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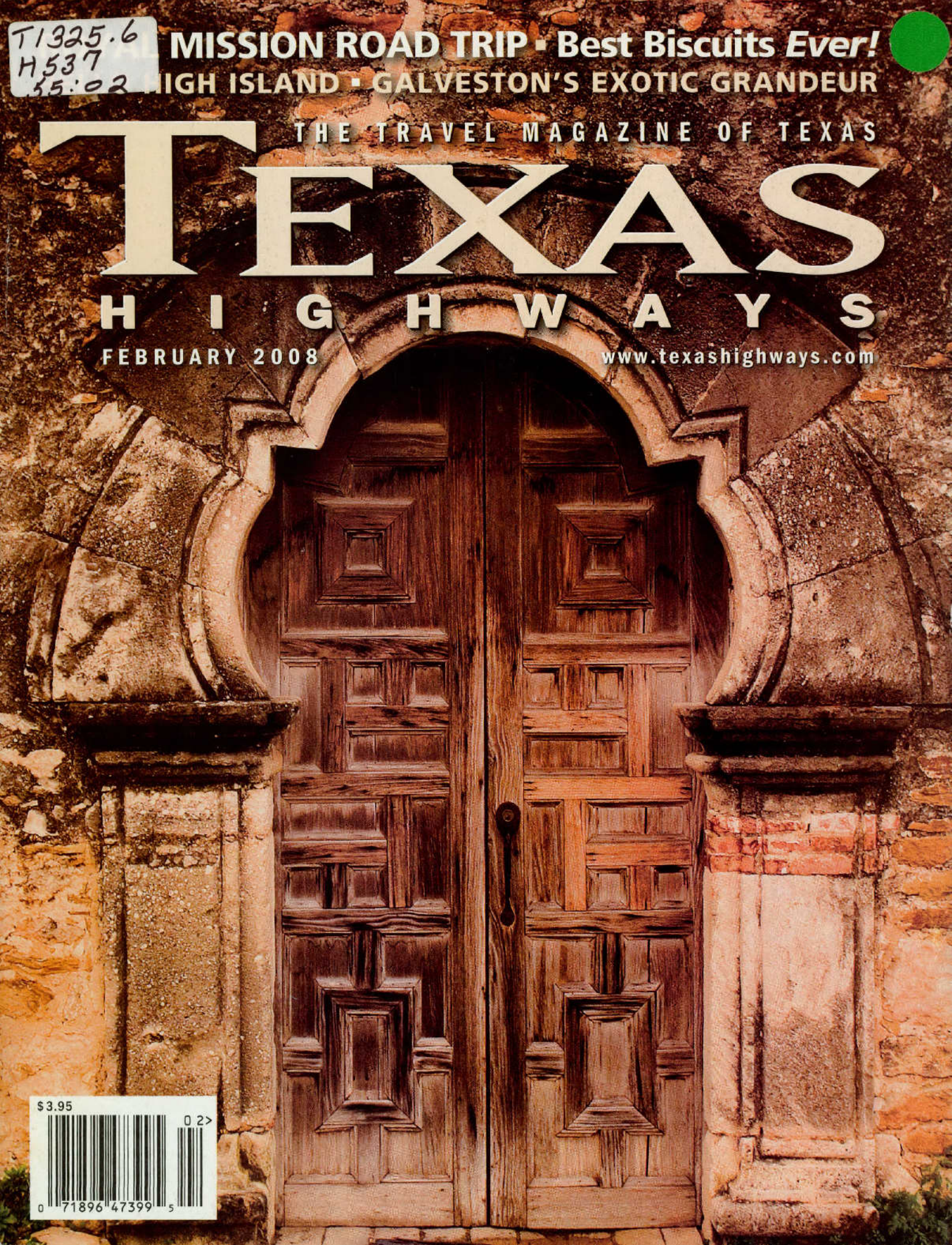
THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

# TEXAS

## H I G H W A Y S

FEBRUARY 2008

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\$3.95





© ROBERT MIHOW

The Junior League of Galveston County helped start the Strand Historic District revitalization by purchasing Nicholas Clayton's 1882 H.M. Trueheart & Co. building in the 1960s and restoring it to serve as the organization's headquarters.

**A**T NOVEMBER'S 2007 TEXAS BOOK FESTIVAL, I enjoyed the opportunity to introduce Hal Box and his recent book titled *Think Like an Architect*. Hal, who is himself an architect, teacher, bon vivant, and former dean of the University of Texas School of Architecture, has written a book that's part architecture history, part self-help guide, and part travelogue. In it, he encourages readers to learn more about architecture, and to think like an architect, to appreciate "the built environment."

So architecture was on my mind when my friend Julie Hooper, an assistant dean at the UT School of Architecture, called to invite me to lunch with her and architect Wayne Bell. Bell, a virtual legend in the world of historic preservation in Texas, works with more than 90 communities in the state to coordinate the Texas Historical Commission's Main Street project. We shared ideas in a wide-ranging discussion about preservation, and one of the topics was the **Preservation Texas** list of the **most endangered sites** in the state ([www.preservationtexas.org](http://www.preservationtexas.org)).

When I got back to the office, I reviewed the 2007 list of most endangered sites and noted that the list included **historic small town theaters** around Texas, **Port Aransas' Mercer House**, the **River Oaks Shopping Center** in Houston, and **Galveston's unprotected historic neighborhoods** that reach from Galveston Harbor to the Gulf of Mexico from 6th to 103rd streets. I didn't realize that Galveston includes five historic districts, but none are protected from "demolition or inappropriate construction."

As we were planning this month's article on the buildings of **Nicholas Clayton**, who worked in Galveston during that city's golden age in the late 19th Century, I began to pay closer attention not just to the amazing number of impressive buildings Clayton built in Galveston, but the number of historic buildings that are still in danger around the state. Fortunately, landmarks like the **Bishop's Palace** are more likely to get the help they need. But there are dozens of sites that need attention. So we're now planning to feature some of the buildings on the **Preservation Texas 2008** list of endangered sites. Let's hope our efforts can help save them.

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor

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HIGHWAYS

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Editor CHARLES J. LOHRMANN

Managing Editor JILL LAWLESS

Senior Editors:

NOLA McKEY, LORI MOFFATT

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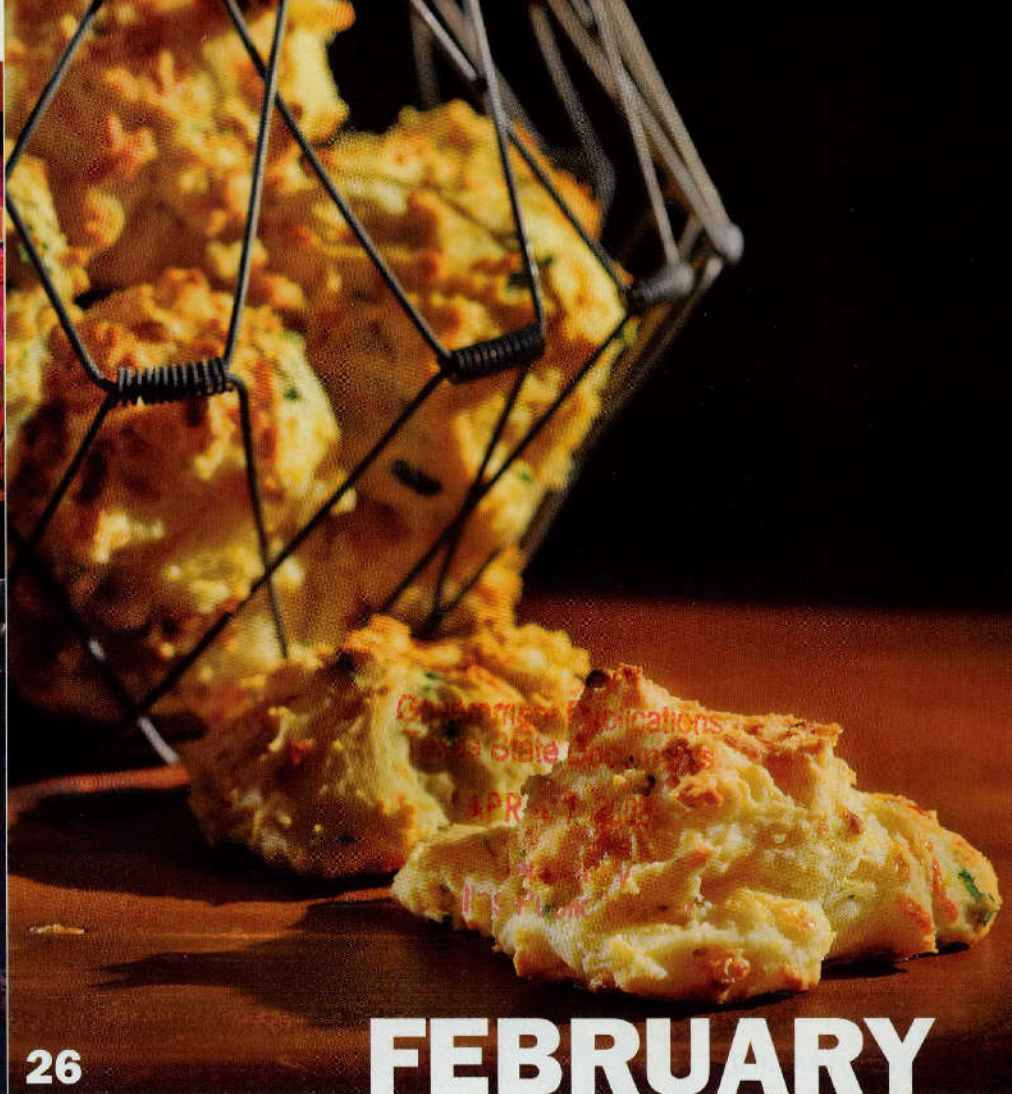
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BY STEVEN SCHWARTZMAN, PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT MIHOVIL
- 42 HELLO HIGH ISLAND** Local lore ties this Galveston County community to Jean Lafitte and Bonnie and Clyde. Today—thanks to six bird sanctuaries—it's a hotspot for birders.  
BY HELEN BRYANT

**ABOUT OUR COVERS** FRONT: San Antonio's Mission Espada, which features a "broken-arch" doorway, is one of the gems that lie along El Camino Real. *Photo* © Mitch Villereal. (To order a print of this photograph, see instructions at left.) BACK: A window in nearby Mission San José offers a timeless view. *Photo* © Virgil Fox.

PHOTOS FROM TOP LEFT, CLOCKWISE: © RICK PATRICK; © GARY RUSS; © NATALIE CAUDILL

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## Big Tree Near Big D

I LOVED Lori Grossman's article about the Highland Park pecan tree [December]. What a well-written, fascinating story! I drive past that tree on my way to work, but had no knowledge of its history. Thanks for a great read!

DOTTIE MILLER  
Dallas

## Bad Santa

I ALWAYS enjoy Gene Fowler's articles, and his Speaking of Texas item on "Bad Santa" [December] was priceless. I lived in Kilgore for many years before moving to Maine, and still look forward to receiving TH every month. Thank you for all of the good articles and pictures.

MART LAPIN  
Orono, Maine

## Galleria Guru

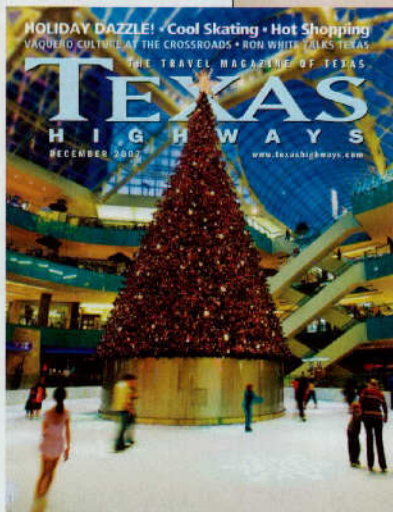
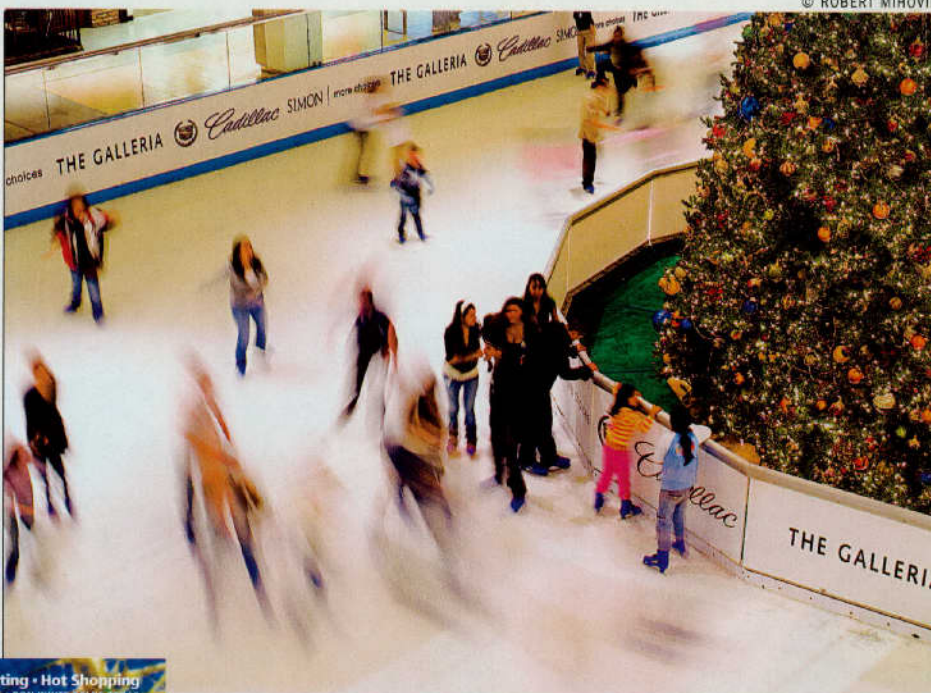
YOU MUST be joking! Comparing The Galleria in Houston and Galleria Dallas [December]? There is no comparison. The Galleria in Dallas takes about three hours to explore (not including Nordstrom or the new American Girl section), while the Galleria in Houston takes three days! I couldn't believe the statistics showing that Houston's is only .5 million square feet larger. It seems two to three times the size of Dallas'.

I had never seen anything like The Galleria when I moved to Houston, and I still think it is amazing. I'll forego about a dozen malls much closer to home to head to Houston's Galleria for regular shopping trips. I do love Karen Millen in Dallas; hope we get one in Houston, too!

JAYMIE PEDIGO

IT'S A SAD state of mind when the number one tourist attraction in Houston is a mall!

JOHNNY GIPSON  
Rowlett



We enjoyed the letters we received about December's story on the Galleries in Houston (above) and Dallas. Go to [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com) and let us know which Galleria is your favorite.

## Mainer Attraction

TH IS THE best state magazine I have seen for several reasons: attractive layout, interesting articles, beautiful pictures, and perhaps because Texas itself is fascinating. The thing that intrigues me most is that the people featured look like they know how to enjoy life and have fun. This gives

the magazine a personal feel.

My favorite stories feature small towns and scenic photos of the countryside. I suspect that Texas has more types of scenery and ecosystems than any other state. Keep up the good work. I hope to make a visit someday, especially to the Hill Country.

BRUCE KUNATH  
Windham, Maine

## Ice-Scathing

IT CONTINUES to amaze me how most of the fine folks of Texas don't consider anything west of Abilene worth talking about, much less traveling to see. Your article on ice-skating ended with a brief box [listing

skating] locations. Strange as it may seem, Odessa has a year-round skating rink located in the mall, and you can enjoy an ice-hockey game at our County Coliseum. You might venture forth to Odessa, the City of Jackrabbits, and learn we exist.

