

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Comal Springs (Site of Major Spring)
Other name/site number: N/A
Related multiple property listing: Historic Resources of El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail

2. Location

Street & number: Landa Park, 164 Landa Park Drive
City or town: New Braunfels State: Texas County: Comal
Not for publication: [checked] Vicinity: []

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
[checked] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my
opinion, the property [checked] meets [] does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
[] national [checked] statewide [] local

Applicable National Register Criteria: [checked] A [] B [] C [] D

Signature of certifying official / Title State Historic Preservation Officer Date
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property [checked] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official Date
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
[] entered in the National Register
[] determined eligible for the National Register
[] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[] removed from the National Register
[] other, explain: []

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Comal Springs (Major Spring), New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Landscape: natural feature

Current Functions: Landscape: natural feature, park

7. Description

Architectural Classification: NA

Principal Exterior Materials: NA

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 6 through 8)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input type="checkbox"/>	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Exploration/Settlement

Period of Significance: 1691-1821

Significant Dates: 1621; 1716

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: NA

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 9 through 14)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheets 15-16)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre (0.14 acres)

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 29.712929° Longitude: -98.137623°

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated property is located within Landa Park and includes the isolated and non-piped major spring of Comal Springs west of Landa Park Drive. The boundary includes a 0.14 acre parcel delineated by a polygon on the attached map (see Page 17).

Boundary Justification: The boundary includes the major springs west of Landa Park Drive that retain the degree of integrity closest to that found during the period of significance, as it is isolated from the park landscape to the east. Included in the boundary are a minimal portion of the rock channel, retaining walls and other features created by the WPA in the late 1930s.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Lena Sweeten McDonald (HRA Gray & Pape LLC); edited by Gregory Smith (THC)
Organization: National Trails Intermountain Region, National Park Service
Street & number: PO Box 728
City or Town: Santa Fe State: NM Zip Code: 87504-0728
Email: michael_taylor@nps.gov
Telephone: 505-988-6098
Date: April 2011; revised November 2018

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 17-22)

Additional items (see continuation sheets 23-24)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 25-29)

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Photograph Log

Photo 1

Looking north towards springs from edge of the nominated parcel

Photo 2

Springs bubbling from rock, facing northwest

Photo 3

Looking southeast from source of springs.

Boundary of nominated parcel extends to edge of regular-coursed wall on left.

Photo 4

Lined creek south of nominated parcel, looking southeast towards bridges, pavilions, and other park structures.

Photo 5

Lined creek and footbridge south of nominated parcel, looking northwest towards spring. Landa Park Drive on right.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Comal Springs (Major Spring), New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas

Description

Comal Springs is comprised of a series of approximately fifteen major and minor springs within Landa Park on the northwestern edge of New Braunfels in southeastern Comal County, Texas. The springs are the source of the 3.25-mile-long Comal River that flows southeast into the Guadalupe River. While the springs are found along a 4,300-foot stretch of the river, the nominated portion of Comal Springs is the secluded major spring west of Landa Park Drive, which best reflects the rural setting (as opposed to parklike setting) that would have been experienced by travelers along the Camino Real between 1691 and 1821. The nominated area includes the spring source and small portion (approximately 30 feet) of a channelized creek that flows south beyond the boundary, turns east to the Landa Park Drive Bridge, then northeast to meet the Comal River.

Landscape and Setting¹

The Comal Springs site is on the Balcones Escarpment, which runs from southwest to northeast from Del Rio to Waco and marks the transition between the rugged limestone Hill Country of the Edwards Plateau and the flat expanses of the Blackland Prairies to the east. Impervious rocks on the southeast and limestone on the northwest form an underground barrier. Beneath the escarpment is the Edwards aquifer, a major water source that supplies water that is forced up through fault fissures that form springs at the surface. Comal Springs is the largest of those springs along the escarpment, with seven major springs and dozens of smaller ones occur over a distance of about 4,300 feet (0.8 mile) at the base of a steep limestone bluff in Landa Park.² Landa Park a municipal park owned by the City of New Braunfels, features a the manmade Landa Lake, which was formed in the 1930s by channeling the flow from some of the springs. Additional springs bubble up through the gravel lake floor, while a few small springs flow from terrace gravel on Dry Comal Creek and other nearby locations. Since Comal Springs first were recorded, the water has been noted for its clarity, a characteristic that is apparent today. The water temperature averages 73.6 to 75.0 degrees Fahrenheit. Ground water temperature increases with depth, and the water is believed to flow as much as 150 meters below the surface before reaching the springs.³

Like all major springs along the escarpment, Comal Springs has long been a dependable source of freshwater that has supported a unique ecological niche with a wide diversity and abundance of plants and animals. Today, the Edwards aquifer and its associated springs are vital to the provision of water for agriculture and municipal water supplies for San Antonio and other cities in the area. In New Braunfels, the Comal Springs also supports a regional recreation and tourism industry and provides critical habit for the Fountain Darter, an endangered fish, as well as countless other flora and fauna. The Comal Springs are the principal source of water for the Comal River, which flows through Landa Park and New Braunfels before merging with the Guadalupe River.

During the prehistoric and historic periods, the escarpment area supported a wide range of plant species at the convergence of southern Blackland Prairie, consisting of bunch and short grasses, and Mesquite-Chaparral Savanna,

¹ Brune and Besse, *Springs of Texas*, Volume 1, pp. 129-130.

² Brune and Besse, 129; Eckhardt, Gregg. "Comal Springs and Landa Park." The Edwards Aquifer Website, accessed September 10, 2011, <http://www.edwardsaquifer.net/comal.html>; Dockall, John E., Douglas K. Boyd, and Lannie Ethridge Kittrell.

"Geoarcheological and Historical Investigations in the Comal Springs Area, LCRA Clear Springs Autotransformer Project, Comal County, Texas." Texas Antiquities Permit No. 3850. Austin: Prewitt & Associates, Inc., 2006, 141.

³ Brune and Besse, 130.

