 22, 1915, Becker killed William Hamilton in downtown Houston, outside of the Tremont Hotel, a place that was well known at that time and favored by many Cypress and Hockley families. The trial was widely covered in the newspapers and after two years, in 1917, Becker was exonerated of the murder charge, due to his plea of self defense.

Becker moved to Austin and opened a cedar lumber company. His wife and children stayed in Hockley. He died five years later on January 17, 1922 in Austin of a heart attack. His son, Oscar Becker, took care of the cedar business. His son, Edward Roeder Becker, inherited the Becker House, saloon and hotel. His son, Edward R. Becker, donated the land where the Becker road was designated.

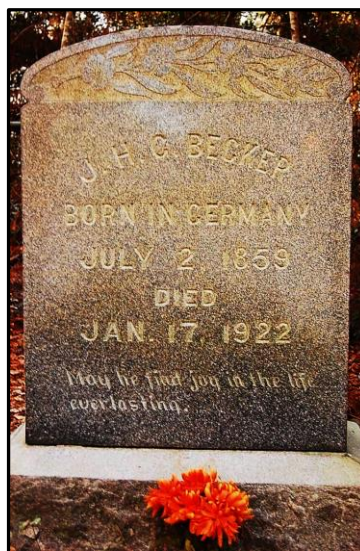
If you would like to know more about J.H.G. Becker, we have more details in newspaper articles and genealogy documents. If you have information to contribute about J.H.G. or Edward Becker, let us know.

Houston Chronicle: October 28, 1906

Specimens of horns probably never seen before in Houston have been mounted in the saloon of Malavansos at the corner of Travis and Congress avenue. The horns were brought direct from Africa by J. H. G. Becker, who went to South Africa as special cotton inspector for the German government. Among the rare horns shown are those of an African buffalo, Congo buffalo, African koodoo, which is a kind of antelope, a double horn from a rhinoceros, and about 75 other specimens of African antelopes.



Edward Becker, circa 1948, in front of his home on the east side of Becker Rd, just north of 290.



The grave of J.H.G. Becker in the Roeder-Becker Cemetery

Mark Your Calendars!

Note: For 2023, The CHS Board of Directors meetings will be held on the first Friday of each month at 1:00pm.

Apr 7 – CHS Board Mtg

(All Members welcome)
Friday, 1:00pm, CHS Library
Cypress Top Historic Park

May 5 – CHS Board Mtg

(All Members welcome)
Friday, 1:00pm, CHS Library
Cypress Top Historic Park

Passenger Lists by Jim Sigmund

One of the most interesting genealogy records are Passenger Lists for emigrants who travel by ship to the United States. Lists of the passengers were generated at the port of departure, and then again at the arrival port. Unfortunately, these lists were often lost, especially in smaller ports where hurricanes and fire have taken their toll. But if you can find these records for your ancestor, they are usually the best clue to the town or village they came from.

One of the most significant Passenger Lists for residents of northwest Harris County is also one of the oldest we have. The ship "Colchis" sailed from Antwerp to Galveston over a two month period. On this ship were several families that settled near each other along Spring Creek, along what is now FM 2920 in Hockley and Rosehill. Conrad Kleb and Otto Hegar, the patriarchs of the large Kleb and Hegar families, were on this ship, as well as Johann Helfrich who settled just west of the Klebs, and started the

first Catholic community in the area. Ernst Weygand's son, Edward, (and then grandson Ed Jr.), owned the land of the Cypress Top Park in the late 1890's. Otilie Weygand was the first wife of E.F. Juergen. Ludwig Gleissner's son, August, lived on the ranch of Ransome House in 1850, and became the first Postmaster of "Houseville" (which later became the town of Hockley in 1857).