M/SGT J.F. SIMMONS, JR.,  
US ARMY, RETIRED  
Odessa

ED. NOTE: *C'mon, Master Sergeant Simmons. TH loves Odessa—and the rest of West Texas! Check out our online archive of previous articles (at [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com)) to see just how much. But the phonebook we are not. For space reasons, we had to leave out several*

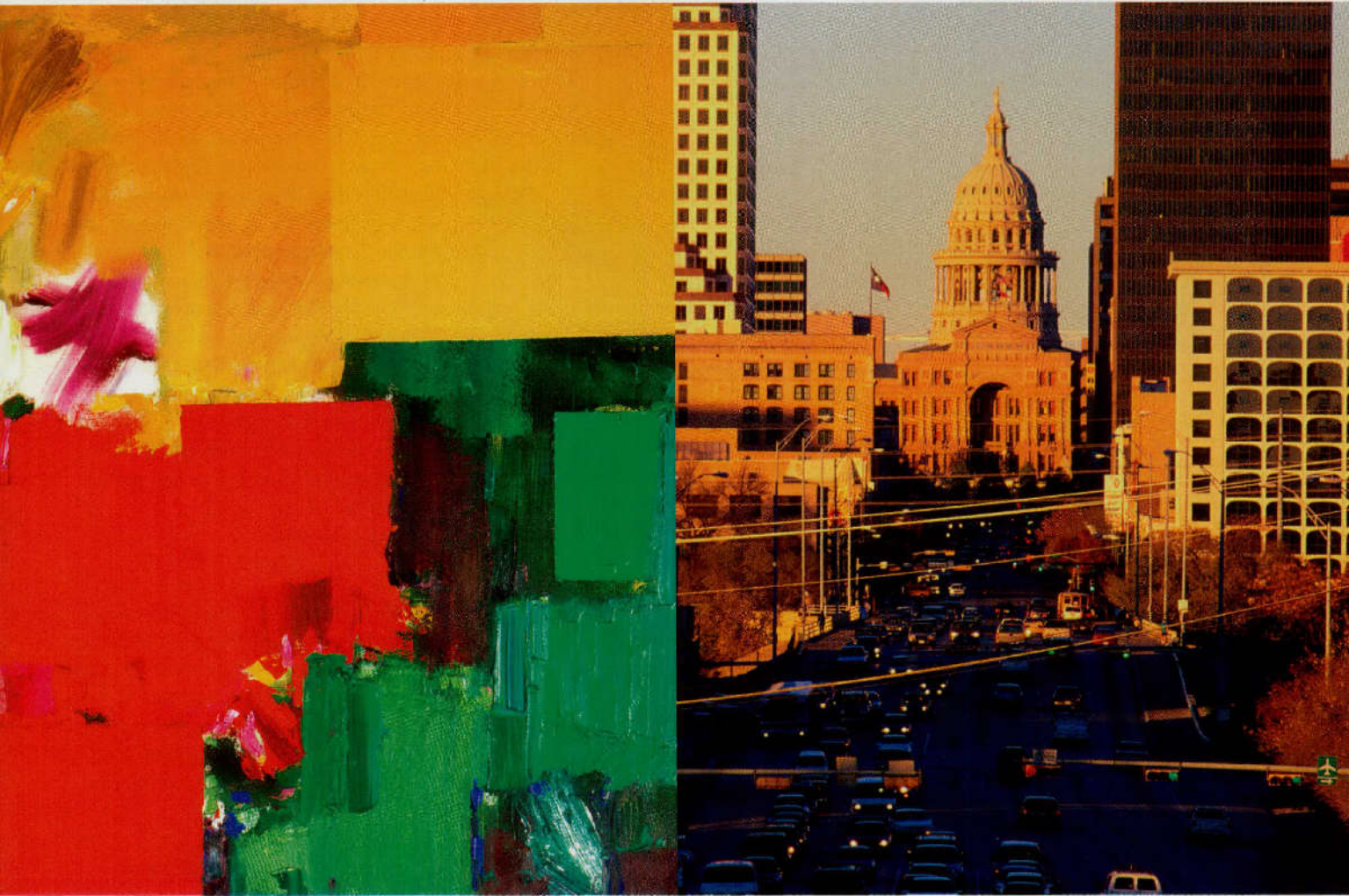
## Look It Up

YOUR WRITERS have a real knack for finding and describing a lot of interesting places—so many that I had hoped your Web site would have a searchable index.

BOB SAMPSON  
Friendswood

ED. NOTE: *You're in luck, Bob. We do have a searchable archive on our Web site ([www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com)). On the left-hand side of our home page, you'll see a "Search" box, into which you can enter any subject (town, restaurant, event, etc.) that piques your interest. Or, if you want to see a breakdown by year, or our index of recipes, click on the "Archives" tab on the home page. Happy hunting!*

Hans Hofmann, *Elysium* (detail), 1960



# Art is happening.

Extraordinary experiences happening at the Blanton Museum of Art

© BOB PARVIN



Our apologies to longtime *TH* contributor (and former *TH* staff member) Bob Parvin, who should've received credit for the photographs of San Ygnacio in January's "Just Passing Through." The village's historic Fort Treviño is pictured here.

worthy rinks, including MCM Ice at Odessa's Music City Mall ([www.musiccitymall.net](http://www.musiccitymall.net)).

## Time-Travel

THANKS for the feature on Old Highway 9 [November issue, story by Jefferson Morgen-

thaler]. Having lived in San Antonio years ago, I have such pleasant memories of taking that route to a ranch where our youth group spent many happy days visiting friends. I also recall the railroad tunnel and longed to someday take a trip that way. It was such a beautiful

drive, especially when the bluebonnets were in season. I always look forward to my *Texas Highways'* arrival.

CHRISTEEN M. STONE  
St. Paul, Minnesota

## I Dream of Texas

I'M A REGULAR reader of *Texas Highways*, a longstanding gift from my friend Mike McClean of Irving. I spent two weeks last year in the "Promised Land" of Texas, and have to express my appreciation for the extreme kindness and generosity of all the people I met. We stayed for a few days at San Antonio's superb Hotel Contessa and enjoyed many of the city's attractions. We then spent a week with Larry Cortez and his wonderful team at Rancho Cortez near Bandera. I could never have believed that, at last, I was going to ride, rope, and enjoy a taste of ranch life in such hospitable and generous company. From childhood, Texas and the West have always been a major interest and attraction to me. My dreams came true on this trip. Good luck to Texas and Texans everywhere. You have every right to be proud of your state and all it stands for.

JOE DEREK WARDELL  
Harrow, London, England

ED. NOTE: *Keep on dreamin', Joe, and come back to Texas soon. Readers, for more on San Antonio's Hotel Contessa, go to [www.thehotelcontessa.com](http://www.thehotelcontessa.com). Find out more about Rancho Cortez, in Bandera County, at [www.rancho-cortez.com](http://www.rancho-cortez.com). For general information, go to [www.sanantoniovisit.com](http://www.sanantoniovisit.com) and [www.bandera-cowboycapital.com](http://www.bandera-cowboycapital.com).*

## Thanksgiving in February

I HAVE been taking *TH* for years and will continue. The stories about places, animals, and people—I love them all. If something is not really of interest to me, I may skip it, but that is very rare. My children live in other areas of Texas, and it is nice to read about places to visit between our home and theirs. Thanks for a great magazine—I do appreciate it.

DONNA WHITEMAN  
Duncanville

Come

# Blog

with us!



**Texas travel honcho**  
June Naylor shares tips on trips, restaurants, shops, and events.

Go to [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com)

**WRITE OR E-MAIL:** Talk to *TH*, *Texas Highways*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009; fax 512/486-5879; e-mail: [letters05@texashighways.com](mailto:letters05@texashighways.com). Web site: [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com). Though we are unable to print every letter, we just might select yours to appear in the magazine—whether you send us kudos or criticism. We reserve the right to edit letters.



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# For THE ROAD

THIS MONTH'S TOP PICKS AND PLACES

## Join the Pack

WHEN WE LEARNED OF GREAT WOLF LODGE, which opened in December in **Grapevine**, we didn't know quite what to think. A North Woods-themed resort complete with an indoor waterpark, a spa, numerous restaurants, and more than 400 suites? How would *that* work?

Turns out that Great Wolf Lodge, which has properties in nine other cities, has mastered the concept of family entertainment. Here's the scoop: Pack your swimsuits, grab the family, and check in. Once you're at the resort, there's no need to carry money: Each person gets a wristband, which allows access to the waterslides, pools, arcades, crafts area, live-action fantasy games, fitness area, and other attractions, along with gift shops and eateries. And at the end of your busy day, you retire to your suite. (Kids can even sleep in beds that resemble tents or dens.)



COURTESY GREAT WOLF RESORTS, INC.

Texas' largest indoor waterpark promises thrills at Grapevine's new Great Wolf Lodge.

Through May 22, Great Wolf Lodge offers a \$199 introductory rate, which includes a standard suite plus four all-access wristbands. Call 817/488-6510; [www.greatwolf.com](http://www.greatwolf.com). -L.M.

## The Art of Discovery



**D**iscover the galleries and treasures of Kerrville, an ideal base for exploring the amazing Texas Hill Country. Kerrville is one hour west of San Antonio on IH-10.

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## EYEWITNESS TO HISTORY

A POWERFUL EXHIBIT RUNNING February 16-April 20 at the **Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum** in Austin gives visitors a front-row seat to American history from 1775 to 1979.

Drawing on rarely displayed documents, audio recordings, and film footage, *Eyewitness: American Originals from the National Archives* spans both tragedy and triumph. It includes Lady Bird Johnson's audio diary, in which she recounts President Kennedy's assassination on November 22, 1963, and NASA's fuzzy but fantastic footage of Jim Lovell describing the vastness of space from aboard the Apollo 8 spacecraft.

Other artifacts include a runaway slave's 1862 letter to his wife, in which he joyfully tells her that he is a free man and serving with a Union regiment. A hand-held device called an "Acoustiguide" allows visitors to not only see the letter, but to hear it read aloud. Another letter, written in May 1945 by a young medic in Germany to his parents in Michigan, conveys the horrors he encountered as he entered the Dachau concentration camp. Written on stationery found in the abandoned office of the camp commandant, the letter is gripping, even without an audio tour.

For a preview of the exhibit, visit [www.kerrvilletexascvb.com](http://www.kerrvilletexascvb.com).



archives.gov/exhibits/eyewitness. Call 512/936-8746; www.TheStoryofTexas.com. —N.M.

### TAKING ART TO THE STREETS

SINCE THE SCULPTURE ON MAIN program in Marble Falls installed 37 pieces of sculpture along Main Street in autumn 2007, travelers have a new reason to enjoy a stroll through this Hill Country town's historic district. The three dozen pieces stand along the three-block stretch of historic Main between Fourth and Yett streets, just a stone's throw from US 281. The work comes from a diverse group of international artists and ranges from the strictly representational bronze of a horse's head (*Asde Oros*) by José Antonio García Guerra of Saltillo, Mexico, to the Calderesque painted steel *Wind Sail* by James Hendricks of San Antonio.

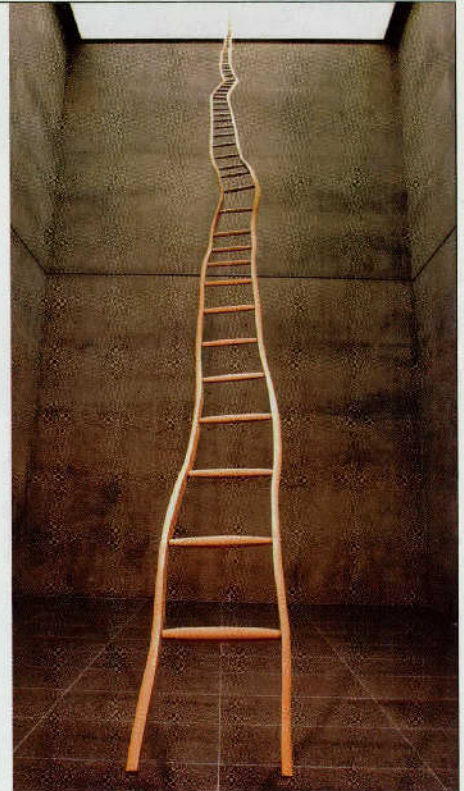
All entries into this juried exhibit are for sale, and also are considered for several annual awards, including the Purchase Award, which wins the sculpture a place in Marble Falls' permanent collection. Twenty-five percent of the purchase price from each sale returns to the Historic Main Street Association to fund expenses for the ongoing Sculpture on Main program.

The Sculpture on Main installation will remain on view in Marble Falls through October 1. To

### So Modern

ONE OF TEXAS' MOST INVENTIVE RESTAURANTS lies nestled in a stunning corner of the **Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth**. **Café Modern**, recently named one of America's Best Restaurants by *Gourmet* magazine, serves American classics like pork tenderloin and chicken salad, embellished with zingy Asian and Middle-Eastern accents like ginger and preserved lemons. Dine there—overlooking the museum's shimmering pond—before (or after) you tour the museum.

On February 24, the Modern opens a major exhibition of the sculpture of Martin Puryear, whose pieces often seem to contort or recede in space. Puryear's magical *Ladder for Booker T. Washington*, part of the museum's permanent collection, extends more than 36 feet and narrows to just over an inch at the top. Call 866/824-5566; www.themodern.org. —LM.



Martin Puryear's *Ladder for Booker T. Washington*, 1996, extends more than 36 feet.

## The 22nd Annual Texas Cowboy Poetry Gathering



February 29 – March 2, 2008

on the campus of Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas

FEATURING: Charley Chambers (Elk City, KS)

R.P. Smith (Broken Bow, NE) The Gillette Brothers (Crockett, TX)

Michael and Dawn Moon (Colorado Springs, CO)

Daytime sessions are free, Evening Shows Friday and Saturday  
more information: 432-364-2490 www.cowboy-poetry.org

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### February 2008

February 29 – March 2 TEXAS COWBOY POETRY GATHERING

The Gathering exists to preserve the oral tradition of the West through poetry, music and story telling.

Daytime sessions are free, donations accepted.

www.cowboy-poetry.org (432) 364-2490

### March 2008

March 1 TRAPPINGS OF TEXAS – Museum of the Big Bend

(show will continue through April 27)

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March 28-31 AN EVENING OF ONE-ACT PLAYS

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## MORE THAN YOU IMAGINED.

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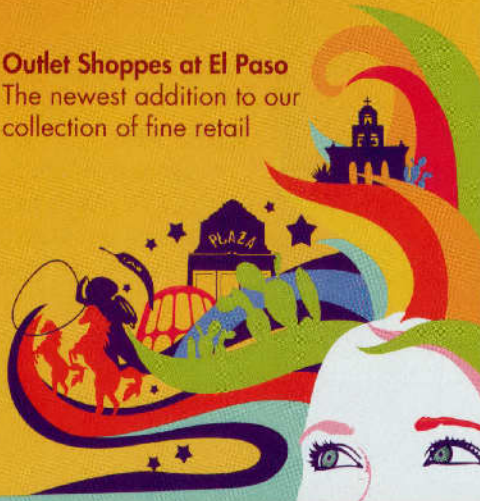
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**EL PASO**

## FOR THE ROAD

view a map and photographs of the installation, visit [www.historicmainstreet.org/](http://www.historicmainstreet.org/). For details on the 2008-2009 installation, call 830/693-9544 or e-mail Pogue Studio and Foundry at [mfpogue@aol.com](mailto:mfpogue@aol.com). For more on planning a visit to Marble Falls, go to [www.marblefalls.org](http://www.marblefalls.org). -C.L.

### BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

MAYBE YOU DON'T IMMEDIATELY THINK about gardening and birdwatching during February. But you should. Winter provides a great opportunity to lay the groundwork for a garden that provides for you—and the birds.

New outdoorsy books on our shelves: Doug Welsh's *Texas Garden Almanac* (Texas A&M University Press; [www.tamu.edu/upress](http://www.tamu.edu/upress)) and Mark Lockwood's *Basic Texas Birds: a Field Guide* (University of Texas Press; [www.utexas.edu/utpress](http://www.utexas.edu/utpress)). We especially like how Welsh gives us guidance for every month, including—for February—tips on pruning trees and shrubs, proper mulching, and getting a head start on spring planting. And in *Basic Texas Birds*, Lockwood, one of the state's leading ornithologists, has produced an easy-to-use guide that combines photos, range maps, and concise, clear information about habitat, background, and identification.

So when that ruby-throated hummingbird discovers that intoxicating red salvia in your garden, you'll be doubly proud. -L.M.

### BIRDS WITHOUT BORDERS

MORE THAN 500 SPECIES OF BIRDS AND 300 species of butterflies have been spotted in Texas' **Rio Grande Valley**, making the region one of the most popular ecotourism sites in the United States. On February 7-10, **Laredo** hosts its first annual **Laredo Birding and Butterfly Festival**.

The event features 10 field trips to topnotch birding sites in the area, 20 speakers whose topics range from butterflies of South Texas to birdwatching in Alaska, a banquet dinner, and a marketplace where you can purchase books, binoculars, and other birding necessities. "People come here from all over the world to go birding," says speaker Jim Hailey. "The Laredo area is the place in the United States to see the white-collared seedeater, the Muscovy feral duck, and the red-billed pigeon." Call 800/361-3360; [www.visitlaredo.com](http://www.visitlaredo.com) or [www.montemuchoaudubon.org](http://www.montemuchoaudubon.org). -L.M.

VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com)

## THE TOWERS THAT LOVE BUILT

**T**exas real estate and oil tycoon Niels Esperson and his wife, Mellie, cherished a timeless love that stood taller than all the skyscrapers in the heart of Houston. Thirty-two stories, to be exact.

The Esperson buildings, regarded today as classical beauties among a modern skyline, symbolize a love that began in Oklahoma. In 1893, Niels and Mellie married, and 10 years later moved to Houston. When Niels died in 1922, Mellie wanted to bestow a gift that evoked their everlasting commitment to each other, so she hired Chicago architect John Ebersohn, known for his exotic style and extravagant design, to build a sky-high memorial in honor of her late husband.

Erected in 1927, the building was the tallest skyscraper in the state at the time, punctuating the skyline with its Italian Renaissance-style architecture and capped with a six-story, tiered, Grecian-style monument. It was deemed the “crown jewel of Houston’s skyline at the time,” according to [www.glassteelandstone.com](http://www.glassteelandstone.com), an architecture Web site.

Years later, Mellie decided to construct an adjoining 19-story annex similar in style. Completed in 1941, the elegant Mellie Esperson Building proudly bears her name over the entrance, and was the first office building in Houston to have central air conditioning. Today, united with its other half, the Niels Esperson Building proves even more striking among the modern architectural masterpieces downtown.