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consisting of small trees, shrubs, and cacti. This mosaic of vegetation zones reflects the transitional nature of the Balcones Escarpment area and is consistent with other spring areas along the escarpment.⁴

Contributing Resource (1 contributing site)

Comal Springs is a site within Landa Park, a municipal park owned by the City of New Braunfels. On a limestone bluff, the nominated area includes the principal spring outlet west of Landa Park Drive, with a dozen spring outlets of various volume loosely dispersed beyond the nominated boundary east of Landa Park Drive. Three more spring outlets have been identified along Comal Creek and Comal River. During the 1930s, the principal spring and those located to the west were modified as part of a larger park development project carried out by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). WPA workers altered the spring outlets by rearranging rocks to make the springs more visible. They also created a channel with rock-lined retaining walls with which the spring flows were used to create Landa Lake. The rock retaining walls have been repaired as needed over the years, but no major alterations to the springs have been undertaken since the 1930s. Mature landscaping composed of anaqua trees (*Ehretia elliptica*) and ornamental plantings surround the springs. A gravel path parallels the rock-lined channel that leads toward Landa Lake. No non-contributing resources are associated with the Comal Springs site.

Current and Past Impacts

Comal Springs has been the site of prolonged and intensive use since the prehistoric period. Native American tribes camped around the springs for millennia. During the mid-nineteenth century, the springs were used to power a variety of industrial concerns, including a grist mill, saw mill, cotton gin, and textile factories. The springs provided hydroelectric power from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century. All the industrial activity took place downstream of the spring outlets. Starting in the late nineteenth century, Comal Springs was the centerpiece of a private park owned by Joseph Landa. The spring site was a popular picnic and recreation spot. During the 1930s, the WPA undertook park development projects that included altering the stream outlets, adding a rock-lined channel to use the spring to create Landa Lake, and planning and installing a rustic landscape design. In 1936, the City of New Braunfels acquired the park and has maintained it since that time as a popular recreation and tourist destination. As such, the Comal Springs site is protected from unsympathetic development.

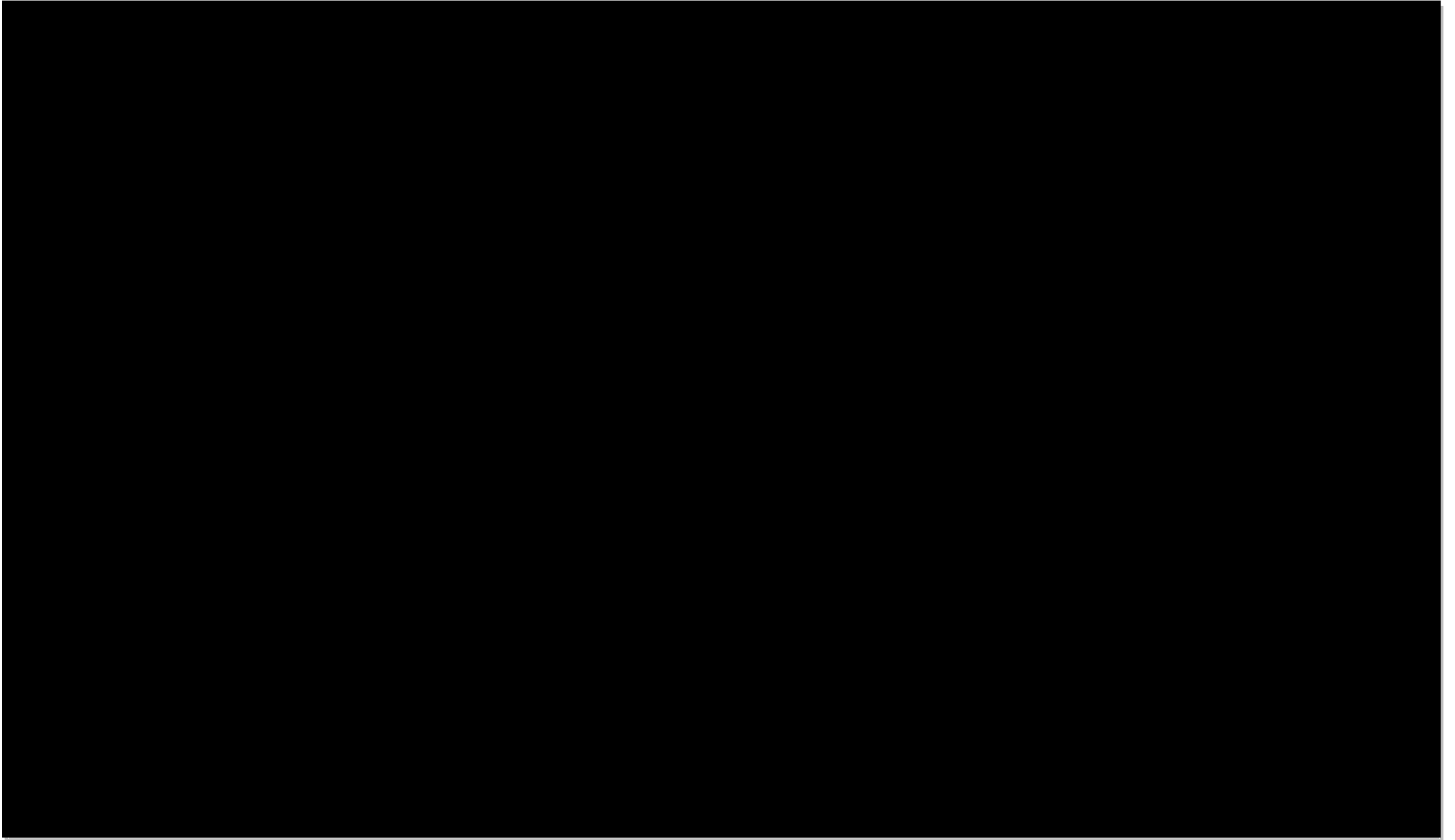
Integrity

The Comal Springs site has served a variety of purposes for millennia, with its most prolonged function being a campsite for various prehistoric and historic period Native American tribes. During the nineteenth century, the spring flows were used for industrial development, although the spring outlets do not appear to have been altered. During the late nineteenth century, a private park was established that encompassed the spring site. Since that time, alterations to the springs have been carried out once, when in 1937 the Works Progress Administration exposed the outlets by removing some rocks, added a rock-lined channel, and installed a rustic-style landscape design. Despite the changes inherent in transforming the spring site from a natural site to a one that is controlled, the rustic craftsmanship has minimally altered the feeling of the nominated site, which is a more enclosed space outside the view of the open park land east of Landa Park Drive.