Ship "Colchis" from Antwerp to Galveston, Arriving October 30, 1846

Eingekommen am 28. bis 31. August 1846

Datum	Name	From Where Woher	Name of Ship Name des Schiffs	eingezahlte Summa in Gulden (fl.)	ausl. L. dor. P. dor.	holl. fl. 10 St.
1846 August 28	Transport		Colchis	5834 57		
49-33	Frans Groch	Offenburg	Colchis	626 -		
10	10 Personen					
9	Adam Gehrig	Forth		563 24		
9	9 Personen					
1	Johann Helfrich		Johann Helfrich	62 36		
29	Matthias Willmann	Heilbrunn		625 24		63
9	8 Personen + 1 Knecht					
	Ludwig Thiel Gleissner	Arsenal	Ludwig Gleissner	1866 -		88
-10	10 Personen					
	Ernst Müller	Louisenthal		191 12		11
-2	2 Personen			62 36		
1	Christine Knack	Darmstadt		62 36		
1	Otto Hegar		Otto Hegar	23 24		
9	E. H. Weygand	Berfelden	Ernst Weygand			
9	9 Personen					
8	Conrad Kleb	Mehrdorf	Conrad Kleb	472 88		16

Passenger List from the ship "Colchis" leaving Antwerp September 1, 1846, arriving in Galveston on October 30, 1846.



Cypress Historical Society

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Darline Roth Research Library: 281-758-0083

Tues 9am-4pm, Thur & Fri 9am-Noon

www.cypresshistoricalsociety.com



CYPRESS HISTORICAL SOCIETY - 2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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FRIED RABBIT

Clean and disjoint rabbit, cover it with water to which has been added 2 tablespoons of vinegar and let stand over night. Put a large lump of CRUSTENE the size of an egg into an iron pot or spider, squeeze the rabbit out of the water and drop it into the pot, cover closely and season with salt and pepper as it cooks; when it begins to fry, turn the pieces until all are nicely browned; thicken the gravy and serve.

A box-top recipe, saved with other "important" papers by Fredericka Rumble, probably in the 1930s. I had to look up "Crustene" and what a "spider" pot was!

Use Crustene For The Best Fried Rabbit!

by Jim Sigmund

In the last newsletter, we showed you an old steamer trunk, donated by Frank Litt, that was brought over from Berlin by Fredericka Rumble in the 1880's. Frank also gave us the old papers that were found in the trunk. Among the old documents and vintage photos was a carefully clipped box top with a recipe for Fried Rabbit! I had to smile at this, because it reminded me of my mother's papers . . . between all the important things she saved, there was always hand scribbled recipes, or something clipped from the side of cereal box!

I like that the subject was Fried Rabbit, since Easter was coming soon, but I was stumped by the mention of "Crustene". I found out that Crustene was a shortening made by the South Texas Cotton Oil Company of Houston, Texas. I found it in newspaper ads as early as 1918, and was sold through the late-1930s or early 1940s. It was sold in a cardboard wrap, like stick butter today, and also in a large can that was opened with a metal key. Another person on the internet refers to a recipe clipped from a Crustene box!



Crustene was sold in a can; and also a box in Houston's Nowells grocery in 1931.

THANKS TO OUR JAN-MAR BENEFACTORS!

Donations:

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Gudrun Sundquist
Glyn Willborg

Scholarship Fund:

Don & Deborah Clanton
Dan & Becky Martin

Library News

by Jim Sigmund

- Mark Froehlich has provided CHS with some important documents to scan. The deeds and abstracts are from the Kleb family, and tracts of land in the FM2920-Mueschke Rd. area, along Spring Creek. The information in the abstracts has provided important insight into the earliest settlement in that area.
- If you haven't already done so, it's time to renew your membership for 2023. Our memberships run for the calendar year. New members who join after our October Event are credited through the next year. Check your mailing label - If the date next to your name is 12/31/2022, then it is time to renew. If it has a later date, or "Lifetime", then you are already a member for 2023!
- The CHS Library is missing a few years from our Cy-Fair High School yearbook collection. If you have any of the following years that you can donate, we would love to have them: 1954, 1960, 1961, 1972 through 1981, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1992, 1999 & 2018.

Cypress Historical Society
P.O. Box 2963
Cypress, Texas 77410

CYPRESS HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2023 MEMBERSHIP FORM

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Make check to: Cypress Historical Society

Mail to: CHS Membership, P.O. Box 2963, Cypress, TX 77410

Questions? Please contact us at 281-758-0083 (Library)
www.cypresshistoricalsociety.com

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