

## History of Lindheimer Plaza

### Park's Origins

Lindheimer Plaza appears as a small “island” in the 500 block of Comal Street, New Braunfels, Texas. Busy city streets surround the park’s .28 acres and hundreds of people pass it each day. The Plaza is located in a residential area, just 1/10 mile from the Ferdinand Lindheimer Haus and within walking distance of New Braunfels’s Historic Main Street District. Although it is a small park, Lindheimer Plaza is rich in history and cultural charm.

In 1845, Ferdinand J. Lindheimer, “Father of Texas Botany”, was given a parcel of land on the Comal River by the Adelsverein. Lindheimer had met the first group of German emigrants at the Texas coast in 1844 and served as a guide for their journey to New Braunfels. Prince Carl, Commissioner-General of the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas, more commonly known as the Adelsverein, awarded Lindheimer the property for his services to the early settlers. Prince Carl also encouraged Lindheimer to establish a botanical garden in the new German community. Before 1850, however, the Adelsverein sought to extend Comal Street and, to do this, needed to traverse Lindheimer’s Botanical Garden. Lindheimer granted permission for the street’s extension and received two additional town lots in exchange. By 1852, Lindheimer had built a Fachwerk home overlooking the banks of the Comal River. He lived there until he died in 1879, just a short distance from the park land that would bear his name.

What we now know as Lindheimer Plaza originally served as a junction point on the busy, early streets. Comal Street connected the route from the Guadalupe River Ferry to nearby town markets making transit easier. Comal Street forms a southwestern boundary for Lindheimer Plaza; while Lindheimer Avenue arcs to form the Plaza’s northern boundary. Guada Coma Street, formerly Ferry Street, forms a southeastern boundary.

Lindheimer Plaza’s origins as a City Park date to 1928. The Women’s Civic Improvement Club (WCIC) reminded the City Board of Commissioners that they had “reserved the privilege of renaming the new park” located at the former Comal Street hay market when the Club “agreed to build the curbing”. The Board of Commissioners Minutes further tell us that the Club’s Secretary, Sophie Schuenemann, reported that “the Club voted as a name, *Lindheimer Park*, in honor of a very worthy pioneer” of New Braunfels.

### Features

Cement curbing ordered by the Women’s Civic Improvement Club established Lindheimer Plaza’s boundaries and displays their name today, over 85 years later. Yet curbing was not the only contribution of

the ladies. They requested suitable fill be brought to the site as soon as it was available. Suitable plants required suitable fill.

The ladies' request for suitable fill also had an impact of perhaps unforeseen consequences. As more streets in the area were paved, proper drainage continued to challenge New Braunfels. The open park land preserved permeable cover.

Currently, Lindheimer Plaza is sparsely planted. Three mature Oaks (two *Quercus virginiana* and one *Quercus texana*) serve as companions to an aging Desert Willow (*Chilopsis linearis*). The old Desert Willow was listed by the Texas Registry of Big Trees in 1984 as the largest Desert Willow of record; a record it no longer holds. More recently, younger trees have been added, including Eve's Necklace, (*Styphnolobium affine*) and additional Desert Willows. Although the older Desert Willow is in decline, it is lovingly tended by the community. Fresh mulch was recently placed a safe distance from the tree's trunk. Earlier this year, a local arborist voluntarily removed ball moss by hand.

A star-shaped flower bed adds another feature unique to Lindheimer Plaza. Created in 1962 by the Garden Club Council of New Braunfels, the flower bed's centerpiece is a monument dedicated to Ferdinand Lindheimer. About 3' high and of rock construction, the monument's marker reads:

In Memory of  
Ferdinand J. Lindheimer  
"A Naturalist of the Frontier"  
Erected by New Braunfels  
Council of Garden Clubs, 1962

Points of the star flower bed measure 21.9 sq. ft. and now display *Gaura lindheimeri* and other plants. When the flower beds were established in 1962, bluebonnets were the pride. Bluebonnets were again planted in 1986 to mark the Texas Sesquicentennial.

#### Supporting the Park's Heritage

This small park reflects New Braunfels history so completely that generations following the WCIC have risen without fail to champion Lindheimer Plaza. With certitude reminiscent of the WCIC and vigor analogous to later environmentalists, Mrs. Leonie Tays and the Guada Coma Garden Club spoke to save Lindheimer Plaza.

