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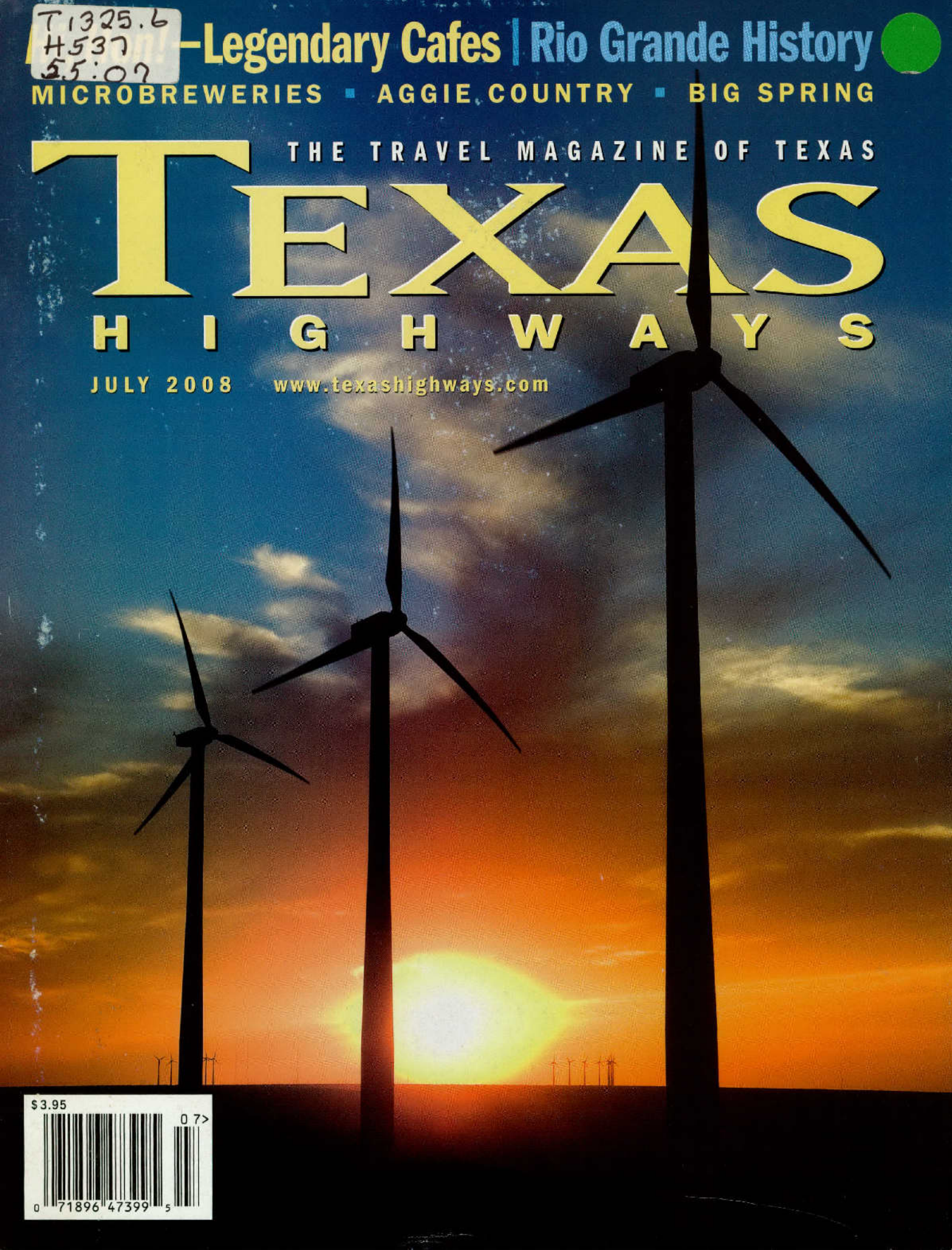


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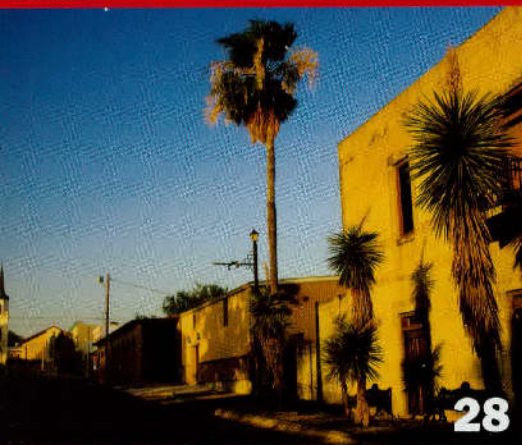


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BY SUSAN KIRR, PHOTOGRAPHS BY J. GRIFFIS SMITH

ABOUT OUR COVERS FRONT: Silhouetted by the setting sun, three wind turbines accent the dramatic evening sky just south of Big Spring. *Photo by Michael Amador.* BACK: A tour of the Spoetzl Brewery takes visitors to the brew-house, where they see five gleaming copper vessels used in producing Shiner's famous beer. *Photo by Kevin Stillman.*

PHOTOS: TOP LEFT © LARRY DITTO; OTHERS BY J. GRIFFIS SMITH

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STAN WILLIAMS



Here I am, on the road with the travel counselors at the Spindletop-Gladys City Boomtown Museum and Lucas Gusher reenactment in Beaumont, one of 13 destinations we saw that afternoon alone. Wish you were here.

HOW DO YOU PLAN A TRIP? There are plenty of answers to that question, but I learned about the true Texas answer the hard way in late April—by spending four days with a group of professional travel counselors on a relentless schedule of visiting one attraction after another. On the bus. Off the bus. Sightseeing on steroids. Why do they do it? So that when visitors ask questions about Texas travel destinations in one of the state's Travel Information Centers, the counselors can provide an insightful answer based on first-hand experience.

One reason I was primed for this extreme tourism experience was that, for the two weeks previous, I had been planning a vacation trip. To make my plans, I hit the guidebooks and the online resources with a vengeance. The result: a detailed plan for every day of the trip, down to the specific meal destinations and which metro line to take in what sequence. One of my best sources was a guide by Rick Steves. I was particularly taken by Steves' advice to always remain "fanatically positive and militantly optimistic. If something's not to your liking, change your liking."

Not only does this advice square with my own attitude about travel, but also, it works. And, of course, Steves and his researchers have actually visited the destinations the guide describes. Which brings me back to planning your trip in Texas. Anywhere in Texas.

You want to make your time and money count, and see as much as possible along the way—or at least know ALL your options. It's OK to burn up the Internet or invest in guidebooks, but it's also good to know you can call a travel counselor—not a travel agent—who actually makes a career of gathering and sharing information. And the service is free.

In each of the 11 travel centers around the state, you'll find true professionals ready to help you. And because of the time they've spent marching around the state, they've actually visited the attractions they describe. They're not just handing out stacks of brochures. And, if you're driving, say, from Texarkana to San Antonio, they'll explain the travel time for all route options—and what to see along the way.

Take my word for it, go online to www.txdot.gov/travel/information_centers.htm and start planning. Bon voyage!

Charles J. Lohrmann

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor

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優美

EXQUISITE VISIONS OF JAPAN

PRINTS FROM THE
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COLLECTION OF THE
HONOLULU ACADEMY
OF ARTS

June 29–August 24, 2008

Come discover the beauty of the “floating world.” *Exquisite Visions of Japan* showcases a selection of extraordinary prints from the James A. Michener Collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts. One of the finest collections of Japanese woodblock prints in the country, these striking images of landscapes, actors, geishas, and much more, will, in the words of Michener, “...gladden the mind and quicken the eye.”

Featuring some of the most beloved and familiar *ukiyo-e* (images of the floating world) prints, the exhibition traces this quintessential Japanese tradition from its commercial origins in the 17th-century to its 20th-century status as high art. Included are exceptional examples by leading Japanese artists Katsushika Hokusai, Utagawa Hiroshige and Kawase Hasui.

Kawase Hasui

1883–1957, *Arashiyama in Winter*, from the second series of *Souvenirs of Travel Japan*, Taishō period, 1921 (detail)
Color woodblock print, 38.8 x 26.5 cm

Exquisite Visions of Japan: Prints from the James A. Michener Collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts is organized by the Honolulu Academy of Arts. Recent conservation of prints in this exhibition was funded by the Robert F. Lange Foundation.

Presentation at the Blanton Museum is made possible by the S Jill Water Foundation and the Inman Foundation.

Additional support is provided by members of the Blanton Museum and by the following organizations:

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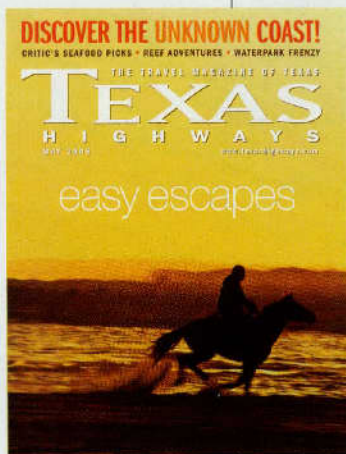


Happy Habitants

I WAS very happy to see June Naylor's article on the "Unknown Coast" [May], which included the Habitat [nature retreat]. My husband and I go every year and are never disappointed.

We decompress and discover each other all over again. He fishes and I read in the peace and quiet or take walks down to St. Charles Bay. Robin and Wayne Nugent are the most wonderful people. We've even stayed an extra day because we couldn't bear to leave. Thanks for featuring our favorite place in the world.

CHRYS YANDELL
San Antonio



Go, Griff!

THANKS so much for Griff Smith's photos in the May issue ["Critic's Catch," "H2O-00000"].

The back cover is marvelous. Griff is a real Texas treasure—I have admired his work for years. I met him only one time many years ago, but his work speaks for him.

DICK McMAHAN

Tickled with Elmer

CONGRATULATIONS on printing Maxine Mayes' interview with Elmer Kelton [May], my favorite author. I probably have read all of his novels and look forward to reading many more. A friend, actor Rodger Boyce (who had a small part in *The Good Old Boys*),

and I had lunch with Elmer after he spoke to a group in Gainesville. I also visited with him briefly at a meeting honoring him in Fort Worth. Kelton is not only a great storyteller, he is an interesting speaker. In one of his speeches, he said that all writers are thieves and liars. Thieves because they steal ideas from other writers and adapt them into their stories. Liars because all fiction is a form of prevarication.

At one of the meetings, I had him sign some of his books for me. I told him my grandchildren would thank me, because it made the books more valuable. He said his grandchildren already thanked me—for buying the books.

WILLIAM RAY GREEN
Gainesville

I HAVE read all of Elmer Kelton's novels and always enjoy reading about the man himself. I appreciate the time he has given to keep us reminded of Texas history. It was a great interview with wonderful pictures. Thanks.

VICKY PICKERING
Houston

THE STORY about Elmer Kelton was excellent. There's another very worthy subject just up the road in Abilene. Nancy Robinson Masters is an award-winning writer and is among America's most successful children's book authors. She has also been a pilot and public speaker for many years. Her adventures often center on her flying skills. Go to www.nancyrobinsonmasters.com.

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Saturday, August 9

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10:00 a.m. 17 and under Working Cow Horse Competition
4:45 p.m. Chuckwagon Dinner
7:00 p.m. WRCA Rodeo performance
Awards Ceremony following
9:00 p.m. Dance

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 2008

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July 4 FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION – Kokernot Park, Alpine
Parade, Games, Drinks, Food and Fireworks.
Info: Rhonda Cole, (432) 837-5539

SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI RODEO REUNION ROPING
Silent Auction, Live Auction and Dance – Info: Rose, (432) 837-8201

July 4-6 & 11-13 "COWGIRLS" – Kokernot Outdoor Theater, Alpine
Music by Mary Murfitt, Book by Betsy Howie.

July 18-20 & 25-27, August 1-3 "PETRA'S CUENTO" – Kokernot Outdoor Theater, Alpine – A bilingual comedy by Rupert Reyes.

August 2008

August 7-10 "PECOS BILL AND THE GHOST STAMPEDE"
Kokernot Outdoor Theater, Alpine – An interactive children's show by Eric Coble.

August 8-9 BIG BEND RANCH RODEO – Alpine
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July 4 Fireworks-on-the-Brazos
Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site
936-878-2214

TALK to TH

The First Famous Hilton

I ENJOYED David Latimer's "Speaking of Texas" item on Conrad Hilton [May]. In addition to Mr. Hilton's Mobley Hotel, Cisco had at least three other claims to fame during my growing-up years there. One: the great Santa Claus Bank Robbery just before Christmas in 1927 [see "Speaking of Texas," December 2007]. Two: The dam that created Lake Cisco in the 1920s was said to be the world's largest concrete hollow dam at the time. (It's still there.) And three: Cisco claimed that the outdoor swimming pool at Lake Cisco amusement park was the largest in the world during the 1930s. Unfortunately, the park is long gone and the water in the pool has been replaced by weeds.

I was surprised to learn that Cisco is considered a "Panhandle town." I always considered myself a West Texan who lived many miles from the Panhandle.

ROY STEEN
Dallas

ED. NOTE: Thanks for the Cisco insights, Roy. The town is in the Panhandle Plains region (one of the state's seven tourism regions). Unfortunately, the words "Plains region" did not make it into the final copy of the story. Thanks to you and the other readers who pointed us in the right direction!

Big Fat Greek's Gathering

REGARDING Nola McKey's article on Greek Bros. Oyster Bar & Grill in El Campo [April]: In mid-April, there were several of us men going to the Gulf for a fishing trip. We decided to meet in El Campo at Greek Bros., and we were not disappointed. The oysters on the half shell, boiled shrimp, fried crawfish tails, shrimp cocktails—everything was great, just like the article said. The atmosphere and rustic appearance made the dining experience that much more enjoyable. Be assured we will stop by again.

GENE LINTON
Wichita Falls

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For THE ROAD

THIS MONTH'S TOP PICKS AND PLACES

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The sultry, long days of summer mean extended hours for fun in the sun. Need some ideas? Read on.

The City by the Sea

ONE OF THE STATE'S MOST EXCITING FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATIONS TAKES place this year in **Corpus Christi**, where pyrotechnics will launch from the flight deck of the **USS Lexington**, the hulking World War II-era aircraft carrier now retired to calmer digs in Corpus Christi Bay.

But fireworks aren't the only things making Corpus Christi exciting these days. Here's a rough plan for a four-day vacation: Arrive on Wednesday afternoon, check into your hotel, and scope out a spot at the marina or on the sea wall, where you'll enjoy views of the **Wednesday-night sailboat races** (6 p.m. in summer). The next

morning, visit the **Texas Surf Museum**, where the exhibit *Texas Women. Texas Waves.* (through Oct. 31) pays homage to female surfers. (If you want to take a surfing lesson yourself—or learn to kiteboard or windsurf—you can do that in Corpus Christi, too.) Over the next few days, depending on your interests, visit the **Texas State Aquarium**,

which has a new area dedicated to rescued sea turtles; the **South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center**, which attracts butterflies by the thousands this time of year; and the **Art Museum of South Texas**, which focuses on 20th-Century photography this summer. As for restaurants, we've heard good things about Price's Chef

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FOR THE ROAD

(authentic diner fare), Hester's Cafe (pastries and omelets), and Frank's Spaghetti House (Italian food).

And if you choose simply to walk the beach and let the surf work its magic, no worries. After all, we're betting this won't be your last trip to this idyllic, easy getaway. Call 800/766-2322; www.corpuschristicvb.com. —L.M.

TOWN AND COUNTRY

IF EVER AN EVENT WAS APTLY NAMED, IT'S the 48th annual Moulton Town & Country Jam-boree. The four-day festival, set for July 24-27 in the Lavaca County community of Moulton, is jam-packed with dozens of activities, from polka-dancing to barbecue cookoffs. (There are also chili cookoffs, a pie-baking contest, and a belt-busting feast lauded as "Moulton's Famous Fried Chicken Dinner," not to mention the usual festival fare like turkey legs and sausage-on-a-stick.)

Most of the fun happens at Moulton City Park, under shady oak trees and a covered pavilion outfitted with huge cooling fans. Besides the

Tower to the People

ON JULY 5, THOUSANDS OF MULTI-national cyclists begin the arduous 3,500-kilometer race from Brest to Paris, France, in the 95th Tour de France. In **Paris, Texas**, however, most cyclists like their pedal-pushing a little more leisurely: The **24th Annual Tour de Paris Bike Rally** kicks off July 19 with distances ranging from 15 to 100 kilometers. Also in Paris, the grounds surrounding the 65-foot tall **Eiffel Tower replica** make a nice spot for a picnic, perhaps on July 14 in honor of Bastille Day. *Mais oui!* Three area sandwich shops—24th Street Café, Sandwich, Etc., and the Texas Belle—can set you up with everything from croissants to baguette sandwiches. Remember: This repast is BYOB—Bring Your Own Blanket. See www.paristexas.com. —L.M.



