

**PARTIAL LIST OF GIDDINGS
PEOPLE AS I KNEW THEM
FIFTY YEARS AGO**

By Rev. G. Birkmann, retired.

I arrived in Giddings Sept. 27, 1876. Some of the church members at Fedor had come to meet me in town and haul my baggage and belongings out to Fedor, the distance being about twelve miles.

I was advised to buy my household furniture, what little I then needed, at Neumann & Raube's store, which at that time was on the corner where the Knox building is now.

As a matter of course, the town of Giddings today is quite different from what it was then. According to my remembrance there was not one brick building. Almost all of the stores and buildings which will be mentioned by me in this incomplete list, were built of cheap lumber. The firm Raube & Neumann was pretty well known among the people, particularly those of Wendish origin, at Serbin, Fedor, etc.

John Neumann was himself, as I take it, of Wendish descent, he spoke Wendish, besides German and English—he had served in the war between the states, as also had Mr. Raube, who was a German, hailing from Austin County, Texas.

At a later date, this firm had their business at the place where Schneider Bros. have theirs now, and were selling groceries only and drinks, and a few years later they had removed to the other side of the street. Mr. Neumann whom the people generally called John, died at the end of the year 1892 of pneumonia which he had contracted in helping to put out a fire in town. I think he was chief of the Giddings firemen at the time.

After Neumann & Raube, the grocery store and bakery (now Schneider Bros. property) was in the possession of Hardmeier who, according to my recollection, was of Swiss origin. Next to him toward the east was Sternberg, a tall man with very long black hair falling over his shoulders, who kept a tin shop. He was not of a timid sort, and not a retiring character. You would most carefully choose your words in addressing Mr. Sternberg.

At the corner where the Citizens State Bank now is, there Mr. Schurmann, the tailor worked and sold dry goods. Later the store was occupied by Mr. Ernst Neitsch, after he had gone into business for himself. Before this, he had been clerking for Mr. Knox. At the other corner, now the place of the First National Bank, there was at one time the postoffice, and Mr. Pauli of La Grange, was temporarily the postmaster. He

later was elected to the state legislature from La Grange.

After this time, Mr. Seay had a watchmaker and jewelry business at this same corner, while a lady, probably a relation of his, was keeping the postoffice.

The Grange Store, I think, was not yet in existence at the time of my arrival in Giddings in 1876, but was probably started a few years later. So it will be about fifty years old by this time. I suppose there is no other store in Giddings that has been doing business so long a time and at the same place. Opposite the Grange Store, Mr. August Schubert kept a small general store, selling some dry goods and groceries, and giving people from a distance an opportunity to sit down at a table and eat a cold little lunch, consisting of crackers and sausage or salmon.

At that time there was no restaurant in town, where you might get coffee and a cooked meal. Mr. Joekel also, as did Mr. Schubert, had a table in his grocery store and sold much ginger ale to those eating bread baked by him and buying cheese or canned fish or meat in addition. When people came ten or twelve miles from the country, of course, they had a good appetite at noon and Mr. Joekel's table would at noon always be well patronized. The store of Mr. Joekel was the one which was later, I believe, occupied by Mr. Hillsberg.

Next to this was Mr. Luecke's tinshop where you could see both Mr. and Mrs. Luecke working at their business. Everything was wide open and you might watch people working at their trade, and there seemed always to be plenty of work to do, and the town was always crowded with country people selling their cotton and buying things needed. Giddings was then much smaller than now, and there was no paved street or sidewalk, and no plate glass and show windows as you now see them for several blocks on both sides of Austin street. However, Giddings at that time was a busy town and doing much trading for its size.

There was no courthouse, but the court met at different locations in town. At the time when the trial of Bill Longrey took place, court was held in a building at the corner where the Citizens State Bank had its quarters ten years ago. I think they called it the Blumann building. I saw the sheriff leading his prisoner through the street up to the courtroom. The street was full of people who were desirous of seeing the prisoner who then was condemned to be hanged. He, the prisoner, was a pretty tall young man, quite impressive in his appearance, with long black hair and he was looking about unafraid while he was the center of so much attention by the public. He was handcuffed, however, he managed to lift his hands to smooth his hair while being led in the company of the sheriff and his assistants.

He was later executed, as everyone knows, right near the town, and was buried there. I passed through Giddings on that day and saw the large crowd out near the gallows, but I saw them from a distance only, and not caring to visit the scene, I rode home on my pony.

Dr. Fields came to Giddings in 1877, and for some years had his office and a drug store at the corner, later occupied by Mr. Neitsch's store. Dr. Fields was for a time associated with Dr. Louis Geyer who later removed to Taylor, Texas. Mr. Warlich had, before Dr. Fields, kept a general store on the same corner.

Dr. Fields in later years, had his drug store on another street in the neighborhood of Mr. Aug. Wurm. Geyer & Fields for a time had in their drug store quite an assortment of musical instruments for sale. This was about forty years ago.

I sometimes was in the office of Dr. Johnson, Sr. I also saw the father of the elder Dr. Johnson, both together in the

same office.

Of lawyers in Giddings fifty and more years ago, I remember Mr. Sinks, Rector, Rousseau, Harris, and of county officials Mr. Knox, the first treasurer of Lee County, and Major Fry, county clerk, and Mr. Burns, assessor and collector.

A leading dealer in saddlery and harness at that time was Mr. Northrup, who had his store near the Grange Store for some time. He also sold buggies and perhaps other conveyances. He had his residence about half a mile or so out of the business part of Giddings. There he had a good-sized pear orchard, and was selling this fruit in season, and I sometimes bought pears from him. Selling saddles and harness and repairing harness was a great business at that time, and when you bought a buggy for a hundred dollars, you might be pretty sure that you would use it up in a few years on our rough roads, and would have to spend \$50 more on that flimsy thing within a few years. And when buying a double set of harness for your horses, you would pay \$25 or \$30. It was a pretty safe guess that you would have to spend, within a year or two, another \$25 for repairs.

Business in Giddings at the time I write of, was generally flourishing, as said before, but there was much trash and shoddy goods on the market, and dealers as a rule, were not so reliable as now, so it seems to me.