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## THE BATH HOUSE THAT WOULDN'T DIE

*by John Troesser*

This modest, yet noble structure sits on the recently overdrawn banks of the **San Marcos River** just south of Luling. It has a lot to be modest about, being a simple child's drawing of a building, now without a roof. The only thing now noble about it is the inscription BATHHOUSE carved above the door.



The inscription  
once again  
sees the light  
of day  
Photo by John  
Troesser, 2000

Designed to be the center of river activities in Luling, the bathhouse was given to the city on the occasion of Mr. Davis' big picnic. Edgar Davis' picnic will be featured soon, along with the story of this interesting and generous personality. He had the bathhouse designed to withstand future floods of the capricious San Marcos. The reinforced concrete later proved to be the structure's insurance policy against demolition.

Mr. Davis' plan: while waiting for air-conditioning's arrival, the bathhouse would be where teenagers would meet, mothers would cool their heat-prickled infants and young men would show-off their swimming prowess to young girls too concerned with their weight to notice.

Unfortunately, Mr. Davis also provided several thousand bottled drinks to wash down the tons of barbecue, and many of the empty bottles were broken when thrown into the river. Enough broken glass was produced to cut the feet of bathers for generations to come.

So the generous gift sat unused for years, with plenty of time to reflect on what would've been its salad (and watermelon) days. The decorative iron grating that once matched the golf course clubhouse was cut away by torch for the scrap drives of WWII. Defaced by graffiti and worse, a decision was made by "the powers that were" to raze the structure.

It was to be made a part of the San Marcos' banks, dozed by a bull or it's mechanical equivalent. But our plucky little pillbox would not go gently into that rubble pile, and withstood the best efforts of diesel power and steel blade.

The people who play golf are used to aggravation, but eyesores they can't stand. So they came up with a plan to bury the bathhouse. It was done in no time at all and soon looked like a Mayan pyramid (to a lesser diety). Weeds sprouted on the mound, but they were green at least and sometimes they appeared healthier than the course's landscaping.



Chinaberries sprouting from the windows  
Photo by John Troesser, 2000

Enter Mother Nature. The river rose and raged and some of Luling's best sandy loam is now covering parts of DeWitt County and flounders in the Gulf.

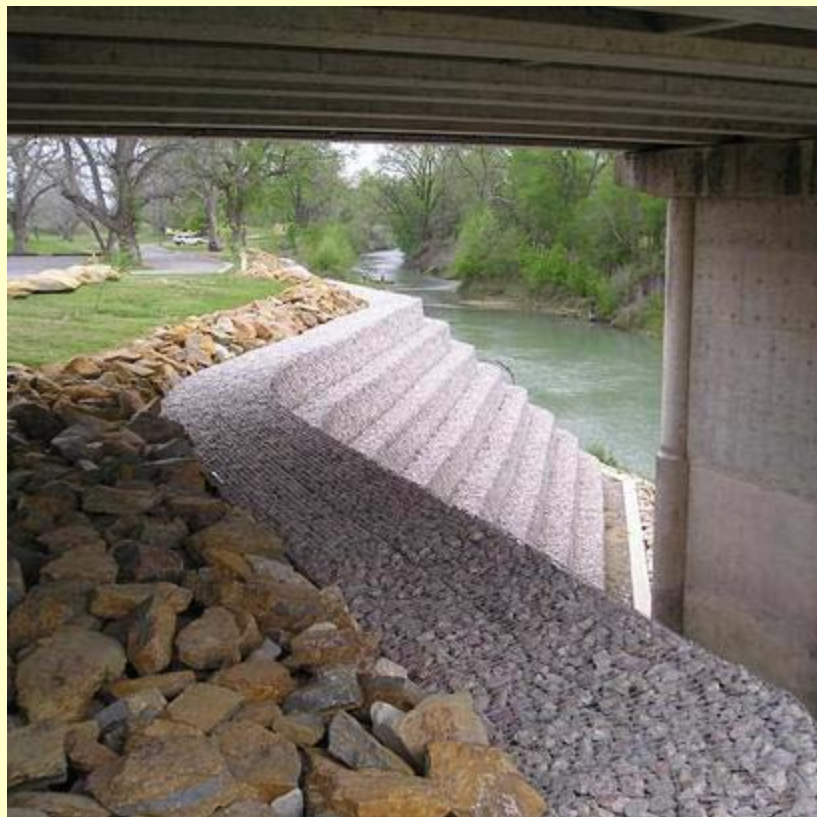
Like the man condemned to hang, but set free when the rope broke, is Luling being told that they should preserve this sturdy gift from Luling's past? If plowed into the dirt, will the Roman-looking inscription confuse future archeologists? Will historians think early 20th Century Pre-Schlitterbahn Lulingites advanced for building it? Or will they think (very) early 21st Century Lulingites barbaric for razing it?

As water use becomes more restricted, we're sure the ingenuity of

Lulingites will devise a flood-proof stairwell to facilitate access to the river from the little Bathhouse that asked for a second (and third) chance. Besides, the broken glass has been swept away or at least has been worn smooth by now.



The recently unearthed bathhouse  
Photo by John Troesser, 2000



Looking away from Zedler's Mills at the site of "Texas' biggest picnic."  
Photo Courtesy Sarah Reveley, March 2006

While Luling's larger population prevents its original use; it could still be a concession stand or a headquarters building for a revenue-producing non-profit organization like the Lion's Club tube rental operation in San Marcos.

We'll keep our preservation-minded viewers apprised.

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After nearly four decades, Zedler's Mills is revealed from Nature's green cloak.

Photo Courtesy Sarah Reveley, March 2006