Every Texan should visit the 65-foot-tall Eiffel Tower replica in Paris.

cooking contests, the lineup includes a softball tournament, horseshoe- and washer-pitching contests, domino matches, and a slew of children's games, including an egg relay and an old-

fashioned sack race. Local bands provide music for dancing throughout the weekend—'50s music on Friday, country-western tunes on Saturday, and polkas on Sunday. Throw in a parade, carni-

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*Go on. It's a big state.
Create your own picture.
Put it all together one piece at a time.*



*Go on. It's a big state.
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For THE ROAD

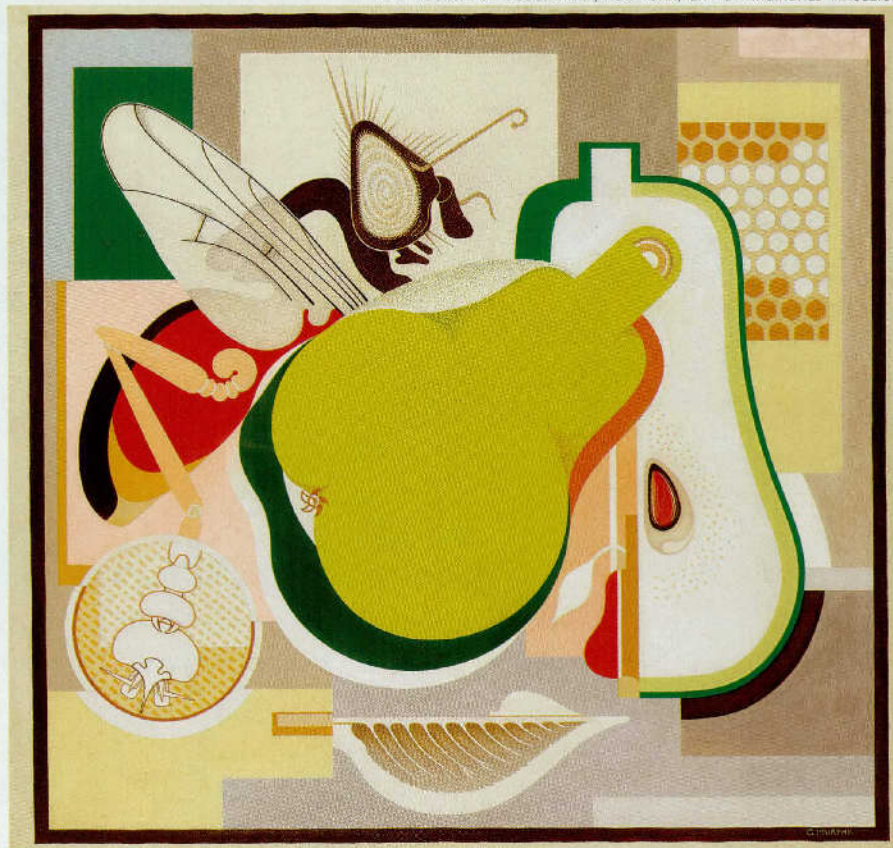
val rides, arts-and-crafts vendors, a vintage car show, an antique farm tractor and engine show, and a pie auction, and you've got the makings of a great family outing. Call 361/596-7205; www.moulton-texas.com. —N.M.

BIG D AND BEYOND

WITH GASOLINE PRICES SO HIGH, NATION-wide travel trend-spotters forecast more weekend getaways and vacations spent close to home. In most parts of Texas, thank goodness, you don't have to journey far to immerse yourself in new adventure. Take North Texas, for example: Within a few hours' drive of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, you can find everything from tranquil wildlife sanctuaries to earsplitting NASCAR raceways.

Tourism leaders here have smartly teamed up to suggest 12 themed trips incorporating attractions in 45 towns and cities throughout the region. You'll find trips designed for art-lovers, thrill-seekers, families with children, architecture aficionados, cowboy-wannabes, animal-lovers, nature-seekers, shopaholics, sports fans, history

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK, GIFT OF ARCHIBALD MACLEISH



Gerald Murphy's graphic painting *Wasp and Pear* (1929), reflects his interest in natural forms.

Celebrate Summer!



Celebrate summer in Kerrville, a scenic one hour drive west of San Antonio on IH-10. Kerrville is an ideal base for exploring the treasures of Central Texas.

Enjoy music, art, a full calendar of events, and the beautiful Guadalupe River that runs through downtown!

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buffs, and even travelers on a tight budget. See www.visitdallas-fortworth.com for ideas.

Especially fun this summer: The Dallas Museum of Art explores the lives of early 20th-Century socialites Sara and Gerald Murphy in the show *Making it New: The Art and Style of Sara and Gerald Murphy*, which runs through September 14. Friends to Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Pablo Picasso, Dorothy Parker, John dos Passos, and other artists of the era, the Murphys—wealthy American expatriates who inspired the protagonists in Fitzgerald's novel *Tender is the Night*—spent their time (and considerable fortune) making art and encouraging their artist and writer friends. *Making it New* includes paintings by Gerald Murphy, photographs of the couple with their coterie, letters and postcards, and works by such friends and colleagues as Picasso, Fernand Léger, Georges Braque, Man Ray, and others. Call 214/922-1200; www.dallasmuseumofart.org. —L.M.

HOT TICKET IN FRISCO

THE HOTTEST TICKET IN TEXAS THIS SUMMER may be a poolside ticket to a RoughRiders baseball game at Frisco's one-of-a-kind **Dr Pepper Ballpark**, which boasts a three-tiered swimming pool overlooking the playing field, complete with a waterfall and an attendant to cater to guests' every whim. If you can't wrangle one of these sought-

Sea World Turns 20

SEA WORLD SAN ANTONIO CELEBRATES ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR, and with the season lasting until December 31, you have plenty of time to plan your own wild adventure. The shows, animal exhibits, and rides make for a special experience anytime, but for an unforgettable adventure, make plans to participate

in one of the park's numerous interaction programs. Take your turn as an amateur trainer for the park's curious sea lions and beluga whales, or go behind-the-scenes of the penguin habitat and zoological support area, where you'll feed stingrays and learn about conservation efforts for such species as Attwater's prairie chickens. Or look into the Resident Camp programs (offered for kids and adults), where you can work alongside animal trainers and marine biologists. See www.seaworld.com.



Trainers at Sea World San Antonio use positive reinforcement—a combination of sound and visual cues, plus rewards—to teach the animals.

—L.M.

musical drama *TEXAS*—written by Pulitzer-winning playwright Paul Green in the early 1960s—has thrilled audiences for four decades. The play tells the story of the Panhandle's settlement in the 1800s through the eyes of ranchers, farmers, and Native Americans. But it needed some modernizing.

"It ran a little long, for one," says director Dave Yirak. "So, last year, we took Green's script, shortened it some, and updated it. We also added some interesting special effects, including a dramatic prairie fire, with real flames, lights, smoke, and all kinds of fun things. And we kept the lightning strike we're famous for; it's done to Beethoven's 9th."

With horses and wagons, fireworks, explosions, and an updated love story, *TEXAS* is still very much a family production, says Yirak. A preshow dinner, catered by the famous Big Texan of Amarillo, features a juicy, grilled-to-order steak, plus salad, rolls, broccoli-cheese casserole, and cobbler for dessert, plus side dishes like grilled jalapeños. Now, that's *Texas*.

TEXAS runs Tuesday-Sunday through August 17 in the Pioneer Amphitheater in Palo Duro Canyon State Park, in Canyon. Call 806/655-2181; www.texas-show.com.

—L.M.

VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT www.texashighways.com

after poolside seats for this season, here's a plan: Put your name on the list for next year, and settle in for an old-fashioned *regular* seat in the park, where you'll enjoy such all-American baseball perks as popcorn, hotdogs, and perhaps the finest diversion of all: people-watching.

Sports fans in Frisco might think they're in heaven. After all, three professional sports teams (the Frisco RoughRiders baseball team, the Frisco Thunder indoor football team, and the FC Dallas league soccer team) keep an action-packed calendar. Frisco also boasts one of the fastest outdoor velodromes in the world, one of Texas' newest rock-climbing gyms, three golf courses, and citywide courts for sports as varied as tennis, volleyball, and basketball. (We've heard that a sports pub called the Irish Rover is the place to go for after-game libations, darts, and billiards, plus a kitchen that turns out authentic Irish fare like Scotch eggs and shepherd's pie.)


See www.visitfrisco.com for tips on planning a vacation this summer in Frisco, including itineraries and tour packages for shopping enthusiasts, sports nuts, families, and spa-seekers.

—L.M.


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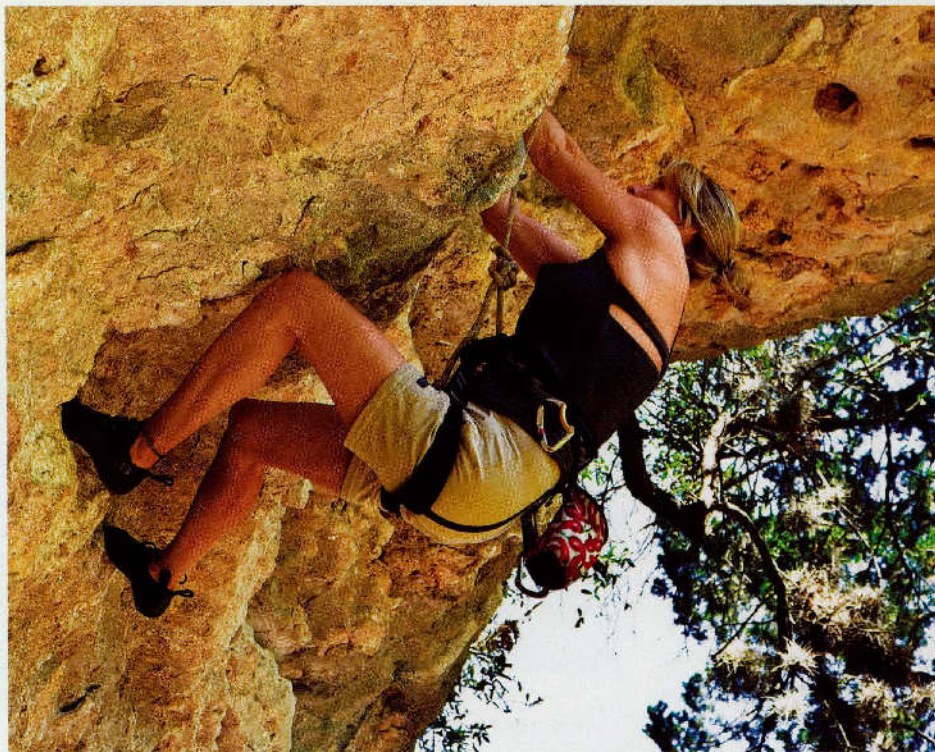
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Spotlight on ROCKING OUT

Climbing to New Heights

THE WALL ABOVE ME AT THE AUSTIN Rock Gym suddenly seems a mile high as I search desperately for a handhold; I have no time for well thought-out strategies. "Reach! Use your legs!" shouts one of my buddies from down below. I push from my toes and slowly proceed up the wall, finding myself staring at the last stretch, my limbs shaking uncontrollably. All I need to do is hop up—just a bit—and latch on to the last handhold, but I can barely maintain my current position, let alone hop. "Come on, Suzanne, bump it up!" my friends holler encouragingly. I squint my eyes and, with all the intensity I can muster, manage to grasp the rock with my hand. Success!



Climber Trish Higby scales the limestone cliffs at Milton Reimers Ranch Park, in Travis County. Along with rock climbing, Reimers Ranch (512/264-1923) offers biking, hiking, fishing, and swimming.

Prior to joining this indoor playground full of simulation rock walls and squishy

floors, I had only dabbled in rock climbing, most notably at Austin's Barton Creek Greenbelt. But I had seen my fair share of movies in which rugged mountaineers stretched for tiny crags in the rock face, their veins and muscles bulging, and I thought of rock climbing as an "extreme" sport. Granted, on those early climbs, my muscles moved in ways completely foreign to me. Without technique, my performance was less than stellar. But reaching the summit, no matter how awkwardly I got there, quieted all self-consciousness. Aglow with a sense of accomplishment, it was hard to be bothered with outward appearances. It seemed to me that rock climbing was something I could really grab hold of.

So I suggested to a crew of guy-friends that it would be fun to spend the day at the Austin Rock Gym and see how we fared. As it turns out, rock climbing is extremely accessible and beginner-friendly; it can be liberating for anybody who wants a physical challenge and doesn't have an insurmountable fear of heights.

On our first visit, we learned how to correctly harness ourselves and each other, and how to be an anchor on the ground, using special knots and small, auto-locking metal devices called carabiners, which are used to connect by rope to a climbing buddy on the wall.

Our instructor also taught us how to handle the rope and how to respond if our climbing partner were to slip or fall. The entire rope system, we learned, is called a "belay system"—

Some of us were tall and spindly, while others were short and stout, but the best climbers displayed a ballet-like grace as they scrambled up the walls. Flexibility was key.

hence the standard call-and-response that precedes any climb: "On belay?" says the climber. "Belay on!" responds the anchor.

I noticed something about the rest of the climbers in the gym. Some of us were tall and spindly, while others were short and stout, but the best climbers displayed a ballet-like grace as they scrambled up the walls. Flexibility was key. Later, one of the employees told me that women tend to make better climbers because physical and mental balance are more important than muscles.

"There's always a physical challenge, but there's also a mental challenge, so climbing is training for both," says Sean Woods, a long-time instructor.

Woods confirmed that one of the great things about learning at a gym is that employees will give you free advice. For example, I learned that beginners tend to pull themselves up using mostly their arms. More advanced climbers center their gravity over their feet and legs so that their legs do most of the work.

There are different levels of difficulty assigned

to routes, or paths, at most climbing gyms. A route simply shows you which rocks to use when climbing. Each rock is marked by a colored piece of tape that indicates which climbing route it belongs to. The idea is that if you stick to a path, you are climbing a designated difficulty level. The most difficult paths have extremely small and awkwardly placed handholds.

So, as a group we started with one route, and then once we successfully completed that route, we could go on to the next one. My male counterparts muscled their way up while I watched, strategizing on how to mentally beat them on the wall. Despite our different techniques, we all made it to the top.

A great way to step outside the normal dinner-and-cake routine for birthdays or other celebrations is to participate in a group rock-climbing tour. Most anyone can organize a climb at such nationally renowned Texas locations as Franklin Mountains State Park and Hueco Tanks State

Historic Site in El Paso, the Lower Pecos River Valley in Comstock, and Enchanted Rock State Natural Area near Fredericksburg.

If you're searching for an adventure with some friends, where you can try the sport in nature and have undivided attention from an experienced guide, check out Austin Rock Gym's Private Instruction Program. An experienced guide will outfit you and instruct you on Austin's Barton Creek Greenbelt, at Milton Reimers Ranch Park near Bee Cave, or at Enchanted Rock.

For someone who already has the basics down, Austin Rock Gym also offers an Outdoor 201 class, where you can learn to lead climb, rappel, set top-rope anchor systems, lead belay with multiple devices, and how to tie impressive knots. The class fee (\$249) includes a one-month gym membership, so you can practice as much as you want.

Perhaps you're an experienced climber seeking an intense rock-climbing getaway. Consider signing up for the Pecos River Adventure Package, offered through Rock-About, another Austin-based outfitter. Climbers set

up camp at a private ranch along the Pecos River called Continental II, where limestone cliffs—some as high as 300 feet—offer sublime challenges. Afterwards, climbers typically bond over a fire and a collectively cooked meal under the bright stars of the Chihuahuan Desert. The ranch is about a two-hour drive from Seminole Canyon State Park, where you can pursue many other outdoor activities, including river rafting, mountain biking, and rock-art tours.

You can also organize rock-climbing tours directly through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Three sites—Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, Franklin Mountains State Park, and Hueco Tanks State Park—maintain a list of certified guides and outfitters who lead tours within the park. A fourth site, Lake Mineral Wells State Park and Trailway, also allows climbing, but you'll need your own guide.

Now that you know the ropes, prepare to see Texas a whole new way. —SUZANNE EDWARDS

FOR INFORMATION about Austin Rock Gym, call 512/416-9299; www.austinrockgym.com.

For details about Rock-About Austin, call 512/415-0804; www.rock-about.com.

For outfitters contracted with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, see www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/activities/outdoor_recreation/climb/.



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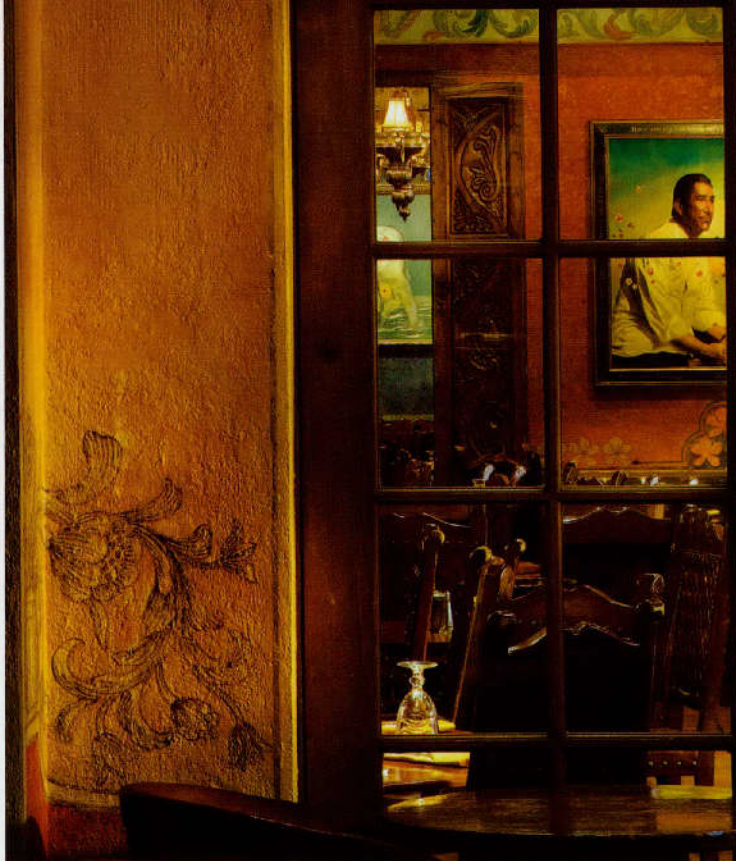
NOTEWORTHY CULINARY JOURNEYS

BY KATHERINE GREGOR

PHOTOGRAPHS BY J. GRIFFIS SMITH

Hacienda Flavor in the Heart of Austin

FOR MORE than three decades, diners at Fonda San Miguel in Austin have marveled at the sensation of visiting a timeless and lovely hacienda deep in the interior of Mexico. It's not just the first bite of *pescado Veracruzano* or *cochinita pibil* that evokes magic. Equally transporting is the cultural immersion in a vibrant world of Mexican arts and crafts. Authentically Mexican, the restaurant reflects the aesthetic and culinary sophistication of owners Tom Gilliland and Miguel Ravago, who shaped Fonda San Miguel around their passions.



The food and ambience of Fonda San Miguel are so evocative of Mexico that diners can forget they're north of the border. A portrait of co-founder and longtime chef Miguel Ravago by Austin artist Roi James is one of many artworks that fill the restaurant.