⁴ John W. Arnn, III, Robert J. Hard, and C. Britt Bousman, "Archeological Investigations at the Landa Park Golf Course Pro Shop, New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas" Texas Antiquities Committee Permit No. 1757.(San Antonio: Center for Archeological Research, University of Texas at San Antonio, 1997): 2.

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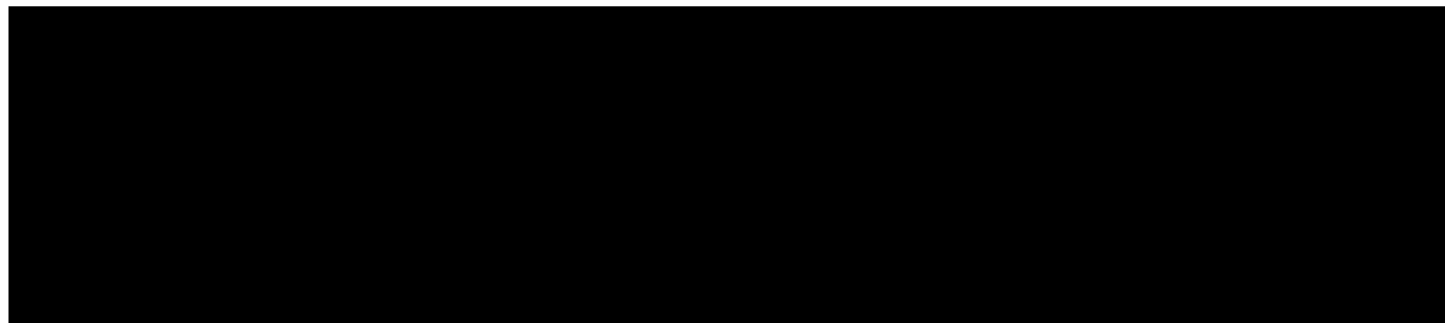
Previous Investigations



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Statement of Significance

Comal Springs served as a camping site for Native American tribes from the Paleoindian period (approximately 10,000 years before present) through the mid-nineteenth century. Spanish explorers discovered Comal Springs in 1691. The native tribes they found living there referred to it as *Conaqueyadesta*, translated as "where the river has its source." A Spanish expedition, led by Domingo Ramon, reached Comal Springs in 1716. Juan Espinosa, a member of the expedition, described "three principal springs," and noting that "groves of inexpressible beauty are found in this vicinity. The waters of the Guadalupe are clear, crystal and so abundant that it seemed almost incredible to us that its source arose so near. It makes a delightful grove for recreation." A short-lived Spanish mission, Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe, was located near the springs in 1756-1758. In 1764, the springs were visited by French explorer Louis Juchereau de St. Denis. Natural landmarks such as Comal Springs served to guide travelers, as natural defensive positions, as sources for food and water, and as markers of political boundaries or property ownership. The location is also identified as a *paraje*, as Spanish *entradas* and other travelers noted stopping at the location before crossing the Guadalupe River.⁵ The springs, which emerge from faults in the Balcones Escarpment, offered Native Americans, Spanish explorers, and travelers along El Camino Real de los Tejas a camp site that provided both water and food. During the nineteenth century, the spring flows were used to provide water power for a variety of industrial concerns. In 1898, Harry Landa opened a private park around the spring outflow sites, which the city of New Braunfels purchased in 1936 and has maintained as a municipal park. Comal Springs is nominated under Criterion A in the area of Exploration/Settlement at the state level of significance for its role in facilitating Spanish exploration during the seventeenth and eighteenth century under the *Historic Resources of El Camino Real de los Tejas* multiple property form. The period of significance spans from 1691 when springs were first encountered and recorded by Spanish explores, through 1821, marking the end of Spanish Colonial Period in Texas.



The earliest historic-period Native American tribes in the vicinity were collectively referred to as Coahuiltecan. In addition to inhabiting the Comal Springs area, they lived throughout south-central Texas. During the eighteenth century, the Coahuiltecan were threatened, and eventually extinguished, by disruptions that began with the intrusions of several Native American groups, including the Jumano, Tonkawa, Lipan Apache, and Comanche tribes. The Jumano initiated extensive trading activities with the Caddo in East Texas and the Trans Pecos groups to the west. The Tonkawa, Lipan Apache, and Comanche entered the area from the Great Plains.

European incursions into south-central Texas were initially rare. The first confirmed European expedition within the current boundary of Comal County took place in 1691, when Domingo T3ran de los R3os crossed the Guadalupe River near present day New Braunfels. Comal Springs offered a convenient place for travelers to pause as they journeyed along El Camino Real as it provided a stable supply of water. Segments of El Camino Real, including what became known as Nacogdoches Road, passed the location on the way to a crossing point on the Guadalupe River two miles south/southeast

⁵ The MPDF identifies *Paraje* sites as "travelers' campsites, were located at many river crossings and can provide clues to life on the trail." *Historic Resources of El Camino Real de los Tejas* Multiple Property Submission, Associated Property Types, 34.

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of Comal Springs. Its strategic location and long history of occupation by Native American tribes made it an ideal location for a Spanish mission. At a location near Comal Springs, the Spanish maintained Mission Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe from 1756 until 1758, at which date the Spanish authorities abandoned it in the face of Comanche raids.

Native American tribes who moved into the Comal Springs area during the historic period persisted in the area through the nineteenth century, although they, too, suffered extensively from depredations brought on by disease and warfare. Archeological investigations in the immediate vicinity of Comal Springs have uncovered sites associated with a variety of historic-period Native American tribes.

