

ROUND TOP RIFLE ASSOCIATION HALL

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“In 1921, the purpose for which this corporation is formed is the support and encouragement of innocent out-door sports, such as bicycle riding, target and trap shooting, open air athletics, games, dancing and others of a like character. The term for which it is to exist is fifty (50) years.” So states the charter of the Round Top Rifle Association of Fayette County, Texas. By 1955, the purpose was generally the same: shooting, target shooting, practice for efficiency, and general amusement. In 1970 the charter term for the period of its duration had been changed to a perpetual term.

The Round Top Rifle Association Hall was built in 1912. The hall is located five hundred yards past the town of Round Top on the left side of the Round Top-Shelby road. The gate entrance was once on the south side for horses and buggies to go through. There was also a crossing from the hall to the Carmine road, entering on the west corner. This road was a short cut to Carmine for people to use instead of going around Round Top to get to the Carmine road. There was also a foot walk left of the Round Top-Shelby road. The main entrance into the hall was on the southeast side facing the road. Other

entrances were at the corner of the east side and at the northeast side. The band stand was on top of the main door entrance. The bull pen was in the front section of the hall. This section was for people that did not dance. These people watched the dancers and got in free. On each side of the hall were three rows of bleachers with an aisle between them. These were for mothers to watch their sons or daughters dance. On the south corner of the hall was a hat and cloak stand. Ladies and gentlemen paid a nickel for every item that was put in the stand. A man got a ticket with a number on it and put the ticket on his belongings. The checker would also have a ticket with the same number. When the person wanted their belongings back he had to give his ticket back to the checker. On the north side was a ladies' room, where there were benches and mirrors for girls to freshen up. The baby room, beside the ladies' room, was for mothers to keep their babies. There were benches nailed to the wall and pallets on the floor for the babies to sleep. Women went in and out of the babies' room to go to the outhouse, a few feet further north. The kitchen was on the east side of the hall. There were steps leading up to the kitchen because it was on a hill. Pies, cakes, sandwiches, and coffee were sold in the kitchen. The fruit stand was on the upper east side of the hall. Bananas, apples, watermelon, peaches, and pears were generally sold. Further south was a concession stand, in which hand fans, handkerchiefs, whistles, and flying mockingbirds on a stick were sold. This stand was mainly operated for the children. South of the main entrance was a milk shake stand where milk shakes were sold. Chips of ice, milk, a little homemade ice cream, and sometimes flavoring and coloring were placed in a container; someone put his hand on top of the container and shook it.

The bandstand outside was for the July 4th celebration; the band would play in it. Sometimes a flag was placed on top of the band stand or perhaps on a post on the right hand side of the stand. On the south corner of the hall was an ice cream stand. The ice cream mixer was hand-cranked. The milk was obtained from their own cows or their neighbors' cows. Each glass of ice cream sold for a nickel.

The hall members had first choice of the operation of all of these stands. If they did not want them, outsiders could have the stands. On the west corner of the hall was a barbeque pit. It was a trench dug in the ground with wire on top, on which to put the meat. Further west was a saloon. Half of the saloon was under a gallery to keep out the sun. A glass of beer cost a nickel. An eight-gallon keg cost two dollars. The wooden kegs were hauled from Fayetteville on a wagon with two mules pulling. When the wagon got to the hall, the people hollered and whistled that the beer wagon was here

again. The bowling alley was on the west side of the hall next to the saloon. It was open to everybody. The bowling balls were from size four inches to sixteen or seventeen inches in diameter. The bigger balls had holes in them in which to place the fingers. The smaller balls were rolled from the bowler's palms. Two boys were in back of the pins to get the balls and roll them back to the bowler in the trough and to set up the nine wooden pins. Target shooting took place on the northwest side of the hall. One hundred feet in front of the ring was a post with nails extending outward for the shooters to rest their rifles on. Ring twelve was bullseye, then eleven, ten, nine, in another ring; seven, six, five, in another ring; and three, two, one, was the last ring. If a shooter hit a bullseye, a rooster would shoot up which was triggered by a mechanism. A bank of dirt was in back of the ring to stop the stray bullets.

Trap shooting was operated in the northwest area. The clay pigeons, which the people called blue rocks, flew like birds. A wall was built over the traps so that the shooters could not see which way the pigeons were going to fly. The person who shot the most pigeons got a prize.

The carousel contained horses on a merry-go-round. It had a hand-turned organ, and it cost a nickel to ride it. There were rings which you could catch to get a free ride. A person could not tell which was a free ring. If nobody was riding the carousel, the owner would call out "free ride," and everybody would jump on.

A fence was built around the hall to keep the horses away from the hall ground. A few yards away from the fence were branches, to which were tied the horses, buggies, and wagons. At the regular dances, the members had to wear their uniforms and caps. They had to act mannerly, or else the trustees would take them off the ground, and they could not come back that night. Some people would walk in groups or with their families to a dance. Others would be on horseback, or in buggies or wagons. If they brought horses, they would bring feed along for them. The dances would start around sundown and would end at three or four o'clock in the morning. People would not buy a dance ticket at the door when they came in; they had to pay when they danced. The girls got in free. Tickets were a piece of cloth of different colors. The boys had to dance with their hats off. At twelve o'clock, the ladies had first choice of anybody they wanted to dance with.