“Because of their iconic form and



The Niels Esperson Building, at 808 Travis Street in downtown Houston, stands as a testament to Mellie Esperson’s undying devotion to her late husband, Niels.

gorgeous detailing, they were everyone’s favorite buildings at the time,” says Barry Moore, senior associate of Gensler, the architectural firm heading the ongoing renovation of the two structures. “[The buildings] taught Houstonians how to love architecture.”

Despite eventually going blind, Mellie continued working from the 25th floor of the Niels building up until her death in 1945. Today, passersby are reminded of her love for her husband when the building’s Westminster clock sings its hourly song.

—Regina Philip, Austin

## THE ENGLISH-TEXAN CATTLE BARON

**I**n the late 1800s, British investors bought thousands of acres of land in the Panhandle. Many of them were called “absentee ranchers,” since they relied on managers to oversee their holdings. Alfred Rowe was one of the few Englishmen who actually moved to Texas to manage his ranch.

Born in 1853, Rowe attended the Royal Agricultural College in England as a young man. In 1878, he moved to the Panhandle, where he began acquiring land for the RO Ranch in partnership with two of his brothers, Vincent and Barnard. Living in a dug-out in Donley County, Rowe bought Longhorn cattle with the guidance of legendary cowman Charles Goodnight. By 1900, the RO Ranch sprawled across 100,000 acres in four counties, and Rowe’s 15,000-head herd had been improved by breeding his Longhorns with Hereford and Durham stock, according to the *Handbook of Texas*.

Rowe married Constance Kingsley, cousin of British author Charles Kingsley, in England in 1901. The couple moved back to Texas to live in a nine-room ranch house they furnished with solid English furniture, old clocks, and hunting prints, a nod to their English heritage. During the next decade or so, they had four children. Over time, Rowe had laid out the townsite for McLean. Two of its streets, Rowe and Kingsley, were named in honor of the couple.

In 1910, the family returned to England, putting the ranch into the hands of a resident manager, but Rowe returned to Texas often to check on his ranch. For his trip to Texas in April 1912, Rowe unfortunately chose to sail on the *Titanic*, and he went down with the ship.

The Rowe family administered the RO until it was sold in 1917 to W.J. Lewis, a former top hand for the ranch.

—Mary G. Ramos, Dallas

# Spotlight

## ON NEW FREDERICKSBURG

### Take Another Look

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, MY MOTHER, BOTH GRANDMOTHERS, and I made a trek to Fredericksburg. We wandered happily from shop to shop on Main Street, admiring hand-carved nutcrackers, custom antler chandeliers, crystal knickknacks, Western sculptures, and handsome 19th-Century armoires. The trip was perfect for our group, but I couldn't imagine proposing a Fredericksburg excursion to some of my trend-conscious friends in Austin. That has all changed.

Even though Fredericksburg is still the domain of Alpine-themed eateries and boutiques offering candles and broomstick skirts, you'll detect a modern and—dare I say it?—hip undercurrent to Main Street these days.

**GET STARTED.** The Fredericksburg area claims more than 300 guesthouses and B&Bs. Find your perfect spot at [www.FredTexLodging](http://www.FredTexLodging.com)

.com, an all-inclusive Web site recently launched by the Fredericksburg Convention and Visitor Bureau. Once you arrive in town, the Visitor



Ben Large, owner of Fredericksburg Gourmet Coffee & Tea, is a latte man, but he likes tea, too.

LORI MOFFATT

Information Center, one block north of Main Street at 302 E. Austin St., can help get you oriented with maps. (Tip: South Adams is the dividing line between West and East Main.) The visitor's center has clean public restrooms, too.

**THAI ONE ON.** The freshest restaurant in town is a sophisticated joint called August E's, which recently moved from a historic building east of town to new digs off Main Street. Chef Leu Savanh's Tuesday-night Thai specials, full sushi menu, and classics like steaks and seafood draw loyal fans. And with its white leather furniture, steel-gray walls, and oversize abstract paintings, August E's is a marked contrast to more traditional restaurants in town.

**WINE IS FINE.** These days in Fredericksburg, it's as easy to find a pinot as a Pilsner. At Texas Wine Cellars, owner Tom Brayshaw offers more than 200 wines for sale by the bottle or case; you can taste many of them while you shop. You can find beer here, too: Ask chief pourer Paul Vaala for a sample of a concoction he calls the "Raspberry Truffle"—a swoon-worthy mix of raspberry lambic ale and chocolate stout.

Soothed by the twinkling lights and the outdoor fire pit, I took a break during my last Fredericksburg foray at the popular Lincoln Street Wine Bar. Mediterranean-style tapas, cigars, a large selection of beers on tap, plus more than 200 wines available by the glass, make this a popular hang-out. Lincoln Street's proprietor, Sean Smajstrla, comes from a wine-loving family: His brother, Todd, oversees the nearby shop *house.wine.*, a

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**James Fox's photography—stark trees jutting skyward, buildings shot from unusual angles, intense close-ups of vintage cars—typify the edgy creativity found here.**

combination wine bar/showroom where Todd combines his love of wine with his affection for what he calls "urban eclectic" decor. Here, you'll find more than 250 wines available by the glass, along with bold furniture, inventive lighting, and items such as vintage skis and surfboards. An outdoor lounge, complete with a recessed fire pit, keeps things hot. In the evenings, Todd plays classic movies in the bar; I'd like to return for a screening of *Casablanca*.



© JAMES FOX

Find *Taos Lights*, an archival pigment print by James Fox, at Photography 414.

**PHOTOGRAPHY IS ART.** There's a reason why the Hill Country paintings of Julian Onderdonk and Hermann Lungkwitz provide inspiration to artists working in modern times—they truly captured the beauty of the landscape. But I wanted something different, and I found it at **Photography 414**, a gallery on Main that represents more than two dozen artists. Gallery director James Fox's work—stark trees jutting skyward, buildings shot from unusual angles, intense close-

ups of vintage cars—typify the edgy creativity found here. I like the displays of antique cameras, too. tea, he started unscrewing the tops of his collection, encouraging me to breathe in their aromas. Large offers some 70 teas and more than 100 fresh-roasted coffees in bulk from his shop on Main, but lots of customers come in for a mid-day cup of coffee, Chai, green tea, latte, or other specialty drink. He serves a mean green chile stew, too. "We do it New Mexico style, with New

Mexican chiles and pork—not something you find in Texas very often," says Large.

**A NEW LEAF.** I love bookstores, especially those that combine new releases with used or rare books—spots where I can pick up the latest Caldecott winner for a friend's kid and maybe discover something wonderful for myself. That's why I was thrilled to discover **Berkman Books**, which opened last December. In the main room, I found an enticing assortment of new releases, but the back rooms—where owners David Berkman and Lucy Jennings keep the used books—beckoned. I could spend a day hunkered down with vintage gardening guides and chunky, 1930s-era "Big Little Books"—those palm-size forerunners to modern comics.

**RED LIGHT.** When you're looking for an airplane propeller to give as a gift, an old railroad cart to use as a coffee table, or a 1940s medical cabinet to serve as a china hutch, pay a visit to **Red**. Here, vintage chandeliers cast golden light on sleek modern sofas, an old circus advertisement becomes unusual wall art, and chunky plastic jewelry dangles from an adapted fireplace screen. "We like to encourage people to think of new ways to use antiques," says buyer Carolyn Moore.

—LORI MOFFATT

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tense close-ups of vintage cars—typify the edgy creativity found here. I like the displays of antique cameras, too.

**DOG LOVE.** When it comes to dog toys, are those knotted threadbare socks déclassé? Dog-lover David Pedregon thinks so, and at **Dogologie**, his canine boutique on Main, he'll nudge you toward the racks overflowing with hundreds of canine playthings designed to make you smile and your pooch's tail wag like a metronome. Dogologie also features collars, beds, grooming supplies, and canine-themed gifts like Boston terrier coffee mugs and Labrador doormats, along with a bakery case full of fresh-baked dog treats.

**TEA-RIFFIC.** When I explained to the affable Ben Large, owner of **Fredericksburg Gourmet Coffee & Tea**, that I was exploring the world of

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# TOP Tables

NOTEWORTHY CULINARY JOURNEYS

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL A. MURPHY

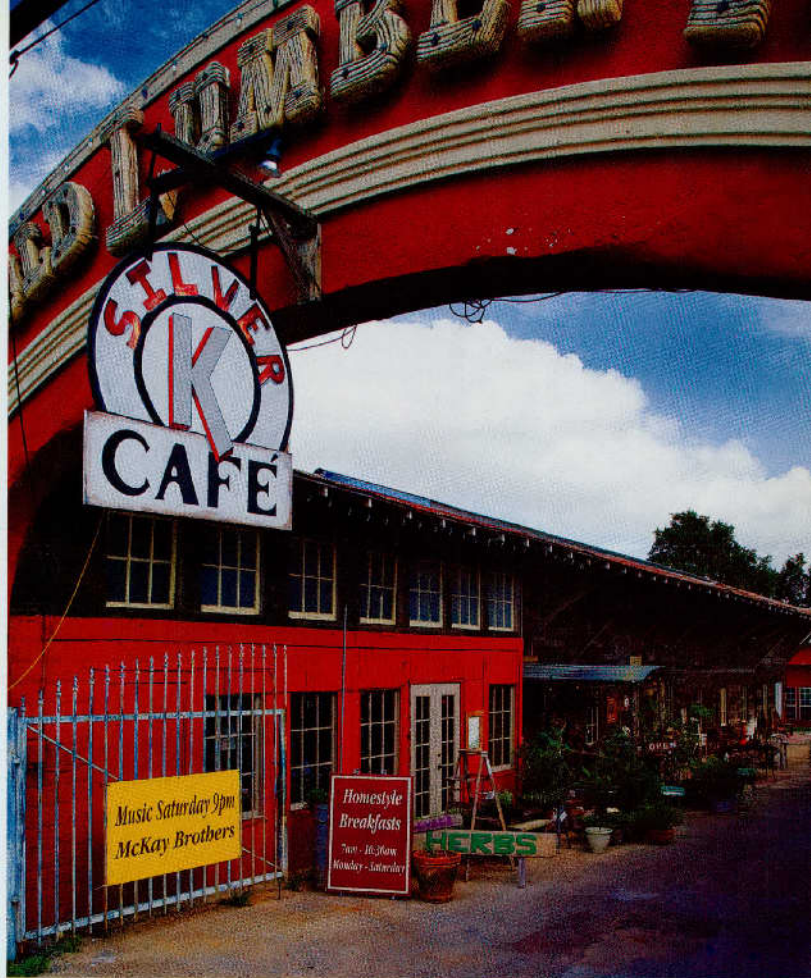
## Silver K Café

**SOME THINGS** hardly ever change, namely what I order whenever my husband and I dine at the Silver K Café in Johnson City. Obliging, I peruse the menu, pondering such temptations as spinach salad, home-made chicken pot pie, and pan-grilled sirloin ... and then I always go back to my favorite.

“Honey-pecan fried chicken with corn pudding, please,” I tell the waitress.

Truth be told, every meal we’ve ordered at the Silver K—by ourselves or with friends and family—

Customers consider the Silver K Café in Johnson City a sterling find, indeed. The restaurant’s offerings range from home-style suppers to candlelit dinners, with live music most weekend evenings.



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has triggered raves. Owner Kay Pratt credits customer demand for expanding her “Texas rustic-elegant” restaurant, which opened in October 2002. Her then thrice-weekly candlelit dinners have since mushroomed into daily offerings from

**SILVER K CAFÉ** is at 209 E. Main St. (US 290) in Johnson City. For directions, hours, and details on home-style suppers, candlelit dinners, Sunday buffets, live music, and open-mic nights, call 830/868-2911; [www.silverkcafe.com](http://www.silverkcafe.com).

a full-fledged menu, with serving hours that span 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Located on Main Street, the Silver K Café claims half of a complex that once housed the Stein Lumber Co., built in 1928. An adjacent building—dubbed the Old Lumber Yard Shops—touts antique furniture, collectibles, candles, clothing, jewelry, books, and other merchandise.

What many customers order nowadays comes as no surprise: chicken-fried steak. “I went into this business saying I’d never cook that,” admits Pratt, a former caterer who moved from Seattle to Texas in 1999, “but we had so many requests

The Silver K claims half of a complex that once housed the Stein Lumber Co. Its eclectic menu includes entrées from CFS to champagne-poached salmon.

for it and some folks actually left because they couldn't get it."

My husband, James, can vouch for the tender CFS because that's what he usually orders. As for me, I'm stuck on the honey-pecan fried chicken: a fried chicken breast topped with a delectable honey-pecan sauce. I also adore the corn pudding. Baked, lightly browned, and slightly sweet, Silver K's corn pudding stands tall, has a cornbread consistency and brims with corn kernels. More, please?

While we eat, I can't help but eye a big chalkboard on the wall that's always

ños, and potatoes. Fresh fruit, home fries, and a biscuit encircle the three-egg masterpiece, which proves as tasty as it is filling.

Several times weekly, the Silver K still dons white tablecloths and dims the lights for fine dining, which translates to champagne-poached salmon, sautéed shrimp tapenade, and blackberry-pecan-crustured smoked pork chops, to name a few entrées. Prices range from \$9.95 to \$27.95.

We could order our two favorites, both boosted to fine-dining status, thanks to customer demand. But James and I—determined to chart new culinary

waters—finally settle on two specials. My crispy fried ravioli, stuffed with prosciutto, basil, and mozzarella, hugs a bed of spinach, and is crowned with a pesto cream sauce and Parmesan cheese. Sautéed vegetables and fried beet slivers add color to the plate.

"This is the *only* way to eat beets!" exclaims James after having a taste. He expresses more kudos

over his Del Rio chicken: a grilled, bacon-wrapped breast stuffed with Mexican cheeses and jalapeños, served with fried tomato slices, mashed potatoes, sautéed vegetables, and . . .

"Would you like my corn pudding?" asks my dear husband.

"Oh, YES!" I reply, barely able to conceal my excitement. For as long as I can, I save my favorite for last.

More, please?

Blanco writer SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS and her husband, James Hearn, celebrated both their wedding day and first anniversary at the Silver K.

Former *TH* photography editor MICHAEL A. MURPHY and his wife, Julie, have enjoyed several memorable meals at the Silver K in recent months.



Kay Pratt holds one of the lunch favorites—a classic Cobb salad. Another option is portabellas and grilled vegetables served atop foccacia.

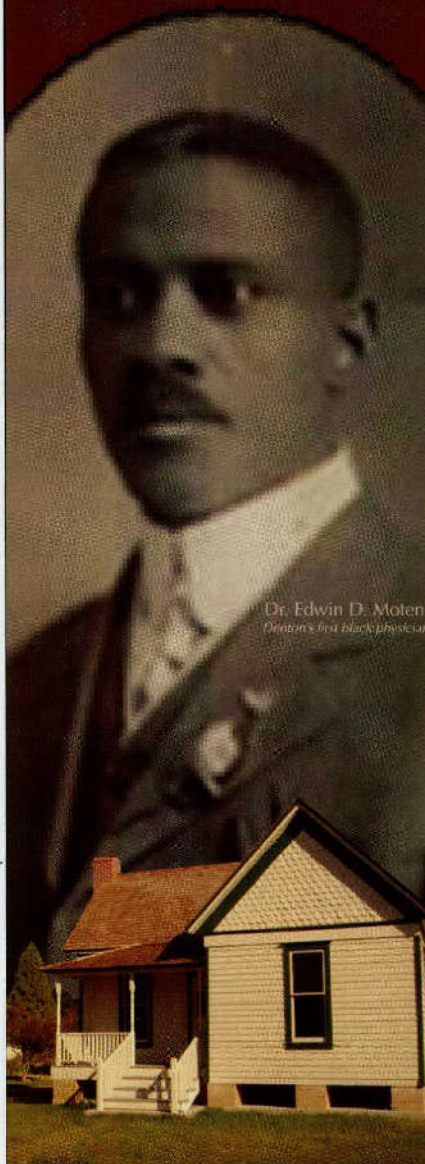
inscribed with the day's desserts—truffle cake, peach cobbler, buttermilk pie, and more. Homemade ice cream, too—vanilla, cinnamon, and coconut. Strictly in the name of research, we share a delicious slice of Key lime pie, a tart-sweet treat dolloped with fresh whipped cream.

More research (honest!) sends us back to try Silver K's home-style breakfast. We consider such entrées as migas, eggs Benedict, and French toast. I order gingerbread pancakes while James ponders an intriguing list of omelets that includes a Greek version filled with artichoke hearts, tomatoes, feta, and olives.

"Where do I begin?" James laments over his choice—a rancher omelet packed with sausage, bacon, ham, cheese, jalape-

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"I've always thought of art, whether it's a drawing, a song, a sculpture ... like an opening, like a door, like an opening to everything else."

**L**ubbock native Terry Allen uses words, music, and sculpture to create worlds unto themselves. In his songs, he creates shadowy worlds populated with desperadoes and young gringo Turks prowling the Texas-Mexico border, heading off to California in search of things they'll never find—gold, redemption, a good girl, the way home. In his drawings and multimedia installations, he invokes the same sort of questing and curiosity, but in more abstract or cerebral forms.

"I've never really thought of music or visual art as that separate from one another," Allen said recently. "I've always made pictures. I've always told stories. I've always played music. Sometimes stories lend themselves to visual ideas, and some things that are very visual have musical connotations to them. If anything, I think you just deal with all of your senses."

