

Springs rooted in Lampasas history

BY JOY PARIANTE
Sentinel Leisure Editor

LAMPASAS – This year is the 38th year of Spring Ho festivities. Spring Ho is an annual celebration, originally founded as a way to honor the water source that brought people to Lampasas in search of its healing sulfur springs.

The first settlers in the area found Native Americans using the springs as the focal point of their communities in the 1850s. These settlers decided to build their town in the same area as the springs were considered to be healing. The waters were thought to provide cures for ailments such as skin disorders, asthma, rheumatism and general aches and pains.

“These sulfur springs are what brought people here,” explained resident Sheila Martinez. “People thought you could sit in the springs and be healed.”

Soon railroads came to Lampasas and many cattle drives went through the area. The Santa Fe railroad built the Park Hotel near the springs in 1885 and it capitalized on people’s desire for wellness. The hotel featured bath houses and a boardwalk to the springs. People came from all over the country to bathe in the healing waters.

According to long-time resident Gary Martin, Lampasas in the 1800s was known as the “Saratoga of the South,” after a city in upstate New York known for its healing carbonated mineral waters. “The railroad brought thousands of tourists here for the spring water treatments,”

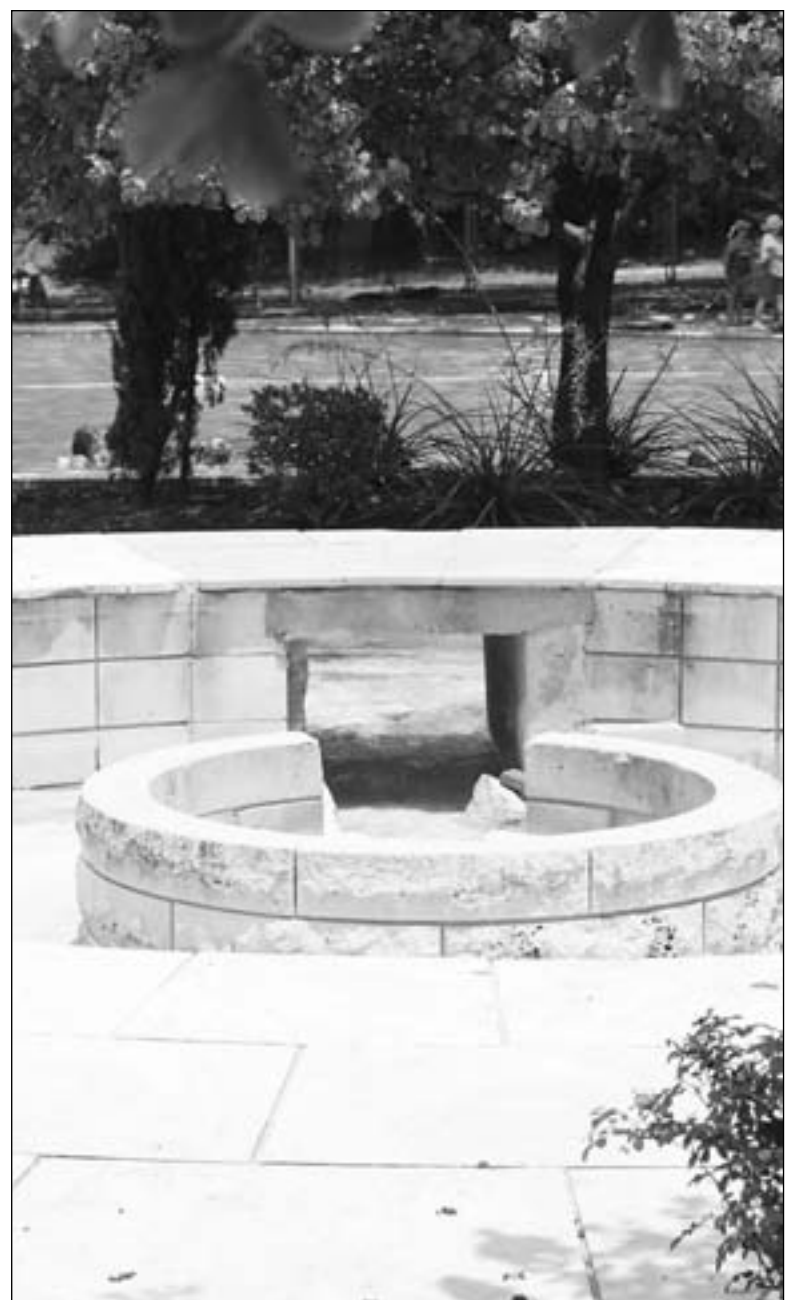
Martin said.

