

Part 2 –The San Antonio Hunting and Fishing Association and the Goeth Ranch

The San Antonio Hunting and Fishing Association had been established by Emerson Hough, C.A. Goeth, General Oscar Guessaz and Rollan Heikes for the purpose of founding a Sportsman's Paradise headquartered at the Trueheart-de la Garza ranch house. That concept ended up unsuccessfully because the pump erected to fill an artificial lake (Blue Wing Lake) was too small. It was operated by a steam engine and during an accidental fire, the plant burned down. Sometime after that the men decided to become farmers and to not pursue the sportsman's paradise concept. During the time the San Antonio Hunting and Fishing Association was in operation, the four owners, each acquired a mule to put on the property to assist in cultivating the fields. One of the mules was named, 'Babe.' For 21 years, Babe worked on the Goeth farm and in 1923 was relieved of his duties and put into retirement.¹

One of the owners, Emerson Hough, lived at the ranch during this period of time and for several years later. Hough was a popular author who wrote novels of the American west. Several of his novels were made into movies including the "The Covered Wagon" and "North of '36." "North of '36" was the story of the romance involved in driving the first herd of cattle on an overland cattle route through Texas and the Indian country to Abilene, KS. Hough conceived the story and the screenplay at the ranch home, while living at the ranch. The movie premiered at the Empire Theater in San Antonio in December 1924.²

The San Antonio Hunting and Fishing Association kept the property for only eight years and then on February 11, 1910 sold the 272 ½ acres to C.A. Goeth, one of the original founders of the San Antonio Hunting and Fishing Association.³ A portion of the description of the property included is as follows: "Also including a convenient right of way for a wagon road from the Corpus Christi road over the remaining estate of Margarita G. Trueheart, deceased, to the old Trueheart residence on

¹ "Babe-26 year old mule Living Memorial to Emerson Hough's Foresight," *San Antonio Express*, 10 June 1923, Section II, Sports and Markets.

² "Ghosts of Trail From San Antonio Live Again by Film-Land Magic," *San Antonio Express*, 7 Dec. 1924, pgs 1-2 B.

³ Bexar County Deed Records, Book 328, p.239+.

the 272 ½ acres herein sold and being the same land conveyed to the San Antonio Hunting and Fishing Association by deed on May 15, 1902. The deed record indicated that included in the sale were, "All lands with fences, 6 mules, 10 cows and calves, 40 head of Berkshire hogs as well as other livestock of every character and description, irrigation markings, pump plat, wagons, farm implements and machinery, feed stuffs, crops and other personal property and all real and personal property owned by the Association."⁴

On April 1, 1911, F.R. Newton sold to C.A. Goeth, an additional 26.4 acres of land out of the Trueheart Ranch for \$913.50. It was described as being out of the Jose Antonio de la Garza grant and referred to as "The Trueheart Ranch." This was said to have been sold by the Estate of Margaret G. Trueheart to the San Antonio Hunting and Fishing Association on May 15, 1902.⁵

Conrad Alexander Goeth, (1869-1953) was born in Blanco County, Texas, to Anton Karl Ludwig Goeth (1835-1912) and Otilie Fuchs (1836-1926). His first marriage was to Caroline "Carrie" Groos⁶ (1871-1932) with whom he had two children, Fred Carl Goeth (1895-1962) and Arthur Conrad Goeth (1900-1973). Caroline Groos was the daughter of Fredrich William Carl Groos and Gertrude Salinas. After the death of Carrie in 1932, C.A. Goeth married Nellie Skogard (1888-1967) in 1934. Although the Conrad Goeth family's primary residence was at 331 Adams in the King William Historic District of San Antonio, the family also maintained the large Trueheart farm which became known as the Goeth Ranch. However, on numerous documents and in the City Directories of San Antonio, Fred Carl Goeth, gave his address as Blue Wing Road.⁷

Conrad Goeth graduated from the University of Texas Law School in 1890. He established a legal practice with William A. Wurzbach under the name of Wurzbach and Goeth. In 1896, Goeth went into practice on his own and then established a partnership with H.R. Ihrle. Later he joined James E. Webb in the firm of Webb & Goeth. His son, Fred C. Goeth joined this practice in 1918 after graduating from the University of Texas Law School. Conrad Goeth was very active in civic and professional organizations in San Antonio which over the years included the following: Director of the South West Insane Asylum (San

⁴ Bexar County Deed Records, Book 211, pgs. 213-217.

