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Chihuly's fluid blue glass shapes populate a forest glade, creating the illusion of mysterious life forms.

Dallas Garden of Glass

Exuberant color and lavish form throughout the Dallas Arboretum.

AN UNEXPECTED question from the international art world: What fills 14,000 boxes in five 53-foot containers delivered by truck and, upon arrival at the destination, demands the attention of ten expert installers for three days?

The answer: *Chihuly at the Dallas Arboretum*. If you are familiar with the work of globally ubiquitous glass artist Dale Chihuly, you can immediately generate a mental image of explosive colors and Disney-esque shapes combined in unpredictable juxtapositions amidst trees and fountains.

If you are not familiar with Chihuly's glass, and the effect it has on audiences, the Dallas Arboretum offers you an abundance of outdoor installations across the 66-acre site through November 5.

The work evokes wonder and amazement from those seeing this type of sculpture for the first time. The wonder starts with the sheer sensual impact of the sculptures. Some offer a visual definition of joy. Others seem more pensive. During my tour, I am surprised when a guide points out a modest installation of green glass fiddlehead ferns peeking out among clumps of the real ferns. A closer look suggests that they might even move with the gentle breeze (but they don't).



Then there are more cynical responses: "What are these glass sculptures doing here? Aren't the plants what we came to see? This is not art, it's garish and inappropriate."

So, Chihuly accomplishes what artists typically set out to do: He challenges an accepted sense of form and color and context

to create a new experience. Some love it. A few do not. But it's amazing on multiple levels.

"Are you worried about what might happen during a hail storm?" one visitor asks. Chihuly shrugs. After all, he's thrown seemingly fragile blown-glass forms off a bridge into the canals of Venice. Why worry about a little Texas weather?

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor-in-Chief

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P.S. This month's **Speaking of Texas (on page 53)** pays tribute to longtime *Texas Highways* contributor and Big Thicket conservationist Howard Peacock, who passed away April 22.

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COVER STORY

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Tracking Time

The 64-mile Caprock Canyons Trailway offers hikers, cyclists, and equestrians Panhandle adventures on a former railway that dates to 1928.

Text and photographs by
E. DAN KLEPPER



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Check out www.texashighways.com for more travel information

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Text and photographs by **E. DAN KLEPPER**

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The Great Texas Balloon Race lures the nation's best hot air balloonists to Longview annually. This year—and in 2013 and 2014—the event will take place concurrently with the U.S. National Hot Air Balloon Race.

Text by **RANDY MALLORY**



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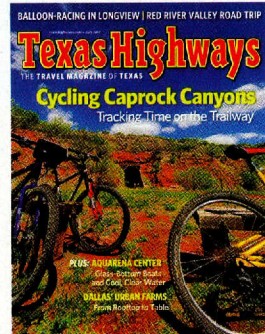
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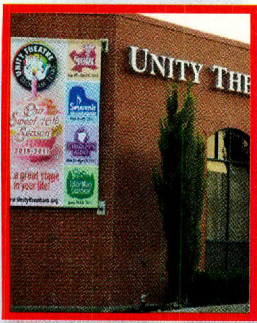
About Our Covers

FRONT: Cyclists explore the 582-foot clarity Tunnel on the Quitaque Canyon Trail, part of the Caprock Canyons Trailway. **Photo © E. Dan Klepper**

BACK: Sundance crew members were among the first balloonists to complete the Ring Toss at last year's Great Texas Balloon Race in Longview. See page 46. **Photo © Cindy Petrehn Photography**

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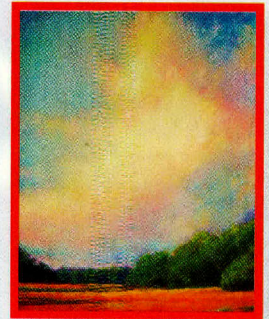
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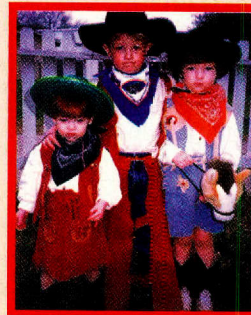


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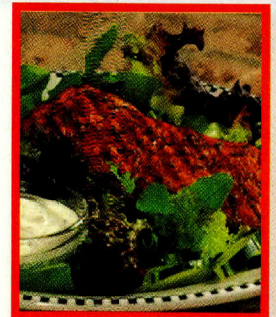
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TH Facebook Fan

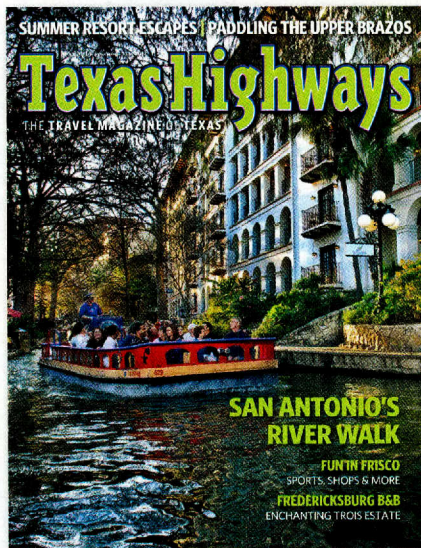


photo taken for his South Austin Tour. I'm James Edward Talbot (I go by just "Talbot") and the name of the sculpture, which was commissioned by the City of Austin through the Art in Public Places program, is *Your Essential Magnificence*, which the photo so perfectly illustrated.

Apart from being a fun photo-op for all ages, the sculpture is also an homage to South Austin and is actually sort of a time capsule, containing within it over 60 mementos from various locations, venues, people, and institutions south of the river. For instance, there's a brick from Armadillo World Headquarters, an old folding chair from the Broken Spoke, and other souvenirs and shards from places such as the Cathedral of Junk and my own mosaic-covered art house, Casa Neverlandia (www.talbotworld.com). I am honored that you included my work in the article.

More
TH Talk at www.texashighways.com/talk

JAMES EDWARD TALBOT, Austin

Our Howard Peacock

EDITOR'S NOTE: We were saddened to learn of the death of longtime contributor Howard Peacock in April. Peacock contributed more than 100 articles to TH over the years on a range of subjects, from his beloved *Big Thicket*, to *Fredericksburg's*

National Museum of the Pacific War, to the *San Antonio River Walk*, where he spent his final years. See Randy Mallory's tribute to this true Texan in *Speaking of Texas* (page 53), and go to www.texashighways.com for a compilation of Peacock's stories.

Texas has lost a good soul, but surely from the heavens, each spring will always feature his reflection amongst the wildflowers across Texas.

ROGER EDISON, TH Facebook Fan

Howard and I would walk the San Antonio River Walk together. He was always in a state of joy, swinging his arms as he strolled. Even on casual meetings, people connected with his warmth, curiosity, and willingness to interact. He was very grateful for the compassion in people. He was a true man of letters who prided himself on his beautiful penmanship. I regret anytime a hero dies. I certainly think Howard was a Texas hero.

NAOMI NYE, San Antonio

Your Essential Magnificence

Regarding the photo in "Keepin' it Weird in South Austin" [*TH* Daytripper, May issue]: There was no name plaque for my sculpture at Live Oak and South Congress when Chet Garner had the

Take Me to the River

I really enjoyed Barbara Rodriguez' and Steven Loesch's story of floating the Brazos [May]. It brought back many memories of childhood summers at Worth Ranch, the Fort Worth-area Boy Scout camp. I remember one summer Brazos River canoe trip I led from the camp to the US 180 bridge during which we had to carry and drag the canoes a lot through the shallow sandbars and rocky ledges and muddy places. We had a great time.

GEORGE STEWART, Boerne

TH READER RECOMMENDATION

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JAMES H. HOLMES III, Dallas

Linda's Fine Foods is at 500 FM 2325, 512/847-5464; www.lindaallen.com

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Postcards

👉 INSIDE: DALLAS DIGS URBAN GARDENING...13 A SPIRITED RENAISSANCE IN SAINT JO...17



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Texas Quilt Museum

Two historic buildings in downtown La Grange showcase the quilter's art Text by HELEN BRYANT

THE CHARTER BUS PULLS UP TO two adjoining 1890s buildings in downtown La Grange, and disgorges dozens of people into what has quickly become a tourist magnet in this Central Texas town: the Texas Quilt Museum.

"It really is true: If you build it, they will come," says Karey Bresenhan, who cofounded the museum with her cousin

Nancy Puentes. "When we had our opening last November, we expected about 200 people—we had 800. The line snaked around almost three blocks of La Grange."

Bresenhan recalls gazing at the line and realizing that the art form she and Puentes had spent their lives promoting had risen to a new level of appreciation in Texas. The cousins—both fifth-generation quilters—have worked

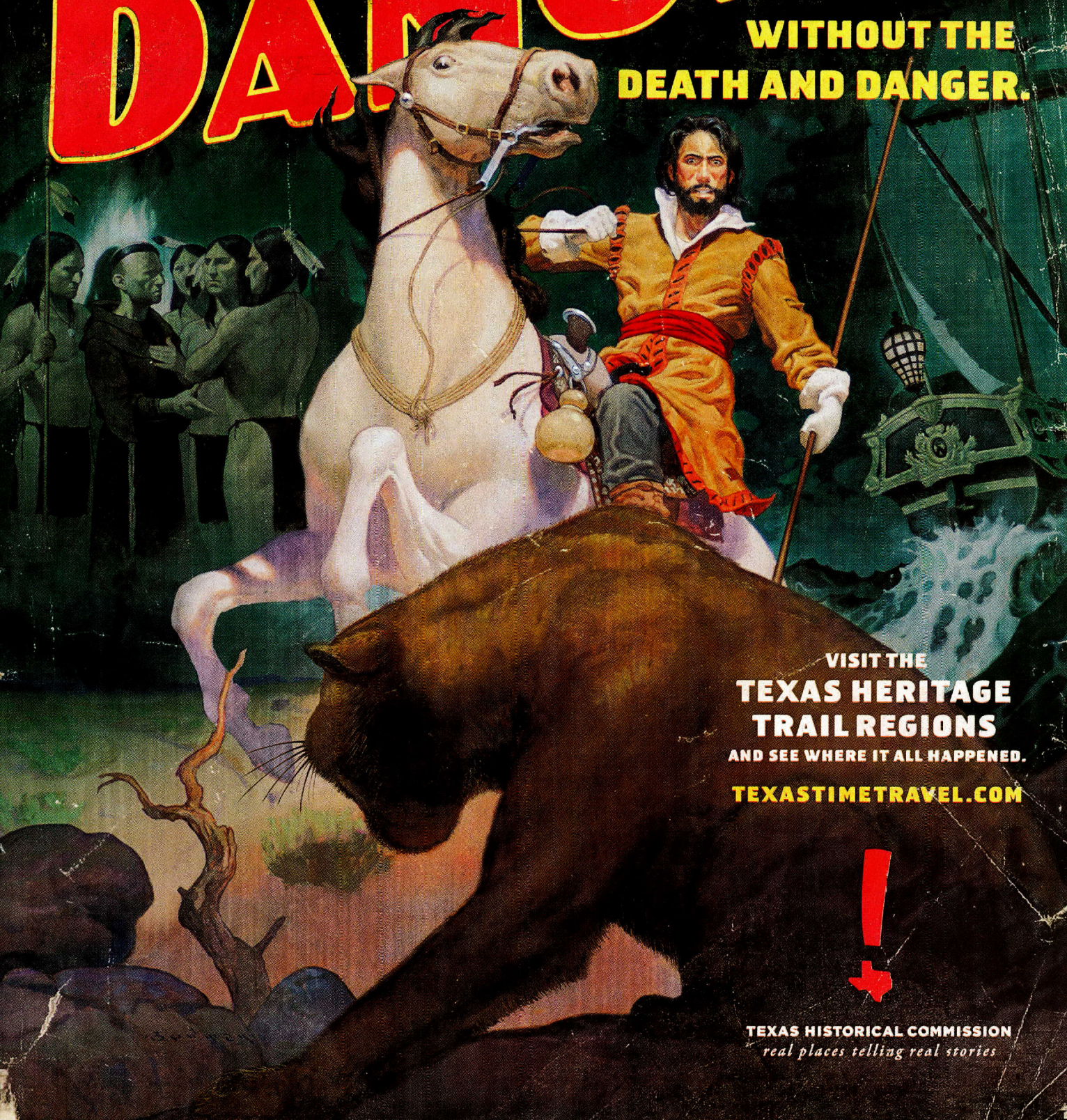
together since Bresenhan started the annual International Quilt Festival in Houston in 1974. Today, the fall event is the largest quilt show and sale in the nation, attracting more than 60,000 people from countries around the world. Bresenhan heads the

The Texas Quilt Museum—
a recipient of a 2012 Preservation Texas award—
currently displays 48 contemporary quilts.

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Festival's parent company, Quilts, Inc., which produces similar quilt shows around the country. Puentes serves as executive vice-president.

Quilting is not just for Grandma anymore. The 2010 Quilting in America survey of 20,000 U.S. households, commissioned by Quilts, Inc. and *Quilters Newsletter Magazine*, concluded that 14 percent of the nation's households are home to at least one quilter.

"Quilters can be anyone from grandmothers to children who learn it in school," Bresenhan says. "And men. You'd be surprised at the number of men who like to quilt." She points out a quilt in the museum's main gallery by Tom Russell of Katy, a whimsical depiction of birds on a tree that features buttons, beads, embroidery, and appliqué.

Making quilts, Bresenhan notes, has progressed beyond simple patchwork into the realms of portraits, landscapes, and still lifes. "Quilts are an art form,



exactly like paintings," she says, "but quilt artists create their works with needle, thread, and fabric—and sometimes other materials as well."

The Quilt Museum's three galleries currently house 48 of the 200 quilts Bresenhan and Puentes featured in their

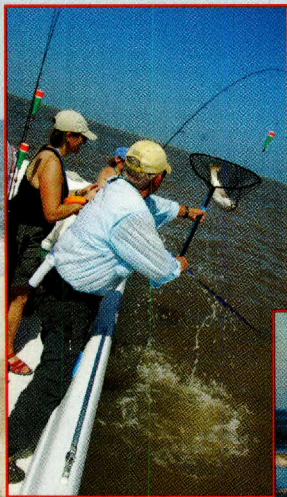
recent book *Lone Stars III: A Legacy of Texas Quilts, 1986-2011*

(University of Texas Press), the final installment of a trilogy examining 175 years

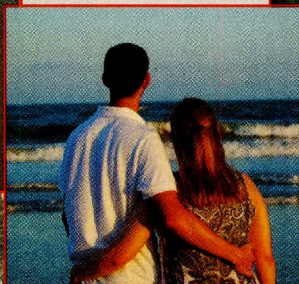
An exterior mural titled *Quilts ... History in the Making* flanks the garden and captures the attention of passers-by.

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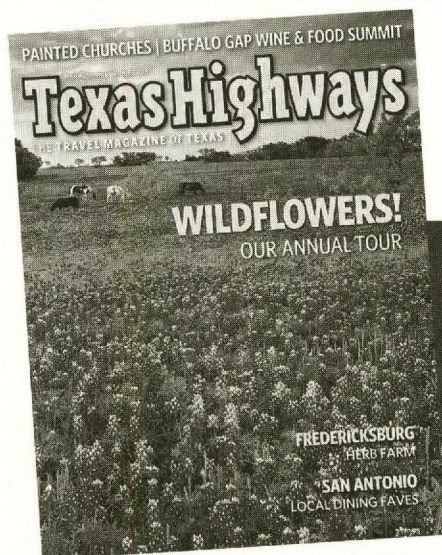
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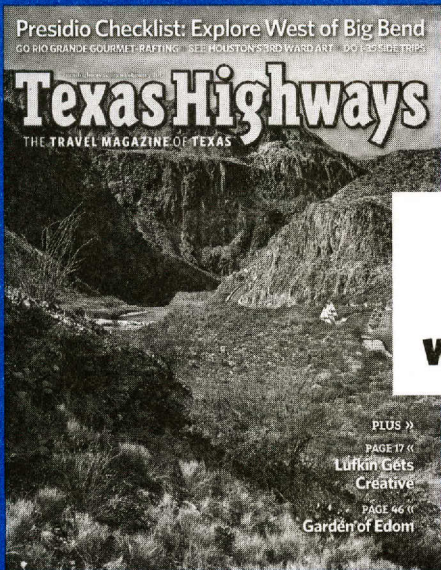
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of Texas quilting. The publication of the full-color, 388-page book coincided with the museum's opening in November, as well as the 37th annual International Quilt Festival in Houston.

Taking up the family love of quilts came easily to Bresenhan, who was raised in Houston. "I grew up sleeping under quilts," she says. "One of my oldest memories is of my mother coming into my room during a norther and putting another quilt on top of me. In wintertime, you could hardly turn over, the quilts were so heavy."

"Quilters can be anyone from grandmothers to children," Karey Bresenhan says. "And men. You'd be surprised at the number of men who like to quilt."

Bresenhan says that after almost four decades of running quilt shows and promoting quilting, she and Puentes decided in 2009 that a museum should be the next step. "We wanted people to look at quilts in a museum setting, where they could more easily appreciate them as art," she explains.

The cousins selected La Grange as the site of the museum because of its central location—about halfway between Austin and Houston. Only one historic building was purchased at first—an 1890 furniture store that was bathed in natural light and exuded craftsmanship, such as two-story, handmade posts that progressed from square to octagonal and back to square.

Preservation architect Barry Moore was chosen to restore the space—reviving the longleaf-pine floors and repairing

A Frontier Fort Revived

Restorations and a new visitors center bring Fort Chadbourne back to life

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Learn about Medal of Honor recipients who served at the fort



DURING THE PAST DECADE, WEST TEXAS

ranchers Garland and Lana Richards gradually restored six historic structures on the grounds of the frontier fort that Garland's family has owned since the 1870s. The revival of Fort Chadbourne culminated in April with the opening of a 12,500-square-foot visitors center, which tells the fascinating story of the military garrison. The U.S. Army established Fort Chadbourne in 1852 to protect settlers and travelers in the region. It housed Confederate soldiers during the Civil War, and in 1867, the U.S. Army abandoned it.

Restored structures include a company barracks and an officers' quarters, where interior plaster walls bear graffiti from the 1870s. The Richardses also completed Texas' only restoration of a Butterfield Overland Mail stage stop, which operated at the fort from 1858 to 1861. The new visitors center displays some of the half-million artifacts found on the fort site. It boasts a large antique gun collection with more than 300 early Sharps and Winchester rifles. Visitors also can view a period saloon, a stagecoach, and a Medal of Honor exhibit, as well as use the center's 1,200-square-foot research center (by appointment).

Fort Chadbourne is off US 277, about 50 miles southwest of Abilene. Call 325/473-5311; www.fortchadbourne.org.

