

WALZEM CHAPEL

I. CONTEXT

The Walzem Chapel is located in the Mission Valley Settlement Community, an area five miles north of New Braunfels in Comal County. Most of this area is now within the city limits of New Braunfels and the chapel is in the Mission Hills Ranch Subdivision. (See Attachment A) The highest point of the Mission Valley Settlement area was called Mission Hill. This area was one of the few areas already named when the German emigrants settled the area.¹ The name resulted because the Spanish had established a Mission, Nuestra Senora De Guadalupe in 1758, in the area.² The Mission Valley Settlement was formed around the time that New Braunfels was established in 1845 and the boundaries resulted largely as school boundaries for the Mission Valley School.³ It was at this location that Johann Joseph and Anna Gertrude Walzem settled after arriving from Germany in the 1850s and where Johann Joseph and his sons built the Walzem Chapel.⁴ (See Attachment B)

II. OVERVIEW

The settlers of the area were primarily German emigrants that came to Texas under the auspices of the Adelsverein in the mid-1800s. In Germany, lack of freedom, lack of opportunity for economic advancement and problems brought about by revolution and war, led to a general dissatisfaction among the people. An opportunity to immigrate to a new land became a reality when an organization called the Adelsverein or Verein zum Schutze deutscher Einwanderer in Texas organized a stock company whose purpose was to secure land in Texas for Germans who wanted to settle there. Prince Carl of Solms Braunfels was the Commissioner General and purchased land from Juan Veramendi and Rafael Garza situated on the banks of the Comal and Guadalupe Rivers. This resulted in the settlement of New Braunfels founded on March 21, 1845.

The settlers endured many hardships after leaving Germany which included crossing the

ocean, the trek from Indianola to New Braunfels and then surviving in Texas during the early years of settlement. Many settlers moved out from New Braunfels with the promise of more land and the prospect of farming, ranching and making a living. These small settlements were approximately 5 miles apart which is the case with the Mission Valley Settlement, just 5 miles from the center of New Braunfels.⁵

The Walzem Chapel in the Mission Valley Settlement area was located on part of the property owned by Johann Joseph Walzem. Johann Joseph and Anna Gertruda immigrated to Texas from Germany in 1851 and their home site is well documented as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark.⁶ (See Attachment C) Mr. Walzem received 160 acres in Survey 361 from the State of Texas in 1859 where his home site and the chapel are located. According to the Land Office in Austin, the 160 acres were originally surveyed in 1854. The Walzem family received the land by a process called pre-emption which would indicate that they started working the land in 1851.⁷ Mr. Walzem was a stone mason and has been credited with building several houses in the Mission Valley Settlement Community.⁸

The 1860 Comal County Census⁹ list Johann Joseph Walzem and his family as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Born</u>
Johann Joseph	Stone mason	43	Prussia
Gertruda	Housewife	43	Prussia
Johann		17	Prussia
Gertrude		12	Prussia
Andreas		8	Texas
Heinrich		3	Texas
Peter		1	Texas

Based on Andreas' age in this 1860 census, he was born in 1852 in Texas and Gertrude was born in Prussia in 1848 four years earlier. These two data points would support that the family would have come to Texas around 1851.

Johann Joseph Walzem and his sons are credited with building the Walzem Chapel (also named St. John Chapel) located on an acre lot in the north end of their original 160 acre tract. Legend has it that Mr. Walzem built the chapel in thanksgiving for a safe trip from his homeland in Germany to Texas.¹⁰ A stone at the top of the entrance to the chapel is marked 1870 indicating it was completed that year. Johann later gave the land and chapel to the Right Reverend Bishop C. M. Dubois of the Catholic Church in June of 1871.¹¹ The property was then purchased in 1989 by Doris Hankamer¹² from the church and later by the developer of Mission Hills Ranch Subdivision whose homeowners now care for the property and the chapel.¹³

Many of the German emigrants were of the Catholic faith and their faith sustained them through hardships. The Walzems were indeed thankful to their God for the good life they received in Texas and built the chapel as a testament.