When Gilliland and Ravago opened the restaurant in 1975 and brought authentic regional dishes from the interior of Mexico to Austin, they were daring pioneers. Until then, Tex-Mex was the only Mex in town. Fonda San Miguel introduced the "exotic" interior cuisine to many diners; by 1978, it was a hit and developing a national following. Early on, the owners aligned with Diana Kennedy, whose seminal 1972 *Cuisines of Mexico* cookbook brought interior Mexican dishes to home cooks and restaurant chefs; she remains a friend and advisor.

FONDA SAN MIGUEL is at 2330 W. North Loop in Austin. Hours: Mon-Thu 5:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., Fri-Sat 5:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m., Sun (for the brunch buffet) 11 a.m.-2 p.m. (No Sun. buffet during August.) Reservations recommended. Bar opens Mon-Sat at 5 p.m. Call 512/459-4121; www.fondasanmiguel.com.

Fonda San Miguel: Thirty Years of Food and Art (Shearer Publishing, 2005), by Tom Gilliland and Miguel Ravago with writer Virginia B. Wood, is for sale (\$34.95 list price) at the restaurant (details on the web site), and at www.amazon.com.

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Today Austin is a food-savvy town where fresh *tomatillos*, *poblanos*, and *nopalitos* are readily available at the corner H-E-B, not to mention Central Market and Whole Foods. But 30 years ago, executive chef Ravago had to search for them; he was forced to import ingredients like black beans and dried chiles directly from Mexico. Diners who loved the food they discovered here included chefs and food-world dignitaries—like Julia Child and

Oscar Alvarez, who has been at Fonda for more than two decades.

The buffet spread offers a feast for the eyes: Several large tables are draped with vibrant Mexican cloths and accented with colorful straw flowers, decorative pieces, and fruit. The food—arranged in categories of cold dishes, entrées, sides, eggs, and desserts—is presented in a collection of Mexican pottery,

When Fonda San Miguel opened in 1975, it introduced many diners to the cuisine of interior Mexico; by 1978, the restaurant was a hit, championed by the likes of Diana Kennedy and Julia Child.

Alice Waters—who spread the word. Gradually, Fonda San Miguel became respected as a premier interior Mexican restaurant, and it helped build a following for the cuisine. Over the years, Gilliland and Ravago turned “foreign food” like chiles rellenos, ceviche, and chicken mole into familiar classics.

Thanks in part to Fonda San Miguel, similar menu items now are available at many good, cheaper, and funkier Austin restaurants. But Fonda remains distinctive for its gracious hacienda setting and authentic character. Locals think of it as a special restaurant for celebratory occasions, a place to entertain out-of-town guests. For those who have traveled in Mexico, it’s a great place to reawaken memories of beautiful hotels and homes.

Bountiful Brunch

THE SINGLE BEST WAY TO EXPERIENCE Fonda San Miguel’s cuisine is at the Hacienda Brunch Buffet offered each Sunday. While expensive (around \$40), it offers excellent value and the opportunity to sample numerous signature dishes (many also available at dinner). For decades, the gracious Chef Ravago has personally presided over the brunch buffet, sharing his knowledge and love of the food—one reason it has been so perennially popular. Now Ravago is semiretired, splitting his time between Madrid, Spain, and trips back to Austin. Capably heading up the kitchen is Ravago’s longtime sous chef,


including hand-painted talavera by Mexican ceramist Gorky Gonzalez. (Gonzalez also created the beautiful tile work in the patio, dining rooms, and at the tortilla station.)

Among the cold dishes, standouts include a meaty fish (black drum) in red achioté paste. Top it with crisp Oaxacan




Desserts at Fonda’s Sunday brunch include (from top) two puddings, *capirotada*, and *arroz con leche*, and pears poached in red wine.

red pickled onions and chipotle-seasoned mayonnaise, then wrap it all in one of the handmade corn tortillas served warm at each table. The ceviche is a classic rendition,




Wichita Falls


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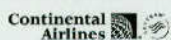
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Fonda San Miguel's festive entrance sets the tone for a memorable evening.

with a nice melding of flavors from the fish, lime juice, cilantro, tomato, and onion.

Three of the meat dishes presented when I visited proved spectacular: chicken mole, grilled quail, and pit-cooked pork. The *pollo en mole poblano* derives its complexity of taste from a sauce flavored with mulatto, pasilla, and ancho chiles; Mexican chocolate; and spices that include cinnamon, anise, coriander, and cloves, as well as almonds, pumpkin seeds, and raisins. The delicate quail is simply grilled but delicious. The *cochinita pibil* is a tender, slow-cooked pork dish originally prepared on the Yucatán Peninsula in pits lined with hot stones and banana leaves. A dark-orange rub of achiote, orange juice, cumin, and other seasonings imparts a depth of flavor to the pork; try some wrapped in a fresh flour tortilla.

Do plan on having a tasting-plate of desserts. Most distinctive are the tres leches cake topped with fresh mango, the creamy flan, the unusually flavored bread pudding (bananas, green onions, and peanuts!), and a tropical mango tart with a pecan-studded crust. Savor small bites of each with a stiff cup of black coffee in a blue-and-white mug, as you vow to forego dinner. *(continued on page 66)*

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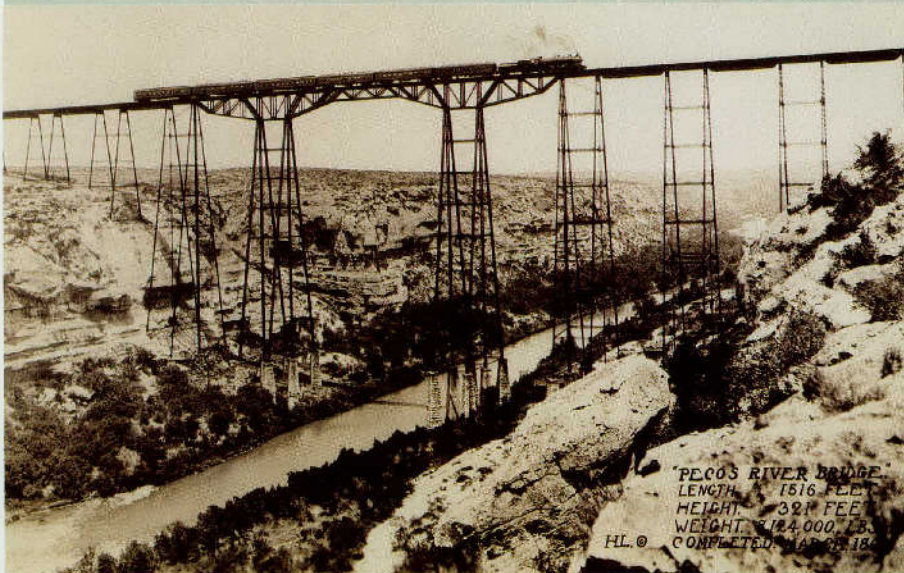
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TEXAS

RIDING HIGH

When the Southern Pacific Railroad was built westward from San Antonio toward El Paso in the early 1880s, the Pecos River presented a major obstacle. The first Pecos railway bridge was a low span completed in 1883 at the mouth of the river, where it joins the Rio Grande.



Following World War I, General Jimmy Doolittle flew an open-cockpit plane underneath the 1892 Pecos High Bridge. He had to tip the plane's wings sideways to squeeze between the support towers.

To access the bridge, trains on the so-called Sunset Route used the Loop Line, a steep and twisty route that dropped some 300 feet from the surrounding plains to the banks of the river below. After crossing, the train had to make its way up the other side by a similar path. The line's grade and curves required that trains be short and speeds slow. The canyon's soft sandstone walls presented a constant threat of rockslides, and the route was dangerous and expensive to operate, according to the book *Building the Lone Star* by T. Lindsay Baker.

In 1890, engineers planned another route a few miles upstream that would cut 11 miles off the distance by eliminating the curves and grades, but it required building a high viaduct across the river canyon. Work began in March 1891, with construction of concrete, limestone, and granite footings. Once the foundations were complete, it took just 87 working days to erect the 24

wrought-iron-and-steel support towers to finish the project. The first train crossed on March 30, 1892.

For many years, the Pecos High Bridge stood as the tallest railroad bridge in North America and the third tallest in the world, measuring in at 2,180 feet in length and towering approximately 320 feet above the river. It became a tradition for trains to proceed slowly over it so that passengers could enjoy the spectacular view.

As trains became heavier, the bridge was reinforced at least twice, but with the onset of World War II, railroad traffic increased so greatly that a sturdier, more reliable bridge was needed. A new Pecos High Bridge, about a quarter of a mile downstream, was completed in 1944 and is still in use today (see JPT, pg. 64). The 1892 bridge was dismantled in 1949 and sold piecemeal to various highway departments and state governments across the nation.

—Mary G. Ramos, Dallas

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

One of Texas' earliest attempts at creating an Indian reservation came to a tragically bloody end. In 1854, the Texas Legislature authorized Major Robert S. Neighbors and Brigadier General Randolph B. Marcy to establish a reservation in Young County. For a while, life on the 37,152-acre Brazos Indian Reservation went smoothly: Some 2,000 Waco, Caddo, Anadarko, and Tonkawa peoples grew wheat, melons, and corn on 600 shared acres of land. They ate beef provided by the government and valued the protection from warring Comanches living in a neighboring reservation. But in 1858, racial tensions mounted between the Brazos Reservation Indians and the white settlers living in Belknap and other nearby communities, according to the book *Ghost Towns of Texas* by T. Lindsay Baker.

Settlers blamed Indians living on the Brazos Indian Reservation for the Comanche's continuing raids. The *White Man*, a local newspaper, furthered the antagonism by publishing anti-Indian articles. Tensions ran so high that some officials feared an all-out war. But by the time Governor H.R. Runnels and General Sam Houston initiated a search for a site to relocate the reservation's residents, settlers had slaughtered an innocent Indian hunting party from the reservation while they slept.

In 1859, Neighbors had the Brazos Indian Reservation tribes moved north to live with the Wichitas in the Washita Valley in what is now Oklahoma, but the relocation only provided a temporary reprieve.

Three years later, pro-Union Indians from Kansas attacked the pro-Confederate Tonkawa living on the reservation, killing many of the remaining Brazos Indian Reservation people in the process. The few survivors returned to Texas, where they worked as scouts for the U.S. Army at Fort Griffin.

—Aaron Gilbreath, Cave Creek, Arizona



legendary cafés

These familiar roadside stops have pampered generations with home-style cooking, Tex-Mex, freshly baked pies, and other signature vittles that fortify us for long drives or stressful lives.

BY JUNE NAYLOR PHOTOGRAPHS BY J. GRIFFIS SMITH





ABOVE AND RIGHT: It's a good bet that some of the diners at Allen's Family-Style Meals in Sweetwater are regulars; the café has been offering the same home-style fare for more than a half-century. PREVIOUS SPREAD: TLC comes in many forms at Texas' landmark cafés, from the sizzling fajitas found at H&H Carwash and Coffee Shop in El Paso to the down-home ambience of The Shed Cafe in Edom.



In 1952, Lizzie Allen opened the front room of her little clapboard house so travelers would have a place to eat a hot, home-cooked meal as they passed through the West Texas town of Sweetwater. Strangers became friends over platters of fried chicken and big bowls of fresh vegetables, which “Ma” Allen served family-style at a table that sat 12. A half-century later, folks still sit down to meals at that same table—and at five other large tables that now fill the building.

Allen’s Family-Style Meals has endured to become one of Texas’ landmark cafés—familiar roadside stops that have pampered generations with home-style cooking, Tex-Mex, freshly baked pies, and other signature vittles that fortify us for long drives or stressful lives. But food isn’t the only comfort these venerable establishments dish out; with their small-town, yesteryear feel, they give us a place of refuge during the rough patches in life, or when we’re simply fed up with days dominated by computer crashes and traffic snarls. Tucking into a plate of chicken and dumplings or a bowl of made-from-scratch peach cobbler within the confines of one of these legendary eateries is darned near as good as a big, warm hug just when we need it most.

Next time you seek solace in food and mood from another time—or simply feel the need for a road trip—consider escaping to one of these six landmark cafés. (Operating hours vary, so be sure to call ahead before you head out.) We’ve included a few attractions near each one to make the adventure even sweeter.



food isn't the only comfort these venerable establishments dish out; with their small-town, yesteryear feel, they give us a place of refuge during the rough patches in life.

ALLEN'S FAMILY-STYLE MEALS
SWEETWATER

Billy Allen runs the café his grandmother Lizzie Allen started in 1952, and which his dad operated from 1968 to 1993. The restaurant's popularity has grown over the years, Allen says, recalling how his grandmother "would knock out a few walls and add tables, knock out another wall and add more tables, until she had no house left and had to move out." Now the same house seats 52 people at lunchtime, while the staff serves double that number at a dinner buffet in a



newer building across the parking lot.

Don't leave without trying: Lizzie Allen's memory lives on in her recipes for fried chicken (the café's most popular item), as well as everything else on the menu, like the meatloaf on Saturday and the pot roast on Sunday and a couple more days during the week. Barbecue brisket, sausage, and pork ribs make up the Friday special. Potato salad and a savory squash dish are among the most popular sides, while peach cobbler is the favorite dessert.

Same neck of the woods: Forty miles to the east, in Abilene, visit Frontier Texas!, an interactive history museum. Thirty-

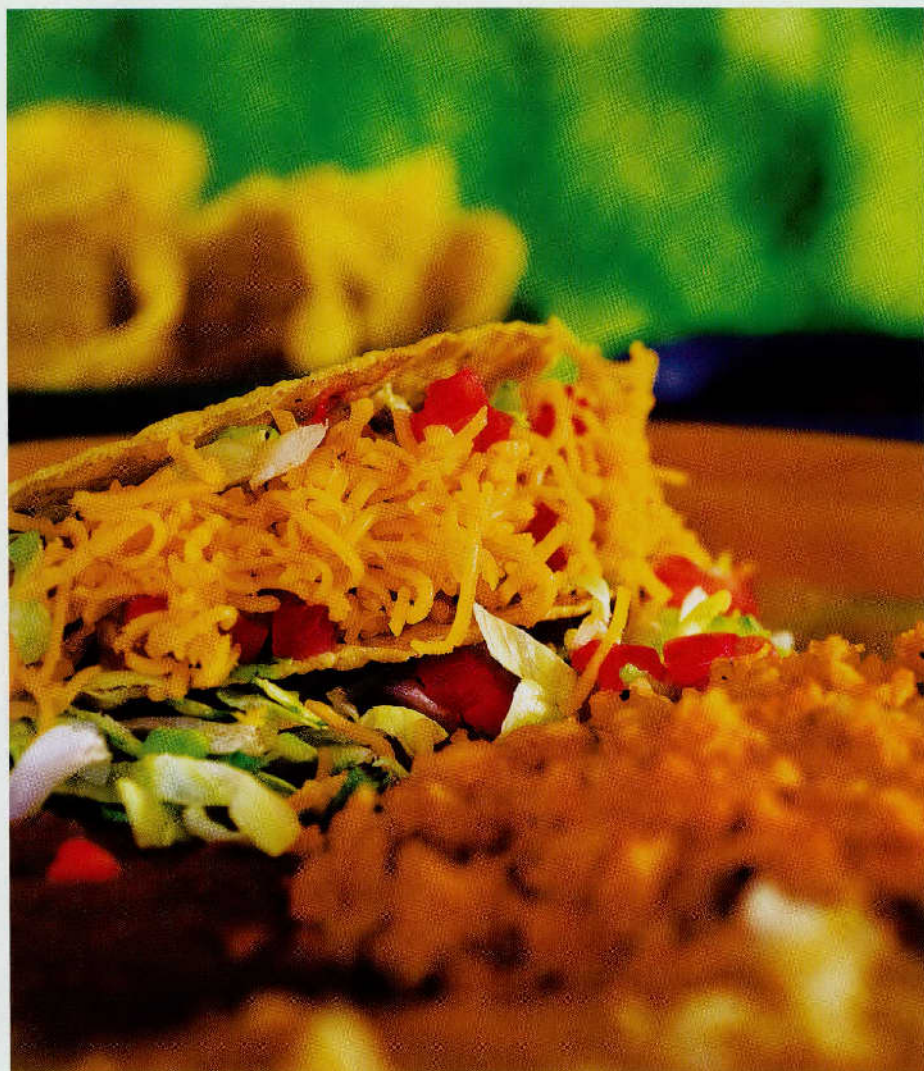
eight miles northwest, in Snyder, see the white buffalo statue. Forty-four miles northeast, in Anson, see one of the fabulous WPA post office murals.

Allen's Family-Style Meals, 1301 E. Broadway St., 325/235-2060

H&H CAR WASH AND COFFEE SHOP
EL PASO

Brothers Ken and Maynard Haddad also took over the family restaurant, the one their dad, Najib Haddad, opened in 1958 at his car wash, near downtown. "My dad loved the old Toddle House





restaurants and sort of modeled this place after that short order-soda fountain concept,” says Ken. “He thought it was better than just having people wait in a room with vending machines.” The café has evolved into an icon, making fans of such luminaries as noted chef/restaurateur Michel Richard and the late Julia Child. It even won the coveted James Beard Award in 2001 for American Regional Classic.

Don't leave without trying: While your car gets a hand wash, grab a counter stool or a table inside the cozy café. Your mouth is guaranteed to water as you wait for one of cook Antonia Soria's magnificent plates, laden with items like *carne picada*: sirloin tips sautéed with onions, tomatoes, jalapeños, and seasonings, and served with flour tortillas, rice, and

beans. Breakfast customers favor the *huevos rancheros*, and lunch patrons like the *chiles rellenos*.

Same neck of the woods: H&H Car Wash is fewer than five minutes by car from the El Paso Museum of Art, and less than a half-mile from primo shopping along Texas Avenue (don't miss El Paso Chile Company, known for its wide selection of salsas and dips).

H&H Car Wash and Coffee Shop, 701 E. Yandell Dr., 915/533-1144

CUEVA DE LEON FORT DAVIS

In 1976, Lorina Wells went from waitress to owner of a little café that was originally called Ernest's. She opted to change



the name and recruited the local high school's Spanish class for help. The building sits in front of the Davis Mountains formation known as the Sleeping Lion, so “lion's cave” seemed a perfect name for the new venture, where today she continues to serve Mexican dishes made from her mom Esperanza Bencomo's recipes. A friendly, no-frills place, the restaurant seats about 90 people at inside and outside tables.