—Randy Mallory

Six restored structures, a new visitors center, and reenactors offer a taste of the frontier at Fort Chadbourne.

mortar in the crumbling brick walls. About midway through the project, the adjoining structure—built in 1892 as a cigar factory—became available, and the museum expanded to include

it. Workers knocked through windows and doors that had been bricked up for decades to link the buildings. The main gallery flows into the second building, also carefully restored, with

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vintage pine patching a few splintered and rotten spots on the floor. So painstaking was the restoration work that the Quilt Museum received a prestigious Preservation Texas Historic Rehabilitation Award in May.

While cofounder Nancy Puentes was involved in all phases of the project, she focused her efforts on the museum's exterior. She asked Brent McCarthy of New Braunfels to paint an intricate, 85-foot-long mural on the outside wall. Designed by Austinite Duana Gill, *Quilts...History in the Making*

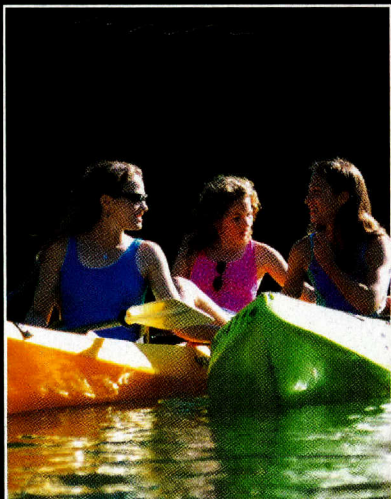
The 48 quilts on exhibit— all made by Texans within the past 25 years— are on loan from their owners or the artists who made them.

faces North Washington Street and depicts 15 colorful, traditional quilts hanging on a clothesline. McCarthy started work in August in 100-degree heat, painting primarily in early morning and late afternoon, and finishing just in time for the November opening.

Puentes also worked with landscape designer Mitzi VanSant of Smithville to plan a garden adjacent to the museum. "The mural is the focal point," says Puentes. "We wanted to create a peaceful space where people could sit and contemplate the mural and think about the women who created these beautiful quilts out of scraps and whose work is the foundation for all the wonderful traditional and innovative quilt art of today."

Called Grandmother's Flower Garden after a traditional quilt pattern, the garden features old-fashioned plants typical of a

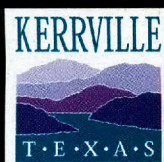
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La Grange “town garden” around the turn-of-the-20th Century. The garden has a *par-terre* layout that’s reminiscent of old geometric quilt patterns, such as Nine Patch, Irish Chain, and Puss in the Corner.

Inside the museum’s soaring main gallery, quilts hang above the balcony rail as well as at eye level. Traditional quilts hang amid art quilts such as a portrait of Indiana Jones by Patricia T. Mayer of Houston, who, Bresenhan says, “wanted to prove she could do a face that someone could recognize.”

Another gallery holds still more quilts chosen from those in the book, such as an

There’s no mistaking the inspiration for this hand/machine appliqué quilt—*Indy*—by Patricia T. Mayer of Houston.

Impressionist quilt sewn with 6,432 tiny circles of fabric by Liz Joe of Dallas, who calls her work *My Mcnet*. The artist used computer imaging to translate a photo of a garden into pixels, then sewed the circles together diagonally, leaving the ends loose—a decidedly nontraditional way of quilting.

Quilt art often features hand-dyed fabrics and elaborate machine stitching,

Bresenhan says, as well as a technique known as trapunto—stuffing parts of the quilt to create a raised surface that adds dimension. “One of the results of the quilt art movement has been to teach people to see quilts with new eyes,” says Bresenhan. “They’re no longer seen as just covers for a bed, but as art that hangs on a wall.”

The 48 quilts on exhibit—all made by Texans within the past 25 years—are

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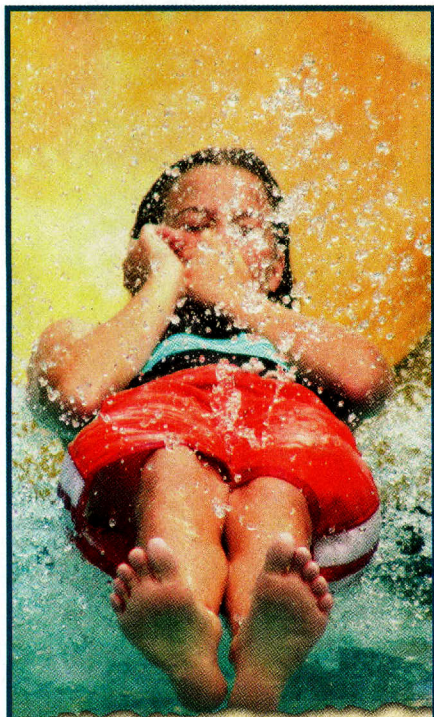
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Texas Quilt Museum

is at 140 W. Colorado St. in La Grange, which is at US 77 and Texas 71, midway between Austin and Houston. The museum’s third installment of quilts featured in *Lone Stars III: A Legacy of Texas Quilts, 1986-2011* (University of Texas Press, 2011) began June 14 and runs through September 30. The museum then plans to feature vintage quilts dating to the 1800s. Call 979/968-3104; www.texasquiltmuseum.org.



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Postcards

McKinney Rough-ing It

Bunking dormitory-style in the Hill Country

HERE'S A LODGING IDEA FOR A summer family reunion or group get-away: Groups of 20 or more can re-create a childhood camping experience—scary stories optional—in McKinney Roughs Nature Park's three dormitories. Sturdy, wooden bunk beds line the walls of airy rooms in these Hill Country-style, two-story buildings.

Down a granite path lined with native plants, the Dining Hall seats 150 campers in a window-lined room under a soaring ceiling. Groups can do their own cooking in the full industrial kitchen, or hire one of the park's approved caterers. For smaller groups, the adjacent Learning Center offers a fully stocked, home-style kitchen and rooms for dining, playing games, or just hanging out. These facilities have hosted everything from religious retreats to youth groups, corporate events, and even a 50th-birthday girlfriend getaway, says LCRA scheduler Jeannie Smith.

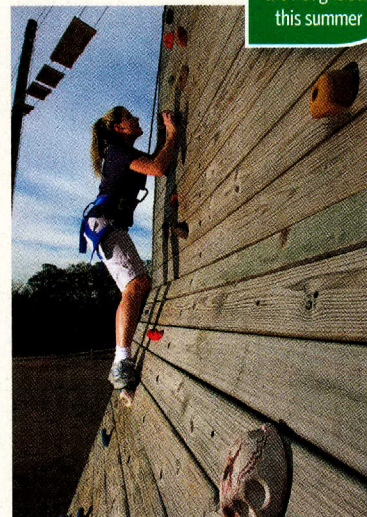
Don't expect to spend much of the day indoors, though, as nature beckons at this aptly named park. More than 18 miles of hiking and equestrian trails web its hilly 1,100 acres, which include elements of Post Oak Savannah, Blackland Prairie, Piney Woods, and Colorado River shoreline. In a matter of minutes, you can hike from a thick canopy of pecan trees up onto a ridge scattered with pines.

Groups can schedule guided activities such as rafting and kayaking trips, nature walks, and a multi-facility challenge course complete with a climbing wall and ziplines. Once everyone's worn out from all the fun, turn out the lights and let the scary stories begin. Call 512/303-5073 or 800/776-5272; www.lcra.org/mckinneyroughs.

—Melissa Gaskill

Go!

Free Stargazing at the Roughs series this summer



Groups of 20 or more can stay in dorm-style quarters at McKinney Roughs Nature Park, which also offers such guided activities as a multi-facility challenge course.

on loan from their owners or the artists who made them. The museum will not own a collection.

The smallest gallery, in the back of the building, currently houses some 50 small quilts donated by artists throughout the nation to be sold to raise money to help the museum get on its feet—about \$15,000 so far, Bresenhan says. The non-profit museum has also received grants

from the City of La Grange and some support from the proceeds of the 2011 International Quilt Festival.

Bresenhan says she and Puentes look at the museum as their baby, and that's appropriate, she adds, because most quilts take about nine months to produce. With this labor of love, they've reaped what they—and hundreds of other quilters—have sewn. **TH**



Uncommon Grounds

In the Dallas area, a new crop of farmers sows ideas as well as seeds

Text by **JENNIFER NALEWICKI**

In the Fairmont Hotel's rooftop garden overlooking downtown Dallas, Executive Chef André Natera (left), Charity Lortie, and Laura Roush grow many of the vegetables and herbs used in the hotel's Pyramid Restaurant & Bar.

ONE OF THE THINGS I LIKED MOST ABOUT SUMMER IN TEXAS WAS helping out in my mom's garden. But when I moved to New York City last year for a job, I figured the only place in the concrete jungle where I would find herbs, tomatoes, and other produce would be at the supermarket. I was wrong.

In cities across the nation, from the Big Apple to the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, there is a burgeoning movement growing alongside the tangles of concrete and steel. Thanks in part to a nationwide interest in sustainable agriculture, city-dwellers are putting down roots in places once considered unsuitable for gardening, like rooftops, vacant lots, and truck beds. Their mission: to educate the public on healthy eating habits while sharing some delicious edibles along the way.

Two pioneers of this urban agricultural revolution are Ian Cheney and Curt Ellis of Brooklyn, New York, who filmed a 2009 documentary called *Truck Farm*, about how they converted a rusty Dodge pickup truck into a portable garden, which they drove to area schools and farmers' markets to promote sustainability and good nutrition. Now, three years later, their concept has expanded to include a fleet of 25 trucks across the nation, including one champagne-colored Dodge D150 in the Dallas-Fort Worth area owned by Marilyn and Donelle Simmons of Waxahachie.

When I first met with the mother-daughter team, there was still an early-spring chill in the air. It was too soon to begin planting crops, but they already knew what they wanted to grow in their second season as a participating Truck Farm: cantaloupes, squash, leeks, tomatoes, onions, peppers, and herbs. Thanks to their

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theMcNay

Radcliffe Bailey
Memory as Medicine

June 6 | September 2



Atlanta-based artist Radcliffe Bailey explores American history and memory to encourage healing and transcendence through art.

Organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. The exhibition has been made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts as part of American Masterpieces: Three Centuries of Artistic Genius. At the McNay, funding is generously provided by the Elizabeth Huth Coates Exhibition Endowment, the Arthur and Jane Stieren Fund for Exhibitions, the Flora Crichton Visiting Artist Fund, the Ewing Halsell Foundation Endowment for Visiting Artists, the Director's Circle, the Host Committee, the William Randolph Hearst Fund for Education Programs, and Marge and Al Miller. Media sponsorship is provided by the *San Antonio Express-News*.

Radcliffe Bailey, *Windward Coast* (detail), 2009-2011. Piano keys, plaster bust, glitter, and shell with sound. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

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Taste

City-dwellers are putting down roots in places once considered unsuitable for gardening, like rooftops, vacant lots, and truck beds.



Donelle Simmons, along with her mother, Marilyn, converted their 1985 Dodge truck into a portable farm.

Truck Farm. Luckily, the Simmonses already had a truck, which they used for Garden Inspirations, their garden-education and landscape-consulting firm. Next, they just needed to drill some holes in the pickup bed for drainage, lay down soil, plant the seeds (heirloom only!), and install a solar-powered drip irrigation system. As with the other trucks in the fleet, the Simmonses' portable farm uses organic gardening methods, so instead of

gardening back-grounds and love of nature, Cheney and Ellis had tapped them to represent

Texas as its sole

chemical fertilizers, they use worms to provide nutrients to the soil. The worms prove especially popular with the students they meet during gardening demonstrations at area schools. So far, the Simmonses have found the children to be eager to learn gardening skills. "We'll put a ladder up against the truck, and they can climb up and touch and smell the garden," Donelle says.

When the Simmonses aren't visiting schools, they set up shop at the Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market on Saturdays from May through October. This year, they plan to participate in the annual Food Day in Dallas on October 24, a grass-roots event celebrated in cit-

ies nationwide to help communicate the importance of healthy, sustainable food. "When we went last year, some of the chefs at the event used our herbs to season a salmon-and-rice-pilaf dish," Donelle says.

Across town, amid the skyscrapers of downtown Dallas, Chef André Natera tends to the rooftop garden atop The Fairmont Dallas hotel. Natera is the executive chef of the hotel's Pyramid Restaurant & Bar, and he incorporates much of the yield from the 3,000-square-foot herb-and-vegetable garden into his culinary creations, like the Niman Ranch Beef Tenderloin, a blue-cheese-and-mushroom-encrusted filet of beef paired with cippolini onions. Every afternoon before dinner service,

he and his sous chefs ride the elevator to the rooftop to pluck chives, parsley, golden sage, lemon balm, and creeping thyme to enhance their creations. "Working in the garden has made me a better chef," Natera says. "After spending months tending to the garden, I make sure produce never gets wasted."

During the warm months, restaurant guests can dine al fresco on the rooftop terrace as part of a five-course menu made with items from the garden, including honey from the two resident beehives and microgreens grown in the greenhouse. "The 'Dining in the Garden' meal is meant to entice all of the senses," Natera says. "Guests can smell the rosemary and basil in the garden while enjoying a meal made from fresh ingredients that I picked from the garden only hours before."

Back on terra firma, 20 minutes south of downtown, sits Paul Quinn College, home of the WE Over Me Farm, a two-acre working farm situated between the end zones of a former football field. The student-run operation donates some 10 percent of its yield to the local community, including sweet potatoes, cantaloupes, blackberries, strawberries, leafy greens, and herbs. The farm also holds regular pick-your-own days and provides produce to the school's cafeteria. "The arugula in particular was a hit with the students," says Elizabeth Wattlely, the college's director of servant leadership. "They're not going to find produce fresher than that."

The private college has been donating food to the community since the program began in 2010. That same year, Paul Quinn created a Social Entrepreneurship curriculum that teaches students about sustainability, agriculture, marketing, and business principles. In April, the farm hosted its second annual "A Community Cooks" event, when local chefs served cuisine using produce from the farm. The event raised more than \$250,000 and donations that included a greenhouse on the football field's western edge, where the school plans to offer

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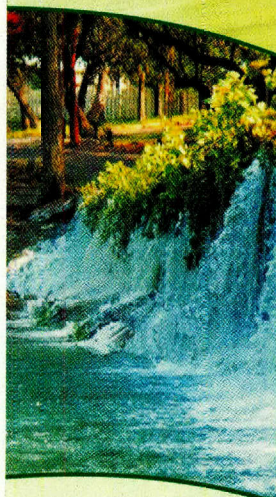
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Everything but the kitchen sink in La Grange

AT DONELLA DOPSLAUF-CERNOSEK'S 2,000- square-foot kitchen shop across the street from the Fayette



County courthouse, the aisles are so crammed with cookware, gourmet salsas and sauces, specialty gadgets, coffee beans, and spices from around the world that if anything new were to join the inventory, it would need to dangle from the rafters. After all,

Kitchen gadgets, cookware, and foodstuffs from around the globe draw foodies to La Grange's Le Petite Gourmet.

cooks from near and far flock to this kitchen mecca for everything from doughnut makers and teak cutting boards to Penja green peppercorns from Cameroon. That's what Dopslauf-Cernosek hoped for when she opened her first store here in 1981.

"Mothers and grandmothers would bring in magazines and food columns from newspapers in larger cities with items circled," recalls Dopslauf-Cernosek, a La Grange native. "They were very happy to find them in the local area."

In 2008, Le Petite Gourmet moved to a spacious historic building on the courthouse square. One bonus of the new space: the ability to hold hands-on, monthly cooking classes, which are taught by regular guest chefs Mike Morphew (who worked at Buckingham Palace) and Dorothy Huang (a popular chef and tour guide). During the summer, Le Petite Gourmet offers special "Kids in the Kitchen" classes that focus on basic skills and safety.

Le Petite Gourmet Shoppe is at 134 N. Washington St., La Grange. Call 979/968-4000; www.lepetitegourmetshoppe.com.
—Helen Bryant

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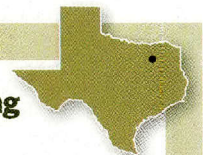
By July, I will be tending to the container garden I planted on my apartment's fire escape in Brooklyn. Thanks to a few green thumbs back in Texas, I've learned that, with a little water and sunlight, I can start a garden anywhere. Even in the concrete jungle. **TH**

Urban Gardening in Dallas

To learn about the **DFW Truck Farm**, call 214/842-2100; www.dfwtruckfarm.com. Also, see www.waxahachiedowntown.com/index.php/farmers-market and www.foodday.org.

The **Pyramid Restaurant & Bar** is in the Fairmont Hotel, 1717 N. Akard St., in Dallas. Call 214/720-5249; www.pyramidrestaurant.com.

WE Over Me Farm is at Paul Quinn College, 3837 Simpson Stuart Rd., in Dallas. Call 214/379-5532; www.pqc.edu.





Spirit of Saint Jo

An authentic Old West town brings together history, food, and culture

Text and photographs by
RANDY MALLORY

ON MANY TRIPS THROUGH NORTH TEXAS ON US 82, I'VE always seen Saint Jo as a diamond in the rough. The tiny town occupies a spot at the crossroads of two important 19th-Century trade routes, the California Road and the Chisholm Trail. But over the decades, the Old West charm largely had faded from the century-old buildings facing the square.

That's different now, as my wife, Sallie Evans, and I discover on a delightful weekend poking around Saint Jo and surrounds.

We start our busy visit by checking in early at the Texas Kings Hotel, where we're greeted by innkeeper Tom Weger. Ten years ago, Tom, his wife Kristy, and their family transformed two adjacent 1870s and early 1900s buildings into this boutique hotel.

Five large, upstairs guestrooms are furnished with antiques and boast original pressed-metal ceilings and beaded-wood walls. Sallie and I stash our bags in the "Outdoor Room," once a doctor's office, and check out a display of fishing rods and lures. Down the hall, we peek into Saint Jo's former Masonic Lodge, now a spacious, comfortable gathering room that looks like an old saloon, where we ask about the hotel name, Texas Kings. "It refers to the kings of our economy—cattle, cotton, and oil," explains Tom Weger. "Saint Jo has a rich history, and a good place to start exploring it is across the square at the Stonewall Saloon Museum."

We take his tip and stroll across the square, past a tree-shaded gazebo and pickups parked where 19th-Century trailhands tied up their horses. I push open the museum's swinging doors Clint Eastwood-style, with a little swagger in my step.

Built in 1873 as a saloon catering to cattle drovers, Saint Jo's first building now houses the Stonewall Saloon Museum. Next door, the Lazy Heart Grill serves lunch and dinner.

