

Nov. 18, 2018

Friends for the Preservation of: LP.11.18.8
Historic Landa Park
Rosemarie L. Gregory
Arlene K. Seales

Photo: Pg 325

Caption: The 2011 poster created by
Jane Felts Mauldin announcing
Weihnachtsmarkt & celebrating
Landa Park's 75th Anniversary.
Courtesy of Jane Miller

How Weihnachtsmarkt Got Its Start

There's an exciting event in its last day for 2018 held at the Civic/Convention Center today. It is Weihnachtsmarkt - The Christmas Market.

This joyous market gives a grand opportunity to shop in the most creative fashion. The selections are outstanding. How fortunate we are to have this extraordinary variety in one location allowing us to complete or begin or just continue our Christmas shopping in such delightful surroundings.

Furthermore, Weihnachtsmarkt is a major fund raiser for an entity we all hold dear, Sophienburg Museum and Archives.

According to its founder, Weihnachtsmarkt first became part of the scene in our community in 1989. All agree, it just keeps getting better.

And how did this exciting and colorful market begin? We are proud to share with you that it was started by a longtime friend of whom we're justly proud and with whom we attended Carl Schurz Elementary and New Braunfels High School, Janelle Williams Berger.

When asked the details of how Weihnachtsmarkt came to be, Janelle referred to the time she served on the Sophienburg Board. It was then she learned the Sophienburg was in dire need of funding.

Without saying anything to anyone Janelle spent time in the period of one year attending and analyzing numerous fund raising events in the Austin, San Antonio, and Boerne areas. During each event she took copious notes. Following the event, she spent a great deal of time analyzing her notes discerning what would fit best for Sophienburg and the community.

After a year of this, Janelle capitalized on a former experience. Janelle's husband, Dr. Charles 'Chuck' Berger, also a N.B. High graduate, as well as Texas A&M and the Baylor School of Medicine, was stationed in Germany as a military doctor. As a military wife, Janelle accompanied Chuck. It was there she experienced the German Christmas Market-Weihnachtsmarkt.

As she was looking for a fund raiser for Sophienburg she realized the German Christmas Market would be a perfect match for New Braunfels with its German heritage.

Through her analysis of area markets and events and bringing in her remembrances of the Christmas markets in Germany Janelle was prepared to make her presentation to the Sophienburg Board. This she did. In ending her presentation, she stated she wished to cover any Weihnachtsmarkt losses experienced by Sophienburg for the first two years. Janelle believed this would give the fund-raiser event time to become established.

The Sophienburg Director, Clyde Blackman, thanked Janelle for her research and presentation. He was most enthusiastic about Weihnachtsmarkt. Also, he thanked Janelle for her kind offer to cover losses for

the first two years but he stated it was important that Sophienburg be responsible for any losses.

There was no reason for concern. There were no losses. In fact, there was a profit from the very first Weihnachtsmarkt.

Janelle's friend, Sherry Rubin, began helping with the many details along the way. Following the completion of the initial Weihnachtsmarkt in 1989 they were amazed that no major changes were necessary.

Something they did change after two years was the date Weihnachtsmarkt was held. Initially it was held after Thanksgiving. The third year Weihnachtsmarkt was held before Thanksgiving. All agreed that was the better time and it has remained so ever since. What also remains is superb shopping opportunities that get better every year.

Thank you, Janelle for inspiring this wonderful gift of Weihnachtsmarkt for Sophienburg and the community. Thank you, Sophienburg for continuing the delightful shopping experiences for us all these special days in November plus the yearly ongoing gift of gathering, protecting, and sharing our history.