Don't leave without trying: Wells' loyal clientele needs regular fixes of her *chiles rellenos*, freshly roasted Anaheim chiles packed with Monterey Jack cheese and then deep-fried. The enchiladas stuffed with cheddar cheese are covered in a smooth, New Mexico red chile sauce, and those filled with Jack cheese have a

LEFT: Get your car washed; have a meal. Why not? At H&H Car Wash and Coffee Shop, you can even grab a table by the window and watch the towels fly as you enjoy a plate of *huevos rancheros* or *carne picada*. ABOVE, RIGHT: Everything is made fresh at Cueva de Leon in Fort Davis, including the tasty tacos.



tucking into a plate of chicken and dumplings or a bowl of made-from-scratch peach cobbler within the confines of one of these legendary eateries is darned near as good as a big, warm hug just when we need it most.



green chile-sour cream sauce. Be sure to get the guacamole on the side; like everything else, it's freshly made—Wells uses no canned or frozen ingredients.

Same neck of the woods: Nearby Davis

Mountains State Park offers great hiking, and McDonald Observatory's marvelous star parties are only a half-hour drive away. If you need a custom-made cowboy hat, check out Limpia Creek

Hats, across the street from the café.
Cueva de Leon, 100 W. Second St.,
432/426-3801

MONUMENT CAFE GEORGETOWN

Rusty Winkstern earned his restaurant stripes at eateries in Austin and Pflugerville before finding a great location for a café in Georgetown. Capitalizing on the building boom just 30 miles north of downtown Austin, he and his business partner, Clark Lyda, opened the retro-style diner in 1995 to a market hungry for their vision. "We wanted to honor the old roadside cafés and highway diners, and we wanted a name that suggested a lasting tradition," says Winkstern. Day and night, you'll find the Art Deco dining room packed with locals and travelers hopping off Interstate 35 for a bite of the past.

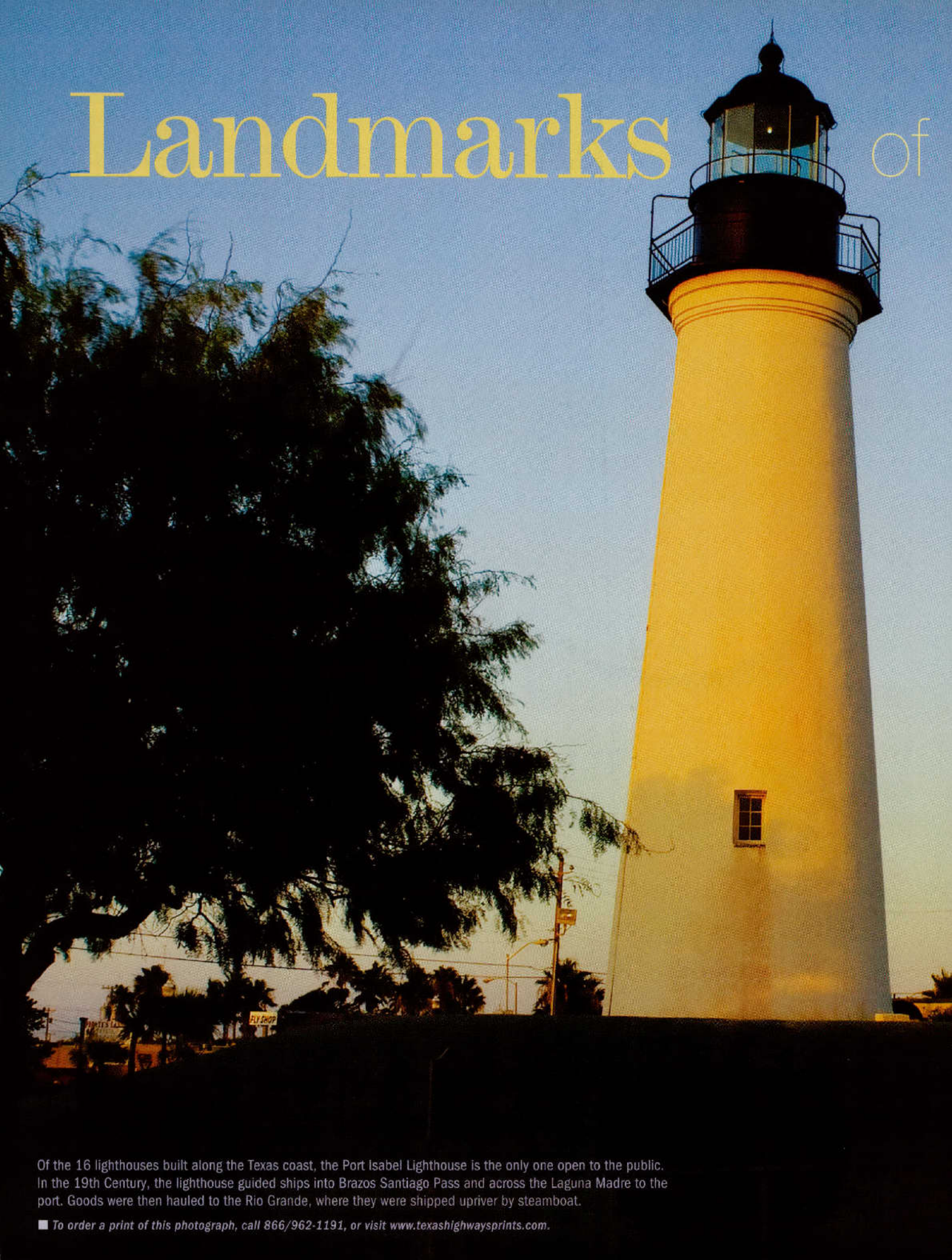
Don't leave without trying: Most dishes feature organically grown ingredients, as the Monument uses vegetables and herbs grown on area farms, including Winkstern's farm a mile away, and honey and pecans from local producers. Peppered bacon stars on most breakfast plates, along with strawberry, blueberry, or buttermilk pancakes. One of the favorite lunch specials is chicken and dumplings, while crowds jam the joint for the Friday night seafood special, a combination of grilled salmon, fried catfish, and fried shrimp.

Same neck of the woods: The lovely Williamson County Courthouse square is within shouting distance of the Monument Cafe, as is the cool little San Gabriel Motor Court if you need a nap after your meal.

Monument Cafe, 1953 S. Austin Ave., 512/930-9586; www.themonumentcafe.com. The owners anticipate moving to a new location at 500 S. Austin Ave. in Georgetown in late summer. The café's phone number and menu will stay the same. (continued on page 59)

ABOVE: One of the featured desserts at Georgetown's Monument Cafe is the fresh-fruit Napoleon, filled with blueberries, blackberries, and strawberries. LEFT: Forget about daintiness when you order the barbecued crabs at Sartin's Seafood in Nassau Bay. The good news: Once you start eating, you won't care.

Landmarks of



Of the 16 lighthouses built along the Texas coast, the Port Isabel Lighthouse is the only one open to the public. In the 19th Century, the lighthouse guided ships into Brazos Santiago Pass and across the Laguna Madre to the port. Goods were then hauled to the Rio Grande, where they were shipped upriver by steamboat.

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

the Steamboat Age

Explore the historic route of steamboats along the Rio Grande.

BY TOM AND KAREN FORT PHOTOGRAPHS BY LARRY DITTO

Today, where white-winged sailboats skim across the Laguna Madre and canoes glide past the banks of the Rio Grande, steamboats once huffed and chuffed, bringing goods and settlers to this southernmost Texas frontier. The smoke-spewing stacks are long gone, and the jubilant bells are silent, but travelers can retrace the voyages of the multidecked steamers from the mouth of the Rio Grande to Roma, visiting landmarks of another era.



The 1850s—when merchants and settlers, adventurers and soldiers thronged to the Rio Grande Valley after the close of the Mexican-American War—shone as the golden age of steamboat traffic on the Rio Grande. Military forts, towns, ranches, and businesses flourished along the banks. United States soldiers and Texas Rangers fought bandits on both sides of the river, and Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lee rode here twice on military business. Through these bygone days floated the steamboat, its paddlewheels splashing, stacks trailing black smoke, and whistle calling everyone to the landing.

A Brief History of Rio Grande Steamboating

Henry Austin, a cousin of Stephen F. Austin, brought the first steamboat, the *Ariel*, to the Rio Grande

in 1829. After a disappointing season, though, he sailed to the lucrative waters of the Brazos River. Steamboat traffic remained sporadic on the Rio Grande until the Mexican-American War.

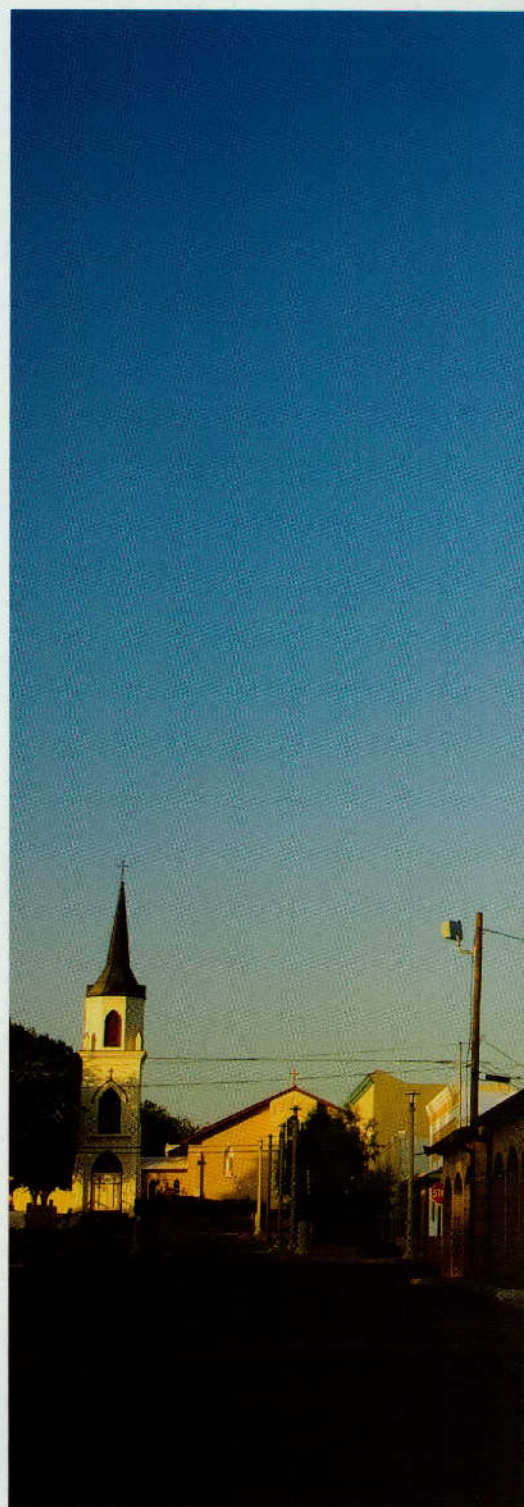
In June 1846, two months into the war, General Zachary Taylor directed the quartermaster department to purchase or charter steamboats from back east to carry troops and supplies from the depot at Brazos Island (off south Padre Island) up the Rio Grande to Camargo, Mexico, the jumping-off point for Taylor's march into the interior. Operating steamers on the Rio Grande for the Army, captains Mifflin Kenedy and Richard King began to build the vast fortunes they would later invest in ranchlands.

And then after the war, in 1850, Connecticut Yankee and Matamoros merchant Charles Stillman formed a part-

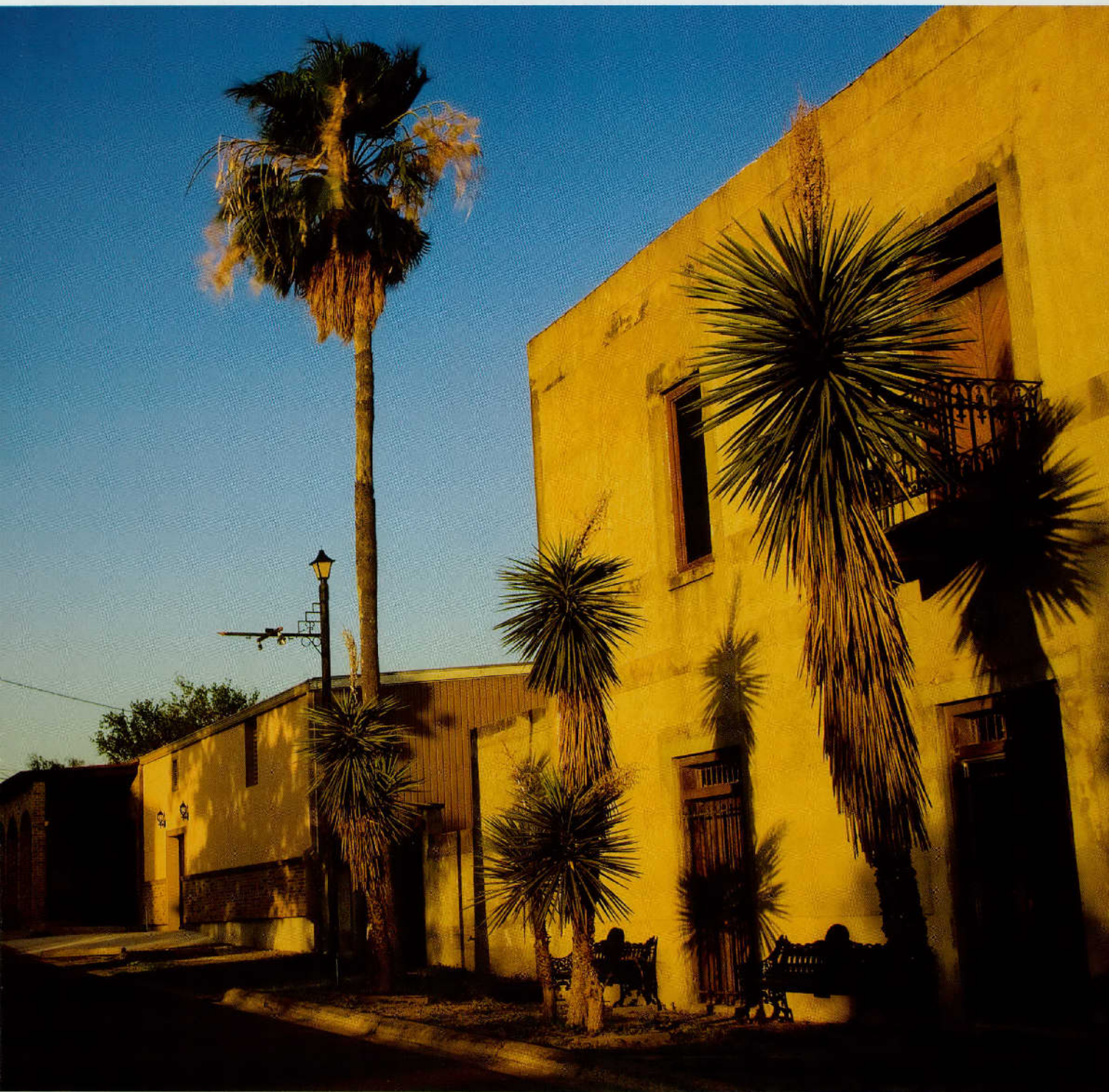
In spite of storms,
wars, and neglect, many landmarks of
the steamboat era remain.



ABOVE: At Los Ebanos, where you'll find the only hand-operated ferry on the U.S.-Mexican border, muscle power beats technology, hands-down. The ferry operates daily 8 a.m.-4 p.m. RIGHT: Roma's historic plaza recalls traditional plazas in Mexico; some buildings here date to the 1850s.



nership with Kenedy, King, and others. "Stillman and his partners bought surplus Army steamers after the Mexican-American War for ten cents on the dollar to move goods up and down the river," relates historian Joseph E. Chance of Edinburg. They also acquired the Army's contract to carry soldiers and supplies from Brazos Island to Fort Brown in



Brownsville and to Ringgold Barracks (later Fort Ringgold) in Rio Grande City.

Later, during the Civil War, river steamers carrying Confederate cargoes were transferred to Mexican ownership to avoid their being confiscated by the U.S. government. Steamboats remained in service on the Rio Grande until 1902, surrendering in the end to

lower water levels brought by irrigation, and to competition with the iron horse.

In spite of storms, wars, and neglect, many landmarks of the steamboat era remain. The Museum of South Texas History, in Edinburg, offers a lively introduction. At its core is the 1910 Hidalgo County Jail, but a \$5.5-million

expansion in 2003 allows the museum to tell more of the region's complicated history. New exhibits include a walk-on replica of a typical Rio Grande steamboat, a shallow-hulled, flat-decked boat with a stairway leading to the pilot house. On-board artifacts include an 1850s fireproof safe, firearms, oil lamps, and a miner's pan. (Many gold-seekers



headed west via the Rio Grande.) A five-minute film, with period music, describes life on the river.

A scale model of the sternwheeler *Rancho* tells another story. Rio Grande steamboats often carried Mexican silver coins as cargo. In 1860, the *Rancho* was transporting an especially valuable

load of silver when it was attacked at La Bolsa Bend. Mexican *jefe* Juan Cortina and his raiders opened fire from the riverbank, and while U.S. soldiers on board fired back, they couldn't go after Cortina and his men since they were on Mexican soil. So John S. "Rip" Ford and his Texas Rangers charged across the

river, forcing the bandits to withdraw. The *Rancho* steamed on to Brownsville, precious cargo intact, having earned her place in Rio Grande history.

Travelers today can approximate on land a typical voyage from the Gulf of Mexico to the head of navigation at Roma.



provided a safe anchorage. Wooden buildings belonging to the U.S. Army dotted the island until an 1867 hurricane blew them away. Today, excursion boats provide a good look at the island (not to mention dolphins, birds of many types, and spectacular sunsets).

Port Isabel

Point (now Port) Isabel, on the mainland, lies directly across the Laguna Madre from South Padre Island. Originally a Mexican garrison and customs house for the Port of Matamoros, the village served as a U.S. Army supply depot between 1846 and 1850. A post office opened in 1849, and the town began to grow.