In 1951, the newly formed Guada Coma Garden Club vigorously worked to prevent Lindheimer Plaza from becoming a utility substation. Club President Mrs. Tays asserted that “Landa Park alone did not adequately meet the need for playground areas for children of New Braunfels” and that “it is desirable to have play areas in various sections of the city. We cannot see destroying one of the few such places that the town now has, especially not for a commercial venture such as this is”, Mrs. Tays wrote.

Mayor Nuhn answered, saying that the club’s stand would be considered. “There will be some disruption of plans” the mayor stated, since “the park was designated an ideal location by utilities engineers.” Mrs. Tays and Guada Coma Garden Club prevailed. Lindheimer Plaza remained a park.

Preservation of Lindheimer Plaza as park land has retained a public space close to the old Lindheimer Haus. Over the years, the space has been used for celebratory events. In 1964, the Texas State Historical Survey Committee placed a marker at Lindheimer Plaza honoring “Texas Germans in the Civil War”. Again, the park’s location is important. The marker was placed at Lindheimer Plaza because of its proximity to the Comal River, where Confederate troops camped.

When the City of New Braunfels celebrated Ferdinand Lindheimer’s 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday in 2001, Lindheimer descendants came from throughout the United States to participate. Naturally, many visited Lindheimer Plaza where commemorative photographs were taken.

In early 2013, New Braunfels Garden Club member Mrs. Peggy Hoffman approached the New Braunfels Parks and Recreation Advisory Board regarding revitalization of Lindheimer Plaza. A partnership evolved and new stone benches were placed. In October, the City held a ceremony to mark the revitalization effort currently underway. Updated irrigation will soon be installed and the proposal includes incorporating various Lindheimer plants and new paths.

### Usage

Since its origins, Lindheimer Plaza has been a vital part of New Braunfels history. Today, visitors to the park are often greeted by those living nearby. An estimated 350 – 500 visitors come to Lindheimer Plaza each year and when events occur, the numbers greatly increase. This context gives us a sense that Lindheimer Plaza will remain vital for future generations.

## Lindheimer Plaza Timeline

- 1844 First German emigrants land near Indianola, Texas, and begin their journey to New Braunfels. Ferdinand Lindheimer is a guide
- 1845 New Braunfels, Texas, is founded. Established by German noblemen, the Adelsverein was organized to direct German colonization in the Republic of Texas
- 1845 Ferdinand J. Lindheimer was given land by Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels in recognition of his services as guide for first emigrants
- 1849 Adelsverein extends Comal Street through Lindheimer's Botanical Garden and passing what would become Lindheimer Plaza. Lindheimer is given Town Lots 285 and 286 in exchange for street rights
- 1879 Death of Ferdinand J. Lindheimer
- 1915 Dean Charles Herman Winkler of Texas A&M credits Ferdinand Lindheimer with being the first to discover the richness of Texas flora.
- 1928 Women's Civic Improvement Club names "Lindheimer Park" and contracts with A.C. Moeller to provide curbing around Lindheimer Plaza
- 1946 New Braunfels Garden Club works to beautify Lindheimer Plaza shrubbery
- 1951 Guada Coma Garden Club prevents the establishment of a utility substation at Lindheimer Plaza
- 1952 City of New Braunfels names "Lindheimer Avenue" as the northerly boundary of Lindheimer Plaza
- 1962 Garden Clubs of New Braunfels construct star-shaped flower beds and monument honoring Ferdinand Lindheimer
- 1964 Texas State Historical Committee places an historic marker honoring "Texas Germans in the Civil War" at Lindheimer Plaza
- 1968 Lindheimer Haus deeded to New Braunfels Conservation Society by Sida Martin, Lindheimer's last granddaughter
- 1984 Desert Willow recognized by the Texas Registry of Big Trees as the largest in the state
- 1986 Texas Sesquicentennial
- 2001 New Braunfels celebrates 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Ferdinand Lindheimer and his descendants visit Lindheimer Plaza
- 2013 New Braunfels Garden Club partners with the City of New Braunfels Parks and Recreation Department to revitalize Lindheimer Plaza