**A Brief, General History of the Area**

As a driving route in the 1920’s, Scenic Loop was originally 46.3 miles roundtrip from downtown San Antonio. The remaining scenic and historic route is approximately 10 miles.

Much documentation of the history of the Scenic Loop Road is found within archaeological records, Spanish Land Grants, civil war veteran land scripts, historic deeds, Stage Coach Schedules and various other writings, including oral histories.

From the south, at Hwy 16, Scenic Loop Road winds along creeks and springs, following resources that were first used by human inhabitants thousands of years ago. It follows the Helotes Creek, passing over the confluence of Helotes and Chimenea Creeks, into a valley that encompasses the City of Grey Forest. As it continues to meander up the hills, crossing the Krempkau Divide, Scenic Loop is framed by a canopy of oaks, elms, junipers, honey locust, black cherry, dogwood, native persimmon and mountain laurel often exposing open hill country vistas.

Evidence of several prehistoric archaeological sites along the corridor is filed with the Texas Archaeological Atlas, showing the early hunter-gatherers and later, historic tribes including Comanche and Lipan Apache inhabited the area. They created trails later used as horse and cart roads, from which stage coach routes developed. The significance of the Scenic Loop was validated later through advertisements for scenic motoring in the early 20th century.

In the 1700s, Spanish Land Grants were given to various culture groups, including German, Mexican and Canary Islanders, and homesteads were established. Several 19th century homes along the road contain gun slits. A 1973 Bexar County Historic Survey was completed on the German-style Marnoch House, located in the southeastern section of Scenic Loop Road and it is thought to have been a stage coach inn. The survey notes describe Gabriel Marnoch as a renowned doctor and naturalist in the area who was the first to locate the Balcones Fault. A Bexar County Historic Marker is on the Menchaca House, (La Quinta de las Piedras). This 1850s stone structure with gun slits, was built over a spring near the Helotes Creek for access to water during battles with tribes inhabiting the area. Many descendants of original families – Cadena, Lazarin, Madla, Lee and Menchaca, to name a few – remain in the area, and continue passing on their oral histories. Several families have historic and contemporary cemeteries on their properties which affirm their genealogies.

Some of the earliest notations of Scenic Loop Road are found in the Goodrich Route Book of Texas (1915-16), Goodrich National Touring Bureau), a Works Progress Administration’s Rider’s Guide to San Antonio, and in the Pioneer Mills 100th Anniversary Booklet.

Numerous San Antonio leaders, including Altgelt, Beckmann, Hildebrand, Huntress, and Wagner lived, or had second residences, along Scenic Loop Road. The most significant homestead that survives today is Rancho Diana in the southern section, now owned and protected by the City of San Antonio.

E.N. Requa developed Scenic Loop Playground in 1928 as a retreat from urban life. The Playground incorporated as the City of Grey Forest in 1962 to avoid being annexed by the City of San Antonio. Today Grey Forest Historical Preservation Society (now Grey Forest Historical Society) is working to preserve the small city’s quality of life and to archive its history. They are at this time completing the application for being listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In the 1980s, a small active group worked with the City of San Antonio to avoid turning portions of Scenic Loop Road into a 5-lane highway. During this time, several letters of support for Scenic Loop to be designated as historic were written, including a resolution written by Bexar County Commissioner Andy Casias.

The 1992 Guideline for the Treatment of Historic Landscapes states that “Historic rural landscapes are vernacular landscapes that historically have been used by people, or shaped or modified by human activity, occupancy, or intervention, and that possess a significant concentration, linkage or continuity of area land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways, and natural features”. The Scenic Loop Road and the area encompassed by the Scenic Loop-Helotes Creek Alliance fits this description completely. We appreciate your assistance in protecting what is left of the historic, scenic and natural integrity of the area.