“Steamboats were important modes of transportation for Point Isabel and the Laguna Madre area during the 1850s,” says Edward P. Meza, Director of the Museums of Port Isabel, “because of their speed and efficiency in transporting large quantities of cargo to communities along both the turbulent waters of the

Gulf Coast and the treacherous currents of the Rio Grande.”

The Museums of Port Isabel includes the Treasures of the Gulf Museum, which spotlights three 1554 Spanish shipwrecks; the Port Isabel Historical Museum, which contains a large collection of artifacts from the Mexican-American War; and the 1852 Port Isabel Lighthouse, which was lighted in 1853. Visitors can climb via 75 narrow steps to the top, which affords an unparalleled view of the Gulf of Mexico and the Laguna Madre. The adjacent lightkeeper’s cottage displays items related to lighthouse history, including maps of Texas lighthouse locations and dozens of photographs.

Brownsville

Brownsville, the next port of call, lies directly across the river from Matamoros. In December 1848, Charles Stillman and several partners formed the Brownsville Town Company, and began selling lots near Fort Brown, the fort established on the river by U.S. General Zachary Taylor as a de-

Rio Grande steamboats
often carried Mexican silver coins as cargo.



South Padre Island

At Isla Blanca Park on South Padre Island, an unobstructed view of Brazos Santiago Pass recalls a time when steamers left the open waters of the Gulf, crossed the bar, and entered the calm waters of the Laguna Madre. Across the Pass, low-lying Brazos Island



ABOVE: At the Museum of South Texas History in Edinburg, a model of the *Ranchero* illustrates 19th-Century life on the Rio Grande. LEFT: This upended cannon at the old Fort Brown site (originally Fort Texas) commemorates the death of Major Jacob Brown in the Mexican-American War. The grounds are now part of Texas Southmost College and the University of Texas at Brownsville.



Smaller craft travel the Rio Grande today, replacing the steamers of yore.

fensive position. Stillman's home, part of a group of attractions known as the Brownsville Heritage Complex, is considered one of the best examples of Gulf Coast architecture in South Texas. Built in 1850, it features broad, Greek-Revival-style columns and a large front porch; inside, visitors can see original furnishings like mid-Victorian armoires and tables, as well as a wooden steamer trunk that was supposedly given to Stillman by a fellow steamer captain. Next door, the Brownsville Heritage Museum offers

extensive exhibits about Stillman, river commerce, and local history. Within walking distance are many historic buildings, several dating to the 1850s and in various stages of restoration.

Rio Grande City

Also in 1848, about 100 miles upstream from Brownsville, Kentuckian Henry Clay Davis established the town of Davis Landing (later

renamed Rio Grande City). Davis, a rancher, and his partner Forbes Britton laid out the city on a straight line from the steamer landing at the foot of Britton Street northward to the top of a hill, where they built the permanent courthouse, intentionally replicating Congress Avenue in Austin. The path of the river has shifted over the years, and the original landing lies at the intersection of Water Street and Britton Avenue.

As it did elsewhere on the Rio Grande, riverboat business brought commerce and entrepreneurship to Rio Grande City. After the Mexican-American War, for example, Kenedy and King built warehouses along the river to store supplies for the military,

To arrange a canoe tour along the Rio Grande, call Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge at 956/784-7500.

essentials RIO GRANDE STEAMBOAT ROUTE

including one on Water Street that today serves as the municipal court. Of Rio Grande City's 625 historic buildings, almost 30 have been restored or renovated.

You'll find several restored structures at Fort Ringgold, which dates to 1848. Built on 37 acres leased from Henry Clay Davis, the fort served as a military post until it was closed in 1944. Three years later, the school district purchased the property—by then expanded to 325 acres—from the U.S. Army. The barracks, officers' quarters, commissary, and other buildings, constructed in the 1870s, continue to serve the school district.

Dating to the early 1850s, the restored commandant's quarters, built of cypress boards brought from New Orleans by steamer, are now home to the Robert E. Lee House Museum, which offers tours by appointment. The museum displays numerous exhibits about life at the fort and along the Rio Grande. Lieutenant Colonel Lee visited the post twice, in 1856 for court martial duty and in 1860 to negotiate with Mexican officials to stop raids led by Juan Cortina. It is doubtful that Lee slept in the house, but he would have visited there and shared meals with fellow officers.

The **Museum of South Texas History** is at 200 N. Closer Blvd. in Edinburg. Call 956/383-6911; www.mosthistory.org.

Isla Blanca Park lies at the southern tip of **South Padre Island**. Brazos Santiago Pass and Brazos Island can be seen from the picnic facilities along Park Rd. 100. Call 956/761-5494.

The **Port Isabel Lighthouse** (part of the Museums of Port Isabel) is at 421 Queen Isabella Blvd. in **Port Isabel**. The lighthouse also houses the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Center; call 956/943-2262; 800/527-6102. Within walking distance of the Port Isabel Lighthouse are the **Treasures of the Gulf Museum** and the **Port Isabel Historical Museum**; call 956/943-7602; www.portisabelmuseums.com.

The Brownsville Historical Association's **Browns-**

ville Heritage Complex, in the 1300 block of E. Washington St. in **Brownsville**, includes the **Stillman House Museum**, the **Brownsville Heritage Museum**, the **Heritage Resource Center**, and the **Aiken Education Center**, plus a 5th site, the old city **Cemetery Center**. Call 956/541-5560; www.brownsvillehistory.org.

Fort Ringgold and the **Robert E. Lee House** are 1 mile east of downtown **Rio Grande City** on US 83. The museum and other historic buildings, such as the Kenedy warehouse, can be seen by car or by a trolley tour arranged by the Rio Grande City Main Street Program; call 956/488-0047.

In **Roma**, visit the **Roma Bluffs World Birding Center** office at 610 N. Portscheller St. Call 956/849-4930; www.worldbirdingcenter.org. For information about Roma, contact City Hall, 956/849-1411; www.cityofroma.net.



Roma

The landing below the bluffs at Roma, about 14 miles upstream from Rio Grande City, became the

nominal head of navigation. The city of Roma once flourished with riverboat business. Christine Donald, who runs the

World Birding Center and the Roma Bluffs Interpretive Overlook here, says, "At Roma, we have the best of both worlds. It's an excellent place to bird, and we're in a neat historic area." From the deck of the Overlook, look left to see the 1928 suspension bridge between Roma and Ciudad Miguel Alemán, which is a National Historic Landmark; look right to spy the small island that steamers circled to return downriver.

The steamboat era on the Rio Grande ended more than 100 years ago, but its romantic legacy remains deeply woven into the cultural fabric of the Rio Grande Valley.★



Built in the 1890s and restored in 1982, Rio Grande City's LaBorde House, now a bed and breakfast, is in the National Register of Historic Places. Locals and visitors alike rave about the enchiladas at the hotel's popular restaurant, Che's. Call 956/487-5101 for LaBorde House; 487-8288 for Che's.

TOM FORT is the director of operations and senior historian at the Museum of South Texas History in Edinburg. KAREN FORT is the director of the McAllen Heritage Center.

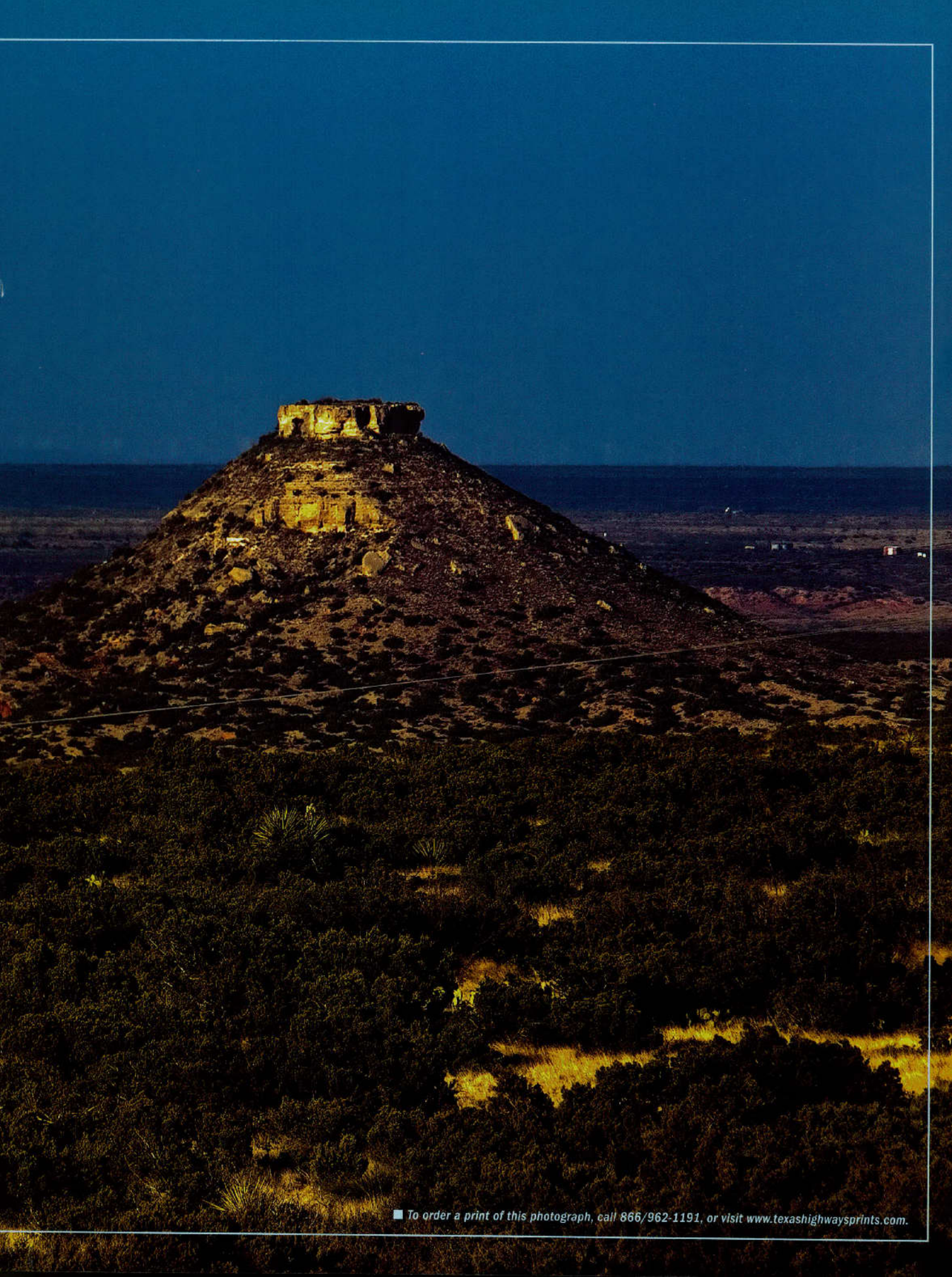
LARRY DITTO leads photographic birding tours of the Rio Grande Valley. You can see more of his work at www.larryditto.com.

WEST TEXAS PANORAMA

Big Spring beckons travelers with parks, local history, and comfort food.

BY EILEEN MATTEI PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL AMADOR

As I look north from the top of Scenic Mountain in Big Spring State Park, I'm standing only inches away from the northern edge of the Edwards Plateau, and I can see the High Plains flat-lining to the horizon more than 20 miles away. From this vantage point, it's easy to understand why so many historic trails have converged here. First, the big spring for which the area is known has long offered the only reliable source of water for 60 miles in any direction. Second, this mountain provides a vantage point from which to keep an eye on whatever is moving on the plains below. During the 19th Century, Native Americans and U.S. Army scouts passed



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



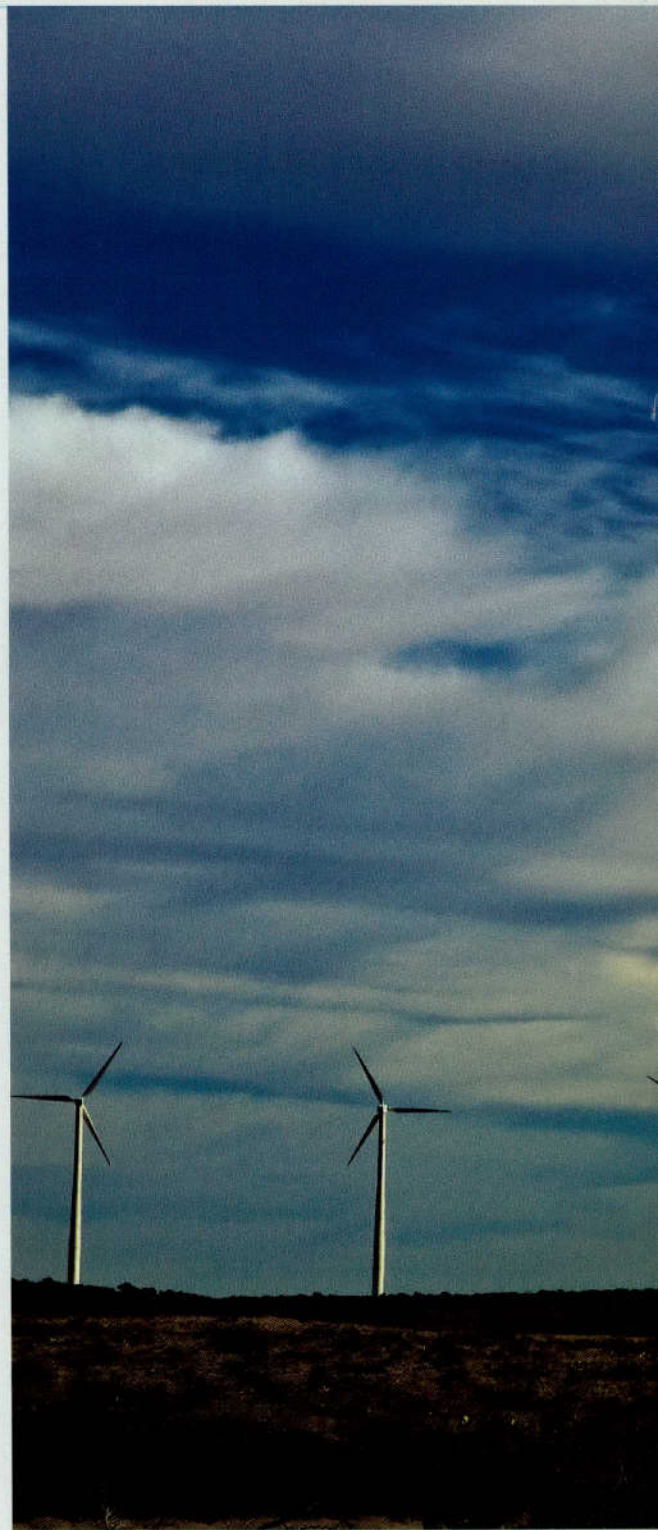
The 15-story Settles Hotel, first opened in 1930 and now undergoing restoration, stands out in the panorama of Big Spring. On the right is the 1932 WPA-built Municipal Auditorum, home to Big Spring's symphony.

this way, keeping an eye on buffalo herds and wagon trains. Later, the Overland Trail and the Texas & Pacific Railroad both came through. And 60 years ago, in the 1940s, I could have watched World War II bombers on training runs.

And I can see the evidence of the others who have visited this Scenic Mountain perch: The graffiti chiseled into the limestone underfoot speaks of long-ago adventurers, as well as Sunday buggy rides and horseback excursions, according to Park Specialist Ron Alton, who works in the 382-acre park. Amid redberry juniper and scrub oak, he points out the shape of a repeating rifle carved in the stone. We notice the dates 1896, 1916, and 1920 not far away, and, among the names, that of Leonard Fisher, the owner of Big Spring's first general store.

From atop this bluff, I can survey the historic landmarks of the town of Big Spring past and consider the prospects for its future. The tallest building in the panorama before me is the 15-story Settles Hotel, a symbol of the optimism generated by the oil boom of the 1920s, and which first opened to a grand reception in 1930. The hotel closed in the 1980s, but is slowly coming back to life through a restoration project begun by new owners who acquired the property in 2006.

Also among the dominant features in the landscape are the wind turbines that make me think of triple-armed sentries safeguarding this West Texas spring and crossroads. Beyond the town itself, dozens of wind turbines stand on the mesas, and current plans call for another 300 to appear this year around Big Spring. The area offers the ideal combination of



consistent wind, elevation, and available transmission lines to capitalize on wind energy. An executive with one of the companies developing the area's wind energy resources explains, "These projects will produce enough electricity to serve 90,000 homes in the southern U.S."

PREVIOUS SPREAD: Signal Mountain, 10 miles southeast of Big Spring, dominates the area landscape, and served travelers as a landmark by which to navigate. These days, wind turbines, above right, seem to march across the nearby West Texas mesas.



THE BIG SPRING AREA was first noted historically in 1849 when a mapping expedition marked the site as a stop for the Overland Trail to California. By the late 1870s, commercial buffalo hunters operated in the area and a rough-and-tumble settlement, mainly hide huts and saloons, evolved. With the completion of the Texas & Pacific Railroad in the early 1880s, the town gained a new identity as a center for area commerce,

On ridge after ridge around Big Spring, gently turning wind turbines resemble triple-armed sentries safeguarding the West Texas spring and crossroads.



Big Spring's own Tumbleweed Smith broadcasts the stories of the outsized characters and everyday folks who give Texas its energetic image.

and with the railroad established, ranchers moved in.

Among the early businessmen was Englishman Joseph Heneage Finch, the flamboyant Seventh Earl of Aylesford, who purchased 37,000 acres and took up ranching near Big Spring in 1883. Soon thereafter, he arranged the construction of the town's first permanent building, which housed a Main Street meat market, run by Aylesford's butcher. Aylesford died in 1885 "from prolonged holiday partying," according to the historic marker. By then, Big Spring had six saloons and a weekly newspaper, and its railroad helped the town earn a reputation as a livestock and cotton-shipping hub.

These days, downtown Big Spring is coming back to life. I visit Good Music Company—its collection of bongos, Zenith radios, Victrolas, and music memorabilia makes the shop look more like a museum. Nearby, in the heart of City Park, the Big Spring Farmers Market brims with local fruits, vegetables, and treats Tuesday and Saturdays from July through October.

