

Startzville Community

I. Context

Soon after New Braunfels was settled in 1845, the settlers started to spread out into the Hill Country. Most of the settlements in the Hill Country were located close to some water source. In this area of Comal County, it was the Guadalupe River which supplied the drinking water and a source of power to grind the grains. The closest settlement to where Startzville was later established was the Tom Creek valley where the Heinrich Startz and Gottlieb Artzt families settled in the 1850s.¹ While the Tom Creek was a reasonable source of water, it could not supply enough water to support the mills. It was the Crains Mill settlement about five miles north, established in the early 1850s and named after J. B. Crain, which had a mill at the Gum Spring crossing on the Guadalupe River. This settlement also had a post office established in 1857, which was discontinued in 1866. When Rev. August Engel reopened the post office in 1873, it was renamed to Cranes Mill.

In time, the Startzville Community was established at the intersection of two roads where the early settlers did not settle because of the lack of water supply and tillable soil to grow crops.

II Overview

The current address of the location under consideration is: 10350 Startz Road, Canyon Lake, Texas 78133. See Attachment 1 - Mapquest of Area in Comal County, Texas.

¹ Roger Nuhn, editor, *The New Braunfels Sesquicentennial Minutes*, Sophienburg Museum and Archives, 1995, p 42.

Early Development

It was at the intersection of Cranes Mill² and Sattler Roads where Bruno and Viola Elbel bought 12.19 acres of undeveloped land from Elmer and Katie May Palmer in 1939.³ Bruno operated a cedar yard here and hauled cedar posts all over the country with his large truck. Their first home on this site, 1940, was of wooden construction with a small grocery store inside the front of the home. The store carried the basic food and home necessities with most likely beer being sold to the thirsty cedar handlers. The place was soon known as “Bruno Elbel’s Place”.⁴ See Attachment 2 for a photo of the home/business.

On 2 January 1942, the home burned down after the fuel for the gasoline stove was mishandled and was ignited by the kerosene refrigerator. They managed to save the car and his large truck.

The Elbel’s second home on the site was a rock house built by Frank Meckel.⁵ See Attachment 3. It also had a grocery store in the front with a three room living quarters in the rear. It was this building that Curt and Alice Schlameus Startz leased in 1944 from the Elbels. By this time there was also an ice house and two gasoline pumps. In 1946, they bought the store and 12.19 acres from the Elbels.⁶ See Attachment 4 for Legal Description of property.

² Known as the Gum Spring Road on the land deeds. Later became known as the Cranes Mill Road.

³ Comal County Clerk’s Office, Book 71, pp 236-237, 22 July 1939.

⁴ Sophienburg Reflections Tape # 585, Viola Froelich Elbel Kleck, 19 February 1990.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Comal County Clerk’s Office, Book 84, pp 19-20, 22 April 1946.

Beginning and Early Years of Startzville

The name **Startzville** was first used in 1950 by an artist friend, Dr. E. J. Duffin,⁷ who painted the front of their store and wrote the following on the side of the painting:

Startzville - Paradise Valley of Comal County
Population - Same
Elevation - Unchanged
Temperature - Delightful
Ice - Groceries - Beer

See Attachment 5 for a photograph of the painting which is still in the family.

The ice house is located on the left of the photo. The two Gulf Gasoline pumps in the front were removed later. The windmill on the right top of the photo is a reminder that the primary source of water for the establishment was from a dug well. The windmill supports the thought that the second Elbel home was built on the same site as the original home for the convenience of not having to dig another well. Shown in Attachment 6 is a photo of the ice house as it appears today. Another photo shows Curt and Alice Startz in front of their store. Notice the sign **Startzville - Paradise Valley** on the building.

This photo was taken before 1959 since Curt passed away in that year. **This single location at that time was known as Startzville, the only structure in the area.** See Attachment 7. The kerosene pump to the left of Alice in the attachment reminds us that they also sold kerosene to their customers. The tank/hand-pump is still there in 2011.