TH tip

Bring a cooler if you plan to buy wine in summer months



At Ancient Ovens, cook Christopher Marshall creates savory pizzas in the dining lodge's wood-fired, brick oven.

In 1873, town co-founder Irb Bog-gess erected the town's first building to serve the needs of drovers moving Longhorns on the Chisholm Trail. Today, the building has been restored and showcases area history with photos of 19th-Century cowboys, vintage chaps, branding irons, and trophy deer mounts. Poker tables and bar chairs are scattered across the wooden floors, and a 1908 vault in back speaks to the building's later days as a bank. I belly up to the antique bar and imagine myself ordering a shot of whisky from a salty barkeep.

Historian Janis Sneed shows us a mural of flowers and a blue stage curtain uncovered beneath multiple layers of paint during restoration. Workers reproduced it with fresh colors, leaving part of the original intact.

Our rumbling stomachs call out for lunch, so we mosey next door to the Lazy Heart Grill, which owners Jack and Debby Schoppa opened last year in two restored 1890s structures. Jack shows us a heart-shaped branding iron used by three generations of his family. Jack's cattle have been branded with

the heart on its side, hence the restaurant's name, Lazy Heart. After a hearty meal of chicken fajitas and chicken-fried steak with mashed potatoes—followed by slices of coconut-cream and

As the sun sets, a cool
wind rises, and we join
70 other guests at
the lodge's long plank
tables for a feast.

white-chocolate-strawberry pie—we're ready to continue exploring.

We spend the afternoon perusing establishments on the square's largely refurbished Main Street side.

A sign saying "Custom Boots, C.T. Chappell Prop." draws us inside a century-old former drugstore. There we find proprietor and master bootmaker Carl Chappell amid a sea of leather, antique stitching machines, and custom-made boots in various stages of construction. He's busy teaching his craft to aspiring

bootmaker Janneman Pienaar, who came from his current home in Washington State "to learn from the best."

Chappell, a third-generation bootmaker, can't remember how many bootmaking contests he's won, but he's glad to pass along his craft wisdom; he has trained more than 150 bootmakers in the last 17 years. His skills are in such high demand that a pair of custom boots may take three years from order to delivery (and cost thousands of dollars).

A few doors down, we find Western art at Davis & Blevins Gallery, a former 1880 hardware store that now showcases the work of noted artist Donna Howell-Sickles and 20 or so other contemporary artists. Howell-Sickles moved to Saint Jo in 1995 and soon transformed a former church into her studio. Donna and her husband, John, restored the gallery space a few years ago and have plans to move this fall to larger quarters next door.

I recognize Howell-Sickles' signature style—awash with reds, umbers, and oranges—depicting cowgirls riding horses, herding cattle, and playing with ranch dogs. "Having grown up on a Texas ranch," she says, "I try to tell the real story of Western women." Her work has garnered national

Custom kicks at Chappell Boots can take three years to make.



recognition and induction into the Cowgirl Hall of Fame in Fort Worth.

Sallie and I drive six scenic miles north on FM 677 through high hills to Arché Winery, where owners Howard Davies and Amy Sterling, along with their son, Grayson, grow 12 acres of red and white grapes—including cabernet sauvignon, merlot, syrah, chardonnay, and roussanne. They welcome us to a cozy tasting room inside the winery, where we sample a delightfully floral roussanne reserve with notes of honey and tropical fruit. It's so delicious that we buy a bottle to enjoy later. Outside, picnic tables beckon, but we have dinner reservations at a nearby restaurant called Ancient Ovens.

Inspired by communal dining experiences they'd enjoyed in Italy, owners Denis and Susan Moody built two massive, wood-fired brick ovens, one outside and one inside a native-stone dining lodge, just steps from their rustic hilltop home. As the sun sets, a cool wind rises, so we join 70 other guests at the lodge's long plank tables for a fixed-menu feast.

We start with artisan sourdough bread, served with a rich spinach-and-artichoke dip. Next comes Susan's signature Italian Teardrops, wonton wrappers stuffed with olives, cream cheese, and spices. Dozens of different thin-crust pizzas follow, topped with all manner of meats, vegetables, and sauces. For dessert, we savor a calzone oozing with molten dark-chocolate-and-hazelnut filling, then toast to an unusual, community-focused evening.

Heading back to the Texas Kings Hotel—where we spend a quiet, relaxing night—we feel satisfied, not only because of the hearty food and wine, but also because there's now a definite luster on the old diamond that is Saint Jo, Texas. **TH**

Saint Jo

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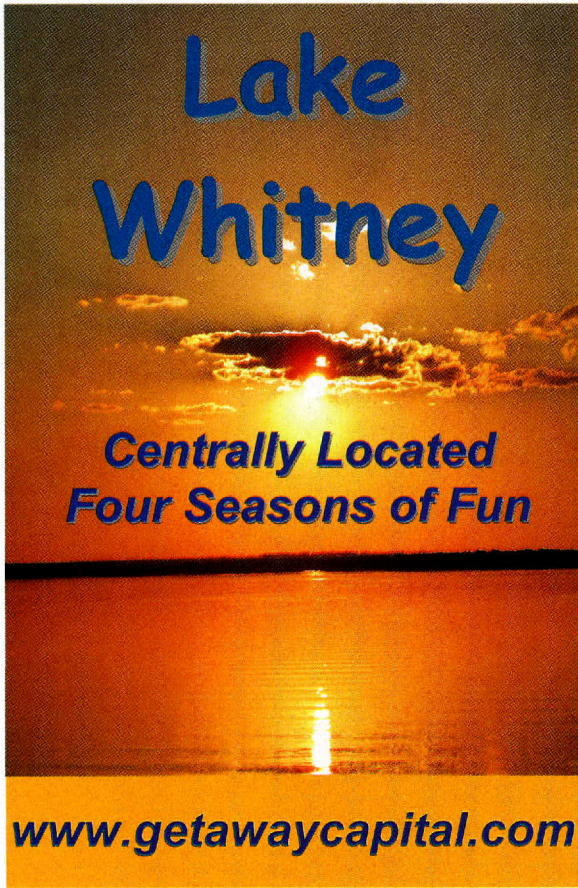
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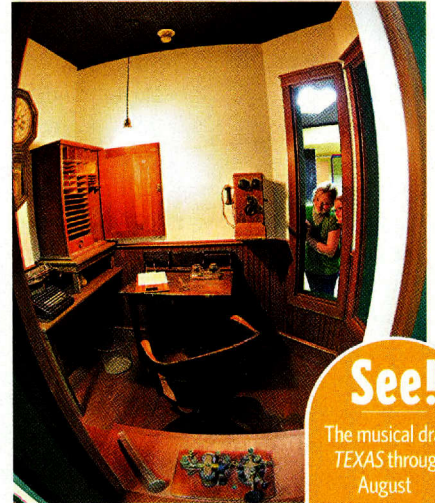
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Pioneer Town

The Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Canyon revamps one of its signature attractions

SINCE 1933, WHEN THE PANHANDLE-Plains Historical Museum opened its doors in Canyon, visitors have been surprised not only by the museum's size (now more than 185,000 square feet), but also by the diversity of exhibits that illustrate the region's history in regard to art, paleontology, agriculture, geology, and Western expansion. One of the museum's most popular attractions, Pioneer Town, a collection of structures representing life here between 1890 and 1910, recently underwent a major rehaul.

On June 30, the museum debuts the all-new Pioneer Town with a celebration featuring gunslinger performances, actors and dancers (and horses!) from the popular musical drama *TEXAS*, children's crafts and activities, and tours of the updated village.

Most of the 30 buildings in Pioneer Town—including a bank, newspaper office, laundry, saloon, and Victorian hotel—now feature interactive displays and activities, and details were so thoroughly researched that even the curtain rods are period-specific. Call 806/651-2244;

www.panhandleplains.org.

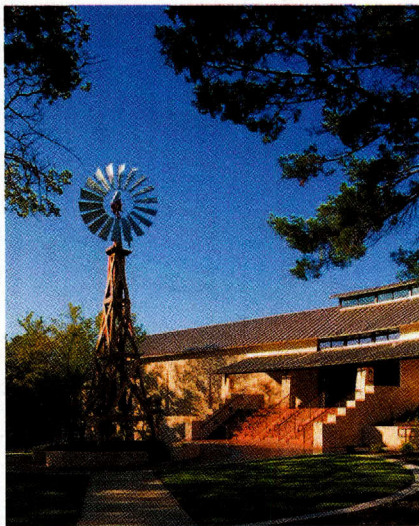
—Lori Moffatt

ABOVE: Visitors peer into an office at Pioneer Town's new Railroad Depot.

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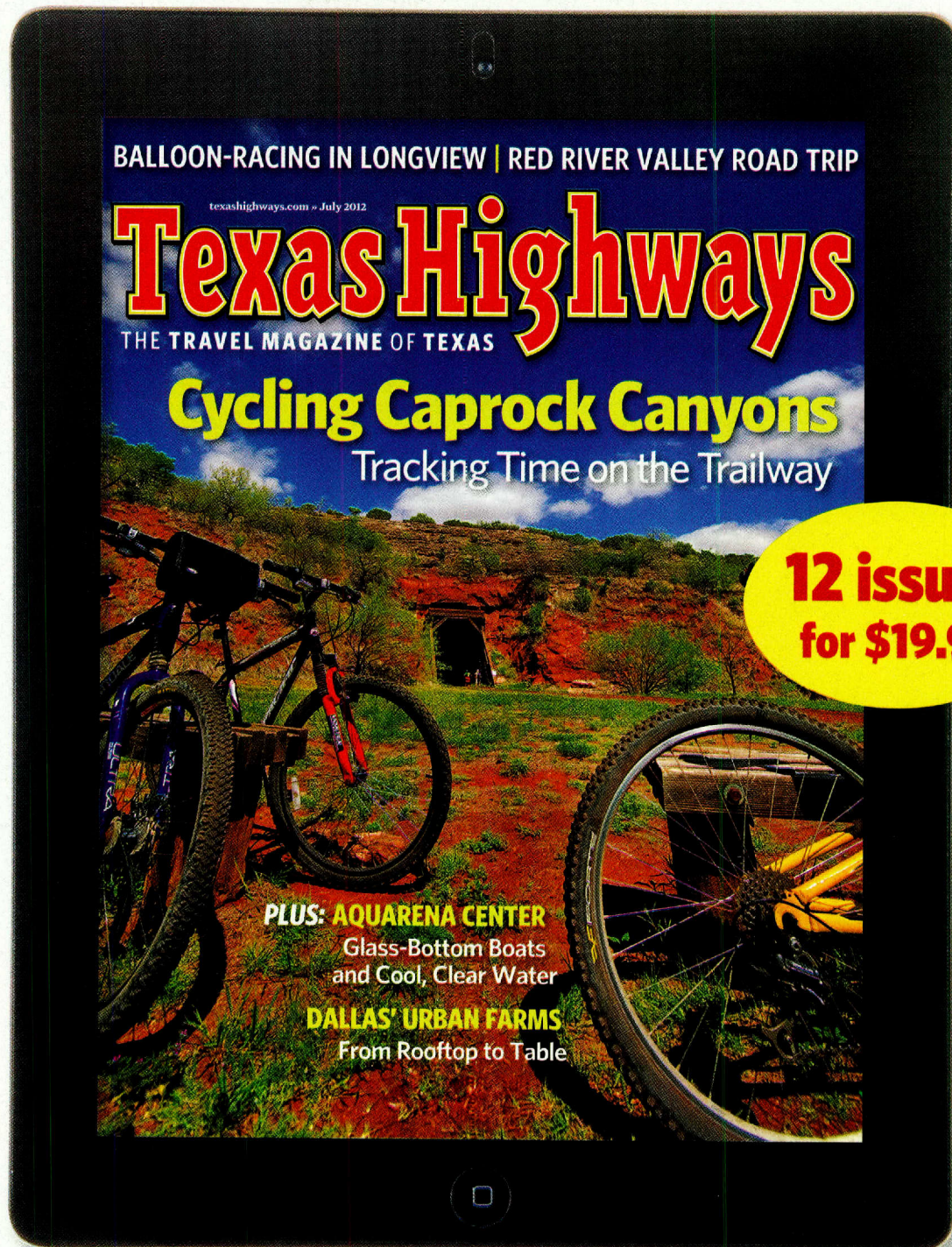
Doss Heritage and Culture Center
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TRACKING TIME

A former rail line sets the stage for time-travel adventure along the CAPROCK CANYONS TRAILWAY

Text and Photographs by **E. DAN KLEPPER**

TRAVELERS ON THE CAPROCK CANYONS TRAILWAY SOMETIMES FEEL they've tipped time's arrow on its head. Following the path of an abandoned rail line, the 64-mile trail system takes hikers, cyclists, and equestrians across the region's halcyon backyard, into the agrarian plains and broken rangeland of caprock country, and out of this century completely.

Railcars once clattered across tracks on this pastoral route—passing through the rural communities of South Plains, Quitaque, Turkey, and Estelline—enabling area farmers to ship their products and reap the benefits of bigger markets farther north. A Panhandle detour for the Burlington Northern Railroad, the branch line of the Fort Worth and Denver South Plains Railway was completed in 1928 and served this slice of the Panhandle for six decades, until Burlington closed it in 1989. »



ABOVE: A remnant of the rail line that preceded the 64-mile Caprock Canyons Trailway. LEFT: Cyclists prepare to enter the 582-foot Clarity Tunnel.

To order a print of the photograph above, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.



THREE YEARS LATER, THE RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY, a nonprofit dedicated to transforming abandoned railway lines into a nationwide network of trails, removed the steel rails and wooden ties and resurrected the remaining berm as a hiking, biking, and equestrian trail. Once the Trailway was completed, the organization turned it over to Caprock Canyons State Park.



To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.

Divided into six trail sections from five to 17 miles in length, the Trailway has eight trailheads, or beginning points, accessible from farm-to-market roads and state highways, allowing explorers to tackle the Trailway piecemeal or traverse it all in one trip by caching water and supplies at trailhead locations and camping along the way. The Trailway crosses 46 bridges and rolls over farms and brushy ranchlands, passes through Clarity Tunnel, and follows Quitaque Canyon before climbing up and over the Caprock Escarpment on a 7 percent grade.

Trailway adventures begin three miles north of Quitaque, at Caprock Canyons State Park, where you can pick up the permit required to use the

ABOVE: Cliff swallows, which often occupy the undersides of trestle bridges, are a common site along the Trailway. LEFT: Texas horned lizards also frequent the trail.



For a listing of the Trailway's six trails and their access points, see www.texashighways.com/webextra.

THE TRAIL FROM ESTELLINE

WHILE the most popular portion of the Caprock Canyons Trailway is the 22-mile section that begins at the **South Plains Terminal** (the westernmost trailhead) and goes through Clarity Tunnel, exploring the Trailway from the other direction has its own rewards.

Estelline Terminal (the easternmost trailhead) marks the beginning of the 10-mile Plains Junction Trail. The trail traverses bucolic cotton and peanut country, where abandoned farmhouses collapse beneath shade trees. Active farms often provide Trailway travelers with a backdoor-view of farming operations.

The Plains Junction Trail ends at **Parnell Station**, where the 12-mile Grundy Canyon Trail begins. The region's 250-million-year-old Permian geology, on view along the trail, is the star here, as exposed red-sandstone layers reveal thousands of years of erosion and evidence of an ancient inland seabed.

At **Tampico Siding**, the Grundy Canyon Trail connects with the Oxbow Trail, a 10-mile roll through arcadian fields and across gully-spanning bridges where small mottes of native prairie vegetation punctuate endless red furrows. Bison roamed here 150 years ago, but today, feral hogs dominate all the way to Oxbow's end at **Turkey**. Travelers should know that the 32-mile section from Estelline to Turkey receives minimal maintenance, making this stretch of the Trailway a bushwhacker's delight.

The 10-mile Kent Creek Trail begins at the **Turkey Depot**, heading east across historic ranchlands. Rancher Charles Goodnight established the JA Ranch, home to 100,000 head of cattle, in the region in 1877. Goodnight also helped save the bison from extinction, rescuing a herd of the few remaining South Plains bison that once grazed the Panhandle Plains by the thousands. The Kent Creek Trail ends in **Quitaque**, where the Los Lingos Trail begins, followed by the Quitaque Canyon Trail, both described in the main story.

—E. Dan Klepper



Trailway, as well as maps and information. While there, you might get lucky and catch Doris Mager, a raptor specialist and the head of S.O.A.R. Inc. (Save Our American Raptors), giving a presentation in the park's outdoor pavilion.

Mager's organization is dedicated to the welfare of North America's birds of prey, and she travels the country with rescued owls, falcons, and hawks, spreading the word about the important role these stunning birds play in our ecosystem. Mager's presentations provide a rare opportunity to witness some of these handsome birds up close, including her great horned owl, "E.T.," a member of one raptor species that you might see along the Trailway at dusk. Look for the round head and telltale ear tufts silhouetted against the evening sky. Mager's friendly screech owl, "Impy-Tex," represents another common nighttime species along the Trailway; listen for its soft tremolo call. The screech owl is also an excellent mimic, and should there be other critters around making noises, you might hear a screech owl's hilarious imitation. The owl's large, candle-flame eyes and squat body on stick legs add to its comical character. Mager's "Cherokee," an American kestrel, represents

a common daytime sighting on the Trailway. This petite falcon with striking, Aztec-like markings can be seen perched on dead snags or diving at unsuspecting insects.

BEFORE SELECTING A TRAILHEAD AND LEAVING THE PARK, be sure to look for the resident bison herd. The entire Panhandle region once served as a migratory byway for the vast bison herds that roamed the Great Plains, and the park's bison, considered the official "Texas State Bison Herd," preserve genetics of bison rescued by ranching legend Charles Goodnight. The Goodnight herd was one of only five foundation herds that saved the bison from extinction. The woolly beasts, numbering less than a hundred, roam the 1,000 acres near the park entrance, lumbering across pastures in the far eastern section of the park almost daily before crossing the main park road to graze. This

ABOVE: The Texas State Bison Herd grazes on 1,000 acres at Caprock Canyons State Park. RIGHT: "E.T.," a great horned owl, stands ready to assist Doris Mager in a presentation about the importance of North American raptors.



To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.



THE ENTIRE PANHANDLE REGION once served as a migratory byway for the vast bison herds that roamed the Great Plains.



slow-moving caravan of horns and husky shag provides a great opportunity to view the native critters up close and from the safety of your vehicle. Take plenty of pictures, but don't feed the bison, and, above all, *don't* get out of your car. These wild South Plains bison are more likely to charge than flee when approached.

Although the Trailway relies on the state park for administration and upkeep, its route doesn't actually intersect the park. Instead, you must exit the park and travel south about three-and-a-half miles back to Quitaque (pronounced "kitty-quay" or "kitt-a-quay") to access the Quitaque Depot trailhead or follow Texas 86 east or west or FM 1065 south to access the other trailheads.