European settlement in the area resumed in 1825, when the Mexican government granted Juan M. Veramendi a large land patent near Comal Springs. Disruptions brought on by the Mexican war for independence during the 1820s and the Texas Revolution during the late 1830s hampered permanent European settlement. Finally, during the 1840s, an influx of immigrants brought permanent settlements to the Comal Springs area. Many of these were German immigrants who arrived in the area through efforts of the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas.

Spanish Exploration of the Comal Springs Area

The first confirmed European expedition in present-day Comal took place in 1691, when Domingo Teran de los Rios crossed the Guadalupe River and blazed a route that eventually became part of El Camino Real de los Tejas. A member of the expedition, Fray Damian Massanet, recorded that:

We stopped on the banks of the creek [Comal River] which flows into the river [Guadalupe]; the village was within the woods. Today we traveled five leagues and I named this site San Gervacio because we left it on his day. In the language of the Indians it is called *Conaqueyadesta*, which means “where the river has its source.”⁶

They also found extensive Native American settlements here that included Indians from as far away as New Mexico and Parral, Mexico.⁷

Establishment of a permanent European presence in the Comal Springs area required more than a century to accomplish. At least three expeditions paused at Comal Springs during the early eighteenth century. In 1714, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis came through south-central Texas on a mission assigned by the French governor of Louisiana, Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, to establish an overland trade route to Mexico. A second Spanish expedition, led by Domingo Ramon, reached Comal Springs in 1716. Juan Espinosa, a member of the expedition, described “three principal springs,” which are believed to have been those springs located along present-day Landa Park Drive. In 1721, an expedition led by Governor Marqués de San Miguel de Aguayo reached south-central Texas. Accompanied by an army of 500 men provisioned with four thousand horses, six hundred head of cattle, nine hundred sheep, and about eight hundred mules, he took his main force to present-day Bexar County. The group next marched to the Comal River and proceeded to a point beyond the San Marcos River, blazing a new route for El Camino Real along the way. After a meeting with St. Denis, Aguayo returned to San Antonio in Bexar County. Under his leadership, as of 1722, two missions, one sub-mission, one presidio, and one villa were founded in present-day Bexar County. Only a single Spanish mission, however, is known to have been established in the immediate vicinity of Comal Springs. In 1756, the Spanish placed Mission Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe here to proselytize Mayeye Indians. In just two years, it was abandoned because of frequent raids by Comanches.⁸

⁶ Brune and Besse, 129.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Haas, Oscar. *History of New Braunfels and Comal County, Texas, 1844-1946*, 15; Brune and Besse, 130.

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In August 1805, Felipe Enrique Neri (“Baron de Bastrop”) reached Nacogdoches, Texas, and proceeded to Bexar County, where he had a successful freighting business. He also received permission from Spanish authorities to establish a colony between Bexar and the Trinity River, including four leagues (17,713 acres) on the Guadalupe River and included the Comal River, but no settlements are known to have existed at Comal Springs.

In 1825, Juan Martin de Veramendi petitioned for eleven leagues of land grants under the Mexican colonization laws of 1825. A native of San Antonio, he became ninth governor of Texas under Mexican rule in 1832. Veramendi selected lands partly at the Comal, San Marcos, and San Pedro Springs, even though lands around the Comal already had been assigned to Bastrop’s earlier grant. It was at this time that Comal Springs and Carnal Creek received their name. *Comal* is the Spanish word for basin or flat dish; as a bowl-like valley surrounds the springs and flat, wide landforms surround the springs, these are presumed to be the inspiration for the name. Large-scale, permanent European settlement around Comal Springs, however, was disrupted again, this time by the Mexican war for independence during the 1820s and the Texas Revolution during the late 1830s.⁹

El Camino Real de los Tejas

Comal Springs is a historically stable water source in an area where water supplies can be scarce, an asset that made it attractive for settlement by native people for millennia. These tribal groups created a network of trails for commerce, travel, cultural exchange, and raids, and they used the spring locations and major streams as campsites and as permanent settlement sites.¹⁰ As Spanish explorers entered the area during the seventeenth century, they used the existing trail network as a basis for their own explorations and thus created *El Camino Real de los Tejas*, a major travel corridor across Texas during the Spanish colonial period. The road and its many tributaries served as a conduit of trade, a strategic military route, and a supply line for the numerous missions established by the Spanish during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including the short-lived Mission Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. A network of evolving routes, El Camino Real developed over many years, with the earliest routes emerging from the trail blazing efforts of explorers Alonso De Leon (1690), Domingo Teran de los Rios (1691), and Gregorio de Salinas Varona (1693). By the early nineteenth century, El Camino Real also was an important route for immigrants travelling into Texas from Louisiana Territory. Proximity to El Camino Real was crucial to the success of early Spanish settlements as it served as a lifeline to market centers, military protection, and religious and civic institutions.

Comal Springs offered a convenient place for travelers to pause as they journeyed along El Camino Real. The segment of the road that extended from Nacogdoches in East Texas to the springs area was known as Nacogdoches Road. In present-day New Braunfels, Nacogdoches Street is regarded as following the historic alignment of El Camino Real. It is approximately two miles south/southeast of the Comal Springs site. Caravans from Mexico headed to the Spanish missions in East Texas crossed the Guadalupe River at Nacogdoches Street. Caravans that arrived during the flood stage of the river were forced to wait to cross until the water level lowered back to normal. When the first New Braunfels settlers reached the area in 1845, they also used the Guadalupe River crossing.¹¹

El Camino Real remained the basis of a major transportation route through the mid-nineteenth century. Military troops used El Camino Real repeatedly as a supply line and transportation route during the Mexican and Texas revolutions and the Mexican-American War. Sections of El Camino Real also were used during the Civil War, when East Texas cotton growers began shipping their crops to San Antonio, Laredo, and Mexico. Following the end of the war, however, newer and shorter roads replaced large segments of El Camino Real. New markets shifted trade patterns from an east/west line of

⁹ Haas, 15-16; Brune and Besse, *Springs of Texas*, 129.

¹⁰ Dockall et al., 141.

¹¹ Haas, 80.

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travel to one that extended from the south to the north. Railroad construction during the late nineteenth century further altered transportation routes throughout Texas, rendering many historic road alignments obsolete. Portions of older roads remained in use for local use, but most historic corridors diminished with each passing year, leaving little more than faint vestiges of their once well-worn alignments.