The stone walls of the chapel are all that remain today. While they are in rather good condition, the roof and windows are completely gone while the floor is buried in years of debris. In its day the chapel stood about 25 feet long and 20 feet wide. The chapel walls are over a foot thick, encasing an area that is over 23 feet long and 17 feet wide. The Walzem Chapel was not a large area to hold services in. The walls were made of limestone locally quarried and cut by Joseph and his sons with sand and mortar from a local kiln. (See Attachment D) The craftsmanship displays the ability of the settlers to use available resources to make a living and survive in what was then a wilderness. A stone marked with the inscription "IIWGA" and the year 1870 remains to indicate the mason and the year the chapel was completed. The "II" is the old way of writing "J" in reference to Johann Joseph Walzem and the "GA" refers to Gertruda Anna.¹⁴ (See Attachment E)

The story behind the name of the Chapel is as exciting as its history. It was officially named St. John Chapel after it was deeded to the Catholic Church because of the Catholic

Church's requirement that places of worship be named after saints.¹⁵ It is referred to as "Anna Gertruda Chapel" in Marjorie Cook's article in reference to the builder's desire to build a monument to his wife¹⁶ but the accepted historical name of the chapel has been Walzem Chapel in reference to the original owner's and mason's family name. To this day confusion continues with the name since the subdivision where the chapel is located is called "Mission Hills Ranch" and the road leading to the subdivision is called "Walzem Mission Road." The road should have been named "Walzem Chapel Road".¹⁷

The Mission Hills Ranch Homeowners Association has erected a decorative metal fence surrounding the structure to help preserve it and also maintain the grounds. (See Attachment F)