Terry Allen does that, and then some. It is his characters and his written vocabulary—a combination of Raymond Carver, Cormac McCarthy, and Mark Twain—that make him so unusual. Allen has received three National Endowment for the Arts grants, written songs for David Byrne's quirky Texas film *True Stories*, and has art in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and other heavy hitters.

But Allen's reasons for making art have never had much to do with where it would end up, or how it would be perceived, much less how many awards it might win. That would fly in the face of the creative process.

"Your obligation as an artist is to make the work true to itself. Once you put it





After we sat down to lunch at Hill's Cafe, I asked him about his Texas favorites. I didn't expect him to play it straight, and he didn't.

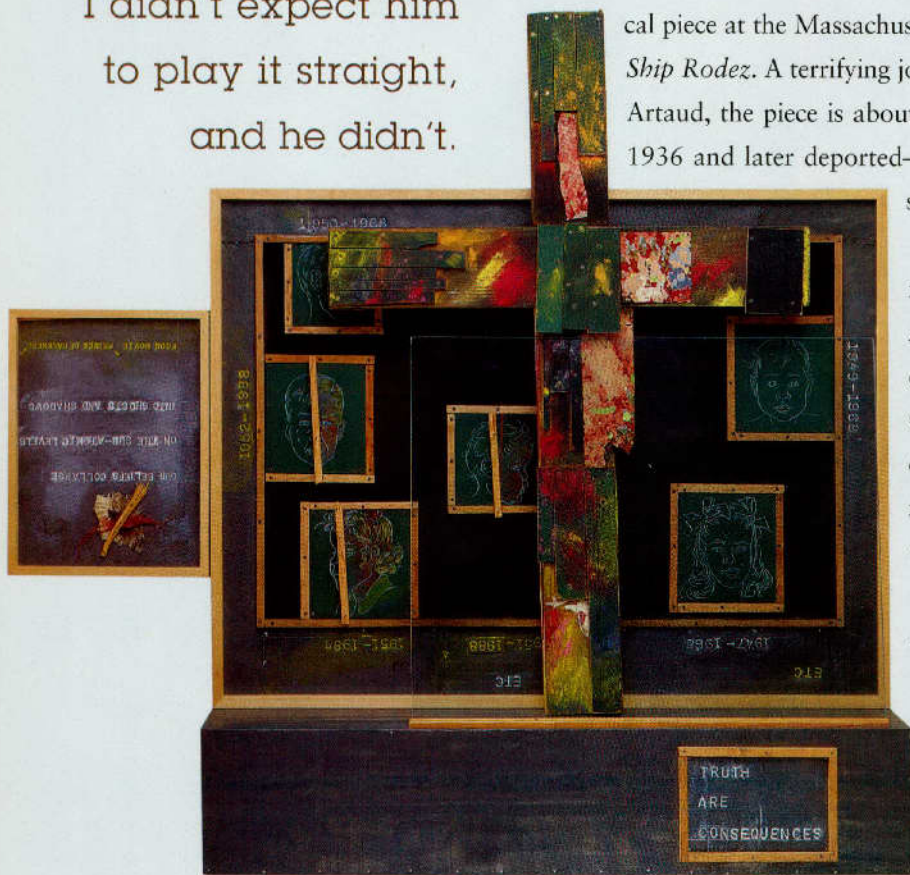
out in the world, it is what it is. I've never been interested in making any kind of art about art—or art to be 'art.' What's much more interesting to me is just the planet we live on and the humans that inhabit it.”

That is clear from his body of work, including the light and rowdy musical about a West Texas hooker—*Chippy*—which he wrote with his Lubbock high school pals Butch Hancock, Joe Ely, Jo Carol Pierce, and his wife, Jo Harvey, and which the group performed in 1994 at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City.

His fascination with man's foibles is also clear from his recent multimedia theatrical piece at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, called *Ghost Ship Rodez*. A terrifying journey into the mind of French visionary Antonin Artaud, the piece is about how Artaud was institutionalized in Mexico in 1936 and later deported—thrown into the hold of a ship, where he was straitjacketed and chained to a cot.

Whether traveling to Southeast Asia with a German filmmaker to create a soundtrack for the film *Amerasia*, putting on a Samuel Beckett-inspired exhibit and performance at the Mermaid Art Centre in Ireland (titled *Voidville*), showcasing epic-size installations in airports, or producing 11 records, Allen takes every topic and turns it every which way but loose.

When Allen and I spoke last fall, he was in Austin to tour *Terry Allen, Best of the Sugar Hill Years*, which he calls his “new record of old stuff.” After we sat down to lunch at Hill's Cafe (he went for the chili), I asked him about his Texas favorites. I didn't expect him to play it straight, and he didn't.



Terry Allen's 1988 mixed-media piece *Truth Are Consequences* is from the series *Youth in Asia*. COURTESY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON

**SHERMAKAYE: What is your favorite Texas city and why?**

**TERRY:** The place I flash on is El Paso. I think it's because of border romance and the endless mystique of it. When I was a kid growing up in the Panhandle, I thought if I could just get to the border, get to Mexico, everything would be okay. Mexico was the open door to mystery and magic. I'd finally be in a wild and exciting place. In border towns you get the best and worst of both sides all at

once. It's not Mexico and it's not the U.S. It's some kind of third creature that's always changing and always spooky and mysterious.

**SHERMAKAYE: What is your favorite Texas critter and why?**

**TERRY:** Probably the coyote. Of course, they're not just in Texas. They're almost everywhere. And they're always despised. This makes me like them even more. (continued on page 52)



In honor of Buddy Holly's birthday on September 7, Terry Allen performed a show at Threadgill's in Austin.

# On a Royal Mission

Our westward trek on El Camino Real de los Tejas thus far has led through historic towns like San Augustine and Crockett (see October 2006 *TH*) and Bryan and San Marcos (January 2008). The final stretch of our journey begins in San Antonio, by far the largest city on the National Historic Trail.

## *Driving El Camino Real from San Antonio to the Rio Grande*

BY ANGELA FOX • PHOTOGRAPHS BY VIRGIL FOX

**T**HERE ALWAYS SEEMS TO BE something new in San Antonio, so we settle into our room at the historic Menger Hotel, in the shadow of the Alamo, to plot our itinerary.

The hotel, with its stunning three-story Victorian lobby and English pub-style bar, consists of a modern wing and the original section dating to 1859 with rooms overlooking shady Alamo Plaza. At night, when horse-drawn carriages clip-clop by, it's easy to imagine we have slipped back to bygone days when Oscar Wilde or Teddy Roosevelt stayed here.

We begin our sightseeing with a stop at the Aztec Theatre, the recently restored 1926 movie palace. We happen by just as the free show in the lobby begins. It is an explosion of rumbling sound, flashing colors, and exotic imagery, complete with an animatronic (*continued on page 22*)

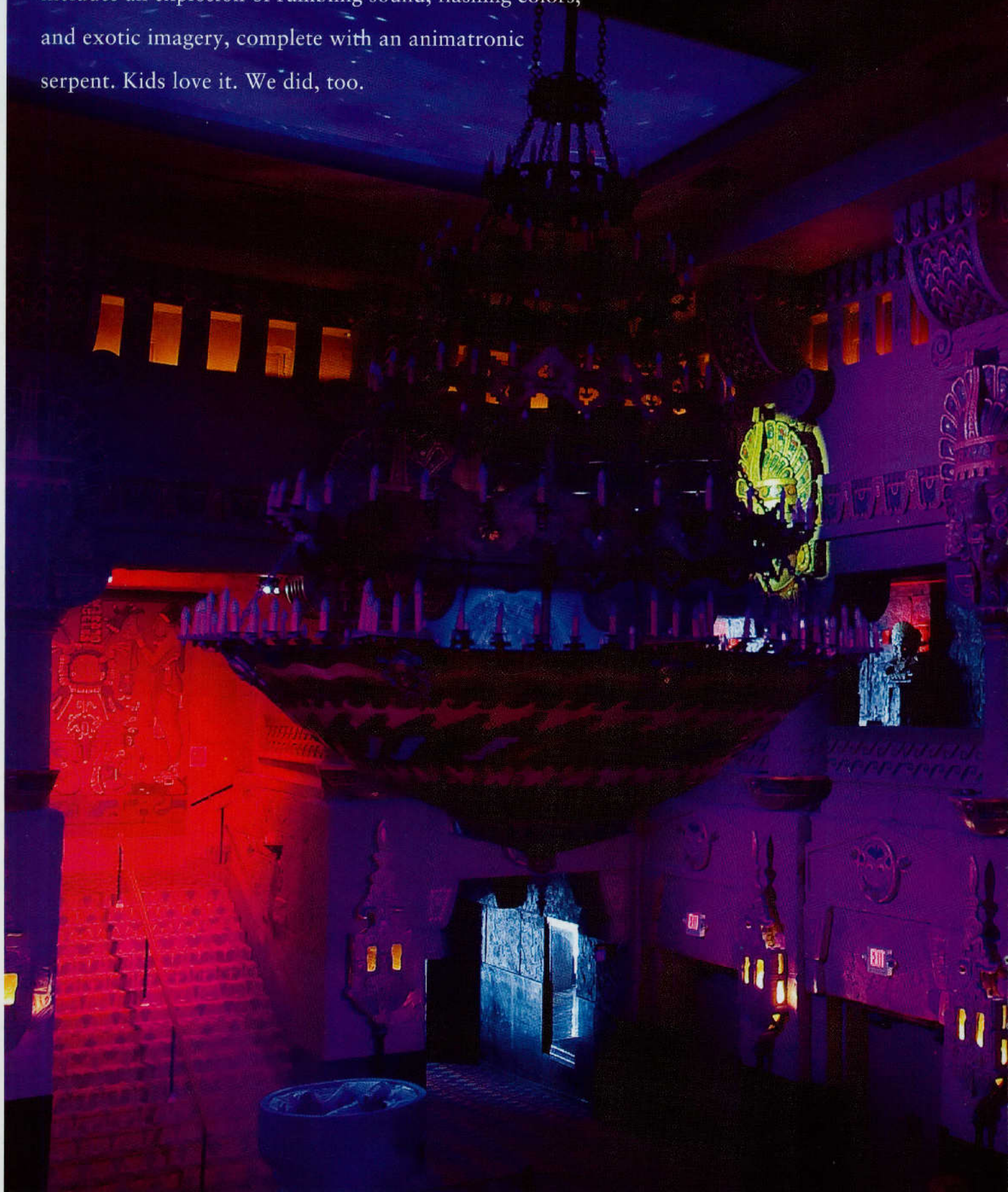
The church at Mission San Francisco de la Espada features this distinctive entrance and a triple bell tower. Espada maintains an active Catholic parish, as do the three other churches within San Antonio Missions National Historical Park.

■ To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit [www.texashighwaysprints.com](http://www.texashighwaysprints.com).



## The Aztec Theatre's free show

includes an explosion of rumbling sound, flashing colors, and exotic imagery, complete with an animatronic serpent. Kids love it. We did, too.





(continued from page 18) serpent. Kids love it, and we did, too. Afterwards, we buy a ticket and enjoy *Mystery of the Maya*, an IMAX film screening in the theater itself. The beautiful and fascinating documentary was shot on location at sites of Mayan ruins on the Yucatán Peninsula and explores the culture, history, and scientific advances of the ancient civilization.

Next we immerse ourselves in the city's earliest days on a tour of the nearby Spanish Governor's Palace. Dating to 1718, the rambling structure includes a chapel, ballroom, family room, kitchen, and bedrooms, all meticulously furnished as they were in the days when San Antonio was the capital of Spanish Texas. On we trek for a quick swing through El Mercado, with its shops and restaurants, and a look at Museo Alameda, the city's newest museum. Within its hot-pink walls are seven galleries showcasing a vibrant mix of American and Latino art and culture.

We head to lunch at Schilo's, a San Antonio institution since 1917. The classic German delicatessen/restaurant is so good, in fact, we end up eating several meals here during our San Antonio stay. We highly recommend the Reuben pastrami sandwiches, wiener schnitzel, split-pea soup, eggs and biscuits, and old-fashioned oatmeal with brown sugar and raisins.

Just a few steps from Schilo's, the world-famous River Walk offers its own array of dining options. Our lunch at the Iron Cactus begins with a chipotle-marinated shrimp cocktail enlivened by a habanero sauce, and a soothing tortilla soup. We continue with entrées of Yucatán fish tacos, filled with tequila-marinated white-

On we trek for a quick swing through El Mercado, with its shops and restaurants, and a look at Museo Alameda, San Antonio's newest museum.



San Antonio's newest—and pinkest—museum, The Museo Alameda spotlights Latin-American history and culture in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution. At right, an old SA favorite, the River Walk flows with the times; take a tour with Rio San Antonio Cruises (800/417-4139; [www.riosanantonio.com](http://www.riosanantonio.com)).

fish and papaya salsa, and grilled red snapper with a sauce of fresh tomatoes and olives. We also refuel at Casa Rio on traditional beef enchiladas; another evening we split an excellent version of fajitas at the Original Mexican Restaurant.

Our primary mission during our Royal Road trip through San Antonio is, well, to see the missions. We've toured the Alamo (Mission San Antonio de Valero) and now we have four more to go along the nine-mile trail that winds south of town. Only

a few miles apart, the missions vary in size and proximity to the river, but each one has its own appeal. Collectively, the four missions are known as San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, and the park's Web site suggests allowing at least four hours to visit all

sites. (We found that six hours barely does justice to these Texas treasures.)

We get up early one morning and arrive at Mission Concepción when it opens, beating the heat and the crowds. Founded in 1731, Concepción is distinctive among the San Antonio missions because of the religious symbols and decorative designs painted on its interior walls. Next up is the massive Mission San José, founded in 1720, with its spacious visitors' center and extensive grounds. The documentary film *Gente de Razón*, shown in the visitors' center on the hour and half-hour, tells the story of the native people of 18th-Century South Texas and the daily life in the Spanish missions.

Farther south at the more intimate Mission San Juan Capistrano, we stroll the short nature trail to the banks of the San Antonio River and imagine what it must have been like in 1731, when this mission was founded. Our favorite just might be the southernmost one, Mission San Francisco de la Espada, also dating to 1731, with its charming triple bell tower and plantings of colorful flowers.

## One Trail, Many Names

El Camino Real de los Tejas, also known as the Royal Road, Old San Antonio Road, and the King's Highway, has been a busy thoroughfare ever since Spanish explorers blazed the trail more than 300 years ago. Portions of the trail that were Indian footpaths even predate the Spanish. The road, in fact, isn't one road at all but a 2,580-mile network of trails winding its way from the Rio Grande through San Antonio and eastern Texas to Natchitoches, Louisiana. Trod by Indians, priests, settlers, and immigrants, by outlaws, soldiers, and Texas freedom fighters, the route was designated a National Historic Trail in 2004. For more information, visit [www.elcaminorealtx.com](http://www.elcaminorealtx.com).

—ANGELA FOX







"Why don't you come up sometime 'n' see me ... at the Menger?" Mae West surely said when she stayed at the San Antonio landmark decades ago. Today, the still-elegant hotel offers 316 rooms, the full-service Alamo Plaza Spa, downtown's largest heated pool, and an award-winning brunch.

We stroll the short nature trail to the banks of the San Antonio River and imagine what it must have been like in 1731.

We're ready to continue on the Royal Road, following its approximate southern trajectory on US 281, then turning on the outskirts of Pleasanton onto Texas 85. We cross the Frio River and stop in the tiny town of Dilley to get our bearings, then take a lunch break at a roadside park on the banks of the Nueces River in Dimmit County. This last leg of our journey, we decide, is made for simple pleasures like our picnic of sandwiches from San Antonio's Schilo's Deli.

Next stop: Carrizo Springs, where we spot the twin red-roofed towers of Our

Lady of Guadalupe Church. We are reading the cornerstone that tells us the church was built in 1940 when Luciano Vargas, a native of the town, strolls up with a friendly greeting. Turns out, Vargas' grandfather cut the limestone blocks for the church and his father helped lay them. Vargas, who runs a local air conditioning business, also tells us with quiet pride how his grandmother came from Mexico in the early 1900s and how his own children have achieved success in business and medical careers. "You're welcome to look inside," he says. "The church is open." We

step inside and are immediately impressed by the altar paintings, colorful murals of Jesus and of the Aztec Indian Juan Diego, to whom the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared in central Mexico in 1531. The chapel, with its wooden pews, center aisle, and vaulted ceiling, is illuminated during our visit by the sunlight filtered through the stained-glass windows.

It's late afternoon by the time we arrive at our journey's end in Eagle Pass, on the banks of the Rio Grande across from the bustling Mexican city of Piedras Negras. We have time to check out the Maverick County Courthouse and Fort Duncan Park (with historic buildings, a museum, ballfields, and a playground), where the town began back in 1849. About 30 miles downstream is where Santa Anna and his army forded the river and followed El Camino Real to San Antonio and the Battle of the Alamo.

Ready now for dinner and a good night's rest, we head for Weyrich Farm, an organic pecan farm overlooking the Rio Grande. The farm and house—now a B&B—have been in the same family since 1910. Our hosts, Leah Gray Leonard and her husband, Kyle, are the fourth generation to manage “The Farm” and have transformed it into a certified organic business. We visit with Leah and two of her young children on the veranda of a three-bedroom house designated for overnight guests. The decor is a comfortable, quirky mix of antiques, family treasures, and souvenirs from around the world—just our style. Breakfast the next morning, we learn, will be *migas*, beans, salsa, and carrot-pecan cake, all prepared from scratch.