Likely Appearance during Period of Significance (1691-1821)

Information about the historic appearance of Comal Springs is found in several sources. In 1716, while accompanying Domingo Ramon's expedition, Juan Espinosa wrote in his diary:

Soon we reached the passage of the Guadalupe which is made of gravel and is very wide. Groves of inexpressible beauty are found in this vicinity. We stopped at the other bank of the river in a little clearing surrounded by trees, and contiguous to said river. The waters of the Guadalupe are clear, crystal and so abundant that it seemed almost incredible to us that its source arose so near. Composing this river are three principal springs of water which, together with other smaller ones, unite as soon as they begin to flow. There the growth of the walnut trees competes with the poplars. All are crowned by the wild grapevines, which climb up their trunks. Willow trees beautified the region of this river with their luxuriant foliage and there was a great variety of plants. It makes a delightful grove for recreation, and the enjoyment of the melodious songs of different birds. Ticks molested us, attaching themselves to our skin.¹²

During the late 1840s, Dr. Ferdinand von Roemer and botanist Ferdinand Lindheimer explored much of Central Texas. About Comal Springs, Roemer wrote:

The springs of the Comal, which lay in a straight course about one mile distant from the city.... We had to cross Comal Creek to get there ... we came to a small, but extremely fertile plain on which dense patches of forests alternated charmingly with small enclosed prairies. A road made by the settlers for hauling the cedar trunks used in building their homes, ... was the only sign of human activity.... We suddenly heard near us the murmuring of rapidly flowing water, and a few moments later stood at the most beautiful spring I had ever beheld. The natural basin, about forty feet wide, was of incomparable clearness and on its bottom, aquatic plants of an emerald green color formed a carpet. Low shrubs of the palmetto, which I had learned to know at a less attractive place, namely in the dismal swamps of New Orleans, lined the banks. An old live oak, decorated with long festoons of grey Spanish moss, spread its gnarled limbs over the basin. This, however, is not the only spring of the Comal. Near it ... are four or six more springs of even greater volume of water and of equal clearness. Every one of them could turn a mill at its immediate source. All unite nearby and form the Comal which, unlike other streams does not experience a gradual growth, but is born a sizable stream.¹³

¹² Eckhardt, "Comal Springs and Landa Park"; Brune and Besse, *Springs of Texas*, 129.

¹³ Haas, 14-15. A stereoscopic view of the Comal Springs dating from about 1900 depicts a verdant landscape with a substantial river flowing through a wooded landscape. The precise vantage point from which the image was recorded is not known, but the image was entitled, "A Texas Eden, Landa's Park, New Braunfels, Texas." (See page 23). A photograph taken of the nominated area in 1928 indicates that the general form of spring outlet was not dramatically changed during the 1930s. (See page 24).

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Post-Spanish Period Settlement and Use

The area which now encompasses central Comal County, including New Braunfels, saw permanent Anglo and European settlement during the 1840s and 1850s. In 1836, the Texas Revolution resulted in the founding of the Republic of Texas. To pay off war debt and weaken political ties with Mexico, the new nation offered public land to Americans and Europeans willing to establish permanent settlements. This offer, in conjunction with political strife in their home country, enticed German noblemen and entrepreneurs to establish societies and immigration companies to organize mass migrations to Texas. German immigrants first arrived in Indianola in December 1844 and many of these new settlers congregated in German-founded towns such as Castroville and Fredericksburg, west and north of San Antonio. In 1845, Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels founded the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas and brought a massive influx of German immigrants into Central Texas. In San Antonio, John Rahm told Prince Solms about “Las Fontanas,” a place where Comal Springs formed the headwaters of a perpetually flowing river. With his first immigrants living in temporary, and unhealthy, conditions at the coast, and thousands more expected, Solms determined an inland way station was needed. Dan Murchison, a scout belonging to Captain Jack Hays’s company of Texas Rangers, piloted him to Las Fontanas during early spring 1845. On March 13, he entered into an agreement with Maria Antonio Garza and her husband, Rafael E. Garza, for 525 hectares of the Veramendi land grant around Comal Springs site for a sum of \$1,111.¹⁴

The first wagon of immigrants arrived on March 21, 1845 and camped on a bluff overlooking the Comal River. Prince Solms and his engineer, Nicholas Zink, selected a town site and designed the settlement to have an open square with streets radiating out at right angles. The original town included 342 lots, each with a narrow street frontage so that the town could remain compact and defensible yet provide street frontage to as many lots as possible. The following year, the local population had increased sufficiently to allow the formation of Comal County from the northern portion of Bexar County. In 1847, native Tennessean and plantation owner William Merriwether purchased a 480-acre (194-hectare) tract directly from the Veramendi family to start a water-powered grist mill, saw mill, and cotton gin. Merriweather’s African-American slaves dug a millrace to divert water for powering the mills. A portion of his tract eventually became today’s Landa Park.¹⁵

By 1860, the Comal Springs were powering seven grist, flour, and sawmills, as well as cotton and woolen factories, a paper mill, an ice plant, and a brewery. A large swamp that was located downstream of the springs was largely drained. In 1870, a water works was constructed to bring water to the community of Landa, and a municipal system for New Braunfels followed in 1886. Hydroelectric power was generated using spring flows from 1890 until about 1950. The International & Great Northern Railroad arrived in 1880 and contributed greatly to the industrial, commercial and economic growth of the city.¹⁶

Landa Park

In 1860, New Braunfels merchant Joseph Landa purchased Merriwether’s property around Comal Springs. Within a few decades the area become known as Landa’s Pasture and served as a popular picnic and recreation spot. Helen Gould, daughter of Jay Gould, primary stakeholder of the International & Great Northern Railroad primary stakeholder, was so impressed with its natural beauty that she asked Joseph’s son Harry to open it to the public, then asked her father to construct a railroad spur to the springs to accommodate visitors. In 1898, the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad also

¹⁴ Eckhardt, “Comal Springs and Landa Park”; Barile and Drake, Landa Street Bridge Project, 5.