The 1932 municipal auditorium sports its original seating, complete with a hat holder under each chair. Big Spring is the smallest Texas town to have its own symphony orchestra.

As I continue my tour, I'm amazed by the Big Spring Municipal Auditorium, a magnificent brick WPA project with two domed towers. The 1932 building still offers its original seating—complete with a hat holder under each chair. The arched ceiling's imprinted tiles, paneled in waxed oilcloth, gleam in the light of chandeliers. Taking advantage of this wonderful building, Big Spring now claims the title of "Smallest Texas Town to Have its Own Symphony Orchestra." Over the decades, Charles Laughton, Charlie Pride, Elvis, and Liberace have all performed here.

It's time for lunch, so that means a ride over roller-coaster hills to Brenda's BBQ and More, a burger shack that knows how to cook a good juicy one. Brenda

Stansel treats everyone to a free dish of her pineapple cobbler because, "It convinces people to come back." And I will.

The spring itself is the centerpiece of Comanche Trail Park, and thanks to clever piping and pumping, the spring once again flows down into the 22-acre Comanche Trail Lake, which is rimmed by walking trails, shaded picnic benches, and ball fields.

The park's true marvel is the 6,900-seat limestone amphitheater, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1934. The amphitheater blends with its surroundings so well that it takes me a moment to register that the structure is manmade and not a natural formation. The Big Spring Symphony presents Pops in the Park here each July 3, and the amphitheater plays host to concerts throughout the year.

Down-home cooking and small-town prices tempt me to visit Herman's Restaurant, where I enjoy a T-bone steak followed by coconut cream pie. I also get a chance to talk to Big Spring resident Tumbleweed Smith, whose radio program *The Sound of Texas* captures Texans telling their stories. "This is a high-energy place," says Tumbleweed, who teaches broadcasting at UT Permian Basin using his given name, Bob Lewis. "I thought Big Spring was too small for me," he says, "but there's an atmos-

The Big Spring Municipal Auditorium offers the same seats as when it opened in 1932, courtesy of the Works Progress Administration. Under each seat you'll find a special shelf to set your hat.





where I've found here that's so conducive to creativity."

I've covered all the ground I can for one day, but the next morning, heading west, I pass the oldest Harley Davidson dealership in Texas, where I see a flock of sandhill cranes grazing out back on a deer-corn buffet. After I pass Big John's Feedlot, where barbecue smoke is twisting upward from the pits, I turn off to find an overlook above the Beals Creek floodplain. The guttural trill of thousands more wintering cranes rises from the wide draw.

Continuing my driving tour at the city's airport, I search the short, tufted grass for other wildlife—prairie dogs. Once I spot the first ones, the stocky, wiggly-tailed rodents seem to appear everywhere, chirping, feeding, and warming themselves in early morning sun. Driving down what looks like an abandoned runway, I keep pulling over, sur-

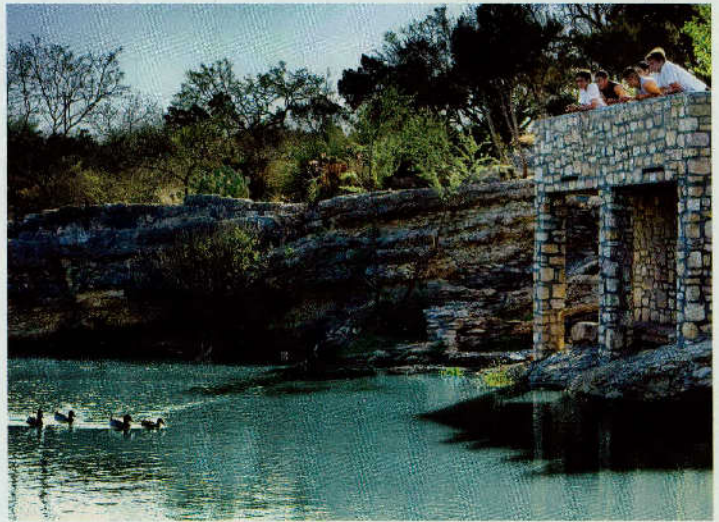
prised at the size of the prairie-dog population, which numbers in the thousands. The prairie-dog towns blanket square miles of what was once Webb Air Force Base.

During WWII, this field was the Big Spring Army Air Force Bombardier School, which graduated nearly 6,000 B-17, B-24, and B-25 bombardiers. These pilots dropped approximately 1.2 million practice bombs locally using the top-secret Norden bombsight. The Hangar 25 Air Museum preserves that and later aviation eras and gives me a glimpse of a time when a "training computer" was actually a plastic-covered graph with a rotating wheel. Beneath the arched wooden ceiling of the spacious brick hangar, I find vintage aircraft and a B-52 fuselage where lithe visitors can squeeze into the pilot and co-pilot seats to survey dozens of

Sandhill cranes cavort around Big Spring during the winter months, taking advantage of the only reliable water for miles around.



The big spring itself is in Comanche Trail Park. Thanks to clever piping and pumping, the spring once again flows down into Comanche Trail Lake, rimmed by walking trails, shaded picnic benches, and ball fields.



The eponymous big spring itself flows with the help of modern engineering rather than natural water pressure, attracting wildlife and migratory birds.

gauges and switches that control the craft's operation.

Touring the historic heart of Big Spring, I make a stop at the 1901 Potton House, a Victorian home of red Pecos sandstone, and the Heritage Museum with its collections of Longhorn horns (at least eight feet tip to tip), rare record players, and an exhibit of 1930s tools used at Big Spring's refinery.

For more than a century, travelers have been content to stay a few days near the big spring and Scenic Mountain. Today, Big Spring offers more comforts and even more reasons to stop in. ★

Writer EILEEN MATTEI enjoyed Big Spring's no-hype ambiance yet hopes the town creates an elevated prairie dog-watching deck.

Photographer MICHAEL AMADOR, who took the photograph on the cover, enjoyed his first visit to Big Spring, and was pleasantly surprised by the variety of terrain in this part of Texas.

essentials BIG SPRING

BIG SPRING, the seat of Howard County, lies 60 miles northeast of Odessa at the I-20 and US 87 junction. For more information, contact the **Big Spring Convention & Visitors Bureau**, 866/430-7100; www.bigspring-cvb.com.

ATTRACTIONS

Hangar 25 Air Museum, 1911 Apron Dr., in the McMahon Wrinkle Airpark. Nearby is the Vietnam Memorial with the war's iconic helicopters. 432/264-1999; www.hangar25airmuseum.com.

Big Spring State Park, 1 Scenic Dr., 432/262-4931; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/bigspring.

Big Spring Municipal Auditorium, 310 E. 3rd St. Tours available by appt. Call 432/263-8235.

Heritage Museum, 510 Scurry, 432/267-8255.

DINING

Al's & Son Bar-B-Q, 1810 S. Gregg, 432/267-8921.

Big John's Feed Lot, 802 W. 3rd, 432/263-3178.

Brenda's BBQ & More, 904 W. 3rd, 432/262-3178.

Herman's Restaurant, 1601 Gregg, 432/267-3281.



TEXAS on Tap

MICROBREWERIES YIELD
MAXIMUM TASTE AND A LOYAL FOLLOWING.



Cheers to Saint Arnold Brewing Company's brew crew, which includes marketing guru Lennie Ambrose and company founder Brock Wagner. The Houston brewery produces five year-round and five seasonal styles.





By Ian Dille • Photographs by Kevin Stillman

BROCK WAGNER, OWNER OF THE SAINT ARNOLD BREWING Company in Houston, stands in the steel basket of a hydraulic boom lift flanked by a row of stainless-steel fermentation tanks, each named for a patron saint of brewers. Like a preacher at his pulpit, Wagner proselytizes on the virtues of Saint Arnold beer to a few hundred fervent believers gathered on the concrete floor below him. “Life is too short to drink bad beer,” he says. “You only have one liver. Use it wisely.”

Over the past 15 years, craft breweries like Saint Arnold’s—defined as small, local, independent beer makers who use the finest ingredients and follow traditional brewing practices—have experienced exponential growth. Today, American beer drinkers, whose choices were once limited primarily to Coors, Miller, and Budweiser, can enjoy an array of options. More than 400 craft breweries currently dot the United States.

Texas has its fair share. The following statewide beer tour, from Houston to the Metroplex, all the way to Austin and beyond, includes the state’s five craft breweries (those that produce less than 2 million barrels per year), and one widely known regional brewery, Shiner, which produces one of the best-selling specialty beers in the nation: Shiner Bock.

SHINER

WHEN entering Shiner (pop. 2,070) from the north on quiet Texas 95, the white brick **Spoetzl Brewery** building signals civilization. Initially constructed in 1909 by a group of German farmers who yearned



At Blanco's Real Ale Brewing Company, Monica Lakin boxes up Full Moon Pale Rye Ale, described on the company's Web site as an "assertive American amber ale ... tawny red and full of malt and hops."

**"LIFE IS TOO SHORT TO DRINK BAD BEER.
YOU ONLY HAVE ONE LIVER. USE IT WISELY."**

—BROCK WAGNER, SAINT ARNOLD BREWING COMPANY

was renamed when Shiner Bock soared in popularity. "It's what we all grew up on," says Dotsy Elliott, who fills my cup in the brewery's hospitality room. "I think I had Shiner Blonde in my baby bottle."

Brewmaster Jimmy Mauric, the on-site leader of Shiner's 58 employees, started at the Spoetzl Brewery 30 years ago as a bottle washer. "As a kid I could smell the beer brewing while playing in my backyard," he says. He prides Shiner beer on both its drinkability and its consistency. In the brewery's lab, Mauric's colleague Peter Takacs, a white-coated quality-control manager, tests each batch for taste and color—ensuring that the next Shiner you drink is as good as the one you just had.

HILL COUNTRY

"AUSTINITES get it," says Live Oak Brewing Company's Chip McElroy of the city's appreciation for his authentic Live Oak Pilz and general love of craft beer. A biochemist-turned-brewery owner, McElroy currently makes beer at a former meat-packing plant just east of downtown Austin—its nine-foot-tall ceilings are just high enough for his horizontally positioned fermentation tanks. They give the yeast a greater surface area on which to react than standard vertical tanks, McElroy says. (Translation: It makes the beer taste better.)

In the Old World style of Germany and the

Czech Republic, McElroy brews with nothing more than beer's four primary ingredients: water, malted grain, hops, and yeast. Employing what's called a decoction mash, he puts his malt (a form of barley grain) through a labor-intensive cooking process designed to heighten the beer's flavor. After one sip of the Live Oak HefeWeizen, which, due solely to its distinctive yeast strain and the brewing process, imparts notes of banana and clove, I concur with McElroy's formula.



Beer starts here (clockwise from top to center): chocolate malt, hops, rye, crystal malt, wheat, and two-row malt.

BREWING

Beer is made from four primary ingredients: water, malted grain, hops, and yeast. The brewing process begins when the malted grain (typically barley, although wheat and rye grains are also used) is put in a vessel known as the mash tun and crushed, breaking the grains' kernels away from their husks. As hot water is added to the mash tun, natural enzymes within the grain react with the starches and create fermentable sugars.

The liquid from the mash tun—the wort—is drained and transferred to the kettle (one of those grand-looking copper tanks). Hops, which add aroma and bitterness to the beer, are added to the kettle and the wort is boiled. After the wort cools, it's moved into a fermentation tank where yeast is added. The yeast converts the fermentable sugars into alcohol. Once the process is complete—voilà—beer!

—IAN DILLE

for the beer of their homeland, the brewery has been considerably expanded. Today, it produces approximately 370,200 million barrels of beer per year. (One barrel is equal to 31 gallons.)

The Spoetzl Brewery currently makes five styles of beer year round, plus two seasonally, including Shiner Dunkelweizen (German for dark wheat), a hearty winter brew with a smooth, slightly sweet aftertaste. The flagship, Shiner Bock, constitutes 87 percent of the brewery's production, but those who live and work in Shiner tend to favor Shiner Blonde. The golden lager, formerly known as Shiner Premium Beer, served as the brewery's initial recipe, but

TODAY, THE BREWERY IS HUMMING WITH MORE THAN 450 BEER LOVERS, MANY OF WHOM HAVE BROUGHT THEIR EMPTY SIX-PACK HOLDERS.

While McElroy doesn't yet bottle his five styles of Live Oak beer, which is named for the iconic Texas tree, his tap handles, constructed from actual tree branches, can be spotted at a number of bars across the state.

In Austin, however, those tap handles compete for bar space with another local brewery. Located south of the booming

brewing, a nine-hour process that once started must be seen through to completion. At some point, he'd conked out. "Come back on Saturday," Cartwright said. "We'll have free beer and live music."

A longtime homebrewer, Cartwright perfected his craft during nine years at Austin's late Coppertank Brewing Company before opening Independence in 2004. Today, with the help of his wife, Amy, the granddaughter of a Depression-era homebrewer (the inspiration for the brewery's Bootlegger Brown Ale), Independence produces 2,000 barrels per year and brews five styles of beer—including the Independence Pale Ale and Jasperilla Old Ale, a highly potent brew that's aged for over a year.

No tour of Central Texas breweries would be complete without traveling 50 miles west along US 290 to Blanco. Here, for more than a decade, **Real Ale Brewery** owner Brad Farbstein has strived "to brew the best beer in our own backyard." That yard easily extends back to the Capital City, where Real Ale does 80 percent of its business; in Austin you'll find Fireman's #4 Blonde Ale, with its perfect balance of sweet malt and bitter hop flavors, at nearly every bar.

During my visit, Farbstein was installing the cooler door on the brewery's year-old (and greatly expanded) facility, just north of Blanco's town square. The cooler, constructed of recycled Styrofoam and concrete bricks, exemplifies Real Ale's environmental dedication. An area farmer collects the brewery's used barley for cattle feed, its local distribution fleet runs on biofuel, and its beer is 100 percent vegan. "We're not entirely green yet," says tour guide Gabriel Gregerman. "But we're trying." *(continued on page 59)*



downtown area, the **Independence Brewery** has no problem attracting loyal enthusiasts to its monthly open house.

I first learned about the event when I dropped in on owner Rob Cartwright one weekday afternoon. After much door pounding, the shaggy, redheaded Canadian (but honorary Texan, who bottles an amber ale each fall called Oklahoma Suks! right around Texas-OU weekend) opened the door. Groggy and shirtless with an Independence Freestyle Wheat Beer in one hand, Cartwright had been up all night

ABOVE: Brewmaster J.B. Flowers pours a glass of Rahr and Sons' Stormcloud, a German-style India Pale Ale. RIGHT: Beer connoisseurs fill the Fort Worth brewery during Saturday tours and tastings.

BEER STYLES

Almost all beers can be classified as either lagers or ales. Here's the difference: Ales are made with yeast that ferments at the top of the tank at temperatures ranging from 60 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit; they take only a week or two to fully ferment. Lagers are made with bottom-fermenting yeast at slightly lower temperatures (50 to 55 degrees Fahrenheit); they're stored (a.k.a. lagered) for four weeks or more before they're ready to consume.

However, to further the confusion, Texas state law requires that all beers above 5-percent alcohol by volume be labeled as ales. These are some of the most popular styles of beer you'll find in Texas.

Bock beers originated in the town of Einbeck, Germany. The lager-style beer was traditionally brewed during the winter for consumption in the spring. Today, many American bock beers, such as Shiner, maintain the dark color of their European counterparts, but offer a smooth, sweet flavor. By the way, "bock" means billygoat in German.

Pilsner—Identifiable primarily by their pale, golden hue, pilsners are perhaps the most ubiquitous beer in the United States (Budweiser is a pilsner). A lager first brewed in the Czech Republic town of Pilsen, a true pilsner bursts with bitter hop and full malt flavors.

Hefeweizen—Among the aromas found in a classic hefeweizen are clove, nutmeg, and banana. These ales contain low bitterness, with a maltiness balanced by an assortment of spicy flavors. They're brewed with wheat, and often served with a wedge of lemon.

Pale Ale—Often described as citrusy and floral, pale ales have become a staple of the American craft-brewing revolution. American pale ales have a medium body, strong hop flavors, and more notable bitterness than their English forbears, such as Bass.

Brown Ale—Identifiable by their reddish-brown color, these ales offer a sweet, nutty palate. Because they rely more on malt and yeast for flavor than hops, they have a smooth taste with little bitterness.

—IAN DILLE



A TALE OF TWO CITIES

HAVING THE BEST

COLLEGE STATION



Sculptor Gary Price's *Children of Peace* at Unity Plaza on Texas Avenue provides a lovely landmark between Bryan and College Station.

OF TIMES IN BRYAN AND COLLEGE STATION



BRYAN

BY SUSAN KIRR

PHOTOGRAPHS BY J. GRIFFIS SMITH

They sprouted forth from the same rich East Texas soil, and could be considered fraternal twins. Although Bryan and College Station share a collective history in the picturesque Brazos Valley, they've maintained their separate identities, which makes a trip to this metro area a double pleasure.

Texas A&M University, the sixth largest in the nation, garners a lot of press, and rightfully so. But there are scores of other good reasons for taking a weekend jaunt to Brazos County and exploring the many attractions found there.

