

INTRODUCTION

This information about the history of Hedwig Village was written in the later part of 2013 and the early part of 2014. Further research was done in 2016, finishing up in the first part of the year. This research concentrates primarily on the early part of the history of Hedwig. Please keep in mind, even though the Memorial Villages which consist of Hillshire and Spring Valley (North of I-10), Piney Point, Hedwig, Hunters Creek and Bunker Hill (South of I-10) are all separate, they are indirectly tied together through their past history and many of the same shared services (school, water, fire, etc.) To get sources of information, the author reviewed city minutes, and spoke with long time residents. Research was also done at the University of Houston (Special Collections) and the General Land Office. There were many things about the city that could not be documented, so they are in a special section (Please see rumor has it)

The author would like to Thank the following people for their help; Former Mayor Sue Speck, current Mayor Brian Muecke and Hedwig Village employees Beth Staton, Lane Standley, Roxanne Benitez and Monica Lopez. Mike Montgomery, head of the Memorial Villages Water Authority. Bryan Kratish, head librarian at the Spring Branch-Memorial Library. Terry Vick, Robert Ackerman, Dorothy Sumner, Audrey and Elizabeth Weedn, Marguerite Holm, all long time Memorial Village residents who were thoughtful enough to take their time and speak to me about the early days of Hedwig. I would also like to thank Mr. Kevin Klaus of the Texas General Land Office and Mr. Stephen James of the Special Collections Department at the University of Houston library. Both of those gentlemen took tremendous time and effort to supply me with a lot of maps and information. Mr. Mike Mathis of Prejean & Company, Inc. a surveying & mapping company, who gave me some very good help with some website information. I would also like to thank the authors of "The Road to Piney Point" and Marks Hinton the author of the book, "The Stories Behind the Names," also "Spring Branch" by George Slaughter. I would also like to Thank the many others who helped contribute to this project. The author (Mr. Tom Roth) takes responsibility for any errors.

If anyone would like to make a contribution to this history, please feel free to contact the author. We could really use old maps and any other documents, magazines, newspapers, etc. would be very helpful and greatly appreciated.

Author: Tom Roth (Troth@airmail.net, phone (713) 984-8698, (713) 857-1451 (C).

Hedwig Village

In the early 1950's a group of citizens living on the West side of Houston, concerned about the lack of zoning and possible annexation by Houston, gathered to incorporate their own cities. There was an election held on December 18, 1954 with a total of 74 votes cast; 57 for Incorporation, 17 against. The results of the election and the plat of Hedwig Village was entered into the minutes of the Harris County Commissioners Court and Hedwig Village was incorporated on December 23, 1954.

Hedwig Village derived from land grants given to Mr. John Taylor, Mr. Isaac Bunker and Mr. A.H. Osbourne. It is about 10 miles West of downtown Houston. Hedwig Village boundaries are I-10 to the North, Bunker Hill to the West, Taylorcrest and Beinhorn to the South, Piney Point and Voss Rd to the East. The total area is .9 of a square mile, the population is approx. 2550. It is surrounded by the other Memorial Villages: Spring Valley and Hilshire Village (North of I-10) Hunters Creek, Piney Point and Bunker Hill (all South of I-10).

Hedwig Village is named for Hedwig Vankowski (later married name was Schroeder). Her family came here from Germany in 1906 when she was 19 years old. She came here to join her sister who had a hotel/saloon at Preston and Franklin in downtown Houston. This is where she met her husband, Henry, who was 44 years her senior. Henry was the son of one of the original settlers in the area, Jacob Schroeder. She donated the land for Hedwig Road, and Hedwig Park is named after her.

Many of the early settlers were from Germany; some of the streets are named after them. (Bauer, LouAl, Witte, Sauer, Hedwig, Reidel, are a few). They were farmers and some raised livestock. Since the area was heavily wooded, there were also sawmills and lumberyards in the area.

