

# Gruene, Texas

“Gently resisting change since 1872”

by Robert Odendahl

Originally I was going to start this article with the history of Gruene, Texas. However, that changed the day I rode down there and came across something not usually seen anywhere, a group of antique Ford automobiles. A few miles south of Wimberley, Texas, at the intersection of 12 and 32, in the parking lot of a cantina were a dozen or so antique Fords from the 1910's and early 1920's. So, I had to stop to take pictures of those beauties and include them in this article.

*The older one with the natural wooden spoke wheels still had the original front lights mounted near the windshield.*



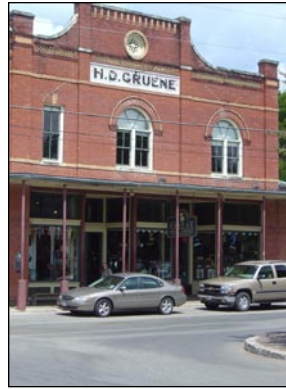
*The red one was painted and equipped as a Volunteer Firefighter vehicle.*

*Since this is a BMW motorcycle club newsletter, I had to include a picture of a 2004 BMW K1200GT, which is approximately 80 to 90 years newer than these Fords, and a whole lot faster.*



You never know what you will see when you ride the back roads of this country. Now back to Gruene, Texas, which most people in Texas pronounce green. Gruene is German for green. What a coincidence!

Gruene, Texas population 20, is located along the Guadalupe River in Comal County. It is now part of metropolitan New Braunfels, Texas, home of the Schlitterbahn, which is Texan for waterpark. In the 1850s, German farmers settled the area. Originally the town was known as Goodwin Community. In 1872 the Gruene family purchased 6000 acres on the north side of the Guadalupe River. At a river crossing a mercantile store was built in 1878 along the Austin and San Antonio stage route. The Gruene family added a cotton gin and dance hall and provided land for the Thorn Hill School. In the 1880s the community took the name Gruene and its commercial development grew with the completion of the International-Great Northern Railroad.



By 1900, Gruene was a banking, ginning, and shipping center for the area cotton growers. The dance hall and saloon, built in the 1880's, became the focal point of social activities. Goodwin post office served the town as did passenger and freight depots. With the blight of the boll weevil in the 1920s, Gruene began to decline. When the great depression hit, the depots and mercantile closed. Post World War II highway construction bypassed the community turning Gruene in a ghost town by 1950. Everyone left. Remarkably, Gruene Hall never closed. I guess ghosts need a place to dance.

A revival of Gruene began in the 1970s. Within a few years the dance hall, claiming to be the oldest operating in the state, was attracting weekend crowds. A live theater company, arts and crafts shops, restaurants, a hotel, and a winery now occupy historic structures. You won't find "blue light specials" in Gruene, because the entire town is on the National Register of Historic Places. No Starbucks, Wal-Mart, K-Mart, HEB, or Home Depot there.



What you will find is Gruene Hall where you can enjoy free live music most of the time. This is an old dance hall with no air-conditioning. Creature comforts include a bar and restrooms. See <http://www.gruenehall.com> for a schedule of events. In the past, Gruene Hall has hosted Willie Nelson, Lyle Lovett, George Strait, Jerry Jeff Walker, and Little Richard. Across the street is the H.D. Gruene building. It says so on the front of the place. This is the second mercantile store built by Henry Gruene. The first is across the street now called the General Store.

Places to eat include the Gristmill. It is on the site of an old cotton gin. It is located behind Gruene Hall, under the old water tower, on the Guadalupe River. What's a grist anyway?



Other places to eat are Oma Gruene's Patio Bier Garden located behind O.A. Gruene's house under the pecan trees, Adobe Verde, Gruenewerks, Janie's Table, and the River House Tea Room.

From February to November, Gruene hosts Gruene Market Days the third weekend of every month. The vendors sell jewelry, sculpture, pottery, spices, etc. all products of Texas. Other events in Gruene are Christmas Along the Corridor, Gruene Town Lighting, New Year's Eve at Gruene Hall, Texas Metal Arts Festival, Gruene Music and Wine Fest, Texas Clay Festival, and the ever popular Tour de Gruene Bicycle Classic.

Gruene, Texas is small place, making it difficult to get lost in. If you insist on a map, you can download one from <http://www.gruenetexas.com/GrueneMaps.pdf>.

If you've decided that Gruene, Texas is a place you must visit, here are some directions, from Austin of course.

From Austin ( the back roads way ) –

- *Go south on Mopac (Loop 1)*
- *At the end of Mopac, turn left on 1826. This will take you past the Salt Lick*
- *Turn left on 150 into Driftwood.*
- *Turn right Cr-170 at the old gas station across from the Methodist Church.*
- *Wind along Cr-170 until to get to FM 12.*
- *Turn left on FM 12 towards Wimberley.*
- *Go through Wimberley until you get to Highway 32.*
- *Turn right on 32 headed west toward Blanco.*
- *Turn right on Cr-215, becomes Purgatory Rd.*
- *Purgatory Rd. intersects 306.*
- *Turn left on 306.*
- *Continue on 306 until you get to Hunter Rd.*
- *Turn right on Hunter Rd.*
- *Straight for 1/2 mile into Gruene.*

If those directions don't make sense, I highly recommend a GPS or a map. I recommend a trip to Gruene, Texas. You never know what you might see on the way there.

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