¹⁵ Brune and Besse, *Springs of Texas*, 129; Barile, Kerri S., and Doug Drake. “Archeological Investigations at the Landa Street Bridge Project, City of New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas, CSJ: 0215-02-032.” Texas Antiquities Permit No. 2524. (San Antonio: SWCA, 2001), 5; Eckhardt, “Comal Springs and Landa Park.”

¹⁶ Brune and Besse, 129.

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constructed a line to the park. Landa's Park and continued to grow in popularity, and in the early 20th century a hotel, spring-fed swimming pool, and bathhouse called Camp Placid were built on site. In 1918, Camp Warnecke opened and offered cabins located along the Comal River for camping, swimming, and fishing. In 1927, Harry Landa sold his property to the Jarrett Investment Company for \$400,000, but the company was bankrupt by 1932, and the park closed. Residents and the New Braunfels Junior Chamber of Commerce organized a petition drive to raise funds for the city to buy the park. In May 1936, citizens voted three-to-one to save the park, and the city purchased the 128 acres for \$80,000. Immediately after the election, more than a thousand volunteers cleaned up the park, planted flowers, and began to renovate the facilities. During the late 1930s, the WPA constructed a new bathhouse (no longer extant), concession stand (Landa Haus), paved roads and bridges for \$60,000. The WPA also exposed the Comal Springs outlets by removing some rocks, added a rock-lined channel, and installed a rustic-style landscape design, all of which are in place today. Landa Park continues to function as a municipal park. The Comal Springs are concentrated in the northwest corner of the park and along the Comal River. While beyond the limited scope of this nomination, the New Deal Era development of Landa Park merits further study for possible nomination as a historic district.

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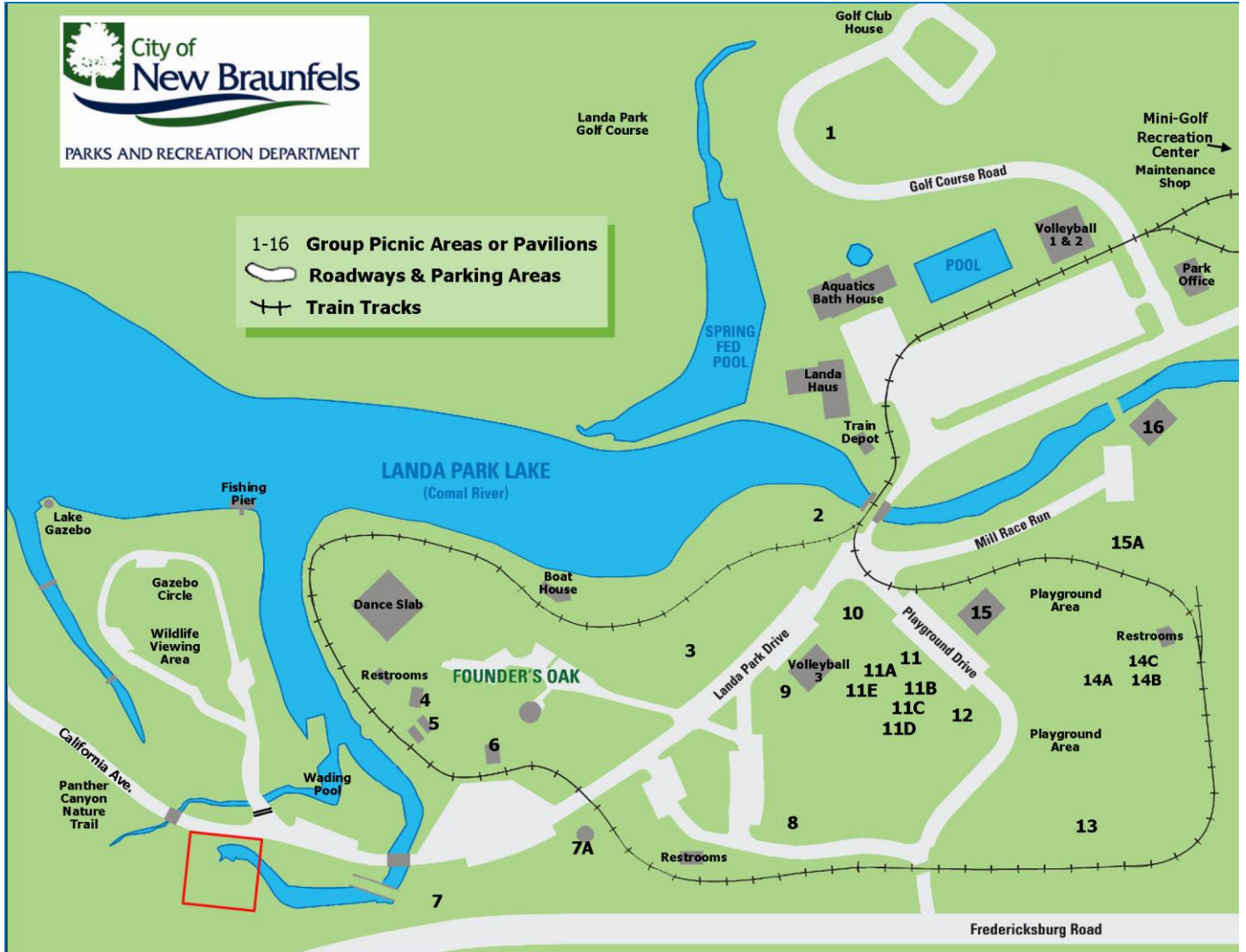
Google Earth Map
Accessed November 12, 2018



Comal Springs (Major Spring), New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas

