

The Bedias Indians

Episode 20: July 2, 2007

Adapted, by permission of *The Huntsville Item*, from: Bedias Indians: Early Inhabitants of Walker County. (n.d.) *The Huntsville Item*.

Read by Cheryl Spencer, Library Associate in Special Collections.

This is Cheryl Spencer, Special Collections Associate in the Thomason Room at Newton Gresham Library at Sam Houston State University. Our talk today is about the Bedias Indians, early inhabitants of Walker County.

Diaries kept by early explorers indicate that Indians hunted and lived in this area of the state. As early as 1749, the tribes in South and East Texas were becoming friendly with the Spaniards who had established missions for them.

It is estimated that when Stephen F. Austin and the other early colonists arrived in Texas, there were about 20,000 Indians living here. In the northern part of present Walker County lived a tribe called the Bidias Indians. The Bidias were members of the Atakapan tribe. The name "Bidai" means "brushwood" in the Caddo language. It is believed that this name was derived from the type of home they constructed for themselves. It was built by forming a frame with sticks, or tree limbs, and covering these with bark or animal skins. They became known as brush houses.

This tribe was found along the Bedias Creek (Americanized for Bidai) and Trinity River and other creeks in northern Walker County. This was a wilderness area with game and fish in abundance. It was a fertile land where they could grow their food. It has been recorded that they grew such vegetables as corn potatoes, pumpkins, squash, beans, and watermelon.

It is also recorded that Pleasant Gray and his brother set up a trading post with the Indians. Sam Houston, when he arrived in Texas, was able to speak their language and had much sympathy for them. In reading journals of this period, we find that the Indians were frequent visitors in Huntsville, visiting with Sam Houston and their other friends.

The town, creek, and road all took their names from the Bidais (Bedias) tribe. Founder's Park, at 10th Street and University Avenue, has a sculpture of a Bidais family at the spring where Pleasant Gray established his trading post. The artists were Larry Zinc and Monica Taylor.