The bands that played were the Happy Cousins, Etzel's Band, and Baca's Band. The bands got eighteen to twenty dollars a night. People could also drink beer at all times. There was no curfew at twelve o'clock.

The Masked Dance was usually held in February. The public

would dress up with masks or hats. There would be three prizes for ladies and three for gentlemen. After the prizes were given out, the dance began.

The Schuetzen Fest was only for members and their families. In the morning the men would shoot for King. Each man had to pay for every shell, and every time he shot he put money in a pot. The person who shot the best would be King, and would get the pot of money. The man who shot the least score would have to buy a treat for everyone. At noon everybody would eat a free meal. When the children came, they got a free tablet, ruler, or eraser. This was called Kinderspiel. In mid-afternoon the ladies would bowl for the public. They would agree amongst themselves how much they would pay the boy to set up the pins. They would also have a pot to put money in. The highest bowler got the pot. Around six they would also have a pot to put money in. The highest bowler got the pot. Around six they would crown the King. The crown was a wreath of cedar with flowers in it. The band would play, and every member could be in the march with the King leading. After the march, the band would play for the dance. At the Schuetzen Fest and at all meetings, the members wore brown uniforms with shoulder cups. The brown cap had a short black visor and a flat crown. Each member wore a red, white, and blue striped pin-on badge six to seven inches long with gold and yellow fringe at the bottom of the badge which was two inches long. A button was on top of the badge, with Round Top Schuetzen Verein and a date on the button.

At the July 4th celebration, there would be two bands playing at different locations in the morning before the parade. There would be prizes for the floats, comicals, and horseback riders. At noon, there would be a barbeque dinner. There would also be a dance at night. Most people came in wagons. Some people would stay all night, so they brought some of their own food and feed for their horses.

The Christmas tree for the Christmas Feast had candles, apples, oranges, candy, and cookies on it. The members would sell tickets for the prizes they had under the tree. After the prizes were auctioned off they took the candy, apples, oranges, and cookies off the tree and gave them first to the children, then mothers, girls, boys, and then men last. A dance was held at night.

The Skat Tournament was for the public. The people would play cards. There would also be prizes for the winners. At Easter, there would be an Easter egg hunt for the little children. People would also play baseball on the road across from the hall. At night there would be a dance.

The most changes at the hall took place in the 1920's. The

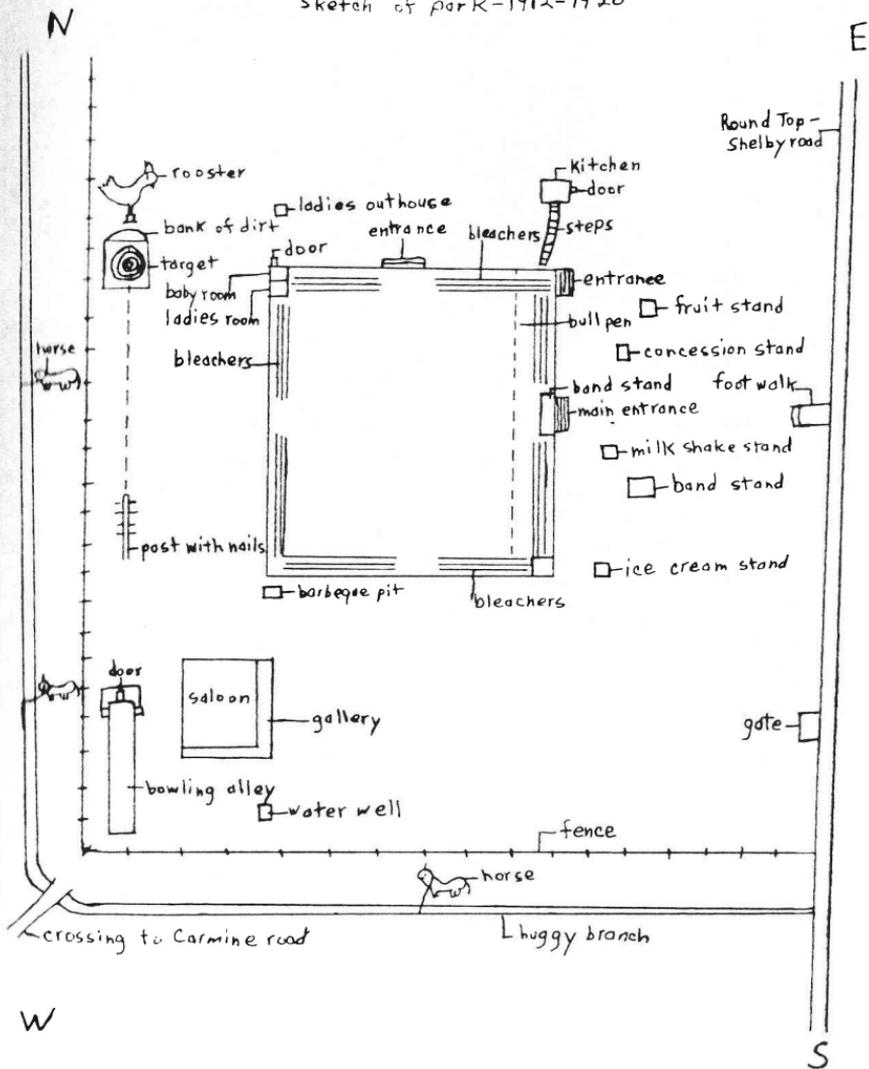
entrances to the hall are on the east and north sides of the hall. A little road runs all around the hall. The main entrance of the hall is on the south side. Other entrances are on the southeast, northeast, and west side. The ticket booth is at the left from the main entrance. On the northwest side is the bandstand. On the inside tables are placed all around the hall. A mens' and two ladies' rooms are located on the north corner of the hall. The barbeque pits are on the northeast side with a kitchen next to the pits. The water pump with water fountains are on the east side. The bingo stand is on the southeast side in front of an entrance. The band stand is further southeast beside the bingo stand. The mens' and ladies' outhouses are on the south corner.