⁵ Bexar County Deed Record, Book 356 p.256.

⁶ Bexar County Marriage Book L, p.473, Document 12652, 5 Sept. 1893.

⁷ WWII Draft Registration for Fred Carl Goeth, 1942, residence: C.A. Goeth & Sons Ranch, Blue Wing Road, south side of the San Antonio River. Registration card 2258.

Antonio State Hospital), President of the City Water Board, Trustee of the School Board, member of the Board of Directors of Groos National Bank, Chairman of the Democratic Party in San Antonio, Corresponding Secretary of the San Antonio Rifle Club, member of the Federal Centennial Committee for the City of San Antonio, and named by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as one of the four members of the Texas Board for Public Works.⁸

The Goeth Farm was a very popular gathering place for social events and for young people. In a 1917 Society column of the *San Antonio Light*, one event was described as young people enjoying swimming, dancing and other summertime pleasures including a camp out supper.⁹

C.A. Goeth & Son Stock Farm was said to be one of the oldest registered Hereford ranches in Bexar County. In a 1933 newspaper advertisement appeared a notice of "Registered Hereford Bulls for sale."¹⁰

Fred C. Goeth married Zelma Beatrice Halm, daughter of Adolph Halm and Nora Eunice Stancill Halm, at St. Mark's Episcopal Church on May 20, 1920.¹¹ They had one child, Frederick Carl Goeth, Jr., born 1 October 1923.¹² Fred Goeth, Sr. and his wife, Zelma, were very active in civic as well as social organizations. In 1942, Fred was appointed the area director of the San Antonio Defense Rental Agency responsible for controlling rents for 62 Texas counties. He was also Vice-President of the Central and South Texas Hereford Breeder's Association, the Vice-President and directing manager of the Willow Springs Golf Association, a member of both the San Antonio and Texas Bar Associations, an officer with the Ex-Student Association of the University of Texas and a member of the Order of the Alamo. Mrs. Fred Goeth was also very active socially and frequently was mentioned in society columns in San Antonio. She was a member of the board of the Sarah Roberts French Home for elderly women, a director of the San Antonio Art Institute, a volunteer with the Witte Museum, serving on numerous committees, a Red Cross volunteer, a 1st Vice-President

⁸ "SA Man On Works Board," *San Antonio Light*, 27 July 1933.

⁹ "Society," *San Antonio Light*, May 6, 1917.

¹⁰ "Cattle Chatter, *San Antonio Light*, 11 Jan. 1933, p.15.

¹¹ Bexar County *Marriage Book 27*, p.186, Document #63969.

¹² Frederick Carl Goeth, Jr. (1923-1985) graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in the Class of 1945. He married Vivette Gruver (1918-1972) of New York City. She was a Red Cross worker throughout the Pacific Campaign during WWII. There is a memorial marker "In Memory of LTC Frederick C. Goeth, U.S. Army, Class of 1945, at the United States Military Academy Post Cemetery, West Point, Orange County, NY. Vivette Goeth is also buried at the U.S. Military Academy Post Cemetery.

with the San Pedro Playhouse and an active member of the Women's Auxiliary of the San Antonio Bar Association. Many social events were held at the Goeth Ranch or "country home."