Memorial Drive was a narrow road that followed the borders of the farms that lined the road, it was nicknamed "the road to nowhere." Highway 90 (also known as Katy Rd.) was there before Interstate 10. Piney Point Road had been put in around the 1900 to 1905 time frame, first as a dirt road, then oyster shell. It was originally called Jeannetta, then Hillendahl- Piney Point before being called Piney Point. There were some small businesses that lined the stretch where Interstate 10, Campbell and Voss Road currently exist. Up until the mid to late 30's, many people would get around by horseback due to the lack of paved roads. On Echo Lane, across the street from the present location of Memorial High School, there was a chicken farm where the owner sold eggs. People would ride their horses on Piney Point Road to Taylorcrest and over to where Memorial City mall is now located and stop to pick berries. Rumor has it that there was an illegal still on part of the site where the mall now stands. When the original people who founded the villages met in the early 50's, the main roads that provide the current boundaries of the Villages already existed.

Over the years, the area continued to grow. When Voss Road was paved with asphalt, many in the area wondered "Why did they make this nice street in the middle of nowhere?" At the time it was paved with asphalt, Voss Road was one lane Northbound and one lane Southbound, it stayed that way until it was widened in the 80's. One of the early residents who had moved from the Heights to Hedwig Village in the early 50's, told her former neighbors that she could see cows and bulls grazing on the land that is now in the area of Beinhorn & Hedwig road. In the early 1950's Prudential Insurance relocated from New Jersey to Houston. Some of the transfers settled in the Memorial Villages, and the area kept its growth due to the influence of the energy industry in Houston. Over the years the Villages have kept their appeal of living in a small city with its own school district, police, fire and other city services, surrounded by a major city.

SPRING BRANCH SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Spring Branch School District began in 1856 with the Spring Branch School Society sponsored by St. Peter's Church. In 1900 there were 50 students in the white school and twenty students in the local black school. In the early 1900's there was a school house at the corner of Campbell and Long Point. Until the 1948/49 school year, Spring Branch School District had only nine grades, requiring the students to transfer to Addicks, Lamar or Cypress Fairbanks, where they had the nickname of "the country kids from Voss Road". In early 1952/53 the high school was opened until it closed in 1985. The school district had 440 students in 1942 and 14000 by 1960. Memorial High school was opened in the early 1960's to relieve overcrowding at the Spring Branch high school.

LIBRARY

The Spring Branch-Memorial Library was first housed in an empty classroom at St. Francis Episcopal Church on Piney Point and was open nine hours a week. In 1959 the library moved to a small cottage which was located where the Edith Spang Reading Garden is now. The garden, which is behind the current library building, is named for Mrs. Spang who was the first person in charge at the new location. She served for many years, and during that time the library continued to expand its collection and patron base.

In 1975 a new library was constructed at a cost of \$358,000. The project was supported by the County Commissioners, City Council and Hedwig residents. In 1963 The Friends of the Spring Branch-Memorial Library was founded to advocate for the library. The group conducts the Annual Book and Plant Festival to raise money to defray costs of the library programs and services, especially children's programs and acquisitions. Members of the Friends also raise awareness of the library in the community, sort books donated by patrons and maintain used book carts in the lobby. Members volunteer at a library booth during the annual 4th of July Village Celebration, care for the plants on the library campus, and help with patron counts.

The Spring Branch-Memorial library is part of the greater Harris County Public Library System. The Harris County Public Library (HCPL) consists of 26 branches covering the greater Harris County area. The Spring Branch-Memorial library is currently open 47 hours a week, has 24,000 registered patrons and has 80,000 physical items in its collection. The eMedia collection consists of multiple databases including Overdrive, which contains 37,993 titles and Hoopla, which contains 378,937 titles. There are five story times a week for babies, toddlers and preschoolers, one weekly after school program for children and one for teens. The library also offers a monthly Evening Pajama Storytime and a monthly Saturday Family Storytime. Spring Branch offers a Summer Reading Program for all ages. Patrons especially love requesting items online from the other 25 Harris County Public Libraries and having the items delivered to their local library. The online website, www.hcpl.net, also offers eBooks, eAudio, Music and more to download.