THE MOST POPULAR MEANS OF TRAVELING THE TRAILWAY is via mountain bike. The 64-mile berm is flat and wide, its grades moderate, and most segments are easy to negotiate. A favorite cycling adventure begins at the South Plains terminal, the westernmost trailhead, and ends at Quitaque. This 22-mile, downhill stretch includes the Quitaque Canyon Trail, Clarity Tunnel, and the Los Lingos Trail, providing an ideal sampling of Trailway environments from rugged canyonlands to pastoral plains. Get an early-morning start, and begin alongside the Marble Brothers Farm Gin, a silver conglomerate of sheds, towers, and ramps above the skyline in a region where cotton once reigned as king. The

Trailway runs alongside plowed fields, where small, leafy shelterbelts border the crop rows, providing shade and windbreaks for rests and snacks between pedaling. The limitations of the High Plains landscape in the face of the area's propensity for spawning tornados and windstorms is evident—utility poles and pitched shed roofs provide the only interruption in a vast, flat-lining horizon.

Soon, however, the Trailway begins to drop, breaking through the eastern ledge of the Caprock Escarpment, an eroding edge that was created during the last Ice Age and now runs 200 miles north to south, from Amarillo to Big Spring. As you descend into Quitaque Canyon, the Trailway passes between deep, vertical pathways carved by railroad construction crews to accommodate the declining grade. The cuts expose the uppermost layer of the Ogallala formation laid down between four and 10 million years ago.

As you ride, watch for mountain mahogany, sumac, wild plum, and Texas basketflower, all of which leaf, bloom, and bear fruit amid the canyon's creeks and gullies. Ephemeral wetlands form after rains and provide feeding grounds and habitat for owls and migratory songbirds. Soon, Emerson Creek Bridge appears, the highest trestle along the Trailway at 60 feet above the creek bottom. The bridge is your signal to watch for the mouth of Clarity Tunnel just a few miles down the trail.

The 582-foot tunnel, listed in the National Register of Historic

Cyclists pause to take in an expansive view of Quitaque Canyon along the 17.5-mile Quitaque Canyon Trail, one of six trails that make up the Trailway.


 TH ESSENTIALS

A FAVORITE CYCLING ADVENTURE begins at the South Plains terminal, the westernmost trailhead, and ends at Quitaque.

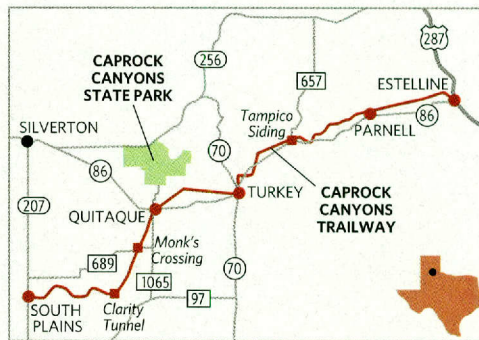
Places, curves through the caprock hillside in a gentle turn to the northeast. As you enter, you might experience some slight vertigo at the tunnel's dark center, just as daylight disappears behind you and before the sunlit exit appears. This midway point is also home to thousands of Mexican free-tailed bats between April and October. Their mostly dry guano (although mucky in spots) covers the tunnel floor, so move quickly and quietly through the tunnel. Avoid disturbing the bats. If you want to see them, but aren't up to traversing the Trailway, the park offers an interpretive bat-flight observation on scheduled nights that includes transport to and from a site near

the tunnel. The program provides an opportunity to watch thousands of the tiny mammals exit the tunnel in a spiraling mass to spend the night feeding on flying insects.

Once out of the tunnel, you'll leave Quitaque Canyon behind, traveling across rangeland northward to Monk's Crossing, where FM 689 intersects the Trailway. Your trek may end here if you've arranged transportation, or you can continue north on the Los Lingos Trail for the final five miles into Quitaque. Soon, you'll cross the concrete Los Lingos Creek bridge, the longest trestle on the Trailway. Not long after your crossing, you'll begin to see Quitaque in the distance.

Few buildings other than water towers and cotton gins rise above a single story in the communities along the Trailway route. Quitaque's water tower, looking like an oil can on spider-stilt legs, is the first to break the bird's-egg-blue horizon. Furrows of alfalfa follow, giving way to modest clapboards, rose gardens, and friendly horses grazing in big backyards. If you've planned for your Trailway adventure to terminate here, then you've come to the right place. Charles Goodnight, who owned the nearby Lazy F Ranch, gave this quiet, provincial community its name in 1880, a word he understood to mean "the end of the trail." **TH**

"Mountain biking the Caprock Canyons Trailway is one of my all-time favorite Texas adventures," says E. DAN KLEPPER. "I love the way it rolls easy and breezy through so much tranquil countryside."



Caprock Canyons Trailway

A 64-MILE trail system that runs between Estelline and South Plains, Caprock Canyons Trailway is administered by **Caprock Canyons State Park**. Visitors must obtain a permit (\$4, free ages 12 and younger) from the visitor center at park headquarters before using the Trailway. The visitor center offers maps and information, as well as programs like guided sunset canyon hikes and Doris Mager's Raptor Talk. The park entrance is on FM 1065, about 3 miles north of Quitaque. (For a detailed map of the Trailway, see the website. Call 806/455-1492; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/caprockcanyons.)

Camping is allowed along the Trailway, but there is no water along the route, so you must cache water and supplies at the trailheads or carry in your supplies. Permanent outhouses are located near most of the trailheads.

For Trailway visitors who bring their own horses, the park offers an **equestrian camping facility**; each of the 12 sites has a set of horse pens. Each trailhead offers parking for vehicles and horse trailers. For information about renting horses in the area, contact the park.

After obtaining a permit from the park, you may access the **six sections of Caprock Canyons Trailway**—the Quitaque Canyon Trail, Los Lingos Trail, Kent Creek Trail, Oxbow Trail, Grundy Canyon Trail, Plains Junction Trail—by means of 8 trailheads, all of which can be reached by farm-to-market roads and state highways. For fee-based shuttle services, call the Caprock Home Center in Quitaque at 806/455-1193. For a listing of trails, mileage, and trailhead access, see www.texashighways.com/webextra.

Caution: Exposure to **bats** and their guano in the Clarity Tunnel (on the Quitaque Canyon Trail) may compromise your health. Do not linger in the tunnel, and avoid raising or breathing dust. Do not harass or handle bats—dead or alive. Do not make loud noises, throw objects at the bats, shine lights on them, or disturb them in any way.

Other Resources

SOAR, Inc. (Save Our American Raptors), 828/506-8106.

Quitaque Chamber of Commerce, 806/455-1456; www.quitaque.org.

City of Turkey, 806/423-1033; www.turkeytexas.net.





San Marcos Springs eternal

With a new focus on education and conservation,
Aquarena Center turns a page

Text by **JOE NICK PATOSKI** Photographs by **KEVIN STILLMAN**

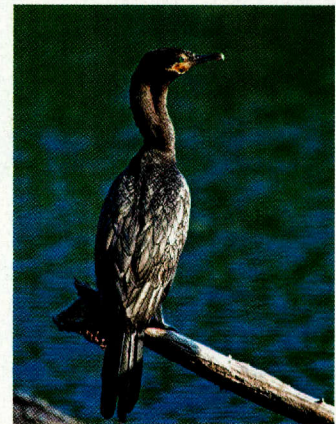
The high temperature had just peaked at 103. An historic drought gripped the entire state. But conditions couldn't have been more perfect as I followed four other kayakers tooling around Spring Lake in San Marcos one summer evening last year. Seventy-degree spring-fed water provided all the natural air-conditioning we could want. A full moon rising above the trees illuminated the setting. As daylight faded, we paddled around a hidden bend where the limbs of trees hugging the shoreline sagged with dozens of white egrets.

As dusk turned into dark, we gazed through the clear glass at the bottom of our kayaks and followed the lights held by several scuba divers who glided around some of the 200 springs bubbling up from the Edwards Aquifer that comprise San Marcos Springs, the second largest artesian springs complex in the western United States. Topher Sipes, the environmental interpreter guiding us around crystal-clear Spring Lake, led us to the headwaters, then back toward our put-in point, following the divers' lights at the lake bottom, before pausing over two gray metal structures submerged below.

"That's the original Submarine Theatre," he said, pointing underwater.

Our voices, previously hushed and soft-spoken, turned loud and animated.

"That's it!"



LEFT: Visitors to Aquarena Center can now explore Spring Lake via guided glass-bottom kayak tours. Highlights include views of the some 200 artesian springs that flow into the lake and an introduction to the site's native birds, mammals, turtles, fish, and plant life. ABOVE: Herons, egrets, and cormorants (shown here) make frequent appearances.



You can't swim in Aquarena's Spring Lake. But on the other side of the dam, swimmers find the same crystalline, cool water flowing into the San Marcos River.

"Glurpo the Clown!"
 "The mermaids drinking soda!"
 "Ralph the Swimming Pig!"

Down below, the ruins of the amusement park attraction—the arena of Aquarena Springs—rusted in peace. In a single glance, modern ecotourists gazed upon one of the touchstones of Texas' very first ecotourist attraction.

From its beginnings in 1928, when San Marcos settler Arthur Rogers first built an inn on the banks of the San Marcos River, Aquarena grew to become one of the most popular amusement parks in Texas. By the early

1970s, Aquarena's delights had expanded to include glass-bottom boat rides, a show in the Submarine Underwater Theatre starring a diving pig and mermaids called Aquamaids, a Swiss Sky Ride gondola lift, the 220-foot-tall Sky Spiral observation tower, and an Old West town called Texana Village with resident dancing chickens and a hoops-shooting rabbit. The attractions were built on, under, and around the main attraction, San Marcos Springs, renamed Aquarena Springs.

As a youngster, I came for the swimming pig and the



parks such as Six Flags Fiesta Texas and Sea World, and the university planned to refocus the park's mission on environmental education. But the water continued to bubble up from the bottom of Spring Lake, of course, and glass-bottom boat tours still enthralled visitors.

Eighteen years after Texas State assumed ownership, Aquarena is a whole new experience. The buildings that contained the entrance, gift shop, restaurant, and Texana Village have been leveled, and nonnative and invasive plants such as Chinese tallow, elephant ears, hydrilla, and water hyacinths are being removed. Hiking trails have been added around the lake to complement the existing wetlands boardwalk. Glass-bottom kayaks have joined the five vintage glass-bottom boats, two of which are now solar-powered, for viewing of the springs in the lake. In addition to the new hiking trails and the existing wetlands trail, several miles of hiking trails criss-cross 251 acres of a joint city/county park on the hillside directly above the lake. Views of the topography here vividly illustrate the Balcones Fault, the rise above the coastal prairie where the Hill Country begins.



For more on Ralph the Swimming Pig, see texashighways.com/webextra.

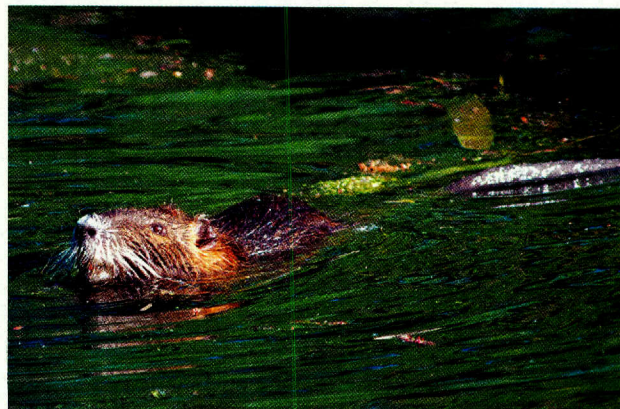
The old Aquarena Inn near the headwaters is now home to the Texas Rivers Center, where visitors can explore a series of aquaria, touch tables, video walls, real-time monitoring stations, and multimedia exhibits about the many endangered species that depend on the springs. You'll leave with a better understanding of how the aquifer, the springs, and the Balcones Fault, as well as groundwater, rivers, bays, estuaries, and the coast, are all connected.

Also sharing space in the old hotel is the Rivers Systems Institute. "No other place I'm aware of offers the combination of incredible beauty, an extraordinary and compelling story, and the opportunity to learn about how the world works," muses Rivers Systems Institute Executive

mermaids. But I never forgot the water. Its clarity was unlike any water I'd seen before. I wanted to jump in. That encounter inspired a lifelong fascination with springs, aquifers, and Texas rivers and streams, especially those in the Hill Country, where I now live.

In 1994, Texas State University purchased the park, surrounding land, and springs, and within a few years, Aquarena Springs ceased operations as a theme park. Swimming pigs were no match for bigger attractions at giant theme

Aquarena staff battle invasive plant species such as hydrilla and elephant ear, as well as imported pests like nutria, aquatic rodents that ravage desirable vegetation.



Director Andrew Sansom, gazing upon the water from his office, the hotel's former Honeymoon Suite. In addition to research, the River Systems Institute oversees a statewide water-quality program involving more than 4,000 volunteer scuba divers and naturalists, and also stewards the San Marcos Springs.

Texas rivers are as unique as San Marcos Springs, it turns out.

"We have more diversity in our rivers than any other state," Sansom states matter-of-factly. "We have basins that average 60 inches of rainfall annually, and basins that have 12 inches of rainfall a year. With the possible exception of Florida, we have the most extensive and healthiest system of bays and estuaries in the United States, all of which at this point are at risk because of the potential lack of freshwater inflow."

The institute's presence has raised awareness of the springs and its economic and aesthetic value to the region, and, just as significantly, has directly benefited the entire Guadalupe River basin through its donation of 40,000 acre-feet of water rights from the San Marcos River for environmental flows, assuring enough freshwater will reach the bays and estuaries that nourish life on the coast and in the Gulf.

"It's the largest commitment of water to the environment in the history of the state," says Sansom, the former director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the author of the 2008 book *Water in Texas*. Sansom puts the springs' importance in perspective. "This is the second-largest artesian spring in the western United States," he says. And unlike the largest springs,

Aquarena's popular glass-bottom boat trips bridge the gap between the park's former mission (entertainment) and its current goals of environmental education.



Comal Springs in nearby New Braunfels, San Marcos Springs has never stopped flowing. "The site is globally significant," Sansom continues. "It is one of the oldest—if not *the* oldest—continuously occupied sites on the North American continent because of the historic waterflow. When the last archeological studies were done here in the 1970s, researchers discovered thousands of stone tools in one area about the size of a two-car garage. So there have been people here a long time."

Fritz Hanselmann, a world-class underwater archeologist, is gathering more data. With funding from the National Geo-

Glass-bottom kayaks have joined the five vintage glass-bottom boats, two of which are now solar-powered, for viewing of the springs in the lake.

graphic Society, Hanselmann is doing a serious examination of cultural resources in the lake, assisted by divers from the aquatic biology, anthropology, and geography departments at Texas State, as well as others who have been approved to dive in the lake.

In other words, San Marcos Springs is getting respect, and crowds continue to come, see, and experience. The annual visitor count is nudging above 125,000.

"When I came here, the culture here was so offended by the notion of the amusement park that the pig was taboo," says Sansom. "We now acknowledge that era and give credit. These people helped create the tourism industry in Texas."

Eight endangered or threatened species, including the Texas blind salamander, share their San Marcos Springs habitat with common residents like spotted gar (left).

That was then. This is now. To show me how Aquarena is bridging the gap between education and tourism, Ron Coley steers





Half-hour tours of Spring Lake aboard Aquarena's glass-bottom boats afford participants clear views of the artesian springs and various aquatic lifeforms.



AQUARENA

AQUARENA CENTER
ON WATERS REEF

ADRIAN J. KATOK





The underwater realm of Aquarena's Submarine Theatre harbors memories of Ralph the Swimming Pig, Glurpo the Clown, and soda-sipping "mermaids."

a solar-powered, glorified golf cart behind the Texas Rivers Center and through a storage area, to the entrance of the newly opened hillside parkland. As Director of Aquarena Center at Texas State, Coley oversaw the transition of a place that captivated him at first sight, 40 years ago, diving Hill Country sites in search of the Texas blind salamander, one of eight endangered species living around the springs. He ended up becoming producer, director, and collaborative writer with Stephen Harrigan of the documentary film *River of Innocence* about the San Marcos River, which flows from the springs. When the university bought the theme park, Coley helped guide the transition.

Following a newly blazed, crushed-gravel path, Coley crouches down in a low-roofed cart as he tools up the steep hillside (a half-mile hike) to the pinnacle of the hillside preserve. Thick with cedar brakes and oak mottes, the preserve also boasts a small pond; it's prime habitat for the endangered golden-cheeked warbler and more than a hundred other avian species. While hiking the hill is encouraged, a shuttle is also available, and Coley says that Segway scooters may soon make the climb, as well.

He stops the cart at the top. "From here, you can see the Blanco River, and you can see Sink Creek coming out of the Freeman Ranch," he says, sweeping an arm over the wide panorama before walking a few paces west to a partially uncovered sinkhole. "If you were to pour dye here, you could see it come out at the springs. The Edwards Plateau and San Marcos Springs are interconnected."

Coley says the repurposed Aquarena directs attention to the real feature attraction—the pristine water that flows from the sand and gravel at the bottom of the lake. "People ask me what I'm trying to do—am I trying to rebuild an amusement park that was the number one tourist attraction in Texas in the '50s? No, what I'm trying to do is preserve and protect San Marcos Springs," he says.

Glass-bottom kayaks are available for guided tours of Spring Lake. Because Aquarena is environmentally sensitive, no outside boats are allowed.