After Curt passed away, Alice became the sole operator of the store. From the stories heard and read, Grandma Startz ran the business her way. She had her opinions on religion, politics and hippies. The changes caused by the construction of Canyon Dam did not sit too well with Grandma as stated in the Houston Chronicle: “Progress doesn’t bug

⁷ Dr. Duffin was most likely a close friend who visited the Curt and Alice frequently since he owned 310 acres of land about one-half mile from their store.

Grandma Startz so much, it's the damn weekenders".⁸

The Continuation of the Original Site and Growth of Startzville

The changes caused by the construction of Canyon Dam had a tremendous influence on the development of community of Startzville. Activity at Startzville grew during the actual construction of Canyon Dam from 1960 until 1964.⁹ In 1963, James, son of Curt and Alice, and wife, Lorine Pantermuehl Startz, added a café building to the left side of the grocery store. James and Lorine operated the **Startz Café** in the **Startzville** community while Alice continued to run the grocery store until she died in 1985. At this time the store was closed while the café continued to flourish until Lorine passed away in July of 1997. James Sr. passed away in 2003, and since then the business is owned by their two children, James Startz, Jr. and Sandra Duncan.¹⁰ The Startz Café is still in operation and is being managed/operated by Monica Startz Wetz, daughter of James Jr. and great-granddaughter of Curt and Alice Startz. The grocery store can still be visited via the café with a few reminders of yesteryear on display.

Startzville started growing when Canyon Dam was completed in 1964 and the subdivisions continue to be developed around the lake today. While the unincorporated Startzville Community has no specific boundaries lines, one can only gage the growth of the community by observing that in 2011 there were 18,044 people living in 7,298 households in the 78133 Zip Code.¹¹ In 2008, the Comal Independent School District constructed the Startzville Elementary School on FM 3159 near the site of the beginning

⁸ *Houston Chronicle, Texas Magazine*, Sunday, 20 April 1975 by Connie Lunnan, photos by David Nance.

⁹ Alton J. Rahe, *History of Sattler and Mountain Valley School, Comal County, Texas - 1846-1964*, Walsworth Publishing Company, 1999, Chapter 19.

¹⁰ Comal County Clerk's Office, Document #200606049788, 12 November 2003.

¹¹ "Zip Code 78133 Data Base, Canyon Lake, Texas" (www.zip-codes.com/zip-code/78133/zip-code-78133.asp). Accessed 22 August 2011.

of the community.

It is interesting to realize that while some small communities such as Hancock and Cranes Mill paid a mortal price for the development of Canyon Lake, Startzville prospered and is still growing during its progression. See Attachment 8 - Map of Startzville area **before** Canyon Dam was constructed. Along with the developments around the lake, new Farm-to-Market roads were constructed. Please compare Map (Attachment 8) with Map (Attachment 1). The original road from Sattler (Sattler Road) was straightened and improved and became known as FM 2673. This road runs from Sattler to Cranes Mill Park, replacing a part of the original Cranes Mill Road. Another part of the old Cranes Mill Road was replaced with FM 3159 and extended to Smithson Valley. Also a new road was created from Startzville to Comal Park, known as Canyon Bend Drive. A portion of the Cranes Mill Road between FM 3159 and FM 2673 was name Startz Road.

III Significance

The history of the Startz family grocery store and café is significant because it provides the background information for the development of the community of Startzville. Rural grocery stores, where people met to purchase many of the essential of life, often became the evening social centers of the community, especially before the days of television.

In a broad sense, the name Startzville represents more than the grocery store site. Curt Startz was the grandson of the original settler, Heinrich Startz, mentioned in the beginning of the write-up.¹² Curt and Alice lived on Heinrich's farm in the community

¹² Heinrich and Louise Artzt Startz had 12 children - Comal County Genealogy Society Census Data.

before they bought the store. Hence, the Startz roots grow deep in Startzville.

Startzville through the Startz family is an example of people who work hard to serve their community with no intention for their legacy to be remembered for years to come.

Attachments:

1. 2011 Map: Location of Startzville in Comal County
2. Photo of the original Bruno Elbel home/business
3. Photo of the second Elbel home/business
4. Legal Description of Property
5. Painting of Startz Store by E. C. Duffin
6. Ice House on the premises
7. Alice and Curt in Front of Store-note Startzville sign
8. Map of Startzville Area before Canyon Dam was constructed