



PEOPLE HAVE GATHERED AT THIS PLACE WHERE JACKS CREEK ENTERS THE NAVASOTA RIVER FOR OVER 8,000 YEARS. EVIDENCE IN THE PARK SUGGESTS THAT THE EARLIEST CAMPERS WERE NOMADIC HUNTER-GATHERERS DURING THE ARCHAIC PERIOD FROM 6000 TO 200 B.C. BUT THIS SITE IS MOST NOTABLE FOR ITS USE BY THE CONFEDERATE VETERANS OF LIMESTONE COUNTY FOR THEIR ANNUAL REUNIONS FROM 1888 THROUGH 1946. FAMILIES CAMPED UNDER THE GIANT BUR OAKS, ENJOYING SPEECHES, DANCES, FELLOWSHIP AND FOOD WHILE REMEMBERING THEIR COMRADES WHO FOUGHT IN THE CIVIL WAR.



The dance pavilion built in 1893 became the social center of the reunion grounds.

By the 1930s as the number of Confederate veterans dwindled, the reunions became smaller and less elaborate. Finally, in 1946 the charter of Camp 94 expired and the grounds fell into disuse. In the 1960s community members began restoring the grounds and in 1984 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department acquired the land and began a program of restoration that continues today.

The park remains a gathering place for family reunions and group activities. The Confederate Reunion Grounds State Park Historical Society hosts events each year that promote an awareness of the reunions grounds.

For information on membership and upcoming events go to www.confederatereuniongrounds.org.

Visit one of these area museums to learn more about the Civil War in Texas:

The Pearce Civil War Museum at Navarro College, Corsicana, TX

The Texas Heritage Museum and Confederate Research Center at Hill College, Hillsboro, TX

Confederate Reunion Grounds State Historic Site
c/o Fort Parker State Park
194 Park Road 28, Mexia, Texas 76667
(254) 562-5751
www.tpwd.state.tx.us/confederatereuniongrounds/



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Interpretive Guide to:

CONFEDERATE REUNION GROUNDS

STATE HISTORIC SITE



SOUTHERN SYMPATHIES

Southern landowners settling in the Navasota River valley brought the culture of cotton and slavery to Limestone County. In 1861 they overwhelmingly voted for secession. Although no battles were ever fought in Central Texas, three out of every four free men in Limestone County served in the Confederate army. After the war ended in 1865, the emancipation of black slaves, the collapse of the old plantation farming system, and the imposition of martial law kept the county in turmoil for years.



THE REUNION MOVEMENT

Beginning in the 1880s veterans North and South alike wished to celebrate the kinship and memory of their war experiences and sacrifices. Reunions captured the emotions and imaginations of many Southerners. Earlier small groups of Limestone County Confederate veterans met informally to socialize and reminisce. In 1888 they began meeting annually in this spot along Jacks Creek. The next year they organized the Joseph E. Johnston Camp of the United Confederate Veterans, named for the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of Tennessee. The chapter became the 94th affiliate of the rapidly expanding UCV.

"The object shall be to perpetuate the memories of our fallen comrades, to administer to the wants of those who were permanently disabled in the service, and to aid the indigent widows and orphans of deceased Confederate soldiers, to preserve and maintain that sentiment of fraternity born of the hardships and dangers shared in the march, bivouac and the battlefield."

—from the Constitution of Camp 94 UCV

As many as 7,000 people attended the annual reunions held in late July or early August under a full moon. They arrived by horse, buggy and special trains from Dallas and Houston. The Camp financed the purchase of the reunion grounds by selling camping lots to the veterans and their families. Families built summer cottages or camped in tents or brush arbors, planting crepe myrtle and irises that still bloom each spring.

Each day at dawn and dusk the gray-haired veterans proudly fired "Old Valverde," one of the Federal cannons captured by Confederates in the battle at Mansfield, Louisiana. These guns saw action for the Confederates in the Louisiana campaigns with the Valverde Battery. At the end of the war Captain T.D. Nettles buried the two cannons under a buggy house in nearby Fairfield rather than surrender them to Union troops. Today "Old Valverde" is on display beneath the flagpoles at the center of the park near the intersection of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson Avenues.

During the reunions veterans eulogized those soldiers who, in the words of General Stonewall Jackson, had "cross[ed] over the river and [now] rest under the trees." The gatherings also included parades, brass band concerts, patriotic speakers, games and traditional southern foods. Attendees danced the nights away on the wooden floor of the pavilion, now recognized by the National Register of Historic Places for its unusual architecture. By the end of World War I time was taking a noticeable toll on the aging veterans. The gatherings continued, but on a smaller scale.



The Old Valverde cannon summoned the veterans to daily activities during the reunions.

THE GREAT MEXIA OIL BOOM



In the 1920s the Bathhouse at Jacks Creek was a popular local gathering place.

In November 1920 wildcatter Albert E. Humphreys struck oil in Limestone County. Everything changed: the county population exploded and Mexia became a boomtown at the center of one of the largest oil fields in the world. The entrepreneurial Humphreys contracted with the Joseph E. Johnston Camp for water and built a pump house on Jacks Creek to supply his wells.

Affectionately known as "The Colonel," Humphreys was a devotee of Confederate history and offered to improve the reunion grounds. He built the Pure Oil Company clubhouse and a large bathhouse on the creek. Miss Mamie Kennedy, one of the last officers of Camp 94, hosted special, lavish parties for "The Colonel" during those oil boom days. She designed and landscaped gardens leading to the "Colonel's Spring," which became known as the "flirtation walk." Eventually the membership of Camp 94 named Colonel Humphreys an honorary member in recognition of his generosity in preserving and beautifying the reunion grounds.