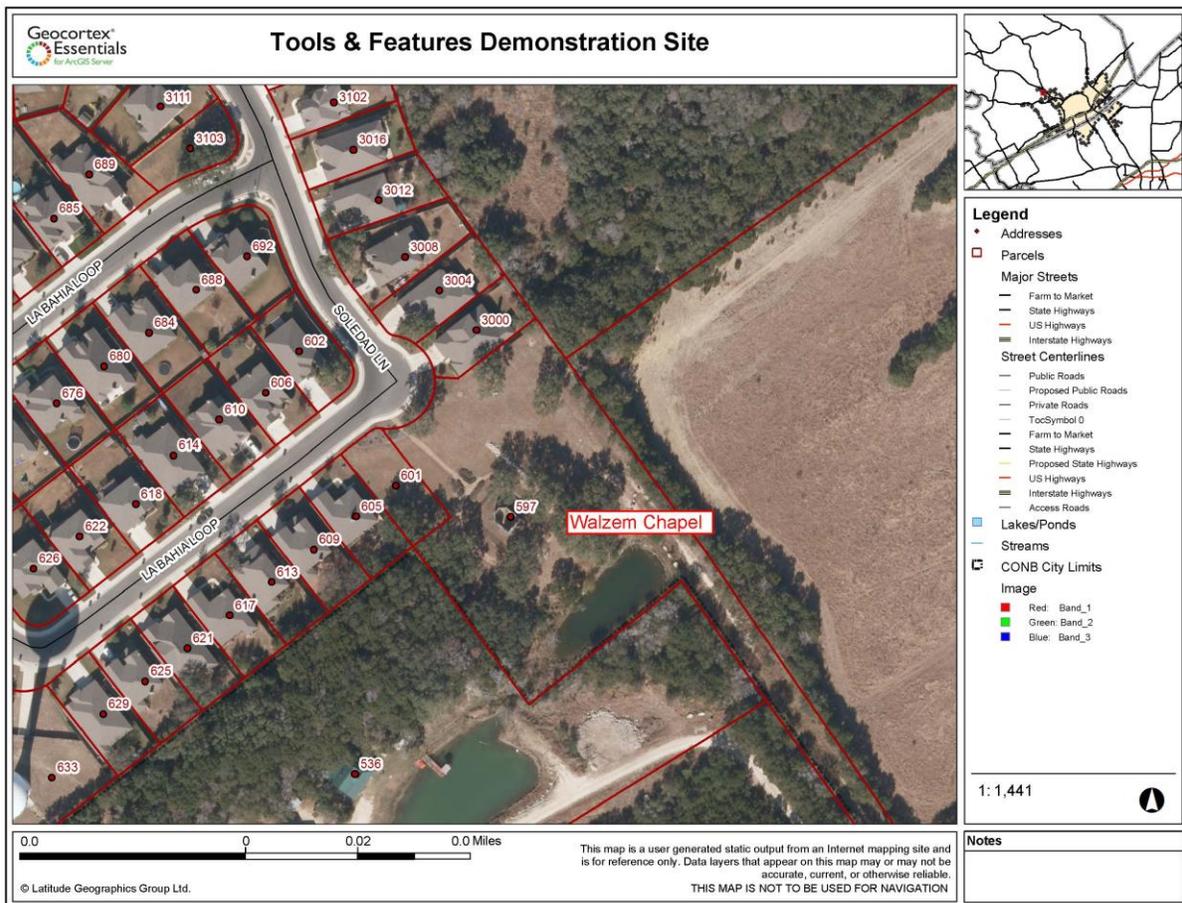
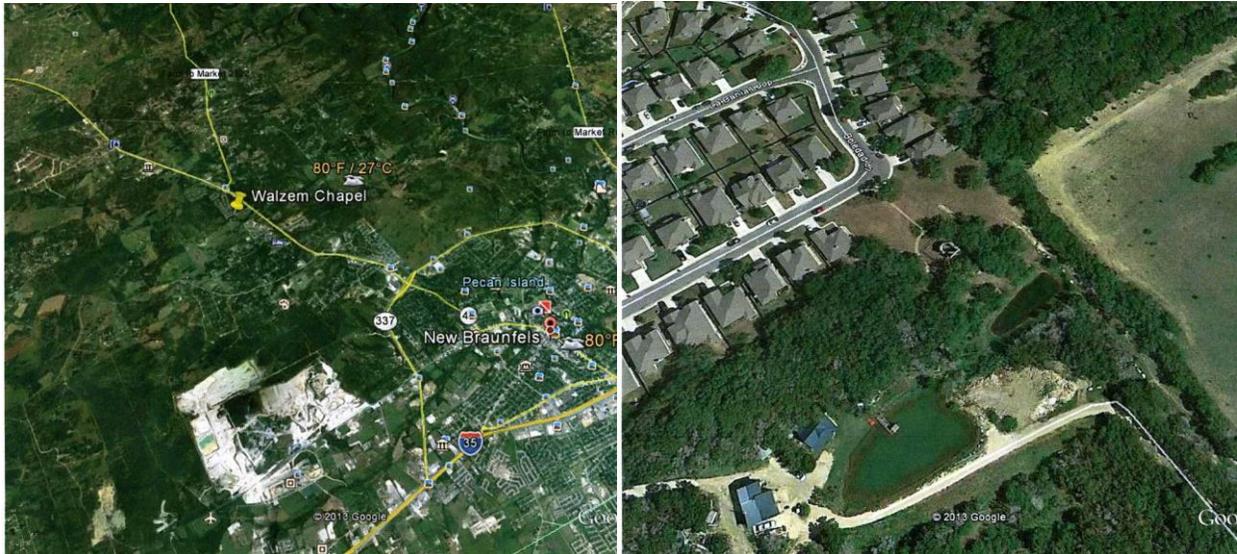
III. SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of Walzem Chapel is the age of the structure and the fact it was the first and one of the only Catholic Chapels in this once remote area. The history of this important building is documented throughout this narrative and the writing of many authors referenced in section IV. One author states this chapel saved children from having to make the greater than five-mile journey into New Braunfels in their bare feet because they needed to save the wear on their shoes.¹⁸ Built as a Chapel of convenience, it served the Catholic families in the Mission Valley Settlement Community. Once the Chapel was owned by the Church, Father Fleury would come to offer Mass from Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church in New Braunfels.¹⁹ The Chapel being over 140 years old and still standing bears testament to the mason's craft. This mason and his family were important members of the Mission Valley Settlement Community as this area was settled and developed in those challenging early days of New Braunfels founding.