We then take a short drive to Guva's, a casual eatery, for a hearty meal of steak and fajitas. Back at The Farm, we stroll with Leah and the kids to the family's private camp overlooking the Rio Grande. They leave us alone so we can enjoy the sunset, and we watch the sun disappear in a quiet dissolve of lavender and pink over the swiftly flowing river far below. We hold hands and walk in the gathering dusk to our night's rest. Tomorrow we will drive home along a different route—but the Royal Road goes on forever in our minds. ★

ANGELA and VIRGIL FOX are confident that the Royal Road will remain a well-traveled route, thanks to enterprising Texans like Leah Leonard and Luciano Vargas.

## essentials HEADING SOUTH ON EL CAMINO REAL

FOLLOWING is contact information for areas and sites mentioned in the story.

**San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau**, 203 S. St. Mary's St., 800/447-3372; [www.sanantoniovisit.com](http://www.sanantoniovisit.com).

**Dimmit County Chamber of Commerce**, 310 W. Nopal St., Carrizo Springs, 830/876-5205; [www.dimmitcountytx.com](http://www.dimmitcountytx.com).

**Eagle Pass Chamber of Commerce**, 400 Garrison St., 888/355-3224; [www.eaglepass.texas.com](http://www.eaglepass.texas.com).

### SAN ANTONIO

**Menger Hotel**, 204 Alamo Plaza, 800/345-9285; [www.mengerhotel.com](http://www.mengerhotel.com).

**Aztec Theatre/Aztec on the River**, 201 E. Commerce St., Ste. 300, 877/432-9832; [www.aztecontheriver.com](http://www.aztecontheriver.com).

**Spanish Governor's Palace**, 105 Plaza de Armas, 210/224-0601; [www.sanantonio.gov/dtops/contractfacilities.asp](http://www.sanantonio.gov/dtops/contractfacilities.asp).

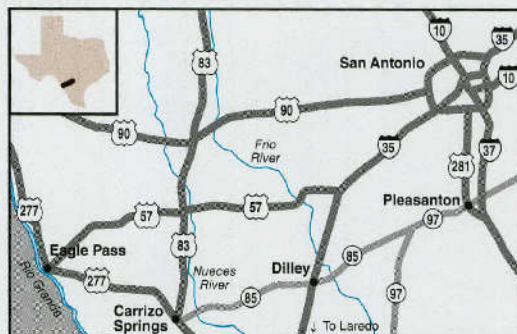
**El Mercado**, 514 W. Commerce St.; 210/207-8600; [www.marketsquaresa.com](http://www.marketsquaresa.com).

**The Museo Alameda**, 101 S. Santa Rosa Ave., 210/299-4300; [www.thealameda.org](http://www.thealameda.org).

**Schilo's Delicatessen**, 424 E. Commerce St., 210/223-6692.

**River Walk**, The Paseo del Rio Association, 210/227-4262; [www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com](http://www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com).

**Iron Cactus Mexican Grill and Margarita Bar**, 200 River Walk, 210/224-9835; [www.ironcactus.com](http://www.ironcactus.com).



**Casa Rio**, 430 E. Commerce St., 210/225-6718; [www.casa-rio.com](http://www.casa-rio.com).

**Original Mexican Restaurant & Bar**, 528 River Walk, 210/224-9951; [www.originalmexican.com](http://www.originalmexican.com).

**San Antonio Missions National Historical Park**, 6701 San Jose Dr., 210/932-1001; [www.nps.gov/saan](http://www.nps.gov/saan).

### DILLEY

**City of Dilley**, 830/965-1624; [www.cityofdilleytx.com](http://www.cityofdilleytx.com).

### CARRIZO SPRINGS

**Our Lady of Guadalupe Church**, 1003 N. 6th St., 830/876-2239.

### EAGLE PASS

The **Maverick County Courthouse** is at 500 Quary St.

**Fort Duncan Park**, 480 S. Adams (park offices); 830/773-4343.

**Weyrich Farm**, 2 miles north of Eagle Pass on FM 1589, 877/898-0991; [www.wfpecan.com](http://www.wfpecan.com).

**Guva's Steak & Grill**, 2150 Del Rio Blvd., 830/773-2100.

■ To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit [www.texashighwaysprints.com](http://www.texashighwaysprints.com).



Another stunning sunset over the Rio Grande, as seen from a bluff at Weyrich Farm, a 150-acre pecan farm and bed-and-breakfast near Eagle Pass.






# bite-size bliss

BY JOYCE SÁENZ HARRIS PHOTOGRAPHS BY GARY RUSS

The ability to make great biscuits is a talent well worth cultivating.



**I**t might be even better than being a good cupcake- or cookie-baker. People will forgive you just about anything if you'll just bring hot, homemade biscuits along with your apology.

Because biscuits are simple bliss. A homemade biscuit is a golden-brown pillow of goodness just begging for a smear of honey or butter or preserves. For the truly indulgent eater, biscuits and cream gravy are the ultimate down-home breakfast.

In the South, biscuits rank with cornbread as a staff-of-life necessity. Only the most resolutely anti-carb among us can possibly resist a warm-from-the-oven biscuit.

Here, from several noted Texas biscuit-makers, are their treasured heirloom recipes from Mom or Grandma, plus expert advice on how to make the best biscuits ever. Pay attention, follow their hints, and you just might become very, very popular indeed.



“I figured out we have sold more than 400,000 biscuits since we have been in business,” says Kathleen Ellington, co-owner of Kathleen’s Sky Diner in Dallas.

### Bring on the Cream Gravy

**M**argaret Sage Gragg knows a lot about baking. After all, she works at the Dallas Affaires Cake Co. in Lakewood.

She grew up in Oak Cliff, and her mother, Marguerite Sage, was a traditional Southern cook. “There’s nothing better than cream gravy on biscuits,” Gragg recalls fondly.

(For a great cream gravy recipe, see Broken Spoke’s Cream Gravy on page 55. Although the legendary Austin dance hall serves this gravy with its chicken-fried steak, it’s wonderful with biscuits, too.)

Marguerite Sage’s biscuits were a treasured part of Gragg’s childhood. Now she bakes them for herself, and she has taught her bakery colleagues to make them, too.

#### MARGUERITE’S BISCUITS

- 2½ c. sifted all-purpose flour
- 1 T. sugar
- 1 T. plus ½ tsp. baking powder
- 1½ tsp. salt
- 5 T. unsalted butter, cut into small chunks
- 1 c. buttermilk plus ¼ c. milk  
(or use 1 c. milk total)



## Yum! A Baker's Dozen of Other Texas Biscuiteers

They may be drop-style or rolled-and-cut, infused with buttermilk or beer, but however they're made, great biscuits abound in coffee shops and restaurants all over Texas, if you just know where to look. Good bets

are cafés that serve breakfast, which means you can usually count on being able to get gravy with those biscuits. **A word to the wise:** Call ahead to confirm serving hours and days open. Don't show up too late, because many dining establishments only serve biscuits for as long as that morning's batch of fresh dough holds out. Here are a few of the places you can find some of the state's best home-style biscuits.

—JOYCE SÁENZ HARRIS

**AMARILLO:** *La Casita del Sol B&B*, 1607 S. Harrison St. (breakfast for guests only), 806/342-3444; [www.lacasita.delsol.com](http://www.lacasita.delsol.com).

**AUSTIN:** *The Frisco Shop*, 5819 Burnet Rd. (at Koenig), 512/459-6279; [www.thefrisco.shop.com](http://www.thefrisco.shop.com). *Cisco's Restaurant, Bakery & Bar*, 1511 E. 6th St. (at Onion St.), 512/478-2420.

**CORPUS CHRISTI:** *Andy's Kitchen*, 5802 S. Staples St. (at Holly), 361/993-0251.

**DALLAS:** *Bubba's*, 6617 Hillcrest Rd. (at Rosedale), 214/373-6527; [www.babeschicken.com](http://www.babeschicken.com). *Norma's Cafe*, 1123 W. Davis St. (at Tyler, in Oak Cliff), 214/946-4711. *Luckys Cafe*, 3531 Oak Lawn Ave. (at Bowser), 214/522-3500; [www.croinc.com/luckys/default.cfm](http://www.croinc.com/luckys/default.cfm). *Barbec's Restaurant*, 8949

Garland Rd., 214/321-5597.

**EL PASO:** *Elmer's*, 6305 Montana Ave., 915/778-5485.

**FORT WORTH:** *Paris Coffee Shop*, 704 W. Magnolia Ave. (at Hemphill St.), 817/335-2041.

**HOUSTON:** *The Breakfast Klub*, 3711 Travis at Alabama, 713/528-8561; [www.thebreakfastklub.com](http://www.thebreakfastklub.com). *Kelley's*, 8015 Park Place (at Gulf Frwy.), 713/645-6428 (other Kelley's locations in *LaMarque*, *Pearland*, *Pasadena*, and *League City*).

**LEWISVILLE:** *Ham and Eggs*, 297 W. Round Grove Rd. #190 (west of TX 121), 972/315-1155.

**LUBBOCK:** *Pancake House*, 510 Ave. Q, 806/765-8506.

**MARBLE FALLS:** *Bluebonnet Cafe*, 211 US 281, 830/693-2344; [www.bluebonnetcafe.net](http://www.bluebonnetcafe.net).

**McKINNEY:** *Bill Smith's Cafe*, 1510 W. University Dr., 972/542-5331; [www.billsmithscafe.com](http://www.billsmithscafe.com).

**PFLUGERVILLE:** *Dot's Place*, 15803 Windermere Dr. (in Windermere Shopping Center, near FM 1825 and Pecan St.), 512/252-9300.

**ROANOKE:** *Babe's Chicken Dinner House*, 104 North Oak St., 817/491-2900; [www.babeschicken.com](http://www.babeschicken.com) (see Web site for Babe's locations in *Garland*, *Sanger*, *Carrollton*, *Granbury*, and *Burleson*.)

**SAN ANTONIO:** *The Guenther House*, 205 E. Guenther St., 210/227-1061; [www.guentherhouse.com](http://www.guentherhouse.com).

**SOUTH PADRE ISLAND:** *Casa de Siesta B&B*, 4610 Padre Blvd. (between Jupiter & Mars; breakfast for guests only), 956/761-5656; [www.casadesiesta.com](http://www.casadesiesta.com).

Combine dry ingredients in a mixing bowl. Add butter in chunks, and cut in with a pastry blender until consistency of coarse meal. Add buttermilk and milk, mixing gently with a spatula until dough just clings together.

Turn dough out onto a floured surface, and roll over to coat with flour. Knead until dough is mixed and slightly elastic, about 10 times. Roll dough to 1/2-inch thickness. Cut with a biscuit cutter, place biscuits in an ungreased pan, and bake at 400° for 15 to 20 minutes. Yield: 10 to 12 biscuits.



Angela's Bistro 51, at Boll and Guillot streets, is in the heart of Dallas' historic State Thomas district.



This delectable heirloom recipe, from Angela Gordon's grandmother and served at Angela's Bistro 51 (above), will have you reaching for seconds and thirds.

### Don't Ruin Your Dinner

**I** am originally from East Texas, and biscuits were a staple when I was growing up, and still are, in my opinion," says Angela Gordon, owner of Angela's Bistro 51 (2701 Guillot St., Dallas; 214/979-0051; [www.angelasbistro51.com](http://www.angelasbistro51.com)). "This is an heirloom biscuit recipe from my grandmother. I updated it with cheddar cheese, garlic, and fresh herbs.

"We used to bring these to the table in a bread basket when the guests first arrived. However, they ate them so fast, asking for seconds and thirds—before they ordered—and filled up on them too quickly. So now we don't bring the biscuits out until they get their first course."

#### ANGELA'S BISTRO 51 CHEDDAR BISCUITS

*If you prefer, you can skip rolling out the dough and make these as drop biscuits, the option chosen by our food stylist.*

2 c. sifted all-purpose flour

2 tsp. baking powder

1/2 tsp. salt

1 tsp. garlic powder

3 T. Crisco

1/2 tsp. baking soda

1 c. buttermilk

3/4 c. grated cheddar cheese

2 T. chopped fresh parsley

Combine sifted flour, baking powder, salt, and garlic powder, and sift into a mixing bowl. Cut Crisco into mixture until dough is size of peas.

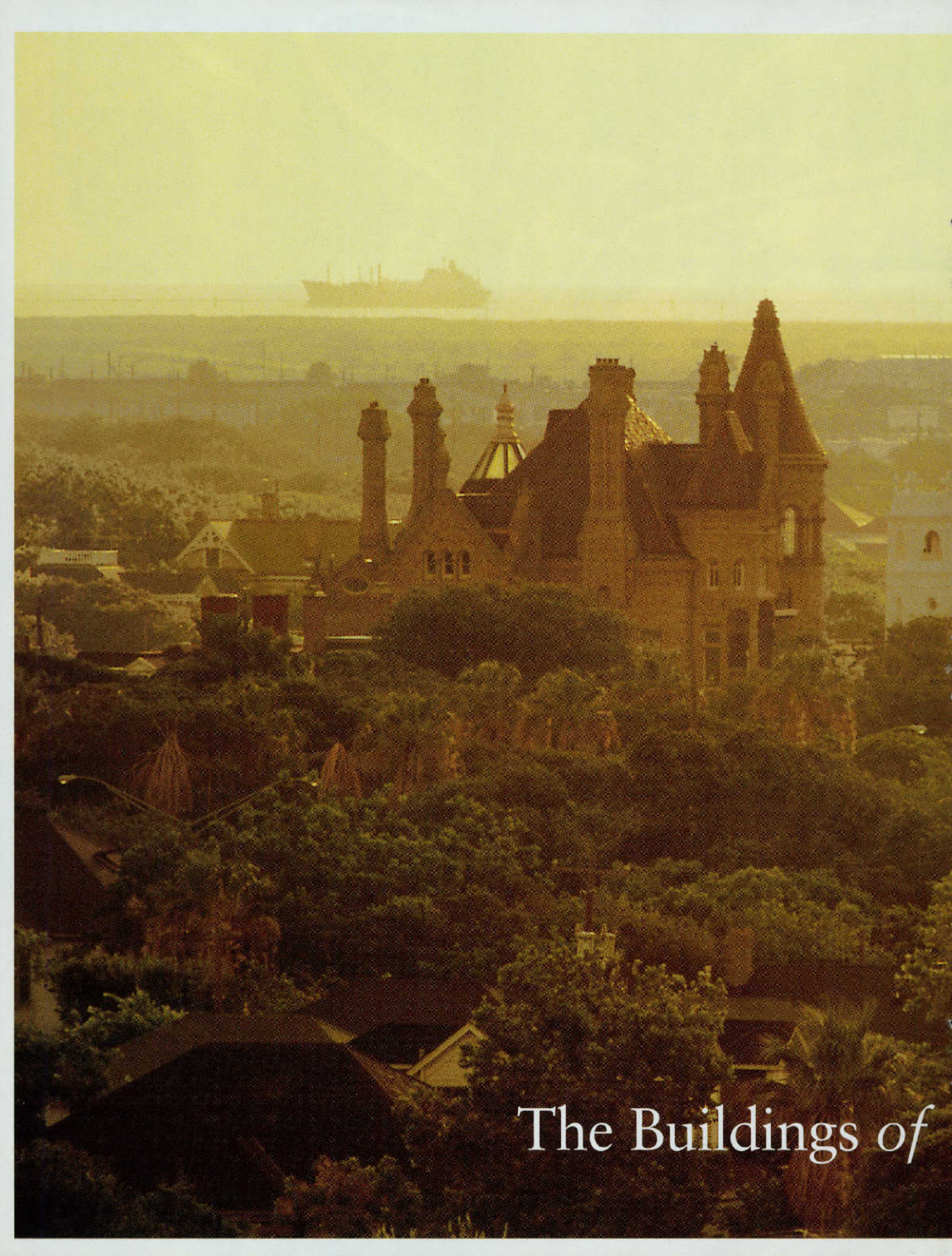
Dissolve soda in buttermilk; stir into dry ingredients until moistened. Beat with a wooden spoon for about 1 minute. Quickly stir in cheese and parsley.

Turn dough out onto a well-floured board. (Dough will be sticky.) Using a well-floured rolling pin, roll to 1/2-inch thickness. Cut into rounds, and place in a lightly greased pie plate, with sides touching. Bake at 450° for 10 to 12 minutes. Yield: 8 to 12 biscuits.

*(continued on page 54)*







The Buildings of



GALVESTON  
GRANDEUR

# Nicholas Joseph Clayton

BY STEVEN SCHWARTZMAN    PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT MIHOVIL



PREVIOUS SPREAD: **Nicholas Clayton** created an exotic skyline for this view of Galveston with the Bishop's Palace on the left and dome of the Sacred Heart Church on the right.

ABOVE: **The Trueheart-Adriance Building**, a commercial building in Galveston's Strand District that Clayton designed for H.M. Trueheart and Co., one of the earliest chartered realty firms in Texas. The building, constructed in 1882 in a combination of Neo-Renaissance and High Victorian style, prompted Gary Cartwright to write in his history of Galveston that "this little crazy-quilt gingerbread structure is right out of Dickens. You almost expect to see Scrooge and Marley looking out one of the narrow Romanesque windows."

