



REDEFINING LIVABLE INTERIORS

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The Enduring Tradition of Sunday Houses

Originally a place in town for Fredericksburg's first German farmers, Sunday Houses now offer a rural retreat for Texas city dwellers.

Fredericksburg's Sunday Houses of yore provided refuge from rural living, giving the area's immigrant farmers a place to stay in town on weekends so they could go to church and socialize. Often only one room with a children's sleeping loft accessed from a ladder outside, the charming structures would look right at home among the popular tiny houses of today.

The Boot Ranch versions of Sunday Houses are far more spacious and contemporary than their namesakes, but they offer a similar sense of refuge. City dwellers find respite from the everyday in these luxurious second homes whose ownership and usage is shared by eight families.

A trip to Fredericksburg provides plenty of opportunities to see, tour, and in some cases, even stay in historic Sunday Houses. There they help form the fabric of the Fredericksburg Historic District, which is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Most of the original Sunday Houses were built in the mid-1800s by German

settlers drawn to the wilds of Texas with promises of land. Under the management of Baron von Meusebach from Germany, each man who immigrated to the Hill Country was given a 100-foot-wide by 200-foot-deep lot in Fredericksburg before he received acreage outside of town, according to Evelyn Weinheimer, archivist at the Pioneer Museum in Fredericksburg. This progression in the land grant process encouraged the proliferation of Sunday Houses as well as townspeople's homes and shops.

The name "Sunday House" refers to a cultural innovation and not an architectural style, Weinheimer says. Wood frame houses with gingerbread lattice-trimmed front porches—perfect as an outdoor spot to sit, work, and engage with passersby—are frequently seen alongside those made from limestone and painted with whitewash. Some owners embellished their structures with second rooms or upstairs stories as their needs changed, while others even moved into their Sunday Houses in their later years to let a younger generation take over the farm.

You can begin your Fredericksburg tour at the Weber Sunday House at the Pioneer Museum. The simple but adorable home served as the weekend living quarters for the Weber family, who lived seven miles from town. The museum's

walking tour through town also includes stops at various Sunday Houses.

Or just walk or drive on your own down West San Antonio or West Main Street, where many of the homes were built to be in close proximity to St. Mary's Catholic Church, the Methodist church, or one of three Lutheran churches.

"They didn't have any other religions here until 1921, when the Baptists came," Weinheimer says. "And church was very important to the settlers. To come back into town for church on Sundays was a big deal."

The opportunity to connect with others in the community was also a big draw. "It was a house they could come to, go to church, shop, and visit other families," Weinheimer notes. "They could go to a dance on Saturday and church on Sunday."

A couple of centuries hasn't changed that desire to connect, and a contemporary Sunday House still offers a cozy home base to enjoy family and friends, to hop into town for church, or to boot-scoot across the floor at a historic dance hall. The Sunday Houses of yesteryear and today are just waiting for you to discover in the heart of the Texas Hill Country.

— STORY BY ANNE HEINEN



TOP: Interior of a historic Sunday House at the Pioneer Museum in Fredericksburg. BOTTOM: Boot Ranch Sunday Houses are fully furnished second homes whose ownership is shared by eight families.