

A Brief History of Paradise Valley & Paradise Hills

In 1847, Mr. William "Billy" Leath came to this valley from Tennessee. He purchased several hundred acres of land along the Blanco River and returned to Tennessee to marry Mary Ann Davis in 1849. In the fall of 1850 they returned to Texas and built a home of rock, logs, and native timber on the land now known as Paradise Valley. Their home burned in 1918, however, the rocks walls and fireplace still stand and form a portion of the north and east sides of a rebuilt home.

The Leaths farmed, ranched, and raised a family of four daughters and one son. After the death of his wife, Mary Ann, William began courting Margaret Elizabeth Hill. Margaret, a brother and half-brother had come to Texas from Arkansas. John Hill did not approve of his 19-year old half-sister marrying the 40-year old man who had daughters nearly as old as she was. However, in spite of her family's objections, Margaret rode horseback behind William to San Marcos and they married on July 4, 1867. To them were born four daughters and three sons.

The Leath family and descendants occupied the ranch continually. Today, a large portion of the original ranch, between RR12 and Leath Creek, is known as Leath Hollow. The Wimberley Hills subdivision was once a portion of the Leath Ranch. Preferring spring water to river water for drinking, Mr. Ed Leath used a sled drawn by horse or mule to transport barrels of water from a nearby spring to his home. In 1944, a portion of the ranch was sold to Jack and Ruby Cowan who in turn sold to Carl Brinkley in 1960. The valley portion of the land, along the Blanco River, became Mr. Brinkley's dream development, Paradise Valley. He invited his friends and attracted visitors to come to Wimberley and build homes along the river.

One day, during the time Mr. Brinkley was considering developing the hills, I was privileged to be driven to the top of the highest hill on the ranch by Mr. Brinkley in his pick-up truck. There were no roads, and it was a scary ride winding

hither and yon through bramble and stony ledges that climbed along deer and goat trails. Upon reaching the topmost portion with its breathtaking views, Mr. Brinkley stepped from his truck, picked something from the ground and handed it to me. It was fossilized oyster shell from the ancient sea that once covered Texas. That was the first time I had been to the top of Old Eagle Cave Mountain, as it was called during the days of my parents' childhood when the youth of Wimberley climbed to the summit for Sunday afternoon picnics. On that day, atop the beautiful hill, in my wildest imagination I did not dream that in twenty years, I would build a home on that site.

When Mr. Brinkley began the development of the two mountains, he fittingly named them Paradise Hills. He built a sturdy bridge over Leath Creek at Leath Hollow and designed a winding road to the top of the mountains. Mr. Chester Franklin built the first roads. Later John E. Harris, Jr. widened the roads. This brought the roads to county specifications for acceptance and maintenance thereafter by the county. During the roadwork, a sign beside the road read, "Please Excuse our Dust".

Mr. Carl Brinkley would be pleased that the residents of Paradise Hills cared enough to erect a magnificent marker honoring his dream. He would be proud that his three daughters and many Brinkley descendants live in Wimberley. And, he would marvel at the "Golden Pond".

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