## GALVESTON GRANDEUR



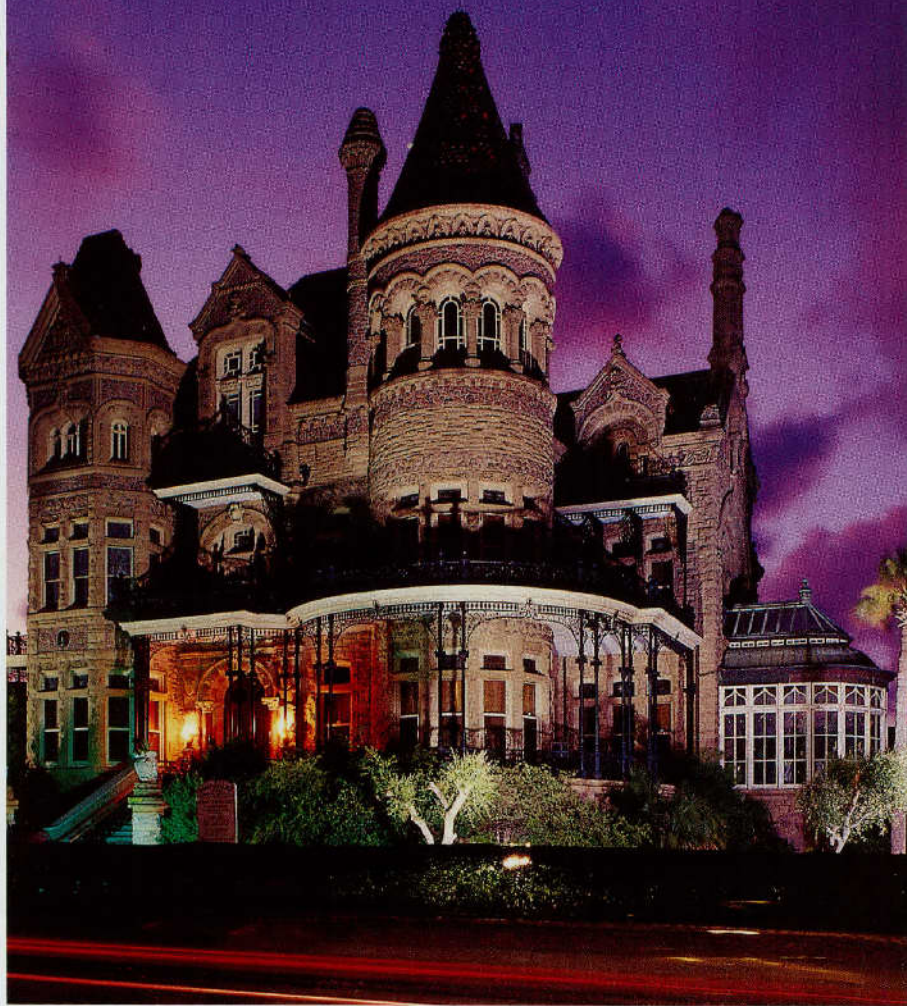
**N**ICHOLAS JOSEPH CLAYTON'S LIFE is one of the rags-to-riches stories that Americans are so fond of. He was born in County Cork, Ireland, in 1840, but after the starvation and disease brought on by the great potato famine killed well over 500,000 people later in that decade, his mother emigrated to Ohio with the boy in tow. As a young man before the Civil War, Clayton worked as a plasterer. Once the Civil War was over, he made his mark as a carver and architectural draftsman. His experience made him extremely proficient in the building trades, and in 1872 a Memphis architectural firm sent him to supervise the construction of a church in Galveston.

Clayton arrived in Galveston in December of that year and, in the words of writer Robert Nesbitt, "remained to become a Galveston legend." At that time, Galveston was the right place for Clayton to establish himself as an architect because, with 14,000 people in 1870 and 22,000 in 1880, it was the largest city in Texas. Its coastal location made it the state's principal center of trade with the rest of the United States and a center of culture as well. Clayton moved smoothly into that world of prosperity and culture, and soon became an integral part of the city's economy, designing and erecting more buildings—and fancier buildings—than any other architect in the region.

An ad in the 1896-97 *Galveston City Directory* listed the services that Clayton's firm could provide: "Plans, Specifications and Superintendence Furnished for Every Description of Building, Public or Private. Large and Difficult Building Construction in Stone, Brick, Iron and Wood; Also Fire-Proof Construction Specialties. Special Attention Given to Modern Designs Embodying the Latest Conveniences, Sanitary Appliances, Heating and Ventilation." The names of 40 prominent commissions appeared at the bottom of the city directory ad, including offices,



## GALVESTON GRANDEUR



**Gresham House**, now known as the Bishop's Palace, was built for Colonel Walter Gresham and his wife, Josephine, between 1887 and 1893. The mansion has been named by the American Institute of Architects as the 14th most important Victorian building in America. Designed in a Victorian adaptation of Renaissance style, its exterior mixes red sandstone, white limestone, and gray and pink granite. Clayton saw to it that the 7,500-square-foot interior was lavishly appointed, installing the first gas-burning fireplace in Texas. In 1923 the Catholic Diocese of Galveston purchased the building as a residence for its bishop, who died in 1950. The Bishop's Palace, now managed by the Galveston Historical Foundation, opened to the public as a museum in 1963.

schools, hospitals, hotels, and residences. Even with a range of buildings to his credit, Clayton's devout Catholicism meant he had a special place in his heart and his architecture for religious buildings. In fact his first independent commission after moving to Texas was for St. Mary's Catholic Church (now Cathedral) in Austin, and he later designed the main building at the new Catholic college there, St. Edward's.

In Galveston, Clayton's religious works included St. Mary's College, Sacred Heart Church, Eaton Memorial Chapel, St. Patrick's Church, and the Ursuline Academy.

Clayton's architecture clearly caught the mood of his times. Where Modernism has stressed simplicity, High Victorian style called for lots of decoration. The outside of Clayton's most famous work, known first as the Gresham House and then the Bishop's

Palace (built 1885–1892), is covered with intricate and beautiful stone work and detailed carvings. And, as his city directory ad stated, Clayton also kept pace with the latest technology: The Gresham House had the first gas-burning fireplace in Texas, while the Galveston News Building of 1884 became the state's first fireproof, steel-beamed structure. Fireproofing was an especially important feature: on November 13, 1885, a huge fire had destroyed some 45 blocks in Galveston. That disaster resulted in many new commissions for Clayton, who continued to prosper through the late 1890s.

Then two events reversed Clayton's rags-to-riches story. He won a contract for a county courthouse in Galveston and posted an \$80,000 personal bond, but for reasons that are still not clear, he ended up forfeiting the bond and eventually had to declare bankruptcy. The other event was the horrific hurricane



ABOVE: **Beyond Galveston:** Even though Nicholas Clayton's influence is most visible in Galveston, his realm extended to other cities in Texas. This photograph was made in the stairwell of the St. Edward's University Administration Building, or "Old Main" as the building is now known. Clayton made prominent use of Texas white limestone in the construction of the four-story Gothic Revival style design. Old Main survived a 1922 tornado and, because of its hilltop site, stands out as a landmark. In fact, it is visible from Clayton's other Austin building, St. Mary's Cathedral, in the downtown area.



## GALVESTON GRANDEUR



**Detail on the Hutchings-Sealy building** in Galveston. As a practitioner of “High Victorian” architectural style, Clayton loved to add lavish and colorful detail to his buildings. Perhaps his early years as a carver helped him design elaborate scrollwork and floral designs in three dimensions.

tors from every clime ... , was almost completely destr[o]yed in the hitherto unexampled Hurricane of Sept. 8th, which devast[at]ed and nearly destroyed the entire city of Galveston on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, A.D. 1900.”

Clayton continued to work as an architect but his business declined. Where once he had built a palace worth \$250,000, his letters from 1906 show him urgently asking to borrow \$50. He held on for another decade, but when he died at age 76 in 1916, his family couldn’t afford a proper tombstone and had to mark his grave with one of his marble samples. Fortunes do indeed change, and in a final reversal

of September 8, 1900, which destroyed most of Galveston and killed more than 6,000 people.

Clayton’s copy book for September 17 of that year contains a letter from him accepting the emergency position of building inspector, followed by a poignant letter in which he wrote about one of his own beloved creations: “The Majestic Church of the Sacred Heart ... , whose impressive architectural beauty and dignity, particularly in its interior, so favorably impressed visi-

Clayton is now recognized as the foremost Texas architect of the 19th Century. His legacy is the dozens of buildings that still survive in the state. ★

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Writer STEVEN SCHWARTZMAN reports that he was blown away by the experience of writing this article—not by the hurricane that destroyed Galveston, but by Nicholas Clayton’s surviving buildings there.

Photographer ROBERT MIHOVIL has just moved his gallery into the Hutchings-Sealy building, one of architect Nicholas Clayton’s Galveston projects. If you’re in town, stop by 2326 Strand, Suite 200. Or contact him at [art@mihovil.com](mailto:art@mihovil.com).



# GALVESTON GRANDEUR

WHERE to see some of Nicholas Clayton's buildings:

## GALVESTON

**Gresham House**, a.k.a. the Bishop's Palace (1887-93), 1402 Broadway, 409/762-2475; [www.galveston.com/bishopspalace](http://www.galveston.com/bishopspalace).

Open daily for paid tours of the interior that allow visitors to see the elaborate rosewood-mahogany grand staircase, crystal chandeliers, lavish wall coverings, stained-glass windows, and other elegant furnishings.

**Ashbel Smith Building**, a.k.a. Old Red (1888-91), University of Texas Medical Branch, 301 University Blvd., 409/772-1011; [www.utmb.edu/tour/18.htm](http://www.utmb.edu/tour/18.htm); [www.utmb.edu/tour/oldred/Old\\_red\\_2003.pdf](http://www.utmb.edu/tour/oldred/Old_red_2003.pdf). Parking Garage 2 is adjacent to Old Red.

**St. Patrick's Catholic Church** (1877), Broadway at 35<sup>th</sup> St., 409/762-9646; [www.saintpatrickgalveston.org/History2.htm](http://www.saintpatrickgalveston.org/History2.htm).

**Hutchings-Sealy Building** (1895-96), 2326-2328 Strand.

**Trueheart-Adriance Building** (1881), 212 22<sup>nd</sup> St.

**Greeleve, Block and Co. Building** (1882), 2314 Strand.

## AUSTIN

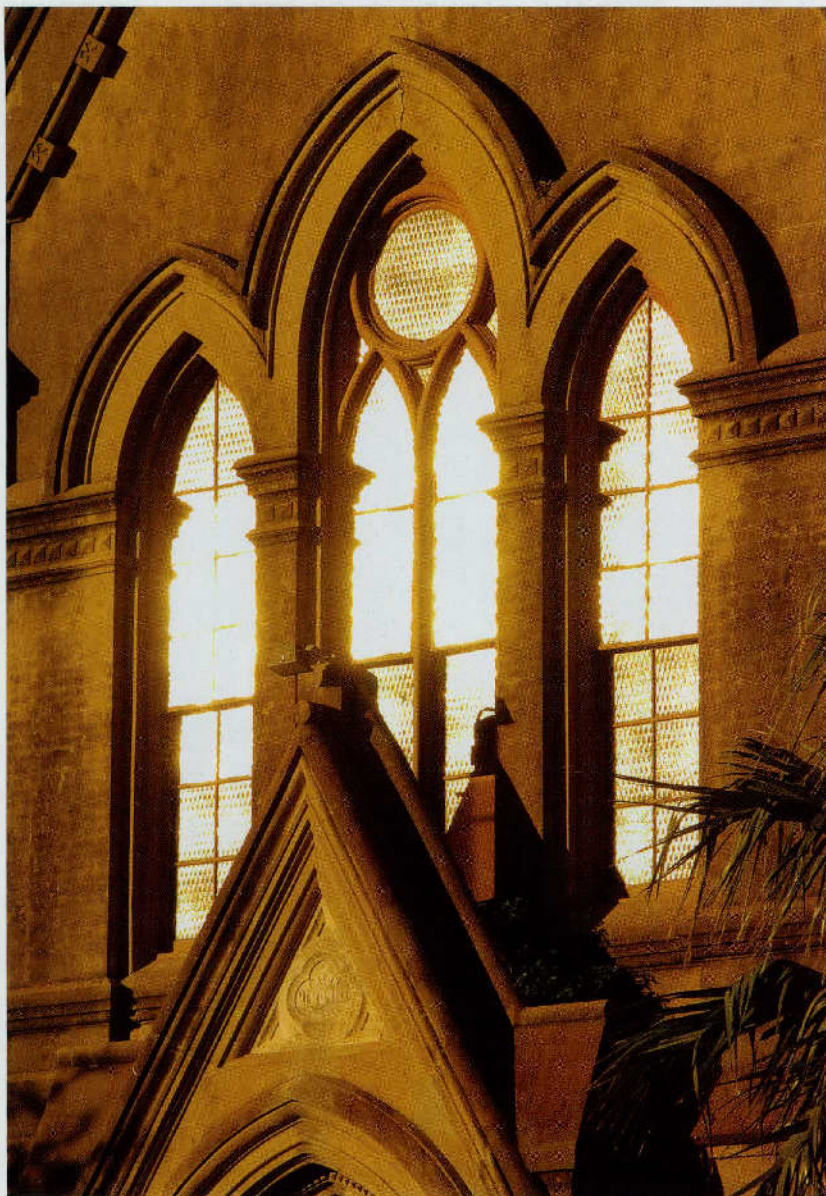
**St. Mary's Cathedral** (1873-1884), 203 E. 10<sup>th</sup> St., 512/476-6182; [www.saintmaryscathedral.org/index.php?page=history.php](http://www.saintmaryscathedral.org/index.php?page=history.php).

**Administration Building**, a.k.a. Old Main (1888-89), St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress Ave., 512/448-8400; [www.stedwards.edu](http://www.stedwards.edu).

## COLUMBUS

**R. E. Stafford Bank and Opera House**, 425 Spring St.

**Convention and Visitors Bureau**, 979/732-8385; [www.columbustexas.org](http://www.columbustexas.org). Theater: 979/732-5135; [www.columbustexas.org/entertainment/dinner\\_theater.htm](http://www.columbustexas.org/entertainment/dinner_theater.htm).



ABOVE: **The early morning sun** reflects from the Romanesque windows of the Eaton Memorial Chapel, built adjacent to Trinity Episcopal Church in Galveston. The chapel was constructed in 1878-79 and dedicated in 1882 as a memorial to the church's founding rector, Reverend Benjamin Eaton.

LEFT: **The dome of Sacred Heart Church** in Galveston. Clayton designed the original Sacred Heart of Our Divine Redeemer Church that was dedicated in 1892 but then demolished by the great hurricane of 1900. The church was rebuilt, but a 1915 hurricane destroyed the dome. Nicholas Clayton was hired to design the new dome, which still helps define the building today.



# Hello High Island



BY HELEN BRYANT

## High Island isn't all that high, and it's not

really an island. It's part of the Bolivar Peninsula. But, then again, since you have to cross a bridge over the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway to get there, maybe the whole peninsula qualifies

as an island. High Island's 38-foot elevation makes it the highest point on the Gulf of Mexico between Mobile, Alabama, and Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula—a span of more than 600 miles. It's high enough that when a hurricane comes along, this 1,100-acre salt dome is sometimes the only thing sticking out of the water.

That's one of High Island's claims to fame. Another is that it's one of the best birdwatching sites in the nation. Birds like trees, and this place has a lot. So six bird sanctuaries sit on this little rise, and people come from all over the world to visit them.

The community also has a rich oil history. In the 1930s, high-producing fields around the salt dome created an oil boom; at one time, as many as 200 wells actively pumped oil. Dozens continue to pump away, with the occasional group of cattle grazing nearby.

High Islanders have even more stories to tell—about the muskrat-trapping operations of the 1940s and 1950s; about Jean Lafitte's cabin boy, who is buried here; and about a quick and painless visit from Bonnie and Clyde. That's a lot of lore for a tiny town of 500 that takes

about three minutes to drive through.

High Island has no motels—just an RV park—and no place to buy a meal, unless you visit in April and take advantage of the barbecue lunch served on Saturdays at St. Matthews United Methodist Church (a local tradition for some 10 years). Otherwise, you'll need to drive about half an hour north to Winnie or head down the peninsula to Crystal Beach for chow. High Island's one motel and restaurant closed last year.

So where *do* the locals go when they want to eat out? (continued on page 49)



© LANCE VARNELL

PREVIOUS SPREAD: The purple martin houses at St. Matthews United Methodist Church are part of the High Island tableau. The roseate spoonbill displays its colors (breeding plumage), as well. ABOVE: You don't have to be a birder to appreciate the quiet beauty of the Smith Oaks Sanctuary, one of six bird havens in High Island. FACING PAGE: Open wide! A great egret feeds one of its young by transferring partially digested materials from its throat to its chick's.







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## High Islanders have plenty of stories to tell—

about the muskrat-trapping operations of the 1940s and 1950s; about Jean Lafitte's cabin boy, who is buried here; and about a quick and painless visit from Bonnie and Clyde. That's a lot of lore for a tiny town of 500 that takes about three minutes to drive through.