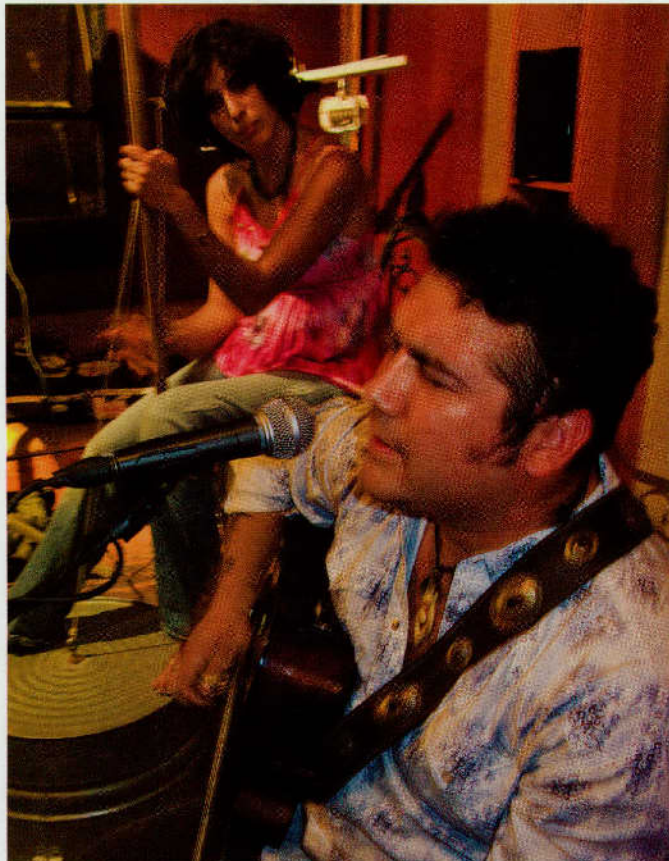
Take Bryan, for example. It's currently in the throes of a major downtown revitalization. First settled in the 1820s, the town really thrived in the 1860s and 1870s, when the railroad's arrival brought commerce from the Gulf Coast. Some of the community's current appeal relates to the town's historic heyday. The LaSalle Hotel, a railroad hotel built in 1928, underwent a major renovation in 2000, and now offers 55 guest rooms (see *Texas Highways*, August 2007). The black-and-white checkerboard-tile floor, wood paneling in the lobby, and quaint café facing the street all recall the charm of the original building.

In 1902, the local ladies' society, known as the Mutual Improvement Club, deemed the town rather uncivilized. Dirt roads, saloons, and plenty of ne'er-do-wells set the tone. Members appealed to Andrew Carnegie for a library, and he agreed, but only if the town would put up the land for the site and commit \$1,000 annually to maintain it.

The community got on board, and one of the first Carnegie libraries opened in Bryan in December 1903.

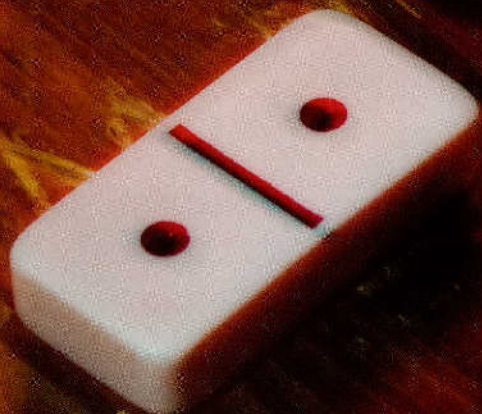
Today, the library serves as the Carnegie Center of Brazos Valley History, archiving area history and photographs, as well as extensive genealogical records. The original pressed-tin ceiling, polished pine floors, carved pine staircases, and oak tables preserve the atmosphere of the library in its early days.

Nearby, the Old Bryan Marketplace, a restored docking warehouse for the railroad, anchors one end of downtown. Here you can find shops such as Nan Richardson's Antiques & More (with a pony from a French merry-go-round), and Out of the Box



LEFT: Chris Puente performs at the Revolution Café & Bar (211-B S. Main, 979/823-4044, www.revolutioncafeandbar.com) in downtown Bryan. FACING PAGE: Dominoes are a popular pastime at the Dixie Chicken in College Station.

■ To order a print of the dominoes photo, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.





ART APPRECIATION
abounds, whether it
involves antiques-shopping
at the Old Bryan Marketplace,
or viewing modern sculpture
in one of three art galleries
on the A&M campus.

(carrying elegant personalized stationery). Madden's Casual Gourmet makes a virtue of the building's wide plank floors, rustic wood beams, and exposed brick walls. Chef Peter Madden serves inventive dishes like grilled meatloaf, braised boneless beef short ribs cooked in a red-wine sauce, and tenderloin rubbed with chocolate, chiles, and coffee.

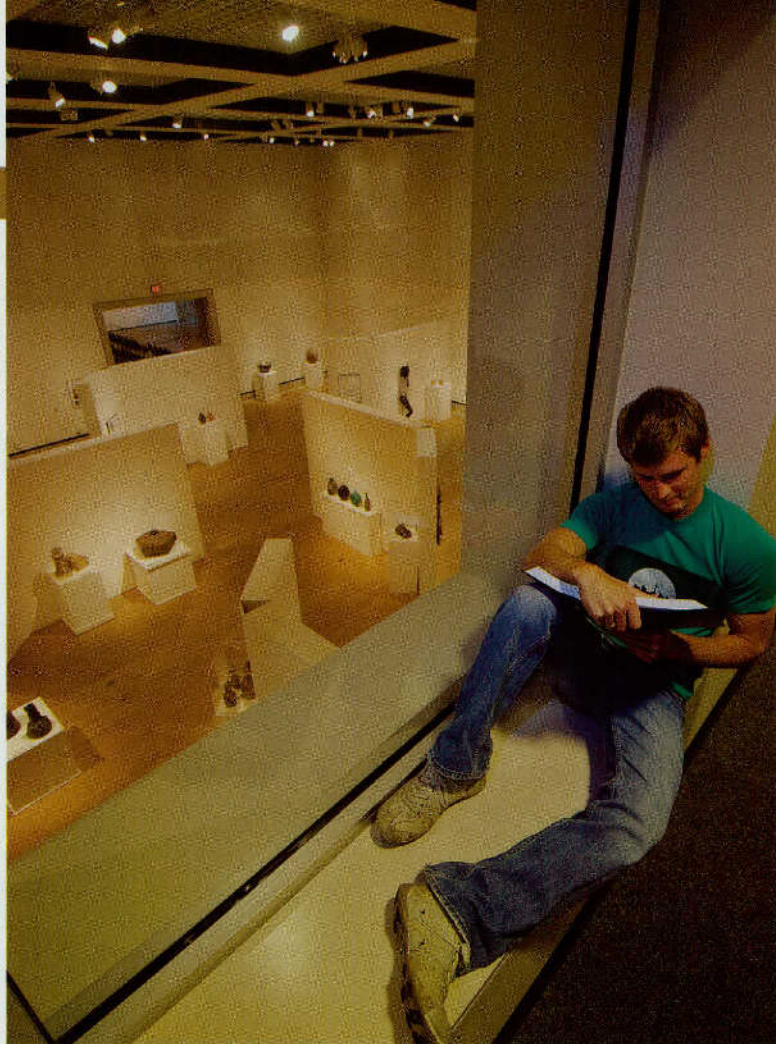
A block over on North Main Street at Caffé Capri, owner Rami Cerone offers both traditional Italian recipes from his mama's kitchen, as well as dishes he's devised, such as Cajun fettuccine and shrimp-scampi ravioli. Ferrari memorabilia displayed around the restaurant reveals the owner's other passion.

In fact, the renovated downtown now features several restaurants, bars, and retailers, including the new River Bridge Bar & Grill (on the first floor of the historic 1906 Howell Building, adjacent to the LaSalle); longtime favorite Los Norteños Mexican Cafe; Catalena Hatters, which makes custom felt hats on site; and Earth Art, which sells handmade Guatemalan *huipils*, textiles from India, distinctive jewelry, and a wide mix of carved masks from Guatemala, Africa, and Bali that will transport visitors around the globe.

College Station lies about 10 miles to the southeast, but the two towns practically merge together, with Texas A&M near the middle. Founded in 1876, the university initially focused on agricultural and mechanical studies (hence A&M), with an all-male, all-military student body. The university began admitting women on a limited basis in 1963 (they weren't on an equal basis with men until 1971), and made it voluntary to join the Corps of Cadets, a student military organization, in 1965. Now, with more than 45,000 students and dozens of disciplines—10 academic colleges, 120 undergraduate degree programs, 240 masters and Ph.D. fields of study, as well as a doctorate in veterinary medicine—the university has diversified considerably since its early days.

In keeping with the vision of a public institution, the university offers an array of activities to the wider public, and many are free. The Forsyth Center and J. Wayne Stark University Center art galleries at the Memorial Student Center contain multiple permanent collections and host numerous traveling exhibits annually.

The Sam Houston Sanders Corps of Cadets Center displays photographs and memora-



FACING PAGE: The Old Bryan Marketplace, set in a 100-year old building replete with 22,000 square feet of leaded glass doors, pine floors, and brick archways, welcomes browsers, shoppers, and treasure seekers. ABOVE: Matt Hansen studies above one of the galleries at Texas A&M's Memorial Student Center.



bilia (cadet uniforms, competition trophies, Bonfire accounts) depicting the history of the Corps at A&M. The building also contains the Metzger-Sanders Gun Collection, an impressive array of muzzle loaders, rifles of the Old West, revolvers from the Civil War era, and intricately carved and inlaid guns from Europe and Asia.

Texas A&M houses a large horticulture department, and you can see some of the experiments firsthand. Just stop at the Holistic Garden (adjacent to the Horticulture Building), an

enchanting patchwork of flowers, fruit trees, vegetables, and herbs. Wander through the beds, where you can view the abundant flowering plants (such as purple sage, yellow rain lily, pink and maroon mallow, and antique roses) and learn their names. Rest a spell next to a replica of an 1850s cottage, under a beautiful arbor festooned with flowering orange trumpet vine.

The George Bush Presidential Library and Museum also calls Texas A&M home, and completed a major renovation in November 2007. You can see a TBM Avenger aircraft

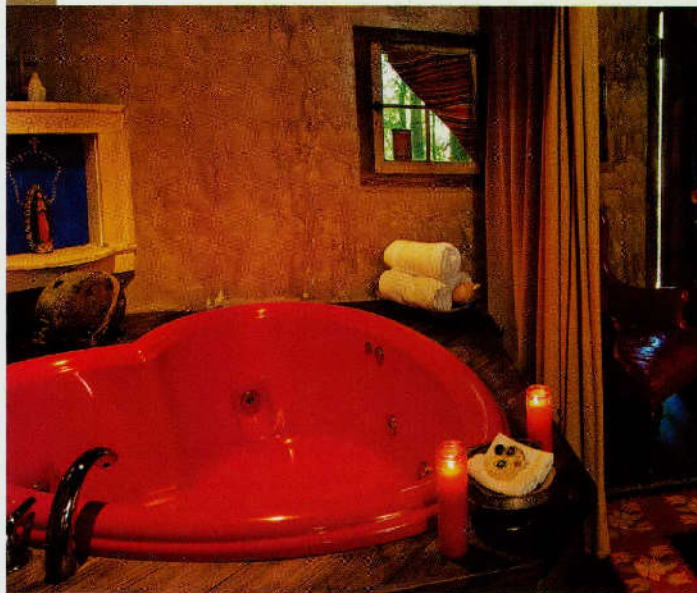
Bryan's Messina Hof Winery & Resort offers a tantalizing package of tours, tastings, culinary classes, a restaurant, and an award-winning B&B.



DON'T LEAVE the Brazos Valley without dropping by the Messina Hof Winery. The annual Harvest Festival runs from July 18-August 17.

(torpedo bomber) like the one that George H.W. Bush flew in World War II, a portion of the Berlin Wall, and several new interactive and video exhibits that examine the former president's life from childhood to the present. You can also read a presidential speech from a teleprompter as if giving a press conference; recent updates include a re-creation of the elder Bush's Oval Office (you can pose for a photo here) and the Situation Room in the White House.

Northgate, on University Drive, lies along several blocks directly across from the north side of campus, and forms the nexus of the university entertainment district, as it is lined with restaurants, bars, and bookstores. Here you'll find the famous Dixie Chicken



7F Lodge

B&Bs so often try to evoke feelings of romance, a getaway, an escape. 7F Lodge delivers all this and more.

In Wellborn, about seven miles from Bryan and College Station, 7F Lodge is set among 14 wooded acres. Five unusual cottages on the grounds offer an opportunity to experience some serious peace and quiet. There's a little French château, a hacienda, a casita, a Hill Country cabin, and an intriguing escape called the Sugar Shack. Far from kitschy, the cabins have been designed with carefully chosen antiques and period details, sure to transport you away from your workaday world.

The Sugar Shack, an actual sharecropper shack once located nearby, was moved to the 7F property by owners Carol and Craig Conlee. This particular accommodation centers on the tale of a juke-joint owner whose lady did him wrong, and the story unfolds in every room, from the screened-in front porch to the cozy living room (complete with Fender guitar on a small stage so you can croon to your loved one) to the boudoir, with its big, comfy bed, deep bathtub, and audacious red walls.

You don't have to talk to, or see, anyone, if that's your preference. Snacks and breakfast are simply left in your cabin—a basket full of cheese and crackers, fresh baked goods, yogurt, fruit, coffee, and juice.

There are plenty of diversions—footpaths winding through the woods, a darling wedding chapel to explore, a day spa, and a wine shop. But 7F is also the kind of place where you can just keep to yourself, hang out on the porch, and listen to nothing but the frogs and the birds and the crickets singing their love songs.

—SUSAN KIRR

In Wellborn, near College Station, the 7F Lodge delivers the goods when it comes to romance, relaxation, and rejuvenation.



Maurice Pinnock makes a decision in the interactive White House Situation Room at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum on the campus of Texas A&M in College Station.

bar, which opened in '76. While you might be tempted to assume that's 1876 (because of the worn plank floors, rusted signs on the walls, and tables carved with students' initials), it has only been around for a little over three decades. Several pool tables, two colorful bars cluttered with memorabilia (various Texana and Aggie mementos, a snake, and beer signs), and a kitchen at the back keep students coming back for burgers, fries, and yes, chicken.

Several bed and breakfasts serve the area, and the Rudder-Jessup B&B, in particular, offers guests wonderful Southern hospitality. Owners George and Hilary Jessup will gladly relate the history of this Colonial-style house. Built in 1936, it retains its historical charm, but has been renovated to include modern amenities like luxe bathrooms and a contemporary kitchen. The former owner, General James Earl Rudder, fought in World War II and served as president of the university from 1959 through the 1960s, overseeing vast changes in the university system.

In the morning, George cooks up a mean ranch-house breakfast of migas prepared with avocados and chorizo, accompanied by coffee and freshly squeezed orange juice. The Jessups make guests feel at home in their spacious kitchen, but you can also savor your breakfast on the back patio, which is particularly lovely March through June, when the garden is in bloom.

And finally, don't leave the Brazos Valley without dropping by the Messina Hof Winery, founded in 1977 by the personable Paul Bonarrigo VI and his wife, Merrill. Named

for their ancestral homelands (Paul's family hails from Messina in Sicily and Merrill's from Hof, Germany), the winery embodies the best of both cultures.

Visitors can enjoy a wine-tasting, choosing four vintages from over three dozen wines made on-site, including pinot grigio, gewurztraminer, cabernet sauvignon, and port, plus several reserve wines. The winery's upcoming annual Harvest Festival—"our favorite time of the year here," says Paul Bonarrigo—runs from July 18-August 17.

Take some time to wander the grounds, walking a path that snakes through the woods, around a pond, and back through the vineyards. A restaurant on the premises,

The Vintage House, serves fine fare in a large dining room lined with large oak barrels. The extensive menu of fish, pasta, steaks, and other grilled meats includes suggested wine pairings for every dish. Guests can also stay overnight in the Villa at Messina Hof, with rooms furnished in historic, romantic motifs, such as Romeo and Juliet, d'Artagnan, and Camelot.

Texas A&M alone may be a great reason to come to the area, but together, the twin cities of Bryan and College Station offer so many other diversions, you may find yourself kicking back and staying longer than you'd planned. ★

Austin-based writer and filmmaker SUSAN KIRR particularly enjoyed her stay at the 7F Lodge in Wellborn, just south of College Station.

Brazos Valley guy and former A&M staff photographer GRIFF SMITH is proud to be a home boy shining a light on Aggieland.

essentials TWIN CITIES—BRYAN AND COLLEGE STATION

BRYAN and College Station are in west central Brazos County, 100 miles east of Austin and 90 miles northwest of Houston. For more information, contact the Bryan-College Station Convention & Visitors Bureau, 715 University Dr. E., College Station, 979/260-9898 or 800/777-8292; www.visitaggieland.com.

ACCOMMODATIONS

7F Lodge, 16611 Royder Rd., Wellborn, 979/690-0073; www.7floodge.com.

Rudder-Jessup B&B, 115 Lee Ave., College Station, 979/693-1749; www.jessup1.com.

LaSalle Hotel, 120 S. Main St., Bryan, 866/822-2000; www.lasalle-hotel.com.

The Villa at Messina Hof, 4545 Old Reliance Rd., Bryan, 409/778-9463; www.messinahof.com.

TEXAS A&M CAMPUS

J. Wayne Stark University Center Galleries, in the Memorial Student Center, 979/845-6081; <http://stark.tamu.edu>.

MSC Forsyth Center Galleries, in the Memorial Student Center, 979/845-9251; <http://forsyth.tamu.edu>.

Sanders-Metzger Gun Collection, in the Sam Houston Sanders Corps of Cadets Center, 979/862-2862; www.aggiecorps.org/CorpsCenter.

The Holistic Garden, adjacent to the Horticulture Building, 979/845-3915; <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/holisticgarden>.

aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/holisticgarden.

George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, 1000 W. George Bush Dr., 979/691-4000; <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu>.



OTHER ATTRACTIONS

Old Bryan Marketplace, 202 S. Bryan Ave., Bryan, 979/779-3245; www.oldbryan.com.

Carnegie Center of Brazos Valley History, 111 S. Main St., Bryan, 979/209-5630.

Messina Hof Winery, 4545 Old Reliance Rd., Bryan, 979/778-9463; www.messinahof.com.

RESTAURANTS

Madden's Casual Gourmet, 202 S. Bryan Ave., Bryan, 979/779-2558; www.pmaddens.com.

Caffè Capri, 222 N. Main St., Bryan, 979/822-2675; www.theplaceforitalian.com.

Christopher's World Grille, 5001 Boonville Rd., Bryan, 979/776-2181; www.christophersworldgrille.com.

River Bridge Bar & Grill, 200 S. Main St., Bryan, 979/823-2333; www.riverbridge-bryan.com.

Los Norteños Mexican Cafe, 205 S. Main St., Bryan, 979/779-7337.

The Dixie Chicken, 307 University Dr., College Station, 979/846-2322; www.dixiechicken.com.

