



INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

CONNECTING TO THE PAST

The scenery and structures of the bluff still attract us. And here we can glimpse back in time to the natural settings of the mid-19th century. The site provides visitors opportunities to enjoy and learn about the beautiful natural surroundings as we explore Texas' shared heritage of frontier spirit, hard work, innovation, honor and bravery.

You can help conserve the resources of Monument Hill and Kreische Brewery State Historic Sites.

- Take advantage of interpretive opportunities that include the museum, self-guided walking trails, nature study and scheduled tours of the house, monument and brewery.
- Learn more about Texas history and heritage through available literature at the park headquarters.
- Tread lightly on the natural resources by staying on the trails, not littering and taking nothing but photos.
- Protect the integrity of historic structures by respecting out-of-bounds areas.
- Become an active supporter – join the Friends of Monument Hill and Kreische Brewery, or make a donation to the site.

FURTHER READING

The Kreisches and Their World by John J. Leffler
Soldiers of Misfortune by Sam W. Haynes
German Seed in Texas Soil by Terry G. Jordan
Dare-Devils All; The Texas Mier Expedition, Volumes I and II by J.M. Nance

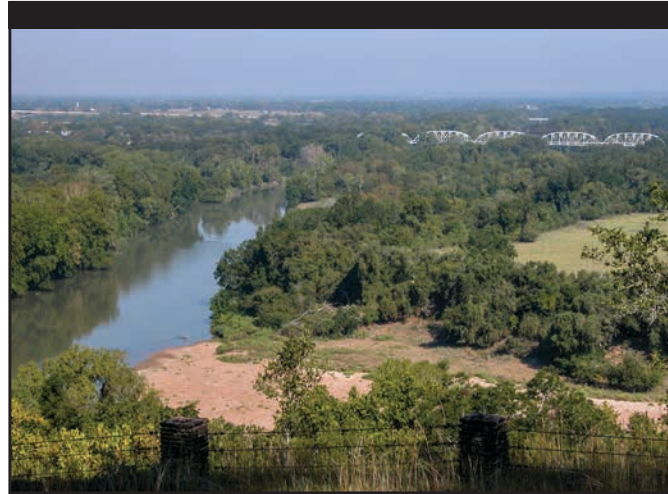
Monument Hill and Kreische Brewery State Historic Sites
 414 State Loop 92, La Grange, Texas 78945
 (979) 968-5658
www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/monument-hill-kreische-brewery



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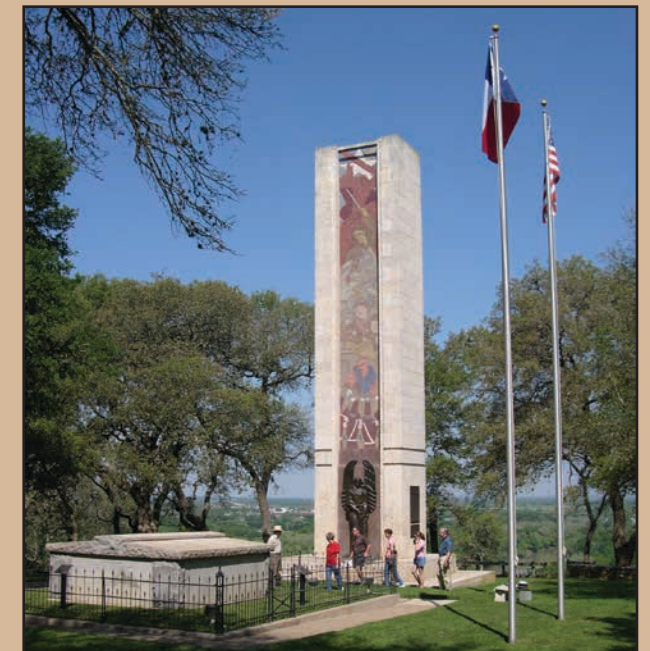


HALLOWED GROUND

Monument Hill is hallowed ground. The remains of men who perished in the struggle for Texas independence are entombed in a granite crypt — their names etched in stone and marked by a towering monument. It is a memorial to the men who died in two separate events in the 1840s: the Dawson Massacre and the infamous Black Bean Death Lottery. On another part of the bluff is a different kind of memorial. The Kreische house and brewery commemorate the life's work of Heinrich L. Kreische and the ingenuity of those early European immigrants who laid the foundations of modern Texas.

In 1842 Texan forces battled at Salado Creek to repel the Mexican invaders who had captured nearby San Antonio. Nicholas M. Dawson's advance militia company of 54 men, most from Fayette County, marched toward San Antonio to join the fight. As they approached the battlefield, 500 Mexican soldiers attacked, killing 36 men in what became known as the Dawson Massacre. Three men escaped but 15 were taken prisoner and marched over 1,000 miles toward Perote Prison near Vera Cruz in southern Mexico.