IV. DOCUMENTATION

- ¹ Ferdinand Roemer, *Roemer's Texas 1845-1847*, Texian Press, p. 111-114.
- ² Historical Centennial Marker is located on Hwy 46 W outside of Loop 337, erected in 1936.
- ³ Hermann Seele (Translated by Edward C. Breitenkamp), *The Cypress and Other Writings of a German Pioneer in Texas*, University of Texas Press, Austin and London 1979, p. 41.
- ⁴ Historical Marker located at 690 Mission Valley Road, erected in 2002.
- ⁵ Oscar Haas. *History of New Braunfels and Comal County, Texas 1844-1946*, The Steck Company, 1968. p. 17-25.
- ⁶ Historical Marker located at 690 Mission Valley Road, erected in 2002.
- ⁷ Deed records: V. F, p. 395, Office of the Comal County Clerk, Comal County Courthouse, New Braunfels Texas.
- ⁸ Alton Rahe "Background information to be used for the consideration of a Historical Marker on the Johann Joseph Walzem Home Site", THC application, 27 Nov 2001.
- ⁹ Haas, p. 290.
- ¹⁰ J. Marjorie Cook, Tribute of Thankful Traveler Rests in Mission Valley Historic Ruins, New Braunfels Herald Zeitung article, 4 October 1952.
- ¹¹ Deed records: V. 14 p. 309-3146, Office of the Comal County Clerk, Comal County Courthouse, New Braunfels Texas.
- ¹² Special Warranty Deed 10 Feb 1989, attachment G.
- ¹³ Deed records: V. L, p. 315-316, Office of the Comal County Clerk, Comal County Courthouse, New Braunfels Texas.
- ¹⁴ Samuel Heitkamp, Reverend, *Walzem Chapel, Chapel of Convenience, Early History of New Braunfels*, 1997.
- ¹⁵ Alton Rahe, "History of Mission Valley Community" Historical Publishing Network, 2010. p. 37.
- ¹⁶ Cook, 1952.
- ¹⁷ Rahe, p. 44.
- ¹⁸ Cook, 1952.
- ¹⁹ Heitkamp, 1997.

Attachment A-2013 Google earth images of the location of the Walzem Chapel. In close up image on the right, Chapel is in the center. The third image is taken from the New Braunfels GIS services website and shows the Chapel with the current City Parcel designations.



Attachment B

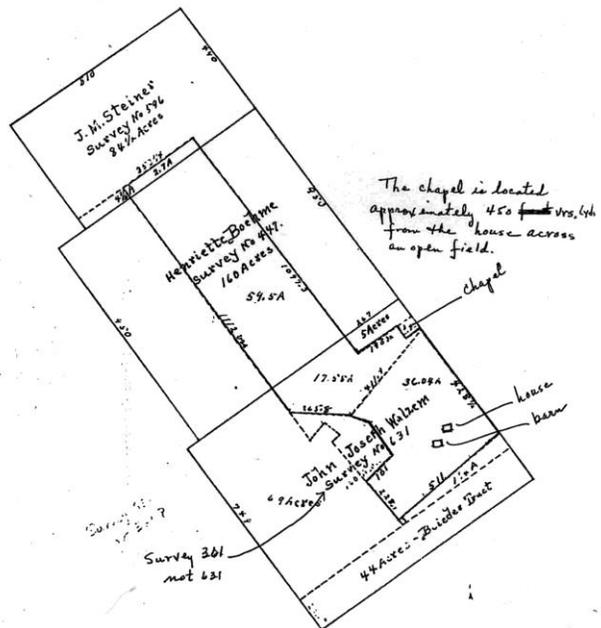


Front of Walzem Chapel photo taken March 2013

Attachment C-Photo taken April 2011 of Homesite of Johann and Gertruda Walzem RTHL and also historic photos and deed image taken from the original Texas Historical Commission RTHL marker files from 2002. Note deed image shows the location of the Walzem Chapel.