Cormorants roost in Claybottom Pond, a rookery in the Smith Oaks Sanctuary. Note the great egret on a nest at the far right.



A formation of pelicans flies over the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge; similar formations fly over High Island, some 20 miles away.

## The upper Texas coast claims two of the best birding sites in the nation: the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge and Bolivar Peninsula, which includes High Island.

(continued from page 44) “Most of the time when we go out, it’s out in the backyard frying fish,” says Houston Sliger, a High Island resident for 40 years who thinks, well, highly of the town.

“I can see the Gulf of Mexico from my front porch, and I’m surrounded by a bird sanctuary on three sides,” he says. “If it weren’t for the mosquitoes, this would be paradise.”

Sliger’s wife, Donna, works with her father, lifelong High Island resident Claude Kahla, at Claude’s True Value Hardware Store down the road in Gilchrist.

Kahla, 79, remembers when High Island was a lot sleepier than it is today. When he was a child, no bridge crossed over what is now the Intracoastal. “Back then it was just a little bayou that had a little pull-across ferry,” says Kahla. “The roads were nothing but cow trails.” Later, a drawbridge was built over the canal. “We’d have to wait while the boats went through,” he recalls. “The mosquitoes would eat you up.” Now, the drawbridge is gone, and a graceful span on Texas 124 arches above the canal.

Kahla’s family was, and still is, in the oil business, but he got into a lucrative sideline in the 1950s: muskrats. At that time, there was a great demand for muskrat hides, which were made into coats. Kahla had 600 traps, and says, “On Fridays, we’d have a fur sale in my yard.”

To get a look at a muskrat trap and other bits of High Island history, I pay a visit to High Island’s unofficial historian, Joe Faggard.

The fence outside the 87-year-old retired constable’s home is festooned with more than 300 hardhats that, over the years, washed onto the beach from offshore oil-rigs. Inside, Faggard has devoted an entire room to old newspaper clippings, caps, photos, and memorabilia ranging from a muskrat trap to an old water barrel. “Galveston wanted me to put all this stuff in its museum, but I never would do it,” he says. “I’ve got my own [private] museum.”

Faggard moved to High Island in 1927 and indeed has quite a souvenir collection, including photos of the old Sea View Hotel. Built in 1897, it survived the 1900 hurricane only to burn in 1947. But in the ’30s and ’40s, the hotel drew people from afar to its Big Band dances; during World



© ROBERT MIHOVIL

War II it housed the U.S. Coast Guard's mounted unit.

Faggard jumps into his pickup and leads me a few blocks to a cemetery where Jean Lafitte's cabin boy—or at least, the guy who said he was the pirate's cabin boy—is buried.

"Rumor was that Jean Lafitte buried some treasure around High Island, but they never did find it," says Faggard. The cabin boy, Charles Cronea, took up residence in High Island, married a local girl, gave up the pirate's life, and started growing watermelons.

Cronea was born in Marseilles, France, in 1805 and died in 1892—quite a long life in those times.

Faggard also takes me to the three-acre Corrie Herring Hooks Bird Sanctuary, which is owned by the Texas Ornithological Society, and shows me where the Sea View Hotel once stood. There's nothing left; nature has retaken the property.

While we're staring, Mitch Overby from

THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS/NATALIE CAUDILL



TOP: The tugboat *Crosby Rambler* tows a barge on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, which borders much of Bolivar Peninsula. ABOVE: a black-throated green warbler enjoys a dip in a shallow pool in the Boy Scout Woods Sanctuary.

Ruston, Louisiana, comes along with his wife, Aleta, and son, Alex.

"We just saw a black-throated green warbler. There are a lot of swallows down on the beach," Overby says excitedly.

Ah, yes. The birds. They're responsible for almost all of High Island's human visitors.

Birds reside in High Island all the time, but their numbers soar during spring migration. About 10,000 birders show up each spring to see the great variety of birds that find High Island hospitable. Many of the birders hope to see a fallout—that's the name of the phenomenon that occurs when exhausted birds appear to fall like raindrops from the sky.

Some birders come with tour groups, but most just come by themselves, binoculars in hand, according to Winnie Burkett, sanctuaries manager for the Houston Audubon Society. Her organization owns four sites at High Island: the S.E. Gast Red Bay Sanctuary, the Eubanks Woods Sanctuary, and the much larger Boy Scout Woods and Smith Oaks sanctuaries. (The latter surrounds the two-acre Mary Edna Crawford Sanctuary, which is owned by the Texas Ornithological Society.)

Burkett says birders flock to High Island in spring and fall during migrations, but especially during April and early May, when birds show off their spring plumage. It's hard to drive down any street in town then without nearly running over a birder.

When I dropped by the Boy Scout Woods Sanctuary last April to talk to Burkett, within five minutes I'd seen a Baltimore oriole, red-eyed vireo, yellow-throated vireo, and scarlet tanager. I recognized the oriole and tanager, but she had to sort out the vireos for me.

"Most of these birds come from Central and South America," says Burkett. "They come to the coast, they're tired, hungry, and thirsty, and we're the only woods for miles around." The birds land in the oak, cypress, and mulberry trees and munch away, ignoring the gawkers.

"They're not concerned about people," notes Burkett, as we watch the birds. "They're concerned about food."

Humans sometimes get concerned about food, too, so here's hoping High Island can resurrect its restaurant. It has a history, too.

## essentials HIGH ISLAND HIGHPOINTS

**THE COMMUNITY OF High Island** is at US 87 and Texas 124 on the Bolivar Peninsula, which is on the northeastern Texas coast. It can be reached by taking Texas 10 south from Interstate 10 at Winnie or by taking the Bolivar Ferry from Galveston and driving up the peninsula. For more information, call the Bolivar Peninsula Chamber of Commerce at 800/386-7863, or visit [www.bolivarchamber.org/highisland.aspx](http://www.bolivarchamber.org/highisland.aspx).

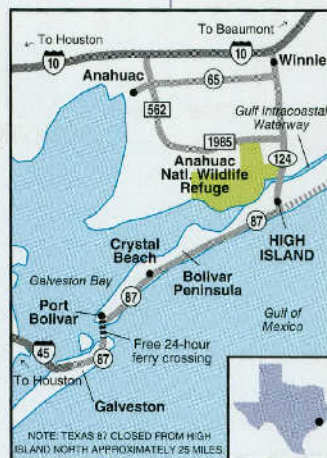
Unless you're going in the dead of winter, take mosquito repellent.

### ATTRACTIONS

The **Houston Audubon Society** owns 4 of the 6 bird sanctuaries at High Island: **Louis B. Smith Bird Sanctuary** (also known as **Boy Scout Woods**); **Eubanks Woods Sanctuary**; **S.E. Gast Red Bay Sanctuary**; and **Smith Oaks Sanctuary**. (A rookery within the latter site is a favorite place for water birds.) A \$5 admission charge (payable at either the Smith Oaks or Boy Scout Woods sanctuaries) gains access to all 4 sites for a day. Call 713/932-1639, or visit [www.houstonaudubon.org](http://www.houstonaudubon.org) for details. (The Web site offers a helpful map of High Island.)

The **Texas Ornithological Society (TOS)** owns the remaining 2 sanctuaries at High Island: **Corrie Herring Hooks Sanctuary** and **Mary Edna Crawford Sanctuary**. For \$5 (payable at the Corrie Herring Hooks Sanctuary), you can purchase a 30-day pass to both sanctuaries, as well as other TOS-owned sanctuaries in the state. Visit the society's Web site, [www.texasbirds.org](http://www.texasbirds.org), for details.

The **High Island Cemetery**, in which Jean Lafitte's cabin boy is said to be buried, is at 56th St. and Gulfway Dr. His gravesite is at



the back of the cemetery.

### BIRDING TOURS

Several companies regularly offer birding tours to High Island, including **Victor Emanuel Nature Tours** (800/328-8368; [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com)); **Field Guides** (512/263-7295 or 800/728-4953; [www.fieldguides.com](http://www.fieldguides.com)); **Penfeathers** (832/698-1175; [pfcompany@aol.com](mailto:pfcompany@aol.com)); and **Wings** (888/293-6443; <http://wingsbirds.com>).

### LODGING

**High Island RV Park**, 1921 Fourth St., 409/286-2294; [www.highislandrvpark.com](http://www.highislandrvpark.com).

High Island has no motels; Winnie offers two: **Holiday Inn**, 14932 FM 1663 (just off I-10), 409/296-2848; [www.holidayinn.com](http://www.holidayinn.com), and **Quality Inn**, 46318 I-10 (eastbound access road), 409/296-9292; [www.qualityinn.choicehotels.com](http://www.qualityinn.choicehotels.com). Contact the chamber about **cabin rentals**.

### FOOD

If you're in High Island in April on a Saturday, be sure to stop by **St. Matthews United Methodist Church** (1308 Weeks Ave.) for a barbecue lunch (served 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.; \$10 per plate). Call 409/286-5164.

Area restaurants include the following:

**Al-T's Seafood and Steakhouse** (a favorite with locals for its Cajun seafood), on Texas 124 south of I-10 in Winnie, 409/296-9818.

**Stingaree**, 1295 N. Stingaree Dr. in **Crystal Beach**, 409/684-2731; [www.crystalbeach.com/wayout/Stingaree/george.html](http://www.crystalbeach.com/wayout/Stingaree/george.html).

**Mama Teresa's Flying Pizza & Italian Restaurant**, 2770 Texas 87 in **Crystal Beach**, 409/684-3507; [www.mamateresasrestaurants.com](http://www.mamateresasrestaurants.com).

According to Joe Faggard, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow once ate there.

Faggard didn't see them, but a fellow constable did. As the story goes, the couple walked into the restaurant and sat down not far from the constable. Another diner pointed them out.

"I know who they are," the constable supposedly answered. "But they haven't broken any laws here."

Not that they could've. There were no

banks to rob in High Island. (There still aren't, although the town's second ATM machine was recently installed.) So Bonnie and Clyde must've just been passing through.

Perhaps they should've brought along their binoculars. ★

Austin writer HELEN BRYANT's passion for the Texas coast led her to High Island. She is slowly learning to identify its many birds.

(continued from page 16)

**SHERMAKAYE:** What is the most beautiful place to see a sunset in Texas, or your favorite vista in general?

**TERRY:** The most beautiful sunset I've seen in a long time was when a friend of mine took us to Sanderson, and we went up a back road to a mesa above the town just to see it. It was a stunning sight. My favorite vista is that dead-flat, endless space of the Caprock, the Llano Estacado. I always feel a huge, deep-breathed sigh of pure relief. Growing up in the middle of it is one thing, but suddenly coming upon it is almost shocking in how strange and beautiful it can be.

**SHERMAKAYE:** Best barbecue in Texas?

**TERRY:** Cooper's in Llano. There's also a good barbecue place in Sweetwater called Buck's, where I stop a lot ... and you can get a real good chicken-fried steak in Muleshoe at the Dinner Bell, especially if it's on the buffet.

**SHERMAKAYE:** What are the best contemporary-art museums in the state?

**TERRY:** They change like multiple personalities. It depends on who has a good curator or director at any given

time. I think probably the best curator right now is Jim Harithas, who has an independent space called The Station in Houston. He puts on some of the most courageous shows happening anywhere. An example is the show he recently did with Palestinian artists. He personally smuggled most of the work out of Palestine. It was the only way to get it out. There are also several vital places in Marfa—the Marfa Ballroom and Chinati. Both places are doing exciting exhibitions and music and theater performances, many in conjunction with Marfa's Goode Crowley Theater, which might be the best small theater in the state. It's stunning so much diversity and excitement in all the arts is going on in that little West Texas town.

**SHERMAKAYE:** If you want a really quiet getaway, to work or think, where in Texas do you go to get that?

**TERRY:** Hmm. I can't really think of a single place in Texas, or anywhere else really, where I couldn't do that. I usually lie lower than a snake when I'm working. We just bought a place in Marfa; I haven't stayed there much yet, but I'm looking forward to it.

**SHERMAKAYE:** Who are your favorite Texas authors?

**TERRY:** You mean novelists? Right now probably Cormac McCarthy. I really like a lot of Larry McMurtry's books too. I also think Grover Lewis was a wonderful writer. He probably invented Gonzo Journalism well before Hunter S. Thompson. He isn't as well-known



and didn't live very long, but he was cold-eyed good at what he did. And my old friend Dave Hickey's a wonderful writer.

**SHERMAKAYE:** What do you want your tombstone to say?



Taking a break from the stage, Allen huddles with his son Bale, daughter-in-law Jennifer, and his grandson Calder "Wildman" Allen.



**TERRY:** I prefer to be put out on a rack and eaten by the birds. Or be cremated. Deep-fried. I don't want to be buried. If I had a tombstone, I don't know ... that's like forced cleverness. Maybe that's all it should say ... forced cleverness. Like an interview, eh? ★

Travel writer **SHERMAKAYE BASS** has written for *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Dallas Morning News*. She enjoyed eating chili with Terry Allen.

Photographer **RICK PATRICK** admires Terry Allen's wit and tight bond with his family. See more of Rick's work at [www.rickpatrickphotography.com](http://www.rickpatrickphotography.com).

With a band that included Richard Bowden on fiddle and Bukka Allen on accordion, Allen performed songs from his 30-year career at his September 7 show at Threadgill's.

# bite-size bliss

(continued from page 30)

## Mama's Best

In Dallas social circles, David Tiller is known as a man who not only appreciates good food, but cooks it. Many of his Southern recipes came from his late mother, Sally Tiller.

Around the summer of 1992, on a visit to East Hampton, New York, Tiller cooked for a dinner party thrown by Texan Liz Carpenter. Among the guests was Lee Bailey, the late cookbook writer and expert on entertaining. When Bailey tasted the biscuits, he asked for seconds. Next day, he asked Tiller for the recipe.

The recipe appeared with a full-page

color photo in Bailey's 1994 book, *Long Weekends: Recipes for Good Food and Easy Living*, and was credited to Tiller and his mother. This original version of the Tiller family recipe, slightly different from the one in Bailey's book, is made by what Tiller humorously calls "the Texas ranch method." He says, "You probably wouldn't see it on the Food Network."

## TILLER'S BUTTERMILK BISCUITS (shown on page 26)

about 2 T. Crisco, divided

2 c. sifted all-purpose flour

1 T. baking powder

1 tsp. salt

1/2 tsp. baking soda

1 c. buttermilk

Preheat oven to 450°. Place a marble-size dab (about 1 tsp.) of Crisco in each of 2 glass pie plates, and place them in the oven to heat.

Combine dry ingredients in a mixing bowl. Cut in a generous tablespoon of Crisco with a pastry blender. Mix in buttermilk.

Turn dough out onto a floured surface. Knead gently a few times, and pat down to 1/2-inch thickness. Cut or shape into biscuits, gathering up scraps and patting them down again to make final cuts.

Carefully remove heated glass dishes from the oven. Dip one side of each biscuit in melted Crisco, and then place other side down in dish, with sides touching. Return to oven, and bake for 12 to 14 minutes, or until golden. Yield: 8 to 12 biscuits.

## 400,000 and Counting

"I have baking in my blood," says Kathleen Ellington, co-owner of Kathleen's Sky Diner (formerly Kathleen's Art Café) and the adjacent Kathleen's Cakery (4424 Lovers Lane, Dallas; 214/691-2355). Her mother, Frances Gallovich, was a prizewinning baker in her (continued on page 56)



FOOD STYLING BY AMY SCOFIELD; GREEN PLATE COURTESY UNCOMMON OBJECTS, AUSTIN





Herbed biscuits (facing page) are a popular item at Kathleen's Sky Diner, at 4424 Lovers Lane in Dallas.

## BROKEN SPOKE'S CREAM GRAVY

1/2 c. drippings or shortening

1/4 c. all-purpose flour

1 qt. milk

salt to taste

pepper to taste

Place drippings in a 10- to 12-inch cast-iron skillet, and heat until hot. Gradually add flour, and cook over low heat until mixture turns brown, stirring constantly to prevent scorching. Add remaining ingredients, and cook, stirring constantly, until thick. If gravy gets too thick, thin to desired consistency with water.

FROM *COOKING WITH TEXAS HIGHWAYS* (UT PRESS, 2005)

## biscuit-baking tips

**HOW MANY CULINARY OPINIONS** exist in the gentle art of making biscuits? Probably zillions, many no doubt valid. And if your method has worked for three generations, more power to you. But if you're a novice looking to turn out a first batch of home-made biscuits (or merely to improve on the last batch), let the experts guide you.

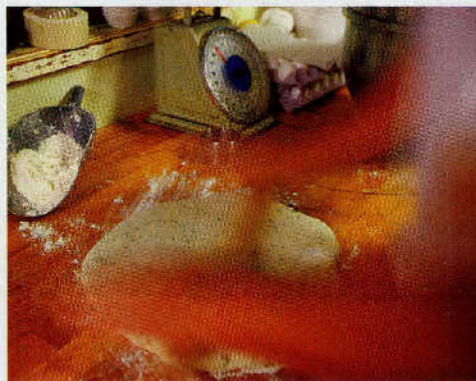
**1. Glass or metal?** Margaret Gragg says that glass slows down the browning process; metal speeds it up. If you want moister biscuits, use a lightly greased glass pie plate or casserole dish, and place biscuit rounds so that their edges touch.

For drier biscuits, place biscuit rounds on a light-colored metal baking sheet with some space between them. Commercial bakers prefer heavy aluminum baking sheets.