In addition to having a successful legal practice with his father, Fred Goeth, was actively involved in the Goeth Ranch. The ranch included a very extensive pecan orchard which may have had initial beginnings with James L. Trueheart. In 1931, the Goeth's hosted a training course open to local pecan growers at the ranch focusing on the best way to kill pests. The Goeth family was said to have two horsepower engines in the orchard for utilizing power to spray their trees. Fred Goeth also demonstrated irrigation methods by "lift" from a stream (San Antonio River). "The turbine at the dam in the river at the farm supplies the power for lifting the water from the stream to the orchard. From the power unit the water runs through the canal to the Blue Wing Lakes where the Blue Wing Lake Gun and Boat Club is located."¹³ In 1938, Fred Goeth was appointed to the committee in the Bexar County Pecan Growers Association to select and plant 12 pecan centennial pecan trees around the downtown area of San Antonio.¹⁴ On 18 February 1939, C.A. Goeth, Nellie S. Goeth and Arthur C. Goeth and his wife, Martha, deeded the 3.287 acres on which the Trueheart House (AKA Casa Vieja) was located to Fred C. Goeth. They also granted to Fred C. Goeth the perpetual right of ingress and egress over the surrounding land which they continued to own. C.A. Goeth, Nellie S. Goeth and Arthur C. Goeth and his wife, Martha Goeth, reserved the right to gather pecans from the trees along the ditch leading to the Blue Wing Lake. In addition, they reserved the right of use of the two windmills and the gasoline engines and the two cypress cisterns in conjunction in providing water for the employees and livestock on the C.A. Goeth & Sons Ranch.^{15 16}

In 1944, the Bexar County Chamber of Commerce sponsored a tour of six leading Bexar County farms for 41 chamber members. A San Antonio Express article, described the Goeth farm as follows: "Highly diversified farm featuring principally the native pecan grove and the improved pecan grove. In the improved pecan grove the trees are laid off on the contour in order that they can be irrigated in excessively dry

¹³ "Pecan Producers at Short Course; Entomology Expert Will Tell of Best Way to Kill Pests, *San Antonio Express*, 19 April 1931, p.2A.

¹⁴ "Plant Pecan Trees Monday, *San Antonio Light*, 1 March 1938, Part 2, p.4.

¹⁵ Bexar County Deed Record, Vol. 1679 pgs 638-639, 1939.

¹⁶ C.A. Goeth was the father of Fred Carl Goeth. Nellie Skogard Goeth was the second wife of C.A. Goeth and the step-mother to Fred Carl Goeth. C.A. Goeth had married Nellie Skogard on 6 Jan. 1934 in Chicago, IL. Arthur C. Goeth was the brother to Fred Carol Goeth. He had married Zelma Beatrice Halm on 20 May 1922 in Bexar County, TX. Arthur Conrad Goeth had married Martha Amanda Baits on 7 Oct. 1918.

weather. The water is secured from a dam installed over 25 years ago which has an unusual water lubricated turbine.”¹⁷ In December 1948, a record pecan crop was predicted by Fred Goeth who was said to have 800 paper-shell pecan trees on the San Antonio River which had been irrigated three times during the year.¹⁸

Due to their interest in historic preservation, Conrad Goeth and his son, Fred Goeth initiated activities to preserve the historic Trueheart house and ranch lands and to have it recognized nationally. A plaque was placed on the house by the Adina De Zavala Chapter of Daughters of the Descendants of the Heroes and Pioneers of the Republic of Texas and also the Texas Landmark Association which read, “Casa Vieja House built in 1848 by James L. Truehart, Texas Pioneer and Prisoner of Perote.” A formal ceremony was held at the Trueheart Ranch house on October 12, 1924. An automobile caravan of San Antonians went out to the ranch to place the tablet on the south porch of the home. The tablet was unveiled by Miss Annie Rose Trueheart and her two brothers, George W. and John Dudley Trueheart, grandchildren of James L. Trueheart and children of Mr. and Mrs. George Trueheart. Mr. C.A. Goeth, San Antonio attorney and member of the Texas Landmark Association presented the tablet. Dr. Frank Paschal, Sr. accepted on behalf of the Texas Landmark Association and Mrs. Adina De Zavala accepted for the “Daughters...” After the ceremony a reception was held in the house by Mr. and Mrs. Goeth.¹⁹

