

## → RUNNING BRUSHY MIDDLE SCHOOL



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### History of Running Brushy (the town)

The first post office in the area know now as Cedar Park was established in February, 1874, in the early town of Running Brushy, on a creek bearing the same name. John Sutton served as postmaster of Running Brushy to February 1876, until the appointment of Mrs. Harriet Cluck in December 1874. Eight years later, in 1882, the post office name was changed to Brueggerhoff. Landford I. Crumley (1882-1884) and Wesley C. Isaacs (1884-1887) served as postmaster at Brueggerhoff. In 1887, the name was again changed to Cedar Park. Early Cedar Park postmasters were Wesley C. Isaacs (1887), William B. McKeown (1899), Emmett Cluck (1892), Ora V. Cluck (1929), and David A. Cluck (1930).

The western portion of the territory, which became Williamson County in 1848 was still the hunting grounds of hostile Indian tribes, and sparsely settled at that time. Earlier, in hopes of encouraging settlement, Captain John J. Tumlinson and his company of 60 Texas Rangers built a fort on nearby Block House Creek in 1836 from which they could patrol and protect families from Indian attacks. Believed to have been the first building erected in present Williamson County, the fort was built at the request of Major Robert McAlpin Williamson, for whom the county would later be named. After only two months of occupancy, however, the Rangers had to abandon the fort when they were recalled to Bastrop. They were needed to cover the retreat of frightened families fleeing their homes and seeking refuge in safer quarters as Santa Anna's army advanced into Texas in his attempt to quell the Texan's fight for independence. This flight, known as the Runaway Scrape, continued until news came of Santa Anna's defeat at San Jacinto. When Rangers finally returned to Block House in 1837, they found the fort had been burned by Indians.

By the mid-1850's and 1860's, although the threat of Indian raids still remained, a few families had moved into the area. They were mostly farmers from Kentucky and Tennessee. Finding the soil and brushy woodland unsuitable for cultivation, they planted cotton, corn, wheat and vegetables in the thin black soil along the numerous streams. Later, in the 1870's, the cattle industry began to flourish. One of the early cattle barons was George Washington Cluck, whose wife and family members would become postmasters at Running Brushy, Cedar Park and Anderson Mill.

Among other early residents in the area was historian, Noah Smithwick. At the age of 89 he wrote "The Evolution of a State", from which much of our knowledge of mid-nineteenth century Texas and Williamson county history is derived.

Dr. Benjamin Tomas Crumley, believed to be part Cherokee Indian, was a highly regarded physician who lived at Buttercup. He was born in South Carolina in 1822. After a trip to France, he attended college, and lived for a time with Indians studying their medical use of herbs. "Doc" Crumley, whose Indian name was Tecumseh, wore his hair in two long braids. He collected herbs and roots from which he prepared many of his medicines. In 1879 he married Lou Rife, and later moved to Lampassas County by 1890.

Another notable character was Harriet L. Standefer, wife of George W. Cluck. She had come to Texas from Cherokee County, Alabama with her parents in 1847, when she was one year old. She was a guest at the inauguration of Governor Sam Houston on December 21, 1859, and later became the first Texas woman to ride up the Chisholm Trail. Harriet met her future husband at a dance and married him in Williamson County on June 25, 1863. By 1871 they had three young children and Harriet was expecting the fourth. George was planning a cattle drive to Abilene, Kansas, but was tormented by the thought of leaving his family at home to fend for themselves. Harriet made the startling decision to accompany him on the drive.

In the spring of 1871, a group of sixteen, including the Cluck family and their trail drivers, set out for Abilene with two large herds of cattle. After several frightful encounters with cattle rustlers, Indians, and floods on the Red River, they reached Abilene that fall. Harriet's fourth child, Euell Standerfer Cluck, was born there on October 17, and the family remained in Abilene for the winter.

When they returned to Williamson County in the spring of 1872, George W. Cluck purchased 320 acres on Running Brushy Creek and built a log cabin there where they enjoyed an inexhaustible supply of water from the spring which fed the creek. Since the family increased by eight more children after their return from Kansas, it was not long before a larger home was built.

Postal service from Austin Northwest to Lampasas initially began in 1852, though it was not until February 1874 that a post office was established at Running Brushy. Before that time mail was delivered by a two-horse hack and left at homes, stores, taverns, and any place accessible to the public. The first post office was established at Running Brushy in February 1874, and in December of the same year Harriet Cluck assumed the duties of postmaster. Her salary ranged from three to four dollars a month, depending on a percentage of stamps cancelled.

Through the years the Clucks purchased additional land until they owned more than a thousand acres. Rock from a limestone quarry on their property furnished material for several important Texas buildings including, among others, an Austin post office, a University of Texas library, the Ross Sterling home near Houston, and trimmings of the Hermann Hospital in Houston. In the 1930's, using funds from the Civil Works Administration, the Anthropology Department of the University of Texas explored an Indian midden (mound) located near the old Cluck home and

estimated to be at least 9,000 years old. A wealth of material was recovered before Mr. Cluck withdrew permission and work was discontinued. It was reported that he had allowed the exploration with the stipulation that there would be no work on Sundays, and when one of the crew was caught at the site on Sunday the project came to an abrupt halt.

Development of railroad systems in the United States which began in 1850 greatly stimulated settlement of the western frontier, however, few lines were built in Texas until after the Civil War. It was 1882 before the Austin and Northwestern Railroad Company narrow gauge line reached Running Brushy. At the insistence of railroad officials, the station was renamed Bruegerhoff. Emmitt Cluck, son of George W. and Harriet Cluck, is credited for having suggested the name of Cedar Park which the post office adopted five years later in 1887.

With the arrival of the railroad, assurance of more efficient means of transporting goods to and from market brought a new wave of settlers who could no longer be totally dependent on oxen, mules and wagons for their livelihood. A depot was built, with a small, well-kept park and pavilion. Large groups of people would come from Austin on special trains to dance and picnic. A regular visitor arriving by train was the travelling salesman, or "drummer", as he was known. He would make his rounds of the stores, eat a meal at the hotel, then board the next train and go on to another town. Often, if no train was available, he would hire a driver and rig at the livery stable for twenty-five cents.

The Austin and Northwestern railway ran from Austin to Burnet through the Williamson County communities of Rutledge (Pond Springs), Running Brushy, White Stone, Block House, Bagdad (Leander), and Liberty Hill, with several flag stops in between. In 1885, a sixteen mile spur was built from Burnet to Granite Mountain, and 15,700 flat cars of granite from the quarry there were transported by train through Brueggerhoff to Austin to be used to build the present Capitol Building.

What was once the town of Running Brushy changed little for one hundred years. In 1970, Cedar Park had only 125 residents. In the next 20 years the population had increased to 5,161; and by 1998 was estimated to be 13,659. Vast cedar forests, large farms and ranches have been rapidly replaced by commercial and residential development. Along with many of the streams and branched which attracted early settlers, Running Brushy Creek and the spring from which it originated have now disappeared. Running Brushy Middle School will perpetuate the memory of the early history of Cedar Park.

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