Figure 1a
J. J. Walzem Survey 361



Attachment D-views of the different sides and interior taken March 2013



Interior view facing the altar.

Attachment E



Front of Walzem Chapel with etched stone. Photos March 2013

Attachment F-Exterior photos taken March 2013



Attachment G-Special Warranty Deed transferring land to the Archbishop of San Antonio

February 1989

FS
Vol. 0668 - 0355

340524

SPECIAL WARRANTY DEED

FILED FOR RECORDS

1989 MAR -6 PH 3-32

THE STATE OF TEXAS §
COUNTY OF BEXAR §

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS THAT I DO HEREBY

Rose L. Rosenbury
Secretary
of the
Archdiocese
of San Antonio
S. Lopez

That I, P. F. FLORES, ARCHBISHOP OF SAN ANTONIO, of the County of Bexar and the State of Texas, for and in consideration of the sum of One and No/100 Dollar (\$1.00) and other valuable consideration to me paid by the Grantee herein named, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, GRANT, SELL AND CONVEY and by these presents do GRANT, SELL AND CONVEY unto DORIS K. HANKAMER, Trustee of the DORIS KUEHLER HANKAMER TRUST, of Harris County, State of Texas, all of the following described real property in Comal County, Texas, to which I may have a right, title and interest arising out of the Deed dated June 1, 1871 from John Joe Walzem and wife, Gertrud Walzem to the Right Reverend Bishop C. M. Dubois or his successors in office, recorded in Volume L, Page 315-16 in the Deed Records of Comal County, Texas, to wit:

One acre of land out of the tract of the Walzem Farm in the mountains in Comal County about five miles Northwest of New Braunfels as more particularly described in the aforesaid Deed;

and all of the following described real property in Comal County, Texas, to which I may have a right, title and interest arising out of the Warranty Deed dated March 4, 1882 from John J. Walzem to Right Reverend John C. Neraz, Bishop of San Antonio, Texas, recorded in Volume Q, Page 83 of the Deed Records of Comal County, Texas, to-wit:

All that certain tract piece or parcel of land lying and being in Comal County, State of Texas, and known as a part of original Survey No. 361, granted to J. J. Walzem, one tract containing three quarter (3/4) of an acre of land:

Beginning at the S.E. corner of the five acres of land, conveyed to Gertrude Schoener,

Thence S. 35° W. 57 varas -

Thence S. 37° E. 57 varas -

Turn to:
DORIS HANKAMER
9039 Katy Freeway, Suite 430
Houston, Texas 77024

Thence N. 35° E. 57 varas -
Thence N. 37° W. 57 varas to the beginning.
0668 0356

and being the same on which the Chapel is situated. Also one quarter of an acre more or less dedicated for a cemetery, now under enclosure, lying opposite said chapel, as more particularly described in said Deed, whether said properties are identical, overlapping, or separate.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the above described premises, together with all and singular the rights and appurtenances thereto in anywise belonging, unto the said Grantee, Grantee's heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns forever; and Grantor hereby binds Grantor, Grantor's successors in office and assigns to WARRANT AND FOREVER DEFEND all and singular the said premises unto Grantee, Grantee's heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns, against every person whomsoever lawfully claiming or to claim the same or any part thereof, by, through or under Grantor but not otherwise.

EXECUTED this 20th day of February A.D. 1989.

+ P. F. Flores
P. F. FLORES, ARCHBISHOP
OF SAN ANTONIO

When recorded, return to:
Mailing Address of Grantee:
Doris K. Hankamer, Trustee
DORIS KUEHLER HANKAMER TRUST
9039 Katy Freeway, Suite 430
Houston, TX 77024