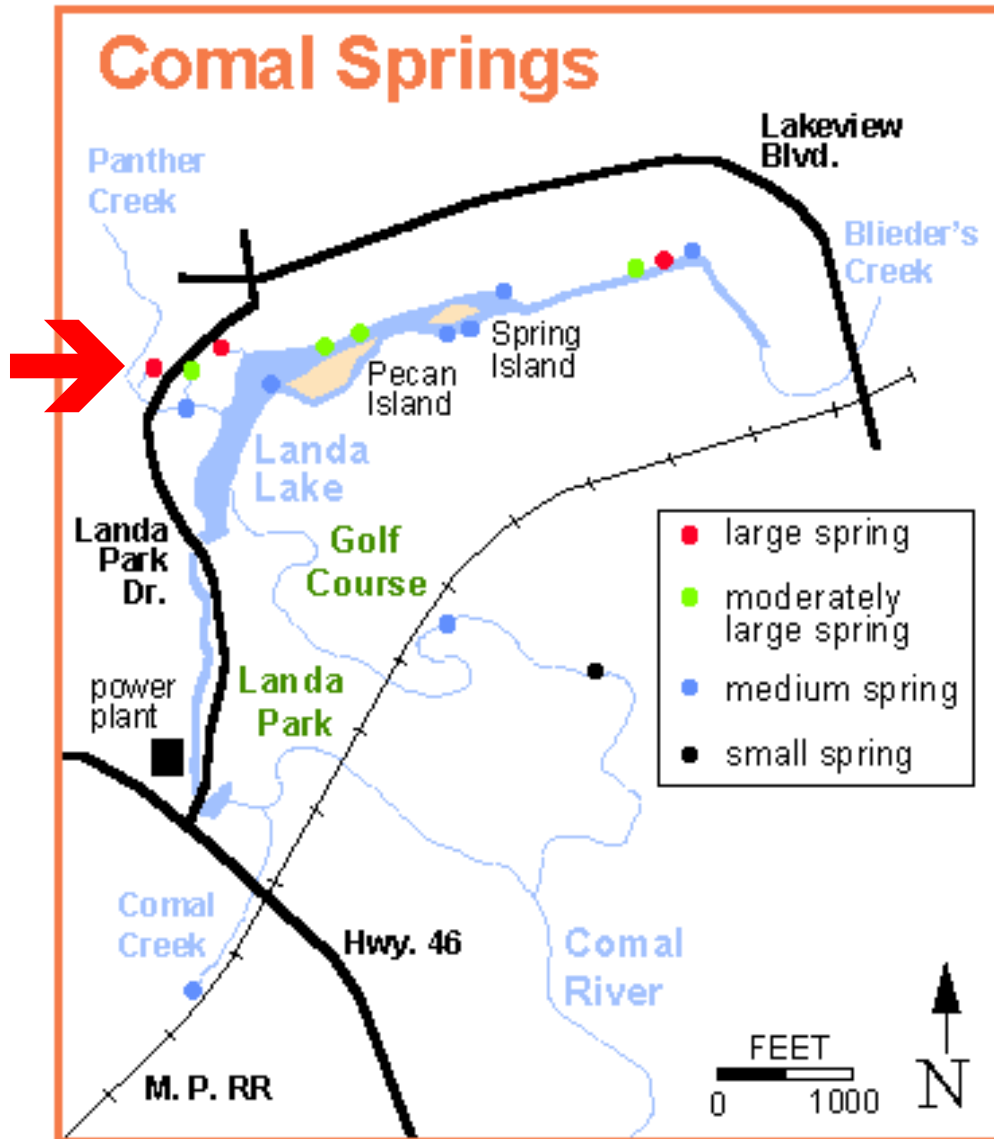
Landa Park Map

Nominated parcel outlined in red (lower left).



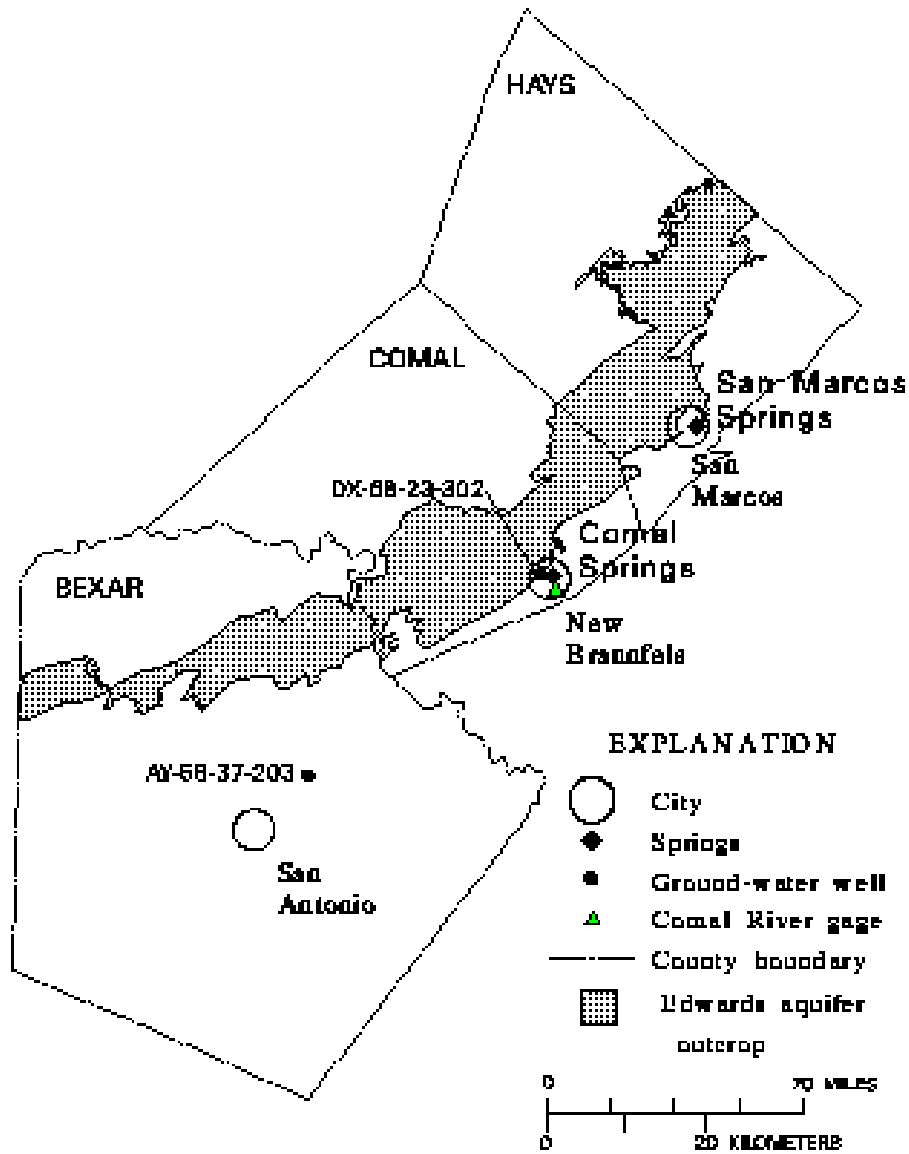
Comal Springs (Major Spring), New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas

