

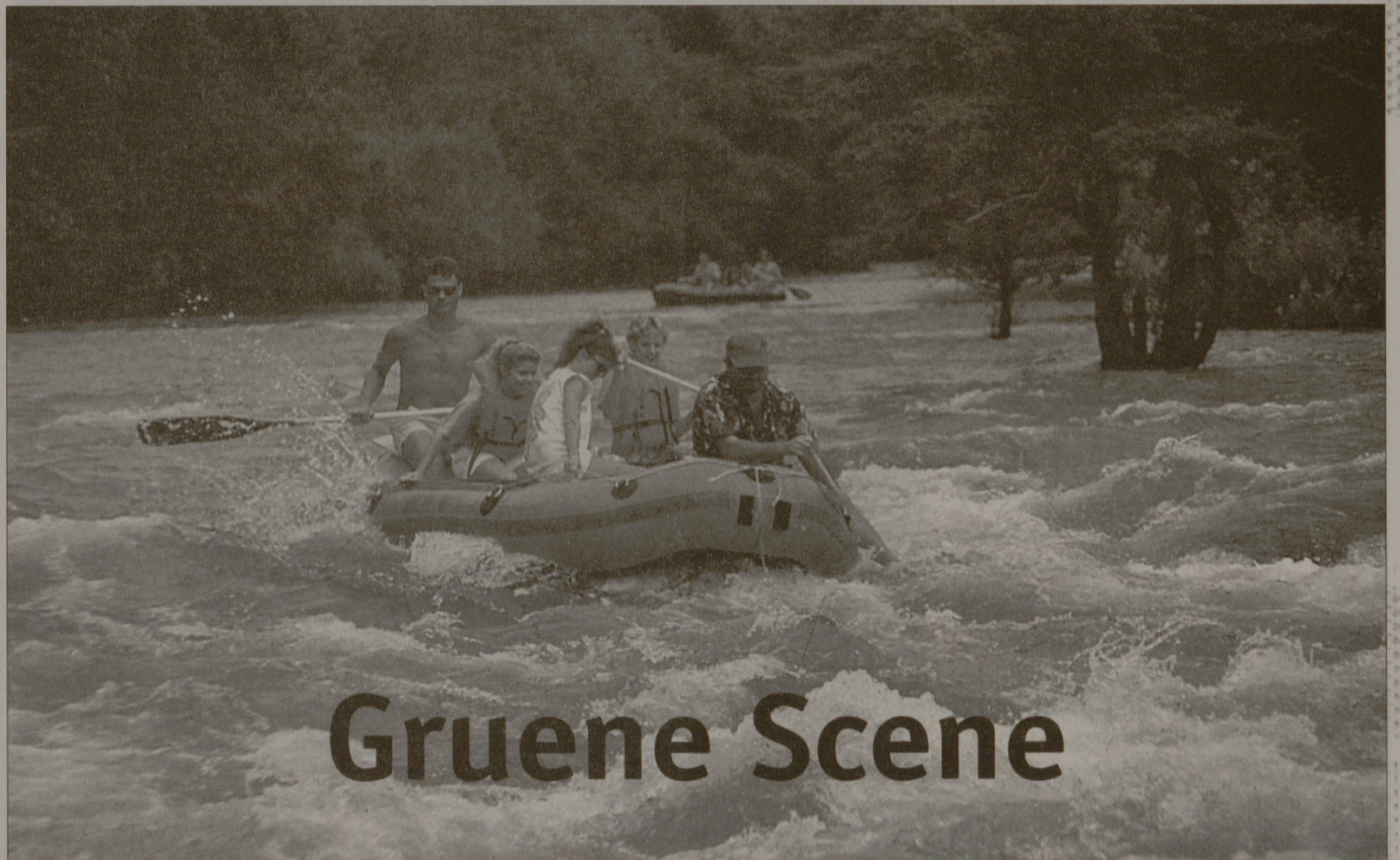
Battalion

Excursions

Historical Texas town offers fun vacation close to home

Story by Natalie Cobb

Photos Courtesy of New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce



Gruene Scene

Between Austin and San Antonio just outside the city of New Braunfels lies Gruene — a virtual Texas ghost town until Pat Molak, a stockbroker and entrepreneur, saw potential in the town and transformed it into one of Texas' most treasured destinations.