➔ TH ESSENTIALS



Aquarena Center

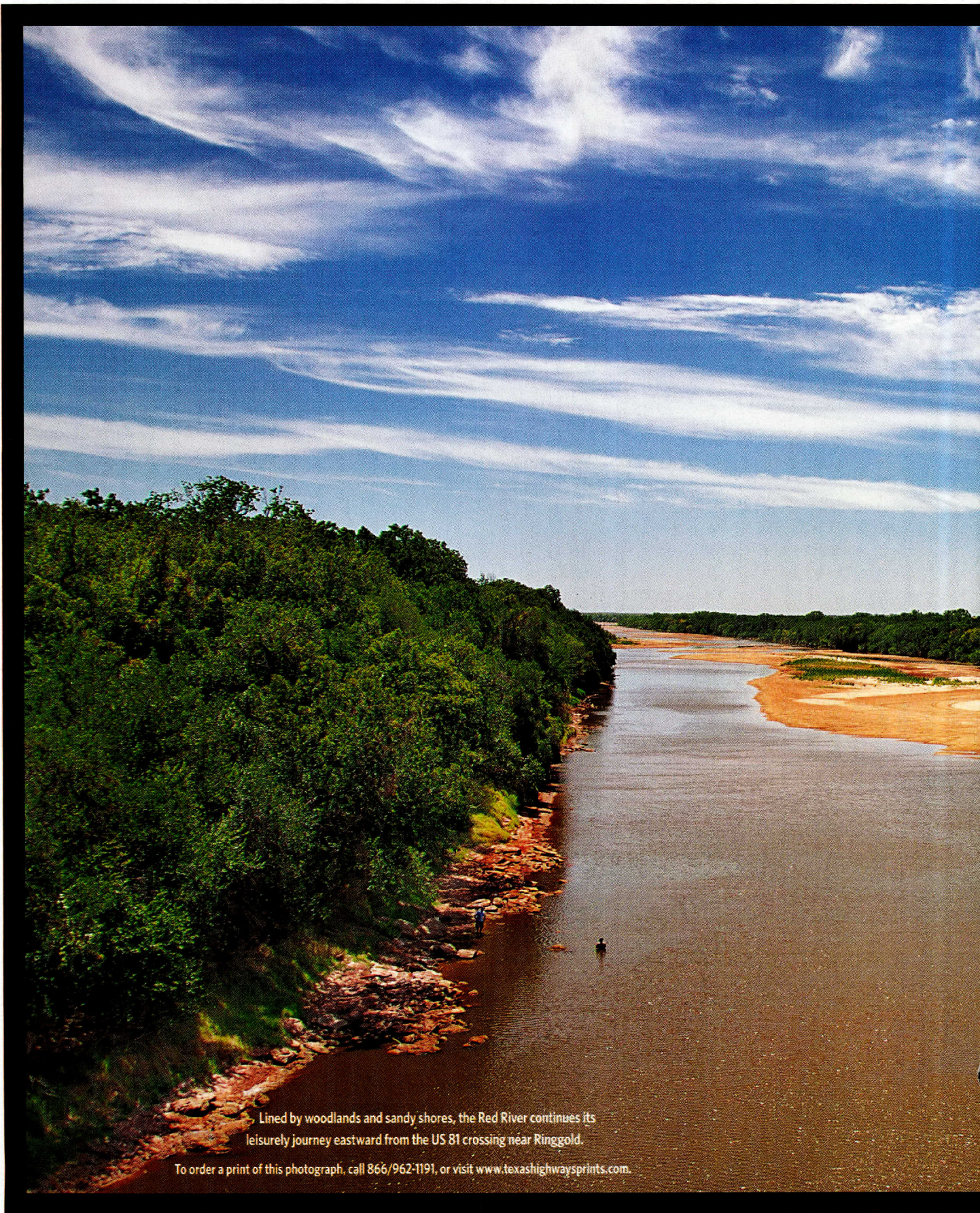
AQUARENA CENTER is part of Texas State University, at 951 Aquarena Springs Dr. in San Marcos. Call 512/245-7570; www.aquarena.txstate.edu.

Fans of the old **Aquarena Springs** theme park can revisit the park's glory days with the DVD *Aquarena Springs and Ralph the Swimming Pig: The Documentary of a Texas Treasure*, which was produced by Bob Phillips, the son of Gene Phillips, Aquarena Springs' longtime manager. The documentary features footage of Ralph doing his swine dive, Glurpo the Clown, the famous Aquamaids, and other attractions, interspersed with interviews of former Aquarena employees. See www.aquarenaandralph.com.

In 2009, author Doni Weber, a granddaughter of Aquarena Springs pioneer Paul Rogers, published the book *Aquarena Springs* as part of Arcadia Press' *Images of America* series. See www.arcadiapublishing.com.

And have some fun doing it, in the spirit of Aquarena. **TH**

When he's not relaxing in a river or swimming hole, writer **JOE NICK PATOSKI** writes about Texas food, football, music, conservation, and travel. Long ago, photographer **KEVIN STILLMAN** had the opportunity to dive at the old Aquarena Springs theme park. He recalls being followed by a mob of swimming piglets, whose interest waned upon discovering he didn't intend to feed them.



Lined by woodlands and sandy shores, the Red River continues its leisurely journey eastward from the US 81 crossing near Ringgold.

To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.



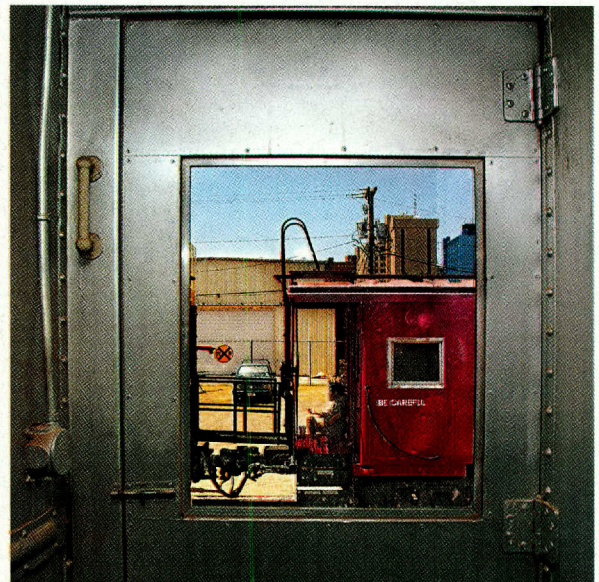
“So come sit by my side
if you love me.
Do not hasten to bid
me adieu.
Just remember the
Red River Valley,
And the one that has
loved you so true.”

—FROM THE SONG “RED RIVER VALLEY”

BIG red

Trails, Rails, and Prairie Dog
Tales of the Red River Valley

Text and Photographs by E. DAN KLEPPER



THE RED RIVER VALLEY, LYRIC of the broken heart and bloodshot prairie, spans the entirety of the state's north central border with Oklahoma, embracing towns and pasturelands from Electra, Holliday, and Wichita Falls east to Paris, Telephone, and Texarkana. Field rows of cotton, corn, and winter wheat dominate its pastoral plains, and the verdant green of late summer milo—seedheads and flag leaves waving—contrasts with the brash

Among the artifacts on display at the Wichita Falls Railroad Museum are rolling stock and motorcar units, along with railroad memorabilia. The museum lies in Depot Square, part of downtown's National Register Historic District.



The Prairie Dog Town Fork flows through Palo Duro Canyon State Park, watering the cottonwoods, sideoats grama, and star thistle populating the canyon floor.

The Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River began to carve Palo Duro Canyon about a million years ago. Along with hiking trails, cabins, campsites, and a museum, Palo Duro Canyon State Park features the *TEXAS* outdoor musical drama from June to August.

sanguinity of its brick-red dirt. Running roughshod over all, both master and agent at once, is its namesake river, an ambling giant flowing wide and calm across 640 miles of the North Texas boundary. From its Texas origins in the Panhandle, the Red River travels east all the way through Texarkana, then south, a journey of more than 1,300 miles, before finally joining the Mississippi on its way to the Gulf of Mexico.

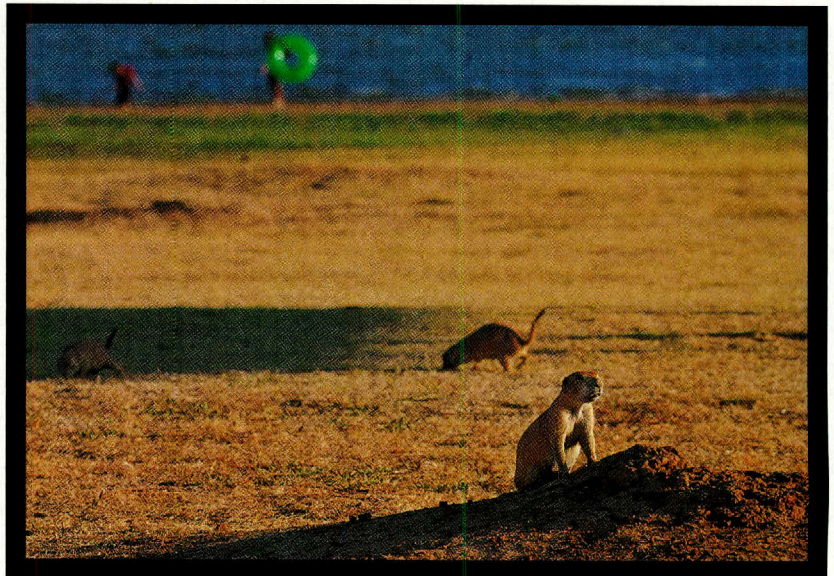


The Red, considered the second longest river affiliated with Texas, served in the 1700s as a dividing line between territories claimed by France and Spain. Boundary and jurisdiction disagreements across riverbanks prevailed over the following centuries, first between Spain and the U.S., then the Republic of Texas and the federal government, followed by Texas and Oklahoma and their battling militias, until the federal courts tried to resolve what they thought would be the final dispute. However, much like the Red's own battles with the natural forces of flooding, the settlement gave way to the whims of human nature. It took a final determination of the federal ruling, signed into law in 2000, to confirm the exact parameters of the Red's boundary dispensation. The law states, unequivocally, that the Texas border ends at the hardwood vegetation line along the *south* bank of the river, leaving the rest of the Red for Oklahoma. The Red River, in fact, doesn't belong to Texas after all. But the source of much of its abundant water does, including the Prairie Dog Town Fork, considered the river's primary root in Texas.

The Prairie Dog Town Fork rises in the Panhandle just north of Canyon, then travels several hundred miles east before joining the North Fork to form the Red River proper. Visitors to Palo Duro Canyon State Park, home to striated canyon walls and wind-whittled hoodoos, will find a dawdling Prairie Dog Town Fork watering the cottonwoods, sideoats grama, and star thistle populating the Palo Duro Canyon floor. State Park Road 5 crosses the Prairie Dog Town Fork no less than six times on its roundabout to trailheads marking scenic stretches along the stream's banks. Try the Paseo del Rio Trail, perfect for a morning birding walk, or the Sunflower Trail, a late-afternoon favorite of the local wild turkey population.

The particularly adventurous can drive to the equestrian campsite just past the park road's sixth and final low-water crossing

The residents of Lake Arrowhead State Park's prairie dog community go about their daily business as people play along the lake's shoreline. Enjoy picnicking, camping, fishing, watersports, hiking, and disc golf at this popular park southeast of Wichita Falls.





and then follow the Prairie Dog Town Fork on foot as it flows alongside a well-trodden horse trail. Or stay high and dry by hiking the renowned Lighthouse Trail and marvel at what the Prairie Dog Town Fork has wrought. Over the last million years or so, the stream's waters carved the chasm from the surrounding short grass prairie, ultimately producing a canyon 120 miles long, 20 miles wide, and 800 feet deep. It's a process much easier to imagine whenever the Prairie Dog Town Fork, swollen with rain, scours the canyon floor with massive and dangerous floodwaters than at the height of summer during a drought, when the stream has been known to run dry.

The 500-strong hat collection of former Western-wear-store owner Nat Fleming now resides at the Museum of North Texas History in Wichita Falls. Look for the hat with a bullet hole in it.



Among the military displays at the Museum of North Texas History is the collection of intricate ship replicas created by World War II Navy veteran Bill Carter.


Farther east in Red River Valley country, the Red gets its first flush of truly navigable waters from the Wichita River. The Wichita, having risen as three separate forks in the rolling prairies of northwest Texas, drifts through the city of Wichita Falls before emptying into the Red. The "Falls," originally a five-foot waterfall located in town along the Wichita River's course, washed away in a flood sometime during the late 1800s. In the 1980s, the city re-created the falls as a 54-foot-high waterfall along the southern banks of the river in the city's Lucy Park. The Falls Trail, a one-mile round trip along concrete walkways, begins at the Falls Trail parking area off the park's Sunset Drive, then follows a bend in the Wichita River before arriving at the multitiered cascade. Lucy Park, a 178-acre urban respite filled with ducks and lotus blossoms, offers plenty of benches, picnic shelters, volleyball courts, barbecue grills, a swimming pool, basketball goals, and playgrounds.

In spite of its location on the river, Wichita Falls remained

The Falls Trail in Wichita Falls follows a bend in the Wichita River before arriving at the multitiered cascade in Lucy Park.



The 54-foot waterfall along the Falls Trail at Lucy Park offers refreshing respite. The park also features a large pond area with ducks, geese, and other waterfowl.



Oil derricks, sealed and capped, serve as markers for boaters and hot spots for fishing on Lake Arrowhead.

A Look at the Lake

BEFORE impoundment began for Lake Arrowhead in the 1960s, 15 oil wells located on the proposed lakebed were capped and sealed. Steel derricks over the wells now mark their locations. These looming structures rise up from the lake's shallow waters, serving as markers for boaters and, beneath the waves, attractors for sunfish and large-mouth bass. At dusk, the derricks' rusting hulks ignite in the sunset light before fading into bony shadows. —E. Dan Klepper

a humble townsite with few settlers until the railroad boom of the 1880s. At that time, residents managed to attract the Fort Worth and Denver Railway Company with abundant property concessions along the proposed track right-of-way and, as a result, the trains began to arrive, inspiring Wichita Falls to thrive. By the turn of the 20th Century, the town served as the transportation and supply hub for five different railway companies covering much of the Red River Valley, including all of northwest Texas and southern Oklahoma.

Some of the region's railway history is on display at the Wichita Falls Railroad Museum, in the city's Depot Square Historic District. The museum (open on Saturdays only) is actually a collection of vintage railroad rolling stock, including locomotives, Pullman sleepers, baggage cars, and cabooses, scattered across the gated museum grounds. Visitors are free to walk among the cars and other merchandise, then board some of the railroad classics and explore.

More of the Red River Valley's past comes to life at the Museum of North Texas History. The museum features a cowboy hat collection created by Nat Fleming, who owned a Western-wear store called the Cow Lot. When customers came to the Cow Lot to purchase new hats, Fleming encouraged them to leave their old cowboy hats hanging on the store wall. The entire collection of 500 hats now hangs alongside exhibits about the North Texas oil boom, Native American artifacts, an Iron Lung,

Steel derricks dot the waterscape at Lake Arrowhead, a reservoir on the Little Wichita River, which feeds into the Red River.

and a remarkable collection of replicas of military ships created by World War II Navy veteran Bill Carter. Carter survived the bombing of Pearl Harbor aboard the USS *Utah* and, in retirement, built each replica by hand.

A lively farmer's market, also located in Wichita Falls' downtown historic district, takes place May through September under the shade of a permanent open-air pavilion. Local Red River Valley growers offer fresh produce directly from area farms. After picking up a basket of tomatoes or onions, you might want to work your way down the street and try an authentic red taco from Casa Mañana, a Wichita Falls landmark since 1947. The restaurant's rich corn tacos are fresh-made, soft but with a distinct, crispy finish, and come in a dark-red color making them both pretty and tasty.

Once past the confluence with the Wichita, the Red River continues eastward, gaining volume from numerous tributaries along the way including the Wichita's shorter sister, the Little Wichita River. Before the Little Wichita reaches the Red, however, its waters are impounded in a reservoir southeast of Wichita Falls called Lake Arrowhead, a favorite among anglers for its white crappie. Visitors can access the lake for swimming, boating, fishing, and sailing via Lake Arrowhead State Park on the northwest side of the reservoir. The park features a prairie dog town, and the critters also have taken up residency among the picnic tables and barbecue pits along the lake's swim-beach shore. The dogs' proximity to the park's amenities provides visitors with a front-row seat to witness their antics.

Downstream of the Little Wichita confluence and just north of the tiny Red River Valley community of Ringgold, US 81 straddles the Red River in a wide concrete bridge, affording travelers a generous view of the Red River's expanse. The southern shoreline, coated in wattles of sand, lies sun-baked and barren while dense Oklahoma woodlands crowd into the

river along the north side. Sandbars and sediment mounds catch rafts of driftwood and flood debris. Turtles float in the sluggish water, corking their funny heads

Emily Nimz often sells her hand-knitted toys at the Wichita Falls Farmer's Market, which takes place May through September.



Red River, Part I

THIS PORTION OF E. Dan Klepper's Red River Valley excursion stretches from the river's Texas origins in the Panhandle east to Wichita Falls and the Ringgold area. He completes his journey in the August issue. For general river information, go to the Red River Authority of Texas' website, www.rra.dst.tx.us. Contact information for sites listed in the story follows.

Wichita Falls

Wichita Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau, 1000 5th St., 940/716-5500; <http://wichitafalls.org>.

Wichita Falls Railroad Museum, 500 9th St., 940/723-2661; www.wfrmm.com. Open only on Sat.

Museum of North Texas History, 720 Indiana Ave., 940/322-7628; www.month-ntx.org.

Casa Mañana, 609 Eighth St., 940/723-5661.

State Parks

Palo Duro Canyon State Park, 11450 Park Rd. 5, Canyon, 806/488-2227; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/palodurocanyon.

Lake Arrowhead State Park, 229 Park Rd. 63, Wichita Falls, 940/528-2211, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/lakearrowhead.

skyward, only to pull back against a sudden shadow, then drop into the river's ruddy murk. Quicksand, snakes, and a relentless headwind discourage most travelers from fully exploring this segment of the Red. The riverbanks here and their attendant lands are privately owned as well, with no public access until the river enters the massive Lake Texoma almost a hundred miles downstream. But perhaps there is something more that keeps the casual wanderer at bay. The Red is not just a river here but a ribbon of time. Once caught in its melancholy, the traveler drifts into a simpler, quieter era, never quite destined to reach the sea. **TH**

"This story covers the first leg of a journey that took me along the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River to Texarkana," says E. DAN KLEPPER. "I think most Texans have a special vision of the Red River, whether imaginary or authentic. After traversing the entire Red River country of Texas by highway, the Red still feels more enigmatic to me than real."



The balloon glow remains a popular activity at the Great Texas Balloon Race in Longview. GTR founder Bill Bussey pioneered the tradition, now a colorful custom at balloon festivals worldwide.



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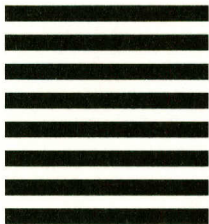
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BALLOONS

OVER THE PINES

Two high-flying competitions
bring America's top
balloonists to Longview and
brighten East Texas skies





Text by **RANDY MALLORY**

EACH JULY, THE SKY ABOVE LONGVIEW

turns predictably polka-dotted when the Great Texas Balloon Race (GTBR) fills the air with dozens of brightly colored hot air balloons. The sky turns particularly polka-dotted this July, because during part of the 34th annual event, balloon-happy Longview concurrently hosts the U.S. National Hot Air Balloon Championship. What's more, the city will host the Nationals again in 2013 and 2014. Organizers of the two events expect that the weeklong competitions, involving some 75 hot air balloonists floating over the Piney Woods, will attract some 40,000 visitors.