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS THE HIGH SANDSTONE BLUFF ABOVE THE RIVER HAS ATTRACTED PEOPLE. THIS PROMINENT GEOLOGIC FEATURE RISES ABOVE A NATURAL RIVER CROSSING AND WAS A LANDMARK FOR PREHISTORIC TRIBES. THE TONKAWA TRIBE FOLLOWED AN ANCIENT HUNTING TRAIL BENEATH THE BLUFF AND HUNTED IN THE SURROUNDING OAK WOODLANDS AND ROLLING PRAIRIES. LATER, SPANISH EXPLORERS CROSSED THE RIVER BELOW THE BLUFF AND NAMED THIS TRAIL "EL CAMINO DE LA BAHIA," THE BAY TRAIL, REFERRING TO A TRADE ROUTE FROM PRESENT DAY GOLIAD TO NACOGDOCHES. IN THE 1830S AND 1840S, ANGLO-AMERICANS, GERMANS AND CZECHS SETTLED BELOW THE BLUFF, CREATING THE TOWN OF LA GRANGE.



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CONTINUED CONFLICT WITH SANTA ANNA

In the winter of 1842, Texans set out to avenge the brutal Dawson Massacre. Over 300 soldiers ignored official orders, marched south down the Rio Grande and attacked the border town of Ciudad Mier. In spite of many Mexican casualties, 250 Texans were captured and marched toward Mexico City. Within six weeks of their captivity 188 escaped, but harsh desert conditions forced 176 of them to surrender within days. Outraged by such defiance, Santa Anna ordered the execution of all escapees, but urgent diplomatic efforts from the United States and Great Britain led to the Mexican government's compromise that came to be known as the Black Bean Death Lottery. The captured escapees drew beans from a pot containing 159 white beans and 17 black beans. Those who drew black beans were executed. The Mexican army then marched the white bean survivors to Perote Prison. There in a bittersweet reunion they met those men from San Antonio that they had set out to avenge.



Survivors of the Dawson and Mier Companies. One in three men died in combat or illness, injury or by execution. For years after the 1848 reburial, veterans met annually to remember those who had not returned home alive to Texas.

THE DEFEATED RETURN HOME

Texas Ranger and white bean survivor Captain John Dusenberry returned to the area of execution in 1847, during the Mexican War. Dusenberry and his troopers risked their lives to exhume remains of the Black Bean victims and return them to Texas. La Grange was chosen as their resting place on Texas soil because it was home of Captain William Eastland, the only officer executed in the Black Bean Incident. As Fayette County citizens learned that La Grange had been chosen as the destination for these remains, the same sense of duty and honor prompted them to retrieve the bodies of Dawson's massacred company from their graves near Salado Creek.

On Sept. 18, 1848, the sixth Anniversary of the Battle of Salado Creek, remains of these Texan militia volunteers were reburied in a common tomb at Monument Hill. Over 1,000 people attended the funeral including several family members and dignitaries.

In 1933, the present granite vault was placed around the old tomb. The adjacent 48-foot shellcrete monument, erected by the Texas Centennial Commission, was dedicated in 1936, the centennial of Texas independence.

The "Black Bean Death Lottery" punished recaptured Texans. One out of every 10 men was executed for attempting to escape at Hacienda Salado.

Source: Charles McLaughlin, artist and member of the Mier Expedition.

IMMIGRATION AND PROSPERITY



Heinrich Ludwig Kreische
German immigrant,
master stonemason
and brewmaster

The end of the Mexican War in 1848 brought peace and prosperity to Texas. Attracted by cheap, fertile farm land and a mild climate, large numbers of Czechs and Germans arrived in Fayette County.

The tree-covered, hilly landscape reminded these immigrants of home. In 1849, German immigrant Heinrich Kreische purchased 172 acres on the bluff including the Dawson/Mier tomb. Kreische married Josepha Appelt in 1855 and they had six children.

Built in two stages, the three-story Kreische house commemorates both the growth of the Kreische business and family. It remains a lasting example of the prosperity enjoyed by many immigrants in Texas. By 1857, Kreische had become a prominent member of the community and was recognized as a master stonemason, constructing numerous buildings in the county.

For the rest of his life, Kreische maintained the Dawson/Mier tomb that became known as Monument Hill. He honored the sacrifices of those who came before him, knowing they helped to make his success possible.

Prospering immigrant families congregate at the scenic bluff home of the H.L. Kreische family.

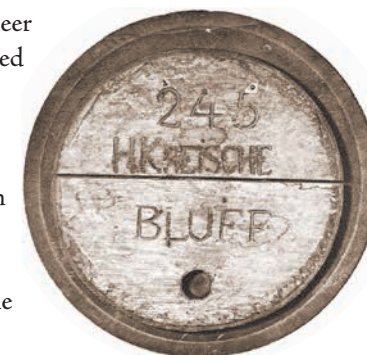


Fayette County citizens enjoy good times on the bluff with Kreische's Bluff Beer.

BREWING UP SUCCESS

About 1860, Kreische began building a brewery in the ravine below his house so that he could utilize the spring water. He recognized an opportunity in the beer production market and became a brewmaster. By the middle of the Civil War, "Kreische's Bluff Beer" was being produced on a commercial scale. An ingenious water system aided by gravity transferred ingredients through a nine-step brewing process. By 1879, Kreische Brewery was the third largest brewing operation in the state.

When a new batch of beer was ready Kreische raised a banner emblazoned with the traditional German phrase "Frisch Auf!" meaning "Freshen Up!" This served as an invitation for major social events with people gathering on Kreische's grounds to enjoy the beer, shooting competitions, large picnics and dances.



Kreische's
Bluff Beer

Kreische died after he fell from his wagon in 1882. Modernization of the brewing industry and Kreische's death spelled the doom of the brewery by 1884.