**2. Milk vs. buttermilk.** If using buttermilk, Gragg says that you

will need to add a little extra liquid—a few tablespoons, perhaps up to a quarter-cup more—than if you use plain milk. Buttermilk also creates a more densely textured biscuit.

**3. Hard vs. soft flours.** Dr. Indra Reddy, a senior research scientist at C.H. Guenther & Son, Inc. (formerly Pioneer Flour Mills) of San Antonio, says most all-purpose baking flour is made from hard winter wheat, usually a red wheat. That's what gives pliable strength to "rolled-and-cut" style biscuits.



However, soft wheat flour such as White Lily is best if you're after a truly airy drop biscuit. "A combination of the two—hard

and soft wheat flours—usually makes for the best biscuits," notes Dr. Reddy.

**4. Does shortening matter?** Many biscuit recipes require pieces of cold, unsalted butter to be cut into the dry ingredients to form the dough. But some old-time recipes call for plain Crisco, which Gragg believes will create a lighter biscuit. Why do they turn out differently? Dr. Reddy says it's simple chemistry: Butter and shortening have different melting points.

**5. Knead it lightly.** Unless you're making heavy, Maryland-style "beaten biscuits" (which use lard or Crisco), you'll want to take a light hand with your mixing, says Gragg. Home-style buttermilk or baking powder biscuits require minimal kneading, just enough to blend the dough.

**6. Drop vs. rolled.** The practical difference between drop biscuits and rolled-and-cut ones? "Rolled-and-cut is a better sandwich carrier," says Dr. Reddy. "It's easy to open one and fill it with whatever you like. Drop biscuits don't work quite so well for that." —JOYCE SÁENZ HARRIS

## bite-size bliss

(continued from page 54) youth and still works several days a week in the bakery.

Herbed biscuits are one of the diner's most popular items, especially for holiday entertaining. "I figured out we have sold more than 400,000 biscuits since we have been in business," says Ellington. The diner opened in 1987.

"This is my mother's basic biscuit recipe, but I decided to do a little twist on it with parsley and green onion," she says. "Green onions are drier than white or yellow, and they give a good flavor without being too pungent."

### KATHLEEN'S HERBED BISCUITS

3 c. self-rising flour

1/4 c. chopped fresh parsley

1/4 c. chopped green onions

5 T. chilled unsalted butter, cut into small chunks

1 1/4 c. buttermilk

3 T. melted butter, cooled slightly

Combine flour, parsley, and green onions in a mixing bowl, and mix with a fork. Cut chilled, unsalted butter into flour-green onion mixture with a pastry blender until it resembles oatmeal. Add buttermilk, and mix until dough becomes a ball, taking care not to overmix.

Turn dough out onto a floured board, and knead a few times until smooth; roll dough to 1 1/2-inch thickness. Cut biscuits using a 2 1/2-inch to 3-inch biscuit cutter, and place on a greased or parchment-lined cookie sheet; brush each biscuit with melted butter. Bake at 425° for 15 minutes, or until golden brown. Yield: 8 to 12 biscuits. ★

STORY ADAPTED AND REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

JOYCE SÁENZ HARRIS, a staff writer for the Taste section of *The Dallas Morning News*, believes that a day without biscuits is like a day without sunshine.

Photographer GARY RUSS' 12-year-old son Gabriel helped him out on this assignment. After shooting Kathleen's Sky Diner, they enjoyed a wonderful breakfast there. For more of Gary's work, see [www.gruss.net](http://www.gruss.net).

# TEXAS HIGHWAYS

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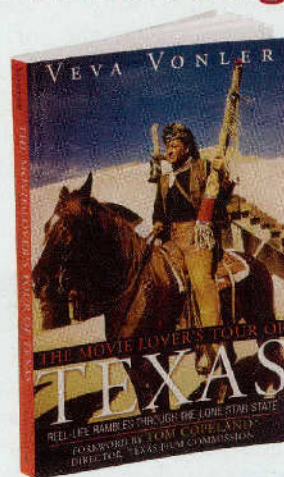
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# Just PASSING Through

BY EILEEN MATTEI

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LARRY DITTO

## Where the Wild Things Are

PORT MANSFIELD is known as a sportsman's paradise, but the tiny fishing village on the Laguna Madre is also a paradise for wildlife ... and wildlife watchers. That's evident in the herds of white-tailed deer that roam the main drag and residential streets, slipping between boat-storage buildings and parked cars. Other deer stand as motionless as yard ornaments at street corners. Plump, bronze turkeys gobble up insects in front of the Port Mansfield Sunset House motel, while short, sturdy javelina trot from scrub brush to corn feeders, which are as commonplace here as bird feeders. And that's just the land animals.

"Everywhere you look, something is flying," says Ken Nolte, a former fishing guide, as his airboat skims across the four-inch-deep water of the Laguna Madre, the shallow, extremely salty "mother bay" that separates Padre Island from the mainland. Roseate spoonbills, great blue herons, reddish egrets, white-faced ibis, osprey, and yellow-crowned night herons



Andrea and Kristen Gorczyca of Dallas proudly show off their catch of the day.

rise around us as we slide through the shallows just south of Port Mansfield.

"A lot of local people have never been here," Nolte explains over the voice-activated headset microphones that let us talk despite the airboat's noise. He navigates the creeks and channels off West Bay, a maze of islets, mud flats, and inlets (called "the slough") only accessible by airboat, or, perhaps, a kayak at high water. What look like abandoned Tiki huts dotting the horizon turn out to be duck blinds camouflaged—in tropical Texas fashion—with palm fronds.

"In the winter, huge clouds of ducks

and geese lift off from the bay," says Nolte's wife, Patsy. In the summer, white and brown pelicans take their turn chowing down at the free buffet of small fish, bugs, and bottom-dwellers so abundant in the Laguna Madre and its backwaters.

"It takes a lot of bait to keep this many birds alive," says Nolte, as mullet erupt from the water like popcorn. A large tail waving in the air signals a hefty redfish "tailing," or hunting for food. "Offshore from Port Mansfield has the best snapper fishing in the state," he adds. "There's plenty of flounder at night, and great shelling because almost no one comes here."

Moving around the pristine and serene marshland for more than two hours, we spot no one. On the west, thorny brush and cacti alternating with marshes mark the privately owned El Sauz Ranch, a historic cattle ranch. A strong breeze keeps the bugs away despite our stopping near a sandbar crisscrossed with bird and raccoon tracks. American white pelicans, skimmers—pretty much every coastal bird seen in South Texas—are here in abundance, ignoring us as they feed.

Port Mansfield on Redfish Bay was carved from the El Sauz Ranch in 1950 to provide a safe harbor for vessels traveling

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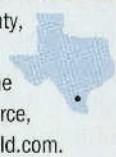
the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway between Corpus Christi and Brownsville. The Willacy County Navigation District owns all the land, (houses and businesses sit on leased property) and administers the water system, roads, and the navigation channel. Port Mansfield's Coast Guard Station is gone, and the commercial fishery is reduced to a few boats bringing in black drum and flounder, but sportfishing keeps the village alive. On the busiest weekends, the population swells from 415 to 1,500.

In the ship channel, which divides Port Mansfield into North Shore and

South Shore, a Manatee Zone sign refers to an elusive creature with almost mythical status. Inside Harbor Bait & Tackle, I find other indicators that Port Mansfield is laid back and affordable. My orange-cream popsicle costs just 39 cents, and clerk Cristina Stark takes time to chat, telling me, "Fishing guides are tight-lipped. They'll tell you what they're catching, but not where." A guide's paying clients, however, are privy to his secret fishing spots.

Cruising the village, I spot weathered fishing shanties leaning into the southeastern wind near weekend McMansions, all with one or two parked boats and, if byside, private fishing piers. The South Beach access leads me to a fishing, not swimming, area. On the north side, the road dead-ends at Fred Stone County Park's shaded picnic tables and a lengthy pier, complete with anglers willing to swap fishing stories.

**PORT MANSFIELD**, in Willacy County, is 25 miles east of **Raymondville** on Texas 186, off US 77. Contact the Port Mansfield Chamber of Commerce, 956/944-2354; [www.port-mansfield.com](http://www.port-mansfield.com).



Deerstories abound, too, since so many residents feed deer, although some consider them nuisances overly fond of graz-

ing on landscaping. Resident Sue Ten Hagen feeds them a bag of corn daily, beginning with a pre-dawn breakfast in her driveway, which draws a few dozen white-tailed deer. Later that day, she takes me in her golf cart to a patch of woods several blocks from her home where 40 or so deer rest and browse. The deer mosey over as she spreads corn on the narrow road. "If you study them for hours like I have, they're still fascinating," she says.



Boaters exit Port Mansfield's harbor for a day of fun on the waters of the Laguna Madre.

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## Just PASSING Through

Just before sunset, 15 deer huddled around two feeders prick up their ears and keep their eyes on me as I pass them to walk the local nature trail. All around, deer are on the move: six scamper across South Port Drive looking like a gang making a jailbreak, while others run toward the sign for the Pelican's Pub. I'm not the only person out deer-watching and enjoying the evening. Inside the pub, a friendly-looking group laughs over a card game.

To experience the sportsman's side of Port Mansfield, the next morning I join fishing guides Captain Bob Lany and Jan Jones and a flotilla of shallow-draft bay boats heading into the sunrise. Once we're anchored in the Laguna's knee-deep water, Lany baits a line with a croaker, casts, hands over the pole, and begins coaching me on the art of croaker-fishing. To the east, fishermen on two bay boats are silhouetted. Like us, they wait for trout to bite. And wait.

Lany, a retired hunting-ranch manager who's been a fishing guide for two years, tries his best to turn me into a saltwater angler. "It's not the movement of the croaker in the water, but the noise it makes that attracts speckled trout, redfish, and sometimes flounder," he says.

My first fish gets away, but Jones lands a nice 19-inch trout for her supper. Lany pulls out his cell phone to check with another of the port's 30 fishing guides. Soon we pull up the anchor and head to a spot that's hot. "It's great to have so many guides who are friends," Lany says.

With beginner's luck, I reel in a 22-inch trout. Cloud cover comes and goes, as do breezes and luck. A sandbar snags us, so we hop into shin-deep water to push the boat free, dragging our feet along the sandy bottom to avoid stepping on a stingray, and finally wrestle the boat into a channel and scramble on board. We catch a few more fish while the beauty and tranquility of the Laguna Madre seep in, relaxing us like a massage.

Lany agrees to show me the Mansfield Cut, a channel eight miles east that splits Padre Island and provides access to the Gulf of Mexico. Miles from the mainland, anglers and herons wade in ankle-deep water with the island creating a tropical backdrop of yuccas, lagoons, and white sand dunes. Abundant water and wildlife and the time to enjoy it all—that's the wonder of a getaway to Port Mansfield.

EILEEN MATTEI thinks the numerous turkeys and deer grazing in the middle of the village make every visit to Port Mansfield feel like a wildlife safari.

LARRY DITTO enjoyed seeing thousands of water birds during a Laguna Madre airboat ride. Watching fishermen at the Port Mansfield marina was also an essential part of his experience there.



Not Just Fun,  
Real East Texas Fun!

Fun comes in all kinds of packages in Longview. The Annual Zonta Antique Sale in March, Greggton Rotary PRCA Rodeo in April, and the East Texas Memorial Day Motorcycle Rally are only a few examples.

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PORT MANSFIELD's area code is 956.

### Lodging

Fisherman's Inn, Laguna and Legion drives., 944-2882.

Port Mansfield Sunset House, 1144 S. Port Dr., 800/311-4250; www.portmansfieldsunsethouse.com. Newly remodeled motel with boat slip.

Get-A-Way Adventures Lodge offers package deals that include lodging and guided fishing and hunting trips. 944-4000; www.

getawayadventureslodge.com.

### Dining

Fisherman's Inn, Laguna and Legion drives., 944-2882. Seafood and hamburgers.

Pelican's Pub, 1001 E. Port Dr., 873-0423. Chili cookoff from noon to midnight 3rd Sat. of Feb. Includes auction, live music, and children's activities. The proceeds benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

### Attractions

Tail Chaser Charters offers an airboat for birding, fishing,

and duck hunting. Call Charlie Buchen at 605-6409.

Saltgrass Charters. Call Shane Jones at 873-0453.

Screamin Reels Charters. Call Bob Lany at 944-2392; www.screaminreelscharters.com.

Terry Neal Fishing Charters. Wade-fishing, fly-fishing, and drift-fishing. Call 944-2559; www.terrynealcharters.com.

Harbor Bait & Tackle, 123 W. Harbor St., 944-2367; www.harborbait.com.

Fred Stone County Park. Take N. Shore Rd. until it dead-ends.









# Readers RECOMMEND...

TIPS FROM OUR READERS

I JUST got back from visiting **Breckenridge**. While there, my friends took me to the best hidden treasure in Texas: **Joe's Pasta**. It's an old Italian restaurant that has been lovingly restored, and serves up some of the best Italian fare around. Together with their family, owners Mike and Mejdija Vraniqi offer brick-oven pizza, shrimp linguine with lemon sauce, and fresh-baked rolls that even I, someone who avoids bread, ate. I'm a transplanted Yankee from New York City and the trade-off was always good Mexican food for a lack of good Italian cuisine here in Texas. Not any more. It made a girl who grew up in "Little Italy" feel like I was back [in New York].

PEGGY McCALL, *Odessa*

*Joe's Pasta is at 420 Walker St.; 254/559-3330.*

DOWNTOWN **Navasota** is alive now more than ever! The year-old **Navasota Blues Alley** in the heart of downtown is a museum and gift shop that boasts a variety of distinctive gifts, and serves as headquarters for the annual Navasota BluesFest (held the second weekend of August). The shop also offers work by local artisans, music memorabilia, and items about the Navasota area and its rich blues history. There's much to see and do in Navasota, the Blues Capital of Texas.

BERT MILLER

*Navasota Blues Alley is at 129 E. Washington Ave.; 936/870-3331. For more information on the Navasota BluesFest, call 800/825-6600; www.navasotabluesfest.org.*

COURTESY BLUE FROG GRILL



BLUE FROG GRILL in the heart of downtown **Marshall** is a brand-new restaurant, and executive chef Brett Spivy delights his guests with unbelievable French fries and a filet mignon on a bun! They also serve homemade breads and desserts.

SHAWNE SOMERFORD, *Marshall*

*Blue Frog Grill is at 101 W. Austin St.; 903/923-9500.*

WHILE touring **Alpine** with my family during Thanksgiving weekend, we stumbled upon **La Trattoria Espresso Bar & Ristorante**. The restaurant's atmosphere was nice, but what caught our attention was all of the heavenly baked goods coming out of the kitchen.

I sampled a Texas-size portion of the best coconut cream pie I've ever tasted, as well as some homemade cinnamon rolls. Hot apple pies were lining the counter in anticipation of Thanksgiving Day sales. Lunch was delicious and the service charming.

LAURA SHUMAKER, *Schertz*

*La Trattoria Espresso Bar & Ristorante is at 901 E. Holland Ave.; 432/837-2200; www.latrattoriacafe.com.*

THERE'S a great new barbecue restaurant in **La Grange** called **F.H.'s Brisket and Brew**, which serves lip-smackin'-good ribs, brisket, chicken, and sausage, plus delicious homemade barbecue sauce, beans, potato salad, and desserts. This is some of the best barbecue I've ever tasted.

CAROLYN FRANKLIN, *La Grange*

*F.H.'s Brisket and Brew is at 3932 US 77 North; 979/242-2458.*

I'VE discovered a wonderful Italian restaurant that has been pleasing palates in **El Paso** since 1956. **Cappetto's** has an extensive menu of classic (and delicious) entrées: veal, chicken, seafood, steaks, and pasta, along with pizza, paninis, minestrone soup, house salads, and tasty desserts like spumoni, cannolis, chocolate-coconut mousse, and tiramisu. Find out what many El Pasoans—and now, luckily, I—already know: For really good Italian food complete with a most satisfying dining experience, head for Cappetto's.

F. MORGAN, *San Antonio*

*Cappetto's is at 2716 Montana Ave.; 915/566-9357, and 2285 Trawood Dr.; 915/591-8907; www.cappettos.com.*

**IF YOU KNOW OF A NOTEWORTHY LONE STAR ATTRACTION, RESTAURANT, EVENT, OR PRODUCT, WRITE OR E-MAIL:** Readers Recommend, Texas Highways, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. E-mail: letters05@texashighways.com. Space constraints prevent us from publishing every suggestion we receive. We reserve the right to edit items. Because we're unable to check out every item, and because hours vary and details can change, please call ahead for more information.

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Photo by Ruth Burke

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**Next month ...** We soak up the arts in **Denison**, mosey through **Muleshoe**, go **drag racing**, sniff the **azaleas** at **Stephen F. Austin State University's arboretum**, and drop by **Dripping Springs**.



© WAYNE NICHOLAS

window on  
**TEXAS**

WAYNE NICHOLAS captured a dramatic moment at a bird sanctuary near High Island. According to Houston Audubon Society Sanctuary Manager Winnie Burkett, the American Alligator's presence here is actually good for the bird population, as it deters predators (like raccoons and coyotes) who might prey on eggs and chicks.

■ To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit [www.texashighwaysprints.com](http://www.texashighwaysprints.com).