The national contest features America's top 50 balloonists, who vie to win the national title, prizes totaling \$50,000, and the chance to represent the U.S. in the 2014 World Championship in Brazil. These top 50 compete in numerous weekday flights for the Nationals, then join another 25 or so balloonists for the GTBR events Friday through Sunday.

All flights take place early each day (6:30 a.m.) to avoid daytime thermals. Flights for the Nationals launch from various locations around Longview and elsewhere in Gregg County, depending on wind direction and flight tasks (such as locating a target on the ground or performing certain maneuvers in the air). Viewing these weekday fly-bys is a matter of luck; fans keep their eyes peeled skyward early each morning.

Then, Friday afternoon through Sunday morning, Nationals pilots join GTBR pilots for flights and other family-friendly activities based at the GTBR festival grounds at the East Texas Regional Airport. GTBR founder and Longview dentist Bill Bussey (himself a record-setting balloonist) invented the festival's most popular event, the "Balloon Glow," now a common crowd-pleaser at balloon festivals worldwide.

The Friday- and Saturday-night balloon glows at the GTBR begin with the inflation of whimsical balloons known as "special shapes." Sometimes two or three times the size of a typical hot air balloon, these oddities can resemble anything from a clown's face to a bumblebee. Then, after sunset, the regular balloons inflate alongside the special shapes, and all remain tethered in place. Around 8:50 p.m., the chant goes up, "One, two, three, GLOW," and the simultaneous blasts of propane burners illuminate the balloons as if they were fantastical fireflies in a darkening sky.

The balloon glow remains a peak experience for balloon enthusiasts and Longview residents Blake and Leska

© JACOB ADKISSON; TOP PHOTO © CINDY PETREHN PHOTOGRAPHY



ABOVE: With his hot air balloon, *Sundance*, already about two-thirds full, balloonist Rick James of Judson blasts the propane burners to fully inflate the envelope. RIGHT: *Sundance* flies overhead during the Great Texas Balloon Race.

IN 2012, AND AGAIN in 2013 and 2014, Longview will
host the U.S. National Hot Air Balloon Championship
concurrently with the Great Texas Balloon Race.





The *Sundance* crew makes the Ring Toss look easy, but positioning the balloon this close to the pole requires a series of skillful maneuvers.



For a roundup of balloon festivals across Texas, see texashighways.com/webextra.

Parker, who have come to the festival since 2005, when their oldest son, Chance, was two years old.

“The noise of the propane burners scared him at first, but then he really got into it,” says Blake. “Now he looks forward to the Great Texas Balloon Race more than Christmas.” Last year, the Parkers invited extended family, and four generations enjoyed the balloon glow together.

“It’s incredible to walk around among these giant, glowing balloons for a close-up view and even chat with the pilots,” adds Blake. “Before the balloon glow, we munch on funnel cakes, play some kids’ games, and check out the craft booths. It’s a great family outing.”

Indeed, a country-fair atmosphere prevails across the festival grounds. Youngsters jump in inflatable bounce houses, and families hop on midway rides, visit arts-and-crafts booths, and sample foods and drinks. Aviation buffs can inspect several special aircraft on display, and, after nightfall, visitors converge near the open-air stage for concerts by top country-western artists. (JB and the Moonshine Band headlines on Friday, and Grammy-winner Ronnie Milsap performs on Saturday.)

The Ring Toss, one of the more popular balloon competitions, takes place on Saturday and Sunday mornings. It involves both Nationals and GTBR pilots competing for \$5,000 in prize money. They launch at least two miles from the airport, then float to the festival grounds, where they try to place or toss a 12-inch, fiberglass ring onto a 20-foot pole. The feat still amazes Sam and Pat Vaughn of Longview, even after two decades of attending the GTBR. As inveterate RV-ers, they park their RV in the motor-home area and enjoy watching the

IN THE RING-TOSS competition, balloonists float over the festival grounds, where they try to place or toss a 12-inch, fiberglass ring onto a 20-foot pole.



Billowing hot air balloons await lift-off during early-morning competition at the Great Texas Balloon Race.

competition with friends. Hundreds of other visitors sit in lawn chairs encircling the pole

to cheer the pilots as they fly by.

During the early competitions, there were years when no one won the purse. “These days, pilots have so much skill and so many GPS and other navigational devices that you can count on someone winning the Ring Toss every year,” explains balloonist Bill Bussey.

Those ballooning skills are put to the ultimate test as Nationals pilots make practice flights on Monday, and then spend the rest of the week competing in early-morning flights. Balloonists in both Nationals and GTBR flights earn points by demonstrating how accurately they complete simple and complex tasks, which can number 25 or more for the week. For example, right before launch, the Championship Director gives pilots the GPS coordinates for a target located miles away. Each pilot determines a launch site (such as an open field) based on wind direction, then flies over the target, which can be as simple as a 50-foot, paper or plastic

“X” spiked to the ground. Then, the pilot must drop a lightweight, stuffed bag the size of a cell phone as close to the center as possible. Other tasks are more complex, like floating through an imaginary window in the sky, with the maneuver recorded for scoring purposes on each pilot’s GPS device.

As the skill level of top pilots rises, so does the ballooning reputation of Longview, which was named by the State Legislature the “Official Balloon Capital of Texas” in 1985. Bill Bussey puts it this way: “This is a colorful, popular event, but it has gained world-class status because it’s a serious competition.”

Adds current world-champion balloonist (and Longview-race regular) John Petrehn of Kansas: “The Great Texas Balloon Race is one of the most successful and competitive balloon events in the U.S. It’s the next best thing to the national championship, and Longview even has the Nationals for the next three years. That’s ballooning at its best.” **TH**

Tyler-based writer-photographer **RANDY MALLORY** had the pleasure of taking a balloon ride over Longview and the Piney Woods with master balloonist Bill Bussey.



TH ESSENTIALS

Great Ballooning

LONGVIEW's 34th annual **Great Texas Balloon Race** festival and competition is July 27-29, 2012, on the GTBR festival grounds at the East Texas Regional Airport, 269 Terminal Circle. This year (and again in 2013 and 2014), Longview also hosts the **U.S. National Hot Air Balloon Championship** (July 24-29, 2012).

Longview is in Gregg County, 125 miles east of Dallas. To reach the festival grounds from Interstate 20, go south on TX 149, turn right on TX 322, turn left on FM 349, and proceed to the entrance. For a detailed map, see www.gtbr.net.

Nationals events take place weekday mornings, beginning on Tuesday; watch for fly-bys during early-morning competitions over the Longview area. GTBR events—all of which are open to Nationals pilots—begin on Friday afternoon. GPS coordinates and target locations will be posted on the GTBR website below.

Besides balloon competitions, the festivities include balloon glows, live musical entertainment, a bounce house, midway rides, arts and crafts, and carnival-type foods and drinks. For schedules and admission fees, call the Longview Convention and Visitors Bureau at 903/753-3281, or visit www.gtbr.net.

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East Texas Original

*In memoriam: Howard Peacock—
man of letters, avowed tree hugger,
friend of the Big Thicket*

Text by **RANDY MALLORY**

IN APRIL, TEXAS LOST TWO STALwarts of environmentalism, Geraldine Watson and Howard Peacock. Count them among conservationists of the 1960s who helped save remnants of the “biological crossroads of North America,” what eco-tourists now enjoy as the Big Thicket National Preserve in southeast Texas.

I did not have the pleasure of knowing Geraldine Watson, one of the great experts on Thicket ecology. But I knew Howard Peacock for more than 30 years, first as a fellow travel writer, then as a dear friend. Howard and I both started writing for *Texas Highways* in 1980. Appropriately, my first article (on bluegrass music) appears alongside his first (on, what else, the Big Thicket). Howard’s article touts some of his favorite Thicket things—the wild orchids, azaleas, silky camellias, and insect-eating plants.

In the ensuing decades, *Texas Highways* published more than 100 of Howard’s articles on nature, culture, food, and history—topics he covered elsewhere as well in a half-century of freelance writing. Howard went on to publish the books *The Big Thicket of Texas: America’s Ecological Wonder* in 1984 and *Nature Lover’s Guide to the Big Thicket* in 1994. He also



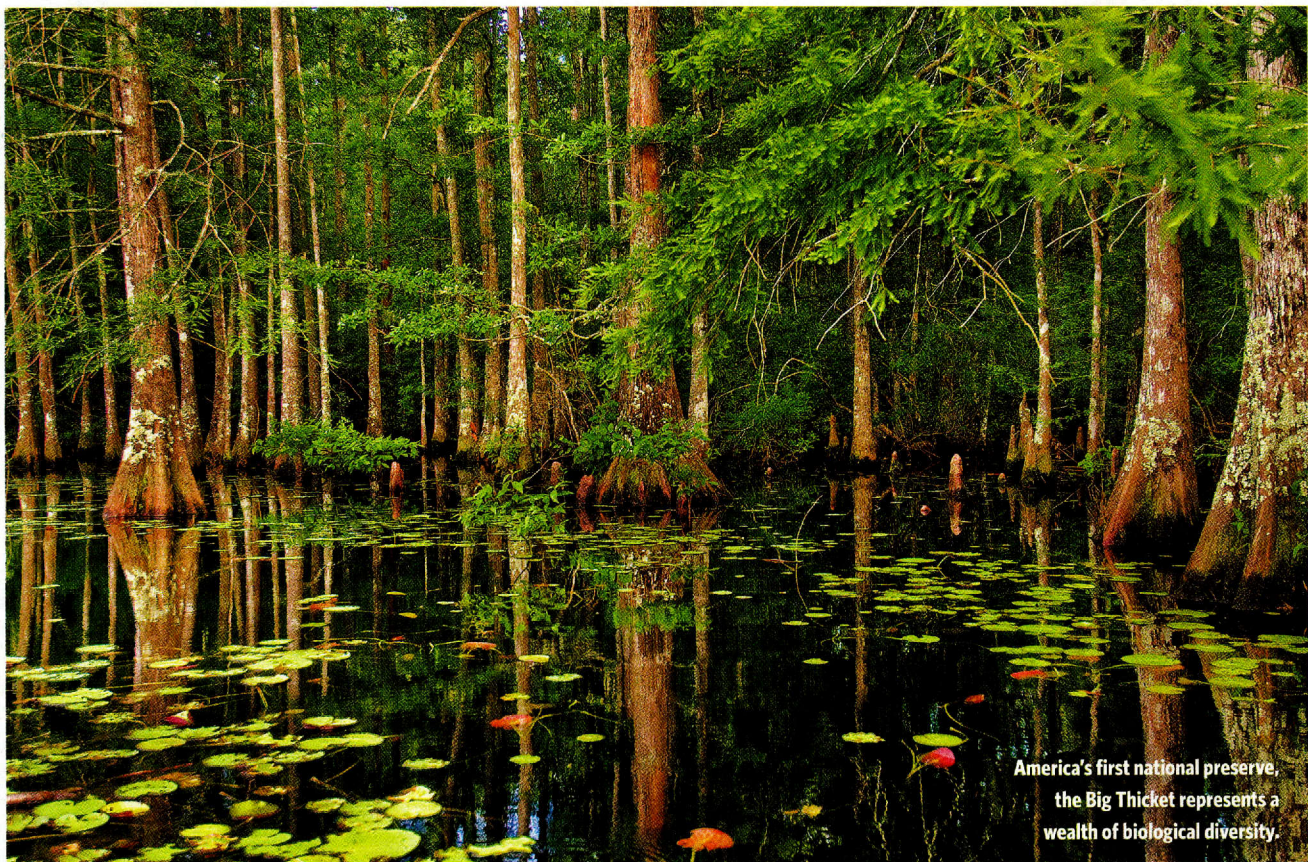
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For more tributes to Howard Peacock, see texashighways.com/more

edited *The Nature of Texas: A Feast of Native Beauty from Texas Highways Magazine* in 1990. Through museum seminars, nature workshops, and TV appearances, Howard taught others about the Thicket’s treasures.

Howard never tired of telling and retelling the Big Thicket story: How it harbors 10 major ecosystems, more than any other place its size in North America and perhaps the world. How indiscriminant logging, industry, and development all but destroyed it. How activists, scientists, and politicians studied and struggled to save important pieces of what remained.

Howard Peacock extolled the Big Thicket’s wonders, from wild orchids to beech trees with “sleek, silvery sheaths of figured bark.”



America's first national preserve, the Big Thicket represents a wealth of biological diversity.

Howard's dedication to the Thicket movement earned him the nickname "Tush Hog," defined as "the meanest old rooter of the woods," says Maxine Johnston of Batson, a seminal activist. But Maxine and all of Howard's friends knew him as the most lovable of all tush hogs and a consummate tree hugger ... literally. "I admit I not only hug beech trees but also kiss them," he wrote in his last article on the Big Thicket (*Texas Highways*, October 2005). "Not many of them, of course; just the prettiest."

Howard was part of a long line of tree huggers determined to protect the Thicket. Beginning in the 1920s, conservationist R.E. Jackson and self-taught naturalist Lance Rosier took scientists and powerful people on field trips to experience the Thicket. Sixties-era environmentalists—including Howard, Maxine, Geraldine Watson, Harold Nicholas, and others—did the same after

forming the Big Thicket Association in 1964. Fellow activist and Big Thicket author Pete Gunter of Denton, says, "Some of us were in attack mode against the timber companies. Howard was inherently gentle and poetic. He wanted to show people the heart of the forest."

Finally, in 1974, Congress created the Big Thicket National Preserve, America's first national preserve. Since then it has grown to 100,000 protected acres in nine separate land units and six water corridors in seven southeast Texas counties. Howard served as Big Thicket Association president (1975-1976) and remained active in the organization the rest of his life. One of his last public appearances in the Thicket came in 2008 during the association's Big Thicket Day in Kountze. "Howard and other members of the association served as the public voice of the Thicket," says Big Thicket National

Preserve Chief of Interpretation Leslie Dubey, "and they still do."

Curious Like a Cat

Howard shared the same birthday, July 12, with one of his literary heroes, American naturalist and writer Henry David Thoreau.

Howard surely was channeling Thoreau in his 2005 *Texas Highways* article when he suggested: "The best way to walk in the woods is like a curious but contented cat. You're alert to sounds, smells, sights, textures, and yes, if you know your wild berries, your taste. ... Walking that way, you see trees, leaves, lizards, tracks, and birds in a new light."

Contemplative walks also gave Howard purpose and solace, even as a child, a fact he recounted two years ago in a brief timeline of his life, a document residing with his archives at the Sam Houston Regional Library & Research Center in Liberty.

Howard's dedication to the Thicket movement earned him the nickname "Tush Hog," defined as "the meanest old rooter of the woods."

Born in Beaumont in 1925, Howard began writing stories as a boy about scouting outings in the Big Thicket. Writing became his passion; he sold his first magazine article while still in high school.

During World War II, he served on a U.S. Navy ammunition ship in the Philippines, then returned to civilian life as a reporter for *The Beaumont Journal*. In 1949, he married Kitty Galiano, his true love for the next 52 years.

The couple moved to Houston, where Howard worked as a writer and fundraiser. He produced 100 episodes of an early TV talk show called *Ideas in Focus*, a project of the Texas Bill of Rights Foundation to engage opposing political positions in sharp but well-mannered dialogue.

All the while Howard wrote in his folksy way to promote the Big Thicket. In 1974, the Peacocks moved with their cats to a dogtrot farmhouse under a beech tree in Woodville to be closer to others

involved in the Save the Thicket movement. Fellow Big Thicket author and historian Francis E. Abernethy of Nacogdoches adds, "I think he moved to Woodville ... to save his soul from gasoline fumes and packed traffic. One of his personalities was quite private, which lent itself to solitary wanderings in the woods."

Zen in the Woods

Kitty Peacock died in 2001, and Howard moved to an apartment on San Antonio's picturesque River Walk. There he explored its riverine pathways as he had the dappled trails of the Thicket. A small park called Portal San Fernando proved a favorite stop. He frequented the spot to sit on a limestone block in a cool breeze perfumed by yellow esperanza flowers, where he lost himself in thought.

Several years ago my wife, Sallie Evans, and I began visiting Howard in San Antonio. Typically we took him to

Paddle the Thicket

START ANY VISIT TO THE BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE WITH

a stop at the Big Thicket Visitors Center, seven miles north of Kountze on US 69. Dioramas, videos, and information panels describe the biodiversity found in the "Biological Crossroads of North America" (four of the continent's five carnivorous genera thrive here, for example). Ask about ranger-led hikes and river trips available throughout the summer. The visitor center (free admission) opens daily 9 to 5 (409/951-6700; www.nps.gov/bith).

Find the coolest summer views of Big Thicket beauty from a canoe or kayak along Village Creek, southeast Texas' premier inland paddling destination. It winds 55 miles from near Village Mills to its Neches River junction at Beaumont. The designated Village Creek Paddling Trail winds 21 miles from FM 418 through Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary to Village Creek State Park at Lumberton. Several take-out points allow short to overnight floats, with camping allowed on wide, white sandbars. Local outfitters provide boats, shuttle service, and guided trips. Try Eastex Canoes (409/385-4700; www.eastexcanoes.com) or Piney Woods Outfitters (409/751-0911; www.canoetexas.com). For details check the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department paddling trails website (www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/boat/paddlingtrails).



—Randy Mallory

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Speaking of Texas

lunch at a favorite Mexican-food hangout—perhaps Mi Tierra or El Mirador. We once sauntered along the River Walk to famed coronetist Jim Cullum's jazz club, The Landing, where Howard closed his eyes, swayed back and forth, and got lost in the music.

Howard regaled us about his faithful San Antonio friends, the ones he met for food and playful conversation, as well as his more distant friends who helped sustain his spirits during his final months of failing health.

One of my favorite memories of Howard involves a visit to the Big Thicket in 2000, when we walked among his beloved beech trees with mutual friend and author Christopher Cook, a Beaumont native now living in Prague. Christopher interviewed Howard, and I shot photos as he reviewed his time in the Thicket. Pausing beside a smooth-barked tree, he explained the subtle difference between hornbeam, crape myrtle, and ironwood. Then he surprised

us: "I am trying to forget names of trees and flowers and birds and everything like that. ... I found out that the names get in the way. When you are looking at a flower and trying to figure out the name, you are not enjoying the flower." Later Christopher remarked about the Zen-like quality of Howard's observation.

A few years ago, I began sending Howard a page-a-day Zen calendar, the same one that I bought each year. We sometimes discussed the sayings we enjoyed, as well as some we couldn't understand.

One of the Zen sayings I keep close at hand asks: "If enlightenment is not where you are standing, where will you look?" I believe Howard saw the light when he wrote in 2005 about walking in the woods: "The last thing you do is hurry. You're not going somewhere; you like being where you are."

