

# LEGACY OF THE LAND SISTERDALE FARMS | EST. 1847

Sisterdale Farms is a historic Hill Country property located along the Guadalupe River in the heart of the original Sisterdale settlement in Kendall County, Texas. Rooted in the mid-19th century Freethinker movement, the land is tied to one of Texas's most unique early intellectual communities, where German immigrants established what became known as the "Latin Settlement," focused on education, philosophy, and the arts. Set against the backdrop of the Guadalupe Valley and surrounding limestone ridges, the ranch reflects both the natural beauty and cultural history that defined the early development of this area. Today, it remains a preserved piece of Texas history, offering a rare continuity between its documented past and the landscape that still defines it.

## SISTERDALE FARMS: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Sisterdale Farms traces its roots back to 1847, when German immigrant settlers known as the Freethinkers established a community along the Guadalupe River in present-day Sisterdale, Texas. Among them was Baron Ottomar von Behr, an educated intellectual often regarded as the first librarian in Texas. Baron Ottomar von Behr and the other settlers formed what became known as the "Latin Settlement," a small but distinctive Hill Country community centered around literature, philosophy, science, and the arts. At a time when much of Texas remained frontier land, Sisterdale stood apart for its emphasis on learning and ideas.

The settlement later drew attention from visitors including landscape architect and journalist Frederick Law Olmsted, who traveled through Texas in the 1850s. As he approached the property area from a ridge above what is now Sisterdale Farms, he looked down into the Guadalupe Valley below and wrote in *A Journey Through Texas*:

"Next day our road took us over a rugged ridge to the valley of the Guadalupe. From the summit was a wide and magnificent view of misty hills and wooded streams."

He also recorded a moment from his visit, writing, "The dinner was Texan, of corn and frijoles, with coffee, served in tin cups."

Under von Behr's stewardship, the land functioned as both a working agricultural property and a gathering place for scholars, travelers, and free thinkers. The valley supported farming, while the higher elevations offered long views across the Hill Country. The original 19th-century homestead structures, later restored, remain as a direct link to this early period and reflect the craftsmanship of the German settlers who shaped the area. Today, Sisterdale Farms remains closely tied to its history. The land has been preserved in a way that still reflects its early character, and the connection to the Freethinker settlement, Olmsted's documented travels, and the surviving historic structures gives the property a clear sense of continuity between past and present.

## THEN AND NOW: THE ORIGINAL GERMAN SETTLEMENT HOUSE



BUILT 1871

The Alfred Behr Homestead at Sisterdale  
Picture taken at the turn of the century  
From left to right:  
Amanda Behr (the first Mrs. Richard Habenicht)  
Paula Behr (Mrs. Hermann Treiber)  
**3698165033803160895**  
Mrs. Alfred Behr, nee Sophie Wollschlaeger  
Alfred Behr  
Christian Wollschlaeger, brother to Mrs. Behr  
Mrs. Andreas Wollschlaeger, Sr., mother of Mrs. Behr  
Edmund Behr  
Otto Behr, on horse