During 1936 a Historical American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the house was conducted. The HABS report included the following statements, “Casa Vieja is in excellent state of preservation and its present owners fully appreciate the value of this early Texas landmark. Other additions and changes are at present contemplated. The house is being occupied at present by Mr. and Mrs. Fred C. Goeth.” At that time the dome shaped rock kilns on the property located about four hundred yards from the house were documented and photographed. Also documented and photographed was the “picturesque stone archway that enabled the builders to carry lime from the kilns to the house.”²⁰

¹⁷ “Six Leading Bexar County Farms are Visited in First Tour by Chamber of Commerce Group,” *San Antonio Express*, 24 Sept. 1944.

¹⁸ “Record Crop of Pecans in Prospect”, *San Antonio Light*, 12 Dec. 1948, p.1

¹⁹ “Ranch House of '48 Marked,” *San Antonio Express* 12 Oct 1924, p.19. This article also includes a photo of the individuals involved in the ceremony.

²⁰ Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), No. Tex 323 and 324. See HABS photos in this Exhibit

In 1956, the San Antonio Conservation Society honored Mr. and Mrs. Fred C. Goeth with a Building Award for preserving the Goeth Ranch House on Blue Wing Road – the house that was built in 1848 by James L. Trueheart.²¹

Fred Carl Goeth died on 1 Nov. 1962 of a sudden coronary occlusion at the age of 67 while at the San Antonio Country Club. He is buried at the Mission Burial Park South in San Antonio, TX. His wife, Zelma H Halm is also buried at Mission Burial Park South.

The Goeth family retained the property for over 50 years as the property did not again transfer until 1963 when the Goeth Estate sold to W.B. Martin, Jr. The Goeths had added significant acreage to the farm. On 3/19/1963, 709.03 acres of land out of the Jose de la Garza survey was sold by the Groos National Bank, executors and trustees of the C.A. Goeth Estate, on behalf of Frederick C. Goeth, Jr. The land sold for \$157,897.09.²²

There are extensive files (54 boxes) titled the "Conrad A. Goeth Papers (1835-1955)" on deposit in the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Collection in San Antonio.

W.B. Martin kept the land for 20 years and then sold it on June 22, 1983 to Joseph and Constance Berry. The amount of acreage involved was 784.525 acres out of the Jose Antonio de la Garza grant with 322.946 acres out of the Goeth Estate. The selling price was \$1,100,000.00.²³

On January 10, 1996, Joseph and Constance Berry sold 785.045 acres of land out of the Jose Antonio de la Garza grant to the Bexar Metropolitan Water District. This included the house and farm outbuildings that comprised the Trueheart Ranch.²⁴

In 2010, a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places was submitted to the Texas Historical Commission. However it was determined not to be eligible for a National Register designation.

Also in 2010, the San Antonio Conservation Society obtained a Conservation and Preservation Easement on 2 tracts of land: 1) a 5.036 acre parcel and (2) a 0.409 acre parcel on which the arched

²¹ "They Tossed Lifeline to Old San Antonio," *San Antonio Express*, 20 May 1956, p.1-G.

²² Bexar County Deed Records, Book, 4909 , p.319+.

²³ Bexar County Deed Records, Book 2861 p. 1704.

²⁴ Bexar County Deed Records, Book 6640, p. 2004.

stone bridge is located. The Trueheart De La Garza House, the bunkhouse building, the brick smokehouse/kitchen portion of the Storage House, the brick Utility Building and the arched stone bridge are all subject to protection under the easement.²⁵

In January 2015, the San Antonio River Authority acquired 325.2831 acres of the property and is now the owner of the Trueheart-de la Garza house and associated structures.²⁶

Compiled by:
Pat Ezell
Historic Farms and Ranches Committee
San Antonio Conservation Society
September 2006, Revised January 2017

²⁵ Bexar County Deed Records, Book 14547 p.379+.

²⁶ Bexar County Deed Records, Book 17064 p.356+.