On July 12, Howard Peacock would have turned 86. He died on April 22, which was, appropriately, Earth Day. **TH**

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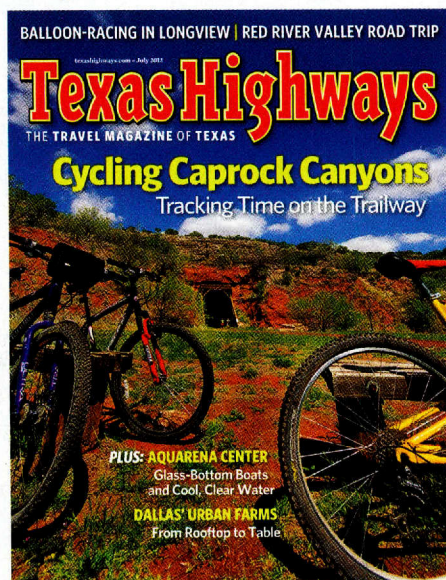
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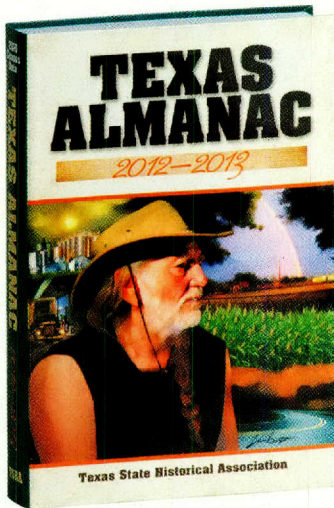
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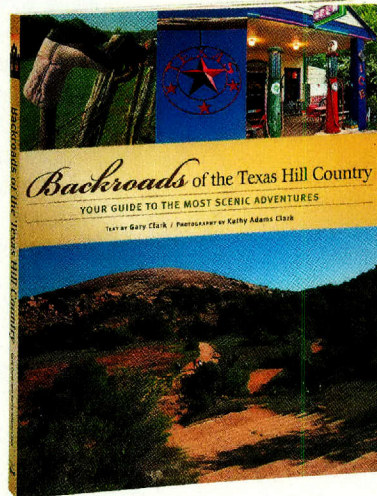
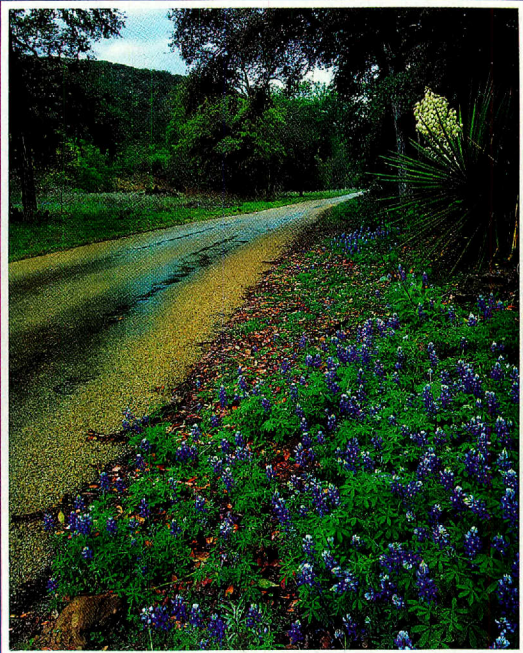
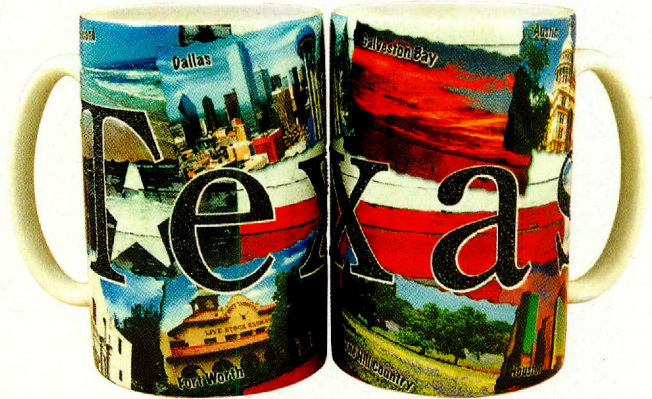
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Texas Almanac 2012-2013

Take a trip across the Lone Star State. The Texas Almanac is the ultimate resource on all things Texan. Filled with hundreds of color maps and photographs from every corner of the state. Soft cover, 6¼ x 9¼ inches.

Item 36712 \$24.95

Hill Country Bluebonnets

Native Texas bluebonnets, a yucca in bloom and live oaks line a pretty country road. 10 x 24 inches.

Item 32130 \$6.50

Texas Word Earrings

French loop earrings in solid sterling silver. "Texas" is 7/8 inches long; earring total length 1½ inches.

Item 37913 \$38.95

Texas Etched Mug

Our large Texas mug is perfect for your morning brew. The etched lettering over colorful Texas scenes adds texture and beauty. Large easy-grip handle. 18 oz.

Item 37339 \$11.95

Backroads of the Texas Hill Country

By Gary Clark

A colorful guide to 30 scenic drives through the heart of the Lone Star State. Ideal for planning a day trip or a weekend getaway. Beautiful color photos and intriguing historical images. 160 pages, color, soft cover, 8.5 x 11 inches.

Item 36351 \$21.99

Texas Fed, Texas Bred CD, Vol. 2

Fourteen tracks include: *That's the Stuff*, *Outside the Lines*, *Long Way to Mexico*, *Amarillo Sky*, *Prove Me Right*, *What I Really Mean*, *Tornado Time in Texas*, *Amarillo by Morning* and more.

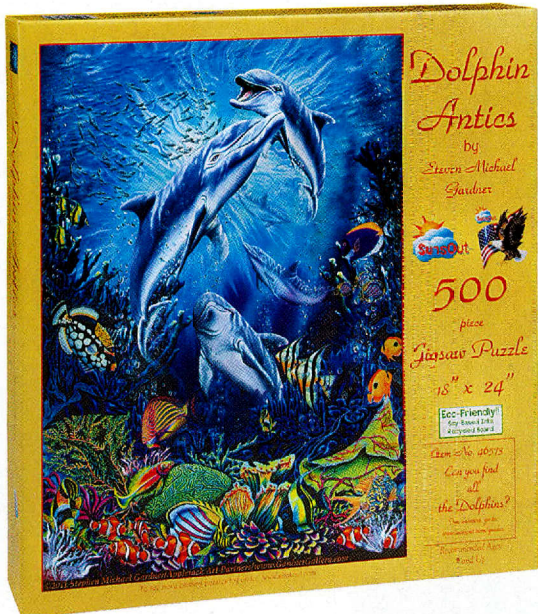
Item 37606 \$19.95

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Texas *flair* TO KEEP OR SHARE



Dolphin Antics Jigsaw Puzzle

Dreaming of the coast? This colorful under-water scene will fill your day discovering wonderful treasures under the sea. Eco-friendly puzzle by artist Steven Michael Gardner. Printed with soy-based ink on recycled board. 500 pieces. 18 x 24 inches.

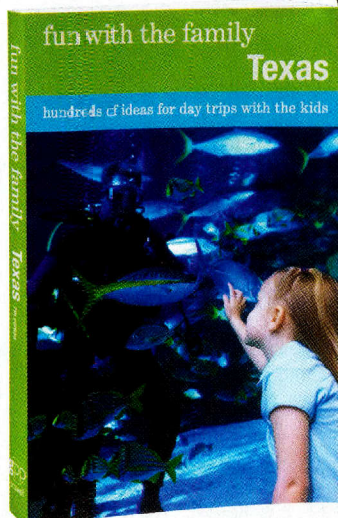
Item 37533 \$14.95

Fun with the Family - Texas Hundreds of ideas for day trips with kids

By Sharry Buckner

Written by a parent, for parents, this easy-to-use guide has hundreds of ideas to keep the kids entertained for an hour, a day or a weekend. Destinations include amusement parks, historical attractions, children museums, wildlife habitats, festivals, parks and much more. Organized regionally for ease of use. 243 pages, soft cover, 6 x 9 inches.

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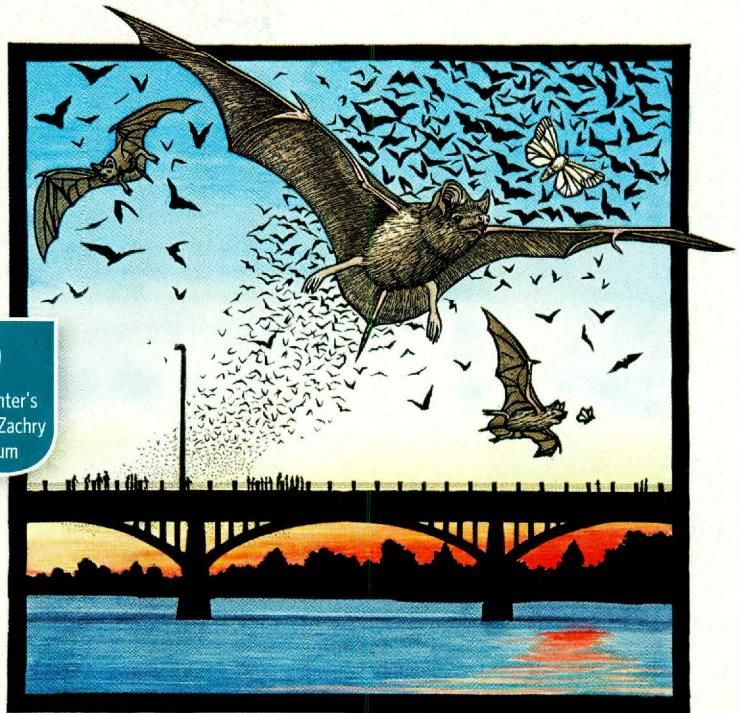
Lady Bird's 100th

THE LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER in Austin is abuzz with events honoring what would have been the First Lady's 100th birthday this year. On July 29, the Wildflower Center opens its doors for **Lady Bird Tribute Day** with free admission. Johnson's granddaughters unveil the new Lady Bird exhibit, which focuses on the environmental legacy she inspired. Performers present a play for children on wildflowers, storytellers read aloud, and more. And look for renowned origami artist Robert J. Lang's paper creations at the Center through August 19.

Also keep an eye out for the **Lady Bird's Lake** exhibit, which runs September 1 through December 2. Photos from the book *Every Town Needs a Trail* and work from area artists, including Elgin-based Margie Crisp (whose work is at right), celebrate the efforts of Lady Bird Johnson and others who helped with the beautification of Austin's Lady Bird Lake. Call 512/232-0100; www.wildflower.org.

TH tip

Check out the Center's new Mollie Steves Zachry Texas Arboretum



July Events

BIG BEND COUNTRY

ALPINE/MARFA: Viva Big Bend Music Festival and Conference July 26-29. www.vivabigbend.com

EL PASO: Viva! El Paso Outdoor Summer Musical July 1-August 12. McKelligon Canyon Amphitheater. www.viva-ep.org 915/433-3684

FORT DAVIS: Coolest Fourth July 1. Downtown. www.fortdavis.com 432/426-3015

FORT DAVIS: Butterfly Count July 14. Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center. www.cdri.org 432/364-2499

MIDLAND: Pueblo to Pueblo Exhibition July 1-August 12. Museum of the Southwest. www.museumsw.org 432/683-2882

MIDLAND: Tall City Blues Fest July 27-29. Centennial Park Plaza. www.tallcitybluesfest.com 432/262-0034

MONAHANS: Freedom Fest July 4. Hill Park. www.monahans.org 432/943-2187

MONAHANS: Butterfield Wagon Festival July 28. Ward County Coliseum and Arena. www.monahans.org 432/943-2187

ODESSA: Independence Day and Firecracker Fandango July 4. Fourth Street at Grant Street. www.mainstreetodessa.com 432/332-4638 or 432/335-4682

ODESSA: Thunder in the Desert Drum-and-Bugle Corps Show July 23. Ratliff Stadium. 432/337-6655

GULF COAST

BAY CITY: Market Day on the Square July 21. www.baycitychamber.com 979/245-8333

BEAUMONT: Independence Day Celebration July 4. Riverfront Park. 409/838-3435

BRAZORIA: Santa Anna Heritage Ball July 14. Knights of Columbus Hall. www.brazoriahf.org 979/236-0241

CLUTE: Great Texas Mosquito Festival July 26-28. Clute Municipal Park. www.mosquitofestival.com 888/462-5883

CORPUS CHRISTI: National Exhibition of American Society of Marine Artists July 1-August 26. Art Museum of South Texas www.artmuseumsouthtexas.org

CORPUS CHRISTI: Summer 2012 Texas Amateur Athletic Association Federation Games of Texas July 26-29. www.taaf.com 361/826-3470

EDNA: Antique Tractor Show and Parade July 4. Brackenridge Recreation Complex. www.brackenridgepark.com 361/782-7272

GALVESTON: Music Nite on the Strand July 14. Saengerfest Park. www.galveston.com


HARLINGEN: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Lon. C. Hill Park. www.visitharlingentexas.com 956/428-5020

HOUSTON: Freedom Over Texas July 4. Featuring Billy Currington and Sara Evans. Eleanor Tinsley Park on Buffalo Bayou. www.freedomovertexas.org

HOUSTON: Legend of Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses July 7. Jones Hall. www.houstonsymphony.org 713/224-7575

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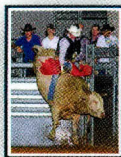
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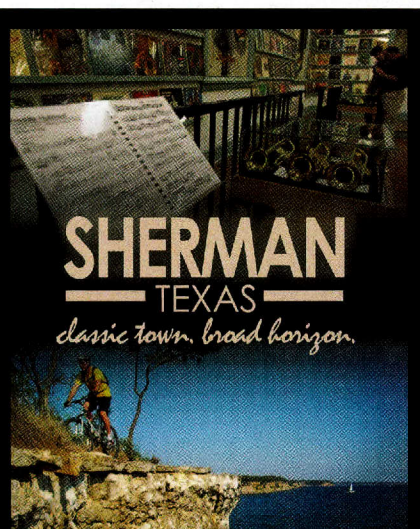


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➔ TH SPOTLIGHT

Floating and Fireworks

BURSTS OF COLOR LIGHT UP THE SKIES FOR POSSUM KINGDOM

Lake's 25th annual Independence Day fireworks display July 7. The pyrotechnics shoot off the **Hell's Gate** rock formation and are best viewed from a front-row seat while floating on the water. Boats can tie up together or drift nearby to enjoy the bright sparks against the night sky. But a boat isn't a necessity. The YMCA Camp Grady Spruce opens its grounds at 6:30 p.m. and welcomes visitors to bring lawn chairs for watching the show from the main camp. Earlier in the week, head to **Possum Hollow Lodge** for an Independence Day celebration with the 18th annual **Night of Music & Fire** on June 30, featuring Cody Canada and the Departed. Visit www.possumkingdomlake.com and www.possumhollowcamp.com/events.asp.

TH tip

More on PK Lake at texashighways.com/thtip

HOUSTON: Reliant Park World Series of Dogs Show July 18-22. www.reliantdogshows.com 713/952-7100 ext. 101

KEMAH: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Kemah Boardwalk. www.kemahboardwalk.com 281/334-9880

LEAGUE CITY: Fire On The Strings Bluegrass Music Festival July 20-21. www.bayareabluegrass.org 581/488-2244

ORANGE: Orange County Sheriff's Posse Rodeo July 19-21. www.orangecountysheriffsposse.com 409/886-2638

PALACIOS: LaSalle Landing Re-Enactment and Fireworks July 4. www.visitmatagordacounty.com 877/878-5386

PORT ARANSAS: Deep Sea Roundup July 12-15. Robert's Point Park. www.deepsearoundup.com 361/749-6339

PORT ARANSAS: Outboard Fishing Tournament July 20-22. www.outboardfishingtournament.org 361/749-4923

ROCKPORT: Patriotic Boat Parade and Fireworks Display July 4. www.rockport-fulton.org 800/242-0071

ROCKPORT: Rockport Art Festival July 7-8. Festival Grounds. www.rockportartcenter.com 361/729-5519

ROSENBERG: Family Fourth Celebration July 4. www.rosenbergevents.com 832/595-3520

SUGAR LAND: Sugar Land Heritage Foundation Historic Walking Tour July 14. Historic Imperial Sugar Refinery site. www.slheritage.org

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: The King James Bible: Its History and Influence Exhibit July 1-29. Harry Ransom Center. www.hrc.utexas.edu

BANDERA: Fourth of July Pet Parade July 4. Bandera City Park. www.banderacowboycapital.com 800/364-3833

BANDERA: National Day of the American Cowboy Celebration July 27-28. Courthouse square and Mansfield Park Arena. www.frontiertimesmuseum.org 830/796-3864

CEDAR PARK: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Millburn Park. www.cedarparktx.us 512/401-5500

ELDORADO: Main Street Day July 28. Downtown. www.facebook.com/MainStreetDayEldoradoTX 325/450-0007

FREDERICKSBURG: Night in Old Fredericksburg July 20-21. www.nightinoldfredericksburg.com 830/997-6523

JOHNSON CITY: Fourth of July Spangle-Dangle July 4. Downtown. www.johnsoncity-texas.com 830/868-7684

KERRVILLE: Fourth of July Celebration on the River July 4. Louise Hays Park. www.kerrvilletx.gov 830/257-7300

KINGSLAND: Aqua Boom July 1 and 4. www.kingslandchamber.org 325/388-6211

LAKEHILLS: Fourth of July Parade and Barbecue July 4. Park Road 37. www.banderacowboycapital.com 830/612-2244

NEW BRAUNFELS: Art on the Beach July 4. Texas Ski Ranch. 512/627-1020

NEW BRAUNFELS: New Braunfels Area Quilt Guild Show July 27-29. Civic/Convention Center. www.newbraunfelsareaquiltguild.org 830/560-0543

PFLUGERVILLE: Pfirecracker Pfestival July 4. Lake Pflugerville. www.pflugervilletx.gov/lake 512/990-6100

ROUND ROCK: Frontier Days Celebration July 4. Old Settler's Park. www.roundrocktexas.gov

ROUND ROCK: Drum Corps International July 19. Reeves Athletic Complex. www.dci.org/austin 317/275-1212

TAYLOR: Taylor Rodeo July 20-21. East Williamson County Events Center. www.taylorrodeo.com 512/864-5898

UVALDE: Sahawe Indian Dancers Ceremonials July 23-28. Outdoor Theater. www.visituvalde.com 830/278-2016

UVALDE: FAI World Gliding Championship July 28-August 19. <http://wgcc2012uvalde.com> 830/278-4115

WIMBERLEY: VFW CPRA Rodeo July 5-7. www.visitwimberley.com/rodeo 512/847-6441

WIMBERLEY: Market Day July 7. Lions Pavilion. www.shopmarketdays.com 512/847-2201