There have been many librarians whose professional knowledge and skill directed and developed the Spring Branch-Memorial Library over the years, but Maria Madrid has served more than twice as long as any of the others. Her dedication has shaped the library of today.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Before the city was incorporated the Harris County Sheriff took care of the policing. The city appointed Fred Peisker and F.D Arthur as co Marshals at the initial citizen's meeting in 1954. They were replaced by Mr. O. T. Sutton in April of 1956. At that time, there was one paid officer, Tom Pickens, and the

department was located in a wooden shack at Katy and Campbell Rd. The evening patrols were done by volunteers in their own cars and on their own time. In January of 1957 one of the city councilmen introduced Mr. W.C. Barnett, owner of the Northwest County Patrol. It was agreed that Mr. Barnett would patrol the streets of Hedwig Village with himself and his men being appointed Deputy Marshals to work in conjunction with the Marshal's Office. In April of 1957 Mayor Stagner stated that Hedwig had been invited by the other Memorial Villages to join a co-operative policing arrangement. At that time, the mayor appointed a committee to look into the situation. In June 1957 Mr. O.T. Sutton (the Marshal) stated that Hedwig participate in the co-operative policing only for Mr. McCormicks services during the day and each village patrol with their own Marshal and deputies during 7:00 to 12:00 PM. During the September, 1957 City Council meeting, the Council approved 9 people appointed as Deputy Marshals by Marshal O.T. Sutton.

In February of 1958, the Council voted to abolish the office of Marshal and appoint a Chief of Police. In April of 1958 O.T. Sutton was appointed Commissioner of Police, to supervise the Chief of Police, James McKnight, and the Police Department. At that same meeting, there were 15 men approved as volunteer patrolmen for the Police Department. In the June, 1958 Council meeting Police Chief McKnight gave a summary of the department's work: In April, 910 man hours worked, 45 traffic arrests, 12 juveniles handled, no traffic accidents. In May, 960 man hours worked, 125 traffic arrests, 16 juveniles handled, 1 traffic accident, 38 warning tickets, 1 warrant served, 15 complaints handled.

By early 1959 the city had a paid police department, although it was very small and volunteer deputies still patrolled in the evening. In the city council meetings of April and May 1959, a there was a lot of discussion concerning the consolidation of the Hedwig police department with the other Memorial Village police departments.

In March 1960 city council discussed moving the police department headquarters in with the fire department, this was done later.

In October 1963, city council passed a resolution that the Police Department facilities be separated from the Fire Department facilities.

In January of 1964, city council approved the purchase of the land and the construction of the new police building at the present location of Clifford & Gaylord. The size of the land is .67 of an acre and the price was \$33,600.

The proposed operating budget for the Police Department for the year of 1967 is approx. \$109,000 with the Hedwig share being \$18,403.

The 1968 Budget for the police department was \$159,000 with the Hedwig share being 27,062.

The 1976 budget for the police department was \$461,170 with the Hedwig share being \$104,271.

In September, 1976 there was quite a bit of discussion in city council and with some residents participating in regards to Hedwig having its own police department. A lot of this was due to the villages all having different ideas how the funding for the police department should be should be done and allocated.

In October, 1976 the City council authorized the mayor to sign the revised Dissolution Agreement and that it be sent to Piney Point, Hunter's Creek and Bunker Hill that the agreement be returned no later than November 1.

In November, 1976 the other three villages have placed a total value of \$176,000 for the land and building and the cost to Hedwig to buy out the other three villages would be \$127,950. The other three cities will transfer a warranty deed to Hedwig on January 10, 1977 for the building and land.

In December, 1976 after authorization from city council, Mayor Marx signed a dissolution agreement, warranty deed and earnest money contract and agreement of lease for the property at 9000 Gaylord.

In January, 1977 the Hedwig had its own police force with Jimmy Jones as the first chief.

In 1985 the city council approved the maximum strength of the police force to be at 16 officers.