Settled in the Hill Country, Gruene offers a large dose of Texas history paired with many exciting things to see and do. The town is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and tourists are well-served.

Jane Nalley, a representative of Gruene, said there are many things to visit historic Gruene.

Gruene is a great place to shop and be entertained in a unique historical setting," Nalley said. "Visitors can listen to the best Texas music at Texas' oldest dance hall, Gruene Hall. Tourists also visit the wine-tasting room, watch the jewelry maker at work, visit the fly fishing outfit store or float the river."

Nalley said Gruene Hall draws many people to Gruene. The structure of the dance hall has not undergone much change since it was built in 1878.

Nalley said the dance hall has hosted musicians such as George Strait and Lyle Lovett.

The dance hall was the filming of the great dance scene in the movie *Michael* with John Travolta.

In addition to Gruene Hall, Nalley said the Gruene Mercantile Building, the Gruene Mansion Inne, the Gruene General Store and the Gruene Restaurant and Bar are what give the town its unique Texas charm.

"The Gristmill Restaurant and Bar is one of the oldest cotton gins in the area. It features indoor and outdoor dining on the river," Nalley said. "The antiques in Gruene draw many people to the town and the Gruene Mercantile Building houses over 6,000 sq. ft. of historical treasures. The Gruene General Store

features an old soda fountain and antiques, packaged food, dry goods, fudge and ice cream."

Food, historical buildings and antiques are not all that can be seen in Gruene; there are also many activities. With a calendar filled with events, everyone is sure to find something exciting while visiting Gruene.

The calendar features several activities every month including Old Gruene Market Days.

Dr. John Ellis, an agricultural economics associate research scientist at A&M, said the Old Gruene Market Days are a great time to visit the little town.

"There are tons of antiques, crafts and lots of interesting stores to see in Gruene. Gruene is a great place to visit, especially during the Market Days," Ellis said.

The Old Gruene Market Days feature over 100 vendor's handmade crafts, gifts, collectibles and Texas foods.

Nalley said the Christmas season is when Gruene really comes alive.

"The Gristmill Restaurant presents the Annual New Braunfels Holiday River of Lights; Asleep at the Wheel will present a concert at Gruene Hall, and the 15th Annual Christmas Market Days and Town Lighting will be held," Nalley said.



One does not have to wait until the weather turns cold to enjoy Gruene. The hot Texas summer leads many tourists to Gruene to float the Guadalupe River. Also, in nearby New Braunfels, Schlitterbahn Water Park can provide cool entertainment during the summer and early fall months.

Michelle Zinn, a Gruene tourist, said Gruene and Schlitterbahn are so close to San Antonio that a drive further south will lead to the San Antonio Riverwalk.

"The Riverwalk is a great place to visit after a day of touring Gruene. You can see both historical and modern aspects of Texas all in one day," Zinn said.

Kerensa Sandoval, a senior speech communications major, said the trip to Gruene and the Guadalupe River is a great road trip from College Station.

"It only takes two hours to get to Gruene," Sandoval said. "It is a great place for a day-long or weekend road trip since there is so much to do and see in the town."

"The river is also fun to float when it is hot outside."

Whether traveling for the day to visit the town or for the weekend to float the river, students, professors and tourists alike can enjoy Gruene as a great place to have fun and absorb a little Texas history.

Above: Rafting on the Guadalupe River is a common tourist attraction for Gruene during the summer and early fall months.

Far left: Schlitterbahn Water Park located in New Braunfels offers visitors the thrill of water slides and rides and the relaxation of the Guadalupe River.

Left: Gruene Hall, Texas' oldest dance hall, has not changed its barn-like structure since 1878, the year it was built.

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- Compass College Ministry — **Howdy '98**, Thurs, Sept 10, 7:30 p.m.
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