Mapped locations of springs at and near the head of the Comal River system as depicted in Eckhardt (2011).
(Nominated parcel includes westernmost red dot)



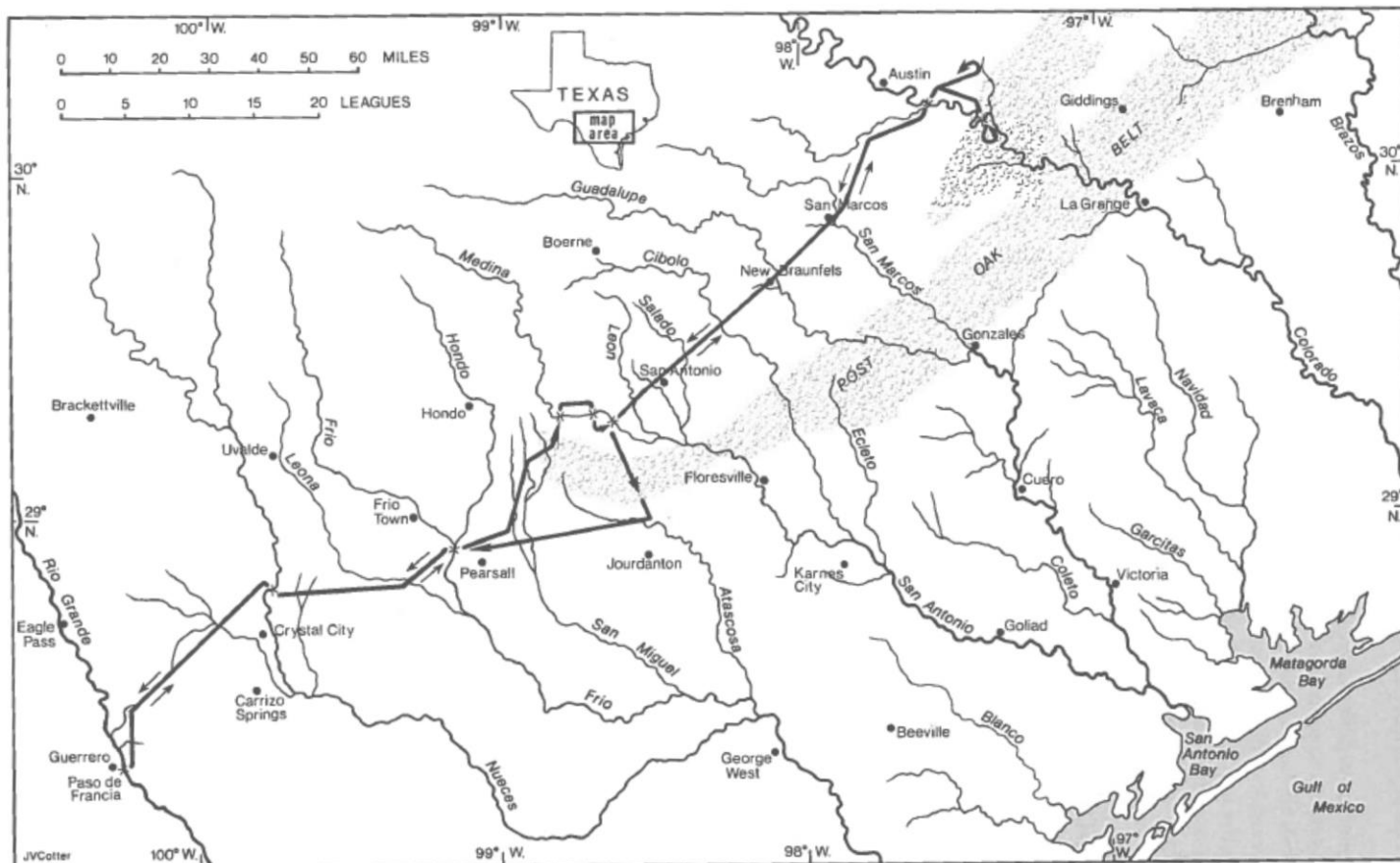
Comal Springs (Major Spring), New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas

Location of Comal Springs and the Edwards Aquifer.



Comal Springs (Major Spring), New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas

Map of the 1709 Espinosa, Olivares, and Aguirre expedition showing the location of New Braunfels, taken from Foster (1995).



Comal Springs (Major Spring), New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas

“A Texas Eden, Landa’s Park, New Braunfels, Texas” by Benjamin Lloyd Singley

Stereoscopic view of Landa Park c.1900

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s15591>



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“Landa Park Picnic, February 8, 1928”

Source: *The Edwards Aquifer Website* (<https://www.edwardsaquifer.net/comal.html>)

This photograph features the nominated property prior to WPA channelization.



Comal Springs (Major Spring), New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas

Photographs

All photos by Gregory Smith
November 2018

Photo 1
Looking north towards springs from edge of the nominated parcel



Comal Springs (Major Spring), New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas

Photo 2
Springs bubbling from rock, facing northwest



Comal Springs (Major Spring), New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas

Photo 3

Looking southeast from source of springs.
Boundary of nominated parcel extends to edge of regular-coursed wall on left.



Comal Springs (Major Spring), New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas

Photo 4

Lined creek south of nominated parcel, looking southeast towards bridges, pavilions, and other park structures.



Comal Springs (Major Spring), New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas

Photo 5

Lined creek and footbridge south of nominated parcel, looking northwest towards spring. Landa Park Drive on right.



- end -