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: Original Team Roping Association Finals July 1-5. Taylor County Expo Center. 254/396-4749

ALBANY: Two Women Look West: Photographs of King Ranch July 1-September 9. The Old Jail Art Center. www.theoldjailartcenter.org 325/762-2269

AMARILLO: Kwahadi Dancers Present "Song of the Eagle" July 6-7, 13-14, 20-21. www.kwahadi.com 806/335-3175

BIG SPRING: USHGA Hang Gliding Nationals July 22-27. www.endlessthermal.com 405/830-6420

BRECKENRIDGE: July 4 Celebration at the Lake and Fireworks Show July 3. North Park. www.breckenridgetexas.com 254/559-2301

BUFFALO GAP: Old-Fashioned Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Buffalo Gap Historic Village. 325/572-3365

CANADIAN: Ranch Rodeo and Fourth of July Parade July 3-4. www.canadianx.com 806/323-6234

LUBBOCK: On Broadway Festival and Street Dance July 3-4. www.broadwayfestivals.com 806/749-2929

MOBEETIE: Old Mobeetie Music Festival July 27-29. Old Mobeetie Jail Museum. www.mobeetie.com 806/845-2028

POST: Post City Trade Day July 7. Main Street. www.postcitytexas.com 806/559-0835

ROSCOE: Roscoe Independence Day Celebration July 7. Downtown. www.roscoetx.com 325/514-8404

SAN ANGELO: National Cowboy Day July 28. Fort Concho. www.fortconcho.com 325/657-4444

SEMINOLE: Trade Days July 20-22. www.seminoletradedays.com 432/758-0807 or 432/209-2403

SNYDER: July 4 Celebration July 3-4. Towle Park. www.snyderchamber.org 325/573-3558

SNYDER: West Texas Western Swing Festival July 6-9. www.snyderchamber.org 325/573-3558

STAMFORD: Texas Cowboy Reunion Rodeo and Parade July 4-7. www.tcrodeo.com 325/773-3591

PINEY WOODS

CENTER: What-A-Melon Festival July 12-14. www.shelbycountychamber.com 936/598-3682

COLDSRING: Trade Day July 28. Courthouse square. www.coldspringtexas.org 936/661-8239

CONROE: CJAMS Music Festival July 7. Downtown. www.conroecvb.net

CONROE: Texas Bluebonnet Wine Harvest Trail July 20-21, 27-28. www.texasbluebonnetwinetrail.com

HUNTSVILLE: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Kate Barr Ross Park. www.huntsvilletx.gov 936/294-5723

JEFFERSON: Jefferson Salutes America Fourth of July Celebration July 4. www.visitjeffersontexas.com 903/665-3733

JEFFERSON: Friday the 13th Aboard Jefferson's Ghost Train July 13. www.jeffersonrailway.com 866/398-2038

KILGORE: Texas Shakespeare Festival July 1-29. www.texasshakespeare.com 903/983-8601

LONGVIEW/KILGORE: U. S. National Hot Air Balloon Championship and Great Texas Balloon Race Festival July 24-29. East Texas Regional Airport. 903/237-4040

MAGNOLIA: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Unity Park. www.cityofmagnolia.com 281/356-2266

MOUNT PLEASANT: Quake on Town Lake Drag Boat Races July 21-22. www.cbhospice.org 903/572-8567

NACOGDOCHES: Freedom Fest July 4. Downtown. www.visitnacogdoches.org 888/653-3788

NAPLES: Watermelon Festival July 27-28. Front Street. 903/897-2037

NEW BOSTON: Freedom Fest July 4. www.newbostontx.org 903/628-2581

SHEPHERD: America's Birthday July 4. Liberty Avenue. www.greatershepherdchamberofcommerce.org 936/628-3890

TENAHA: Independence Day Celebration July 4. www.shelbycountychamber.com 936/598-3682

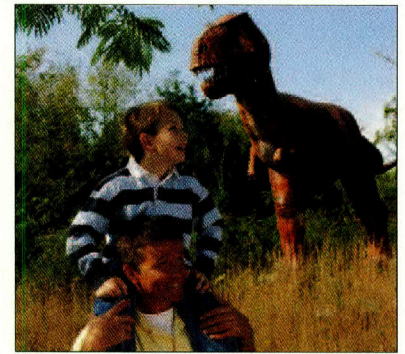
THE WOODLANDS: Red, Hot and Blue Festival July 4. Town Green Park and Waterway Square www.woodlands cvb.com 281/363-2447

THE WOODLANDS: Bugs Bunny at the Symphony July 26. www.woodlandscenter.org 281/363-3300

TIMPSON: Frontier Days July 5-7. Downtown and SoSo Park. www.shelbycountychamber.com 936/598-3682

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ADDISON: Kaboom Town! July 3. Addison Circle Park. www.addisontexas.net 972/950-2881 or 800/233-4766



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TH tip

Visit the Panhandle-
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in Canyon

➔ TH SPOTLIGHT

It's TEXAS Time!

TH TRAVELER IS VENTURING TO PALO DURO CANYON STATE PARK FOR THE 45th-anniversary season of *TEXAS*, an outdoor theatrical tribute held in the Pioneer Amphitheater (Tuesdays through Sundays until August 18). The Texas Panhandle Heritage Foundation produces the musical with a cast of more than 60. Song, dance, and humor fill the lively production, which focuses on Panhandle pioneers of the 1800s. A nightly chuck-wagon barbecue dinner and occasional backstage tours are available before the show. Added elements enhance the family-friendly show, from nuanced lighting to special water effects and, when the weather cooperates, fireworks. Call 806/655-2181; www.texas-show.com.

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- ANDERSON: "Days to Remember" Historical Celebration** July 14. Fanthorp Inn State Historic Site. www.birthplaceoftexas.com 936/873-2633
- BASTROP: Patriotic Festival** July 7. Fisherman's Park. www.bastropchamber.com 512/321-2419
- BELLVILLE: Spring Creek Bluegrass Club Show and Jam** July 28. www.springcreekbluegrass.com 979/865-5250
- BELTON: Fourth of July Celebration and PRCA Rodeo** July 4-7. www.beltonchamber.com
- BELTON: Market Day** July 21. Downtown. www.downtownbelton.com 254/721-4693
- BONHAM: Kiwanis Trade Days** July 5-8. Fort English Park. www.visitbonham.com 903/227-4477 or 903/583-9386
- BONHAM: Quilt Hop Textile Exhibits** July 28. www.visitbonham.com 903/583-983C
- BRENHAM: Grape Stomp at Windy Winery** July 21-22, 28-29. www.windywinery.com 579/836-3252
- BRYAN: Messina Hof's Harvest Festival** July 20-August 26. Messina Hof Winery and Resort. www.messinahof.com
- CANTON: First Monday Trade Days** July 1. www.visitcantontx.com 877/462-7467 or 903/567-1849

- CHAPPELL HILL: Fourth of July Parade and Summer Cowboy Event** July 4. www.chappellhillmuseum.org 888/273-6426
- CLEBURNE: Goatneck 100K Bike Ride** July 28. www.thegoatneck.com
- COLLEGE STATION: I Love America Celebration** July 4. George Bush Presidential Library and Museum. <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu> 979/691-4068
- COMANCHE: Family on the Fourth Celebration** July 4. www.comanchechamber.org 325/356-3233
- CUERO: Cuero Country Opry** July 19. www.cuero.org
- DALLAS: Small Houses of Great Artists** July 1-December 31. www.dallasarboretum.org 214/515-6500
- DALLAS: Fair Park Fourth** July 4. Fair Park. www.fairpark.org 214/670-8400
- DALLAS: Meet the Museum: Collections Spotlight on Kennedy Assassination Myths** July 13. The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza. www.jfk.org/go/events 214/747-6660
- DALLAS: Taste of Dallas** July 13-15. Outdoor food festival. Fair Park. www.tasteofdallas.org 214/670-8400
- DENTON: Fourth of July Jubilee** July 4. Quakertown Park. www.dentonparks.com 940/349-7275

FAIRFIELD: Rodeo July 20-21. Moody Reunion Fairgrounds. www.swbrodeo.com 214/668-3391

FARMERS BRANCH: Independence Day Celebration July 3. www.farmersbranch.info 972/919-2620

FARMERSVILLE: Farmers & Fleas Market July 7. Historic Onion Shed. www.farmersvilletx.com 972/782-6533

FORT WORTH: American Vanguard: Graham, Davis, Gorky, de Kooning and Their Circle, 1927-1942 July 1-August 19. www.cartermuseum.org 817/989-5067

FORT WORTH: Grossology: The (Impolite) Science of the Human Body July 1-September 3. Museum of Science and History. www.fortworthmuseum.org 817/255-9540

FORT WORTH: Mimir Chamber Music Festival July 2-13. Walsh Center for Performing Arts at Texas Christian University. www.mimirfestival.org

FORT WORTH: Dead Sea Scrolls and The Bible Exhibit July 2-January 13. MacGorman Performing Arts Center. www.seethescrolls.com 877/789-0876

GAINESVILLE: Summer Sounds July 27. Gainesville Square. www.gainesvillesummersounds.com 940/665-2831

GARLAND: The Garland Opry July 21. Plaza Theatre. www.thegarlandopry.com

GATESVILLE: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Downtown. www.gatesvilletx.info 254/865-2615

GRANBURY: Old-Fashioned Fourth of July Celebration July 1-4. www.granburychamber.com 817/573-1622

GRAPEVINE: July 4 Train Rides July 4. Cotton Belt Depot. www.gvrr.com 817/410-3185

GRAPEVINE: Nash Farm Ice Cream Social and Picnic Dinner July 7. Nash Farm. www.nashfarm.org 817/410-3185

HICO: Old Settlers Reunion July 17-21. Old City Park. www.hico-tx.com 254/796-4221

INDEPENDENCE: Celebrating Independence July 4. Downtown. 888/273-6426

LEONARD: Leonard Picnic July 18-21. <http://leonardchamber.com/leonard/annual-picnic/>

LEWISVILLE: Sounds of Lewisville Concert Series July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31. MCL Grand Theater. www.soundsoflewisville.com 972/219-3401

MCKINNEY: Red, White and BOOM July 4. Craig Ranch soccer complex. www.mckinneytexas.org 972/547-7480

MCKINNEY: Third Monday Trade Days July 13-15. www.tmtd.com 972/562-5466

MESQUITE: Historic Florence Ranch Homestead Tour July 14. www.cityofmesquite.com 972/613-7547

ROUND TOP: Round Top Music Festival July 1-14. Festival Hill Concert Hall. www.festivalhill.org 979/249-3129

SAINT JO: July 4 Ice Cream Freeze-Off and Fireworks Show July 4. www.saintjochamber.com 940/995-2337

SEALY: Sealybration July 13-15. B&PW Park. www.sealycommunityfoundation.org

SHINER: Half-Moon Holidays July 7. Downtown. www.shinertx.com 361/594-4180

TEMPLE: July 4 Family Fun Fest July 4. Miller Park. www.discovertemple.com 254/298-5597

THE COLONY: Liberty by the Lake July 4. Stewart Creek Park. www.libertybythelake.com 972/625-1106

WALLIS: Arts and Crafts Show July 14-15. American Legion Hall. 979/885-2164

WAXAHACHIE: Crape Myrtle Festival and Driving Trail July 3-4. www.waxahachiechamber.com 972/937-2390

WEATHERFORD: Parker County Peach Festival July 14. Courthouse square. www.peachfestivaltx.com 817/596-3801

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

EAGLE PASS: Fourth of July Celebrations July 4 and 7. Downtown and Shelby Park. 830/773-4343

EDINBURG: "Saints Preserve Us!" Exhibit July 1-September 30. www.mosthistory.org 956/383-6911

FALFURRIAS: Fourth of July Celebration July 6-7. Jim Alaniz Brooks County Showgrounds. 361/325-3333

GOLIAD: Market Day July 14. Courthouse square. www.goliadcc.org 361/645-3563

SAN ANTONIO: Fiesta Noche del Rio July 6-7, 13-14, 20-21, 27-28. River Walk's Arneson River Theatre. www.fiestanochedelrio.com 210/226-4651

SAN ANTONIO: Balcones Heights Jazz Festival July 6, 13, 20, 27. Wonderland of the Americas Mall Amphitheatre. www.sanantoniocentral.org/jazz-festival 210/732-0055

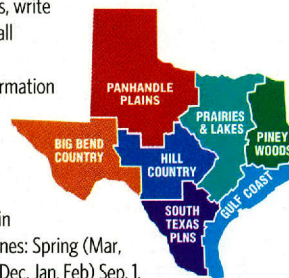
WESLACO: Alfresco Weslaco July 19. Texas Boulevard. www.weslaconow.com 956/969-0838

Want more? Go to the Events Calendar at www.texashighways.com.

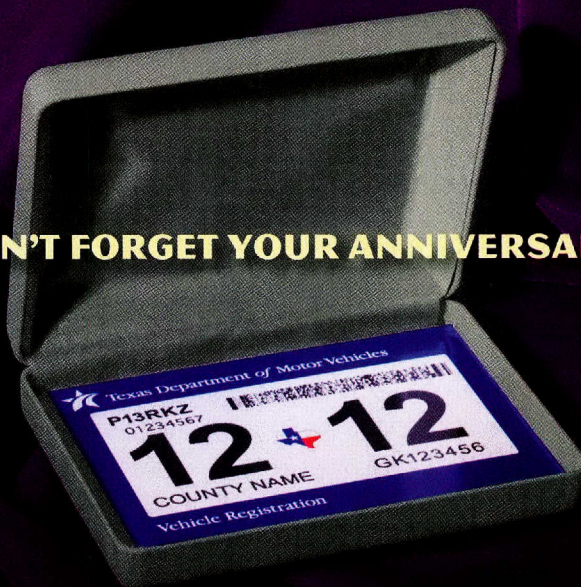
For a free printed copy of an even more detailed, quarterly schedule of events, write to Texas Events Calendar subscriptions, Box 149249, Austin 78714-9249. Or, call 800/452-9292 from anywhere in the U.S. or Canada, between 8-6 Central.

For Texas travel questions, call 800/452-9292 to reach a TxDOT Travel Information Center, where a professional travel counselor will provide routing assistance, advise you of any emergency road conditions, and send brochures (including the official Texas State Travel Guide and map, accommodations guide, and quarterly Texas Events Calendar).

Send future event information to: Texas Events Calendar, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009; e-mail: texasevents@txdot.gov; fax: 512/486-5879. Listing deadlines: Spring (Mar, Apr, May) Dec 1; Summer (Jun, Jul, Aug) Mar 1; Fall (Sep, Oct, Nov) Jun 1; Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb) Sep. 1.



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Luling: Land of Meats and Melons

SOME FOLKS dream of a land flowing with milk and honey, but what about one that's rich with barbecue and watermelons? The good news is that this magical place exists in the Central Texas town of Luling.



CHET GARNER is the host of *The Daytripper* travel show on PBS; www.thedaytripper.com.

9:00 a.m. I pulled into town and instantly realized that barbecue sauce isn't the only valuable liquid still flowing in Luling these days, as the town was dotted with oil pumps working hard to pull Texas black gold up from the ground. However, instead of letting these pumpjacks turn into industrial eyesores, the artistic residents of Luling have decorated them as everything from an orca to an airplane to a football player.

9:45 a.m. Curious about Luling's history, I stopped by the **Central Texas Oil Patch Museum** to explore the great exhibits about life in Luling during its early oil heyday. Once known as the "toughest town in Texas," Luling hit it big in 1922 when oil prospector Edgar Davis discovered oil at his "Rafael Rios #1" well, which transformed this small town into a booming community. Davis went on to become Luling's resident philanthropist and established an agricultural education foundation that still exists today.

11:00 a.m. Present-day Luling also deals in another precious Texas commodity—barbecue. And while its downtown may be just a few city blocks long, Luling houses two of the state's best barbecue joints. With plans to eat at both, I made my first stop at **Luling City Market**. For more than 50 years, this old-school market has been turning out succulent brisket, sausage, and ribs that patrons purchase straight off the pits at the back of the dining room. My lunch was incredible, and the complimentary smoky cologne clinging to my clothes on the way out was just an added bonus.

12:30 p.m. The best way to polish off a barbecue lunch in Luling is with a juicy slice of watermelon. So I crossed the street to the **Farmer's Market**, where hundreds of locally grown

melons awaited. After a quick lesson from **Watts Produce** on how to "thump" a melon to test for ripeness, I picked out what I hoped was a good one.

1:15 p.m. Next up, **Zedler Mill**, a local museum, park, meeting place, and swimming hole that sits right on the San Marcos River.

Contact the **Luling Chamber of Commerce**, 830/875-3214; www.lulingcc.org.

At one point Zedler Mill was the town's main mill, but today it makes for Luling's best place to swim, rope swing, and jump into the refreshing river below. So after covering myself in the sweet, juicy nectar from my watermelon, I simply dove into the river and washed it all away.

3:30 p.m. In the mood for more adventure, I drove to **Palmetto State Park** to take a hike through one of the few palmetto patches in Central Texas. The dwarf palmetto is a small, trunkless

palm tree that grows in abundance at the park, far from its usual East Texas habitat. Once I was down the trail and had lost sight of the parking lot, I found myself in the midst of the palms and felt transported to the middle of an exotic rainforest.

6:30 p.m. I headed back into town to **Luling Bar-B-Q**. While its neighbor prides itself on a limited selection, this joint serves the entire spectrum of smoked meats and sides from pork loin to broccoli salad. My full plate of beef, chicken, and pork made me happier (and fuller) than a thirsty tick on a big, fat dog.

WHILE OIL still flows in Luling, meats and melons have created a boom of their own. And as long as these delicious resources stay plentiful, I will continue to make my tasty pilgrimage to this Texas-style promised land. So, whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path, I hope to see you on the road. **TH**



Click!

TH video on
light painting at
[texashighways.com/
windowontexas](http://texashighways.com/windowontexas)

Window on Texas

Photograph by **J. GRIFFIS SMITH**

LIGHT SHOW With its powerful mirror trained on distant stars, the George Observatory's Gueymard Research Telescope seems a natural subject for light painting, one of *TH* Photo Editor Griff Smith's favorite techniques. "I've used light painting on all kinds of surfaces," he says, "but it's especially effective on metal." To capture this image, he mounted his camera on a tripod, selected a 30-second exposure, and used two Q-beams to "paint" the telescope with light. **See texashighways.com/windowontexas for the *TH* video on light painting.**

The George Observatory, at Brazos Bend State Park near Needville, is a satellite facility of the Houston Museum of Natural Science. Call 281/242-3055; www.georgeobservatory.com.

Look for our story on the George Observatory in the August issue.