Regular dances are held on the third Saturday of each month. On all the days except Saturday, the dances start at eight-thirty and end at twelve-thirty. On Saturday the dances start at nine and end at one. At the Schuetzen Fest the members do not have Kinderspiel, bowling, and no longer wear their uniforms. The celebration on July 4th has not changed much--there are still prizes, a barbeque dinner, and a dance at night. At Christmas the little children form a line and Santa Claus gives them candy. There is a dance at night. The Skat tournament is the same as in the early days. At Easter, there is still an Easter egg hunt for the little children, and a dance at night for the young people. The Antiques Fair is held twice a year. It occurs on the first Saturday and Sunday in April and October. The antique sellers come from all over the country. Each seller has a booth in which to put his antiques. People from all around come to look and buy the antiques.

The first Stew Cooking Contest started in October of 1974, and has now become an annual affair. The people buy or bring their utensils and go to every contestant and get a bowl of free stew. The person who has the best stew wins a prize. Bingo cards, skat and domino tables are available all afternoon. In the evening there is a twelve-man beer drinking contest. Any person can enter it. The person who drinks the most bottles of beer of their own choice in an hour is the winner. The winner gets the prize. Before the dance at night, a member of the hall bids on a jar of the winner's stew.

The Articles of Amendment, the Charter, and the Constitution and By-Laws of the Round Top Rifle Association Hall can be found in the Round Top State Bank. Even though there are many changes from the earlier days, the hall is trying to keep all of the earlier activities alive.

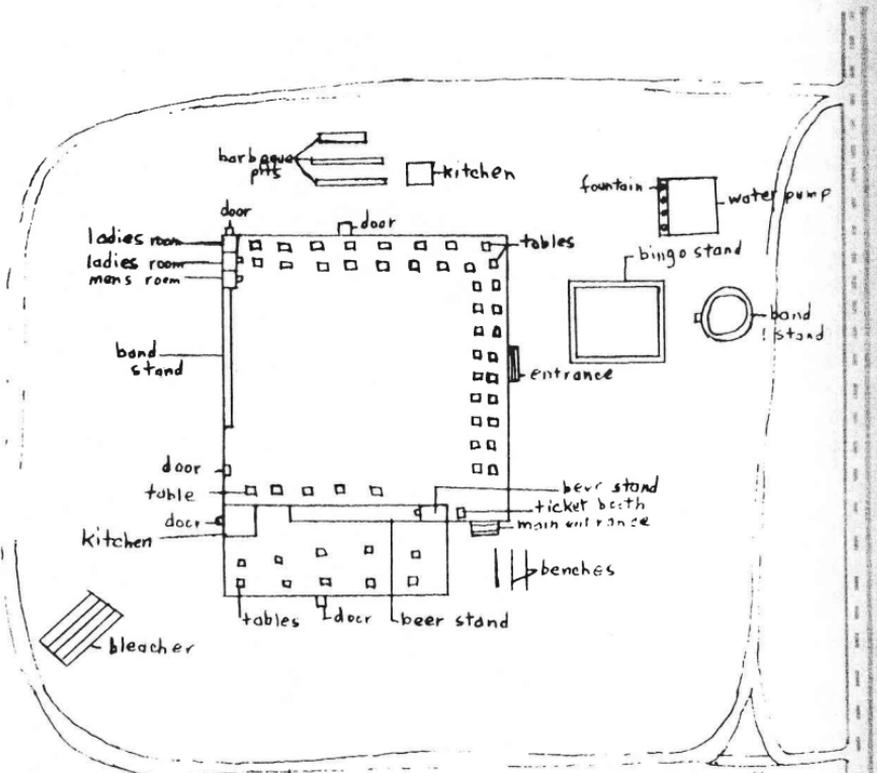
Sketch of park-1912-1920



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mens outhouse
Round Top
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