Today, the main spring is known as Hancock Spring and its healing waters still benefit Central Texas residents. Visitors can view one of the original bathing houses and, just a few feet away, they can experience the sulfur waters. A large man-made pool is filled with water from the springs at a rate of 70 gallons per second and is open to the public. Other local waterways include Sulphur Creek, Hanna Springs, Cooper Springs and other smaller springs. Despite the residents’ affection for the springs, a flood in 1957 destroyed a large part of the town and almost ruined their downtown business district. Residents simply cleaned up the mess, rebuilt and nearly two decades later they would dedicate Lampasas’ biggest event to the water which nearly wiped out their hometown.

The annual Spring Ho festival in Lampasas is dedicated to the important role played by water in the founding of the town. “Ho” is the wagon trail term for stop and the festival’s name means “Stop for the springs,” Martin said. The festival is a big event which draws thousands of visitors to Lampasas every year.



The sulphur water sources in Lampasas made bath houses like this one a popular draw for people from across the country looking to improve their health.



Photos by Joy Pariente, Sentinel Leisure Editor

A natural sulphur spring feeds this man-made pool in downtown Lampasas. The springs were originally coveted for their supposed healing properties.

MORE LAMPASAS

For more Spring Ho coverage, see page C8.



Photos by Pfc. Sharmain Burch, 14th PAD

(Left) Yahaira Padilla spends a moment at the swings on Organizational Day with her toddler daughter June 23.

44th AMD strengthens family bonds during Organizational Day activities

BY PFC. SHARMAIN BURCH
14th PAD

Air defense and gunnery training has been the primary focus for the 1st Battalion, 44th Air Missile Defense Regiment, 69th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, for the past year and a half, as they train to be ready to deploy.

While that focus remains for the “Patriot Avenger” Battalion, they took time out for some family fun to enhance unit morale and esprit de corps. Nearly 900 Soldiers and their families met at Belton Lake Outdoor Recreational Area for the battalion’s 2nd annual Organizational Day June 23.

“It’s not just about the unit, it’s about the families, as well,” Capt. Walter Hill, the training officer for the battalion, said. “They support their Soldier and we support them.”

The vision of the battalion’s command team, according to Lt. Col. Brian Gibson, Command Sgt. Maj. Jerry Faulk and Sgt. Maj. Isaac Gipson, was to show how important it is for Soldiers and their loved ones to know they are all one family. Staff Sgt. Jermaine A. Martin and Hill made the command vision a reality, as they planned the event over two months.

“This is not just their husbands’ or their wives’ place of duty, this is our family together,” Hill said.

“There will come a day where we all will have to fight together, and so if we become a family now, when we go overseas we will still be a family,” Walter added.

The 1-44 AMD family spent the day with friendly competitions, including basketball, volleyball and a commanders against sergeants relay event. Another highlight of the day was the tug-of-war event, in which each battery wanted to show its strength.

“We’re going to win every tug they have,” said 1st Sgt. Bradford L. Wilson Jr., with Btry. C, 1-44 AMD.

The families were thankful to have time to spend with the Soldiers and to be given the opportunity to meet other family members.

“I find it enjoyable and it’s a good way for spouses to mix and mingle with the Soldiers,” said Natalie Gipson.

With fun-filled events replacing a day away from their normal routine, the day was made even more special for Sgt. Timothy Sziky. He proposed to his girlfriend at the lakefront resort area, creating a new family bond as other bonds within the battalion were strengthened.



ABOVE, Capt. Steve Burns won the Commander/1st. Sgt.’s relay. He made a dash to the finish line after spinning 10 rotations around a bat on Organizational Day June 23. LEFT, A tug-of-war competition was held between Bravo and Echo Companies, 1-44 AMD, during Organizational Day June 23.



During the 1-44 AMD Organizational Day, Lt. Col. Brian W. Gibson awards a Soldier and his son for having the best fish face June 23.

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