Café Eccell, 101 Church Ave., College Station, 979/846-7908; www.cafeeccell.com.

legendary cafés

(continued from page 27)

SARTIN'S SEAFOOD

NASSAU BAY

When the original Sartin's opened in Sabine Pass in 1971, the public's response was widespread addiction to its version of barbecued crabs. Legend holds that the recipe originated in the 1940s at a nearby seaside crab shack called Granger's, but the Sartin family made the dish famous in the 1970s, after they opened a series of restaurants in the area. Through the years there have been more than a dozen Sartin locations, but many—including the flagship café—have fallen victim to hurricanes. The Nassau Bay restaurant opened after Hurricane Rita took out a Beaumont location in 2005 (a new Sartin's will open in Beaumont this summer). Other locations in Nederland and Beaumont offer the same style of barbecued crabs, but they're under different ownership.

Don't leave without trying: The barbecued Gulf blue crabs, natch. The whole



crab is slathered in butter and dipped in a heavy, proprietary spice blend and then deep-fried. Unbelievably messy to eat, these fiery crustaceans have no equals, and are worth the trouble it takes to consume them. Order them by the dozen or half-dozen or all-you-can-eat on a platter with crab balls, fried catfish and shrimp, French fries, hush puppies, and onion rings.

Same neck of the woods: Space Center Houston is a mile west, the Kemah Boardwalk (shops, restaurants, entertainment) is about six miles east, and Galveston Island is 30 miles southeast.

Sartin's Seafood, 18023 Upper Bay Dr., 281/333-4040; www.sartins.com

THE SHED CAFE

EDOM

When you happen upon four dining rooms packed with members of the Red Hat Society and the weekend Harley-Davidson set, you know you've found a destination country café. Since opening in 1970 at the intersection of two tiny ribbons of highway winding through the Piney Woods, The Shed has pulled in big crowds, especially at lunch.



If lines are streaming out through the screen doors, just sit a spell on the front porch until there's room inside.

Don't leave without trying: Chicken-fried steak is the biggest seller, but you'd be nuts to overlook the old-fashioned cheeseburger, cooked on a well-seasoned griddle and served on a fresh, toasted bun. Sides vary daily, but the pinto beans are a good bet. Try the signature desserts: Peanut butter meringue and buttermilk pies are the big stars, followed closely by apricot fried pies and blackberry cobbler.

Same neck of the woods: Canton, home of the famous First Monday Trade Days, is just 20 miles west, and pretty Tyler State Park is about 35 miles northeast.★

The Shed Cafe, 8337 FM 279, 903/852-7791; www.theshedcafe.com

JUNE NAYLOR wrote about more than 60 legendary eateries in her recent book *Texas Landmark Cafes* (available for \$5.95 from The Great Texas Line Press, www.savoryhousepress.com). She says the six establishments she covers here have become personal favorites.

Photographer GRIFF SMITH says it's a tossup as to which of these cafés has the best pie: He thought The Shed's Chocolate Dream Pie and the Monument's Chocolate Pie with Toasted-Pecan Crust were both outstanding.

TEXAS ON TAP

(continued from page 48)

If you visit, make sure to taste the crisp, full-flavored Full Moon Pale Rye Ale. It's a righteous brew.

FORT WORTH

ACCORDING to the Web site of Fort Worth's recently opened Rahr and Sons Brewing Co., the 150-year history of Rahr family brewing is nearly older than that of the city itself. Upon entering the brewery's museum-like office, filled with century-old artifacts from the family's original Eagle Brewery and Malting House in Wisconsin, I believe it.

Later, seated at a table covered in half-empty Rahr and Sons beer bottles, my tour guide, Mark Wedge, flips through a picture book of Rahr's history. Founded in 1847 by German immigrant Wilhelm Rahr, the Eagle Brewery chose to close down brew-



A beacon of Texas brewing, Shiner's 1909 Spoltz Brewery today produces more than 370,000 barrels of beer per year.

ing operations in the early 1900s, leaving only the Rahr Malting Co., which today includes the single largest malting facility in the world.

In 2004, Fritz Rahr, Wilhem's great-great-grandson, quit his job in marketing and sales and revived the family brewing

tradition. Of the brewery's eight beer styles, the award-winning Ugly Pug Black Lager remains the most popular. "Even people who have written off dark beer enjoy this one," Wedge says, pouring out a chocolate-colored liquid that emits notes of caramel and coffee. "It's black, but drinks like a light-bodied beer—good for Texas heat."

HOUSTON

BACK at the Saint Arnold Brewing Company, I'm deep into my third sample of

Fancy Lawnmower, a light German-style Kölsch with citrusy hop flavors that perfectly complements summer yardwork. For the past 13 years, owner Brock Wagner, a former investment banker, has devoted every Saturday to sharing his passion for good beer. "When we started

hosting tours, there would be 15 people and we'd walk them around the entire place," he says.

Today, the brewery is humming with more than 450 beer lovers, many of whom have brought their empty six-pack holders of Saint Arnold's five year-round and five seasonal beer styles. The recycled containers are redeemable for T-shirts, pint glasses, and, if anyone manages to save up 200,000 of them, a 1957 "tie-dye" painted Bentley. Later, Wagner leads me into the warehouse where the Bentley is stored. He opens the rear door, and I climb in.

Settling into the couch-like leather seats, I do the math: Only 199,999.5 more six packs to go. ★

IAN DILLE, who enjoys combining his love of beer and bicycling, says, "The Spoetzl Brewery hosts a ride called the Shiner G.A.S.P. The Real Ale Ride traverses some of the Hill Country's most scenic terrain. And Saint Arnold sponsors a relay race called Beer Bike."

Photographer KEVIN STILLMAN says, "Saint Arnold also makes a great root beer."

essentials

A DIY BREWERY TOUR

Spoetzl Brewery, 603 Brewery St., Shiner, 361/594-3383; www.shiner.com. Tours: Mon-Fri 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.; free.



Live Oak Brewing Company, 5th and Allen sts., Austin, 512/385-2299; www.liveoakbrewing.com. Tours: Tue and Thu, 2 p.m.; free. Call ahead for appt.

Independence Brewing Company, 3913 Todd Ln., #607, Austin, 512/707-0099; www.independencebrewing.com. Tours: First Sat of every month, 1-3 p.m.; free.

Real Ale Brewing Company, 231 San Saba Ct., Blanco, 830/833-2534; www.realalebrewing.com. Open Fri 2-5 p.m. (tour at 4); free.

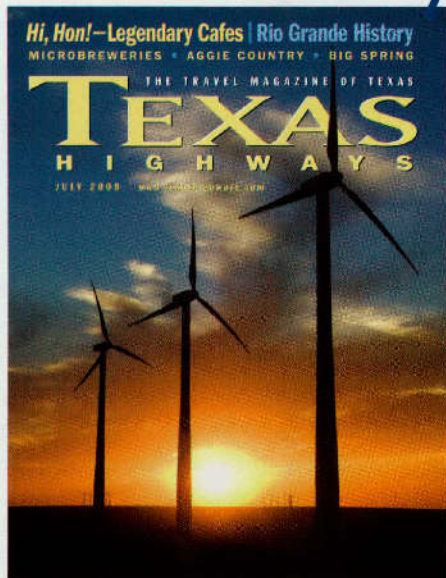
Rahr and Sons Brewing Company, 701 Galveston Ave., Fort Worth, 817/810-9266; www.rahrbrewing.com. Tours: Sat 1-3 p.m.; free.

Saint Arnold Brewing Company, 2522 Fairway Park Dr., Houston, 800/801-6402; www.saintarnold.com. Tours: Sat 1 p.m.; \$5.

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TEXAS HIGHWAYS

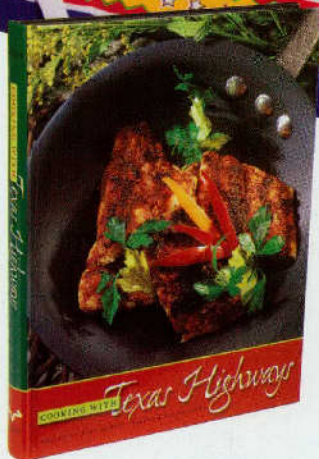
READER SERVICE GUIDE TO ADVERTISERS

(Reader service numbers are in red.)

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2. Amarillo Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 15
3. Best Western Texas, inside front cover and pg. 71
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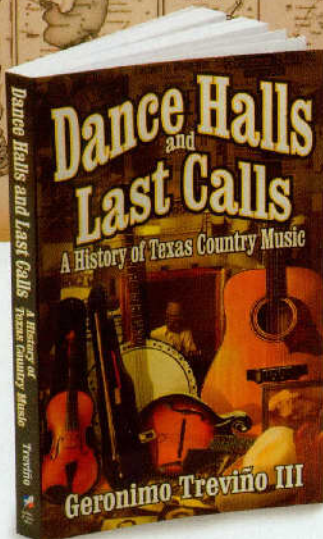
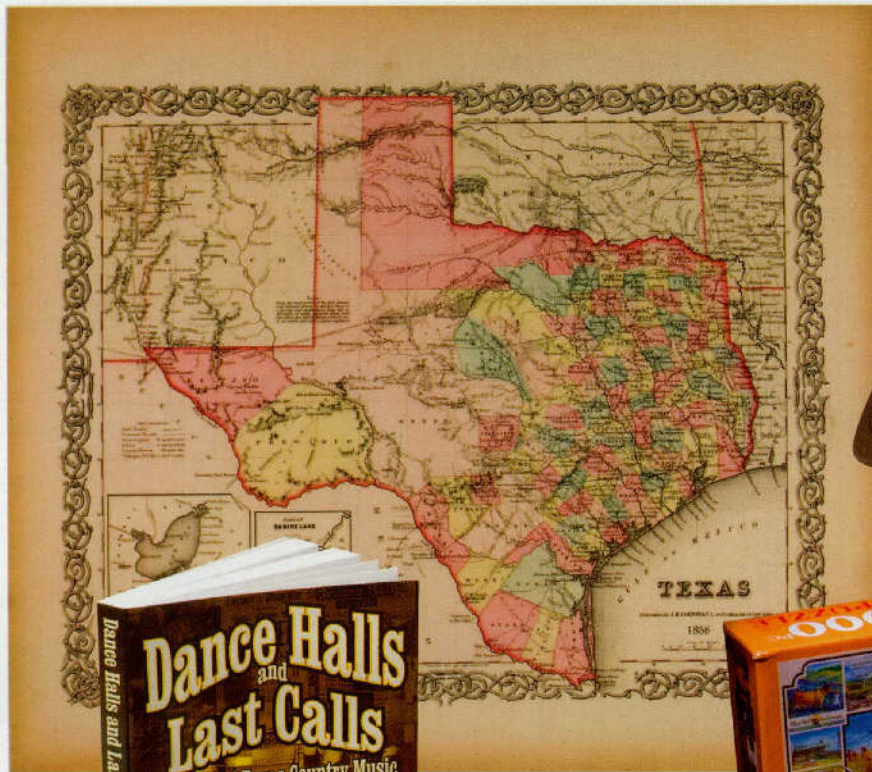
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By Geronimo Treviño III

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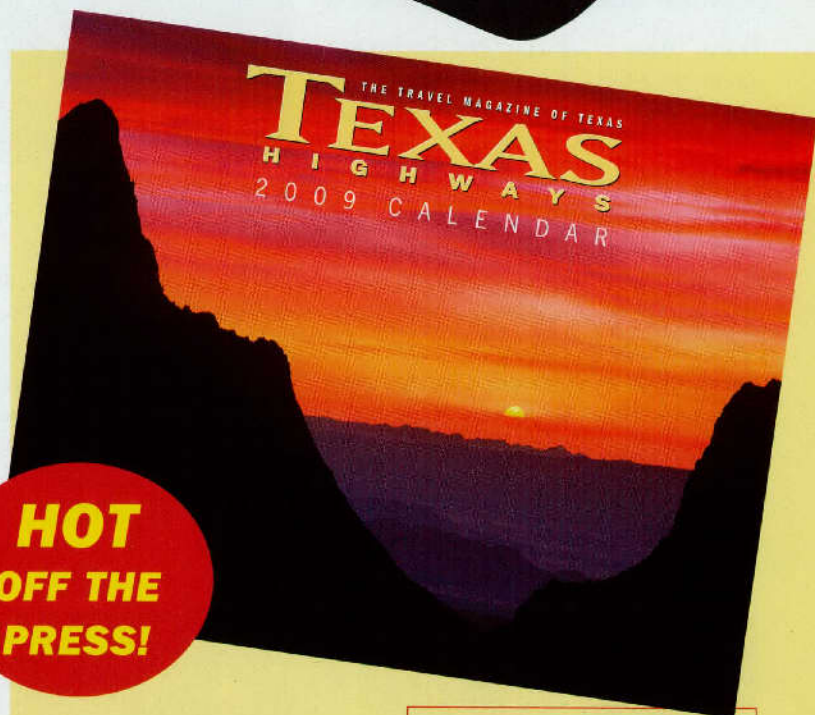
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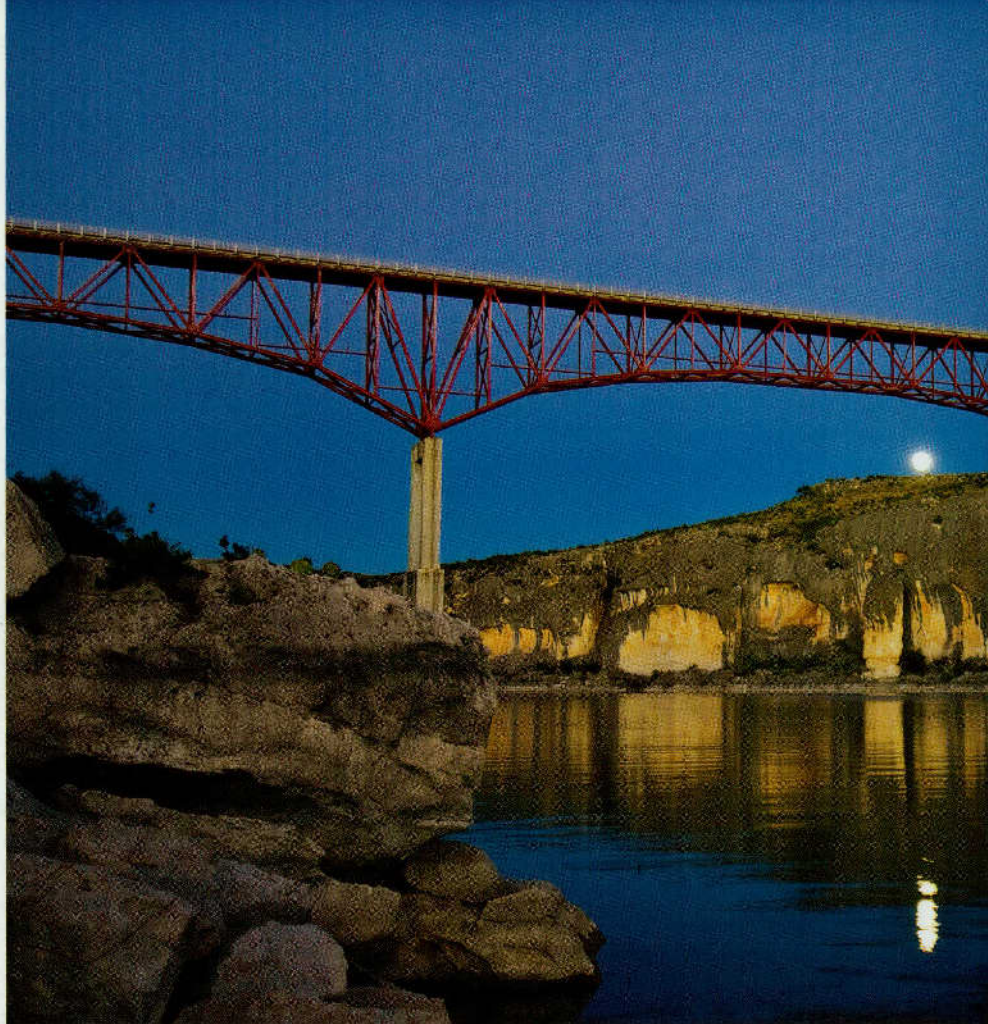
BY CHARLES LOHRMANN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY BOB DAEMMRICH

A View of Pecos River Canyon

BECAUSE the US 90 bridge over the Pecos River west of Del Rio is the highest highway bridge (256 feet above the river) in Texas, it merits a stop all by itself. It's surprising that a long-gone viaduct bridge not far from here, at 320 feet, was the highest such bridge in North America (See "Speaking of Texas," page 19). If you need a better reason to make this brief excursion on the way to Big Bend, nearby Amistad National Recreational Area offers not only a postcard-worthy view of the bridge and the Pecos River Canyon, but also includes the Pecos River Nature Trail, an interpretive path that provides a 20-minute natural history overview of the surrounding borderlands.

But wait, there's more: With the heavy rains of the past few years creating historically high water levels in Lake Amistad, the current views of the lake and the Pecos could, literally, be once-in-a-lifetime.

Naturally, we hope the water-filled views will remain, and that West Texas



A serene view of the Pecos River Canyon and the US 90 bridge. Even if you only have a few minutes to spare, the Pecos Nature Trail, and the longer views across the Rio Grande, make it time well spent.

gets more rain this year and the lake levels remain high. The wildflowers, wildlife, and even the cactus seem to love it. The bass fishermen are rejoicing at the renewed fishery of Lake Amistad and, on my spring 2008 boat trip up the Pecos, the white bass run was drawing droves of anglers several miles upstream. And the higher water allows access to ancient rock-art

YOU'LL FIND Amistad National Recreation Area's Visitor Center on US 90, 10 miles west of Del Rio. For more on Amistad National Recreation Area, visit www.nps.gov/amis. For details on **Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site**, www.tpwd.state.tx.us. See www.texasbeyondhistory.net/pecos, www.shumla.org, or www.rockart.org for more information about experiencing the region's **rock art**. For **paddling routes** and maps, visit www.nps.gov/amis/planyourvisit/paddling.htm or www.villa.delrio.com/kayaking-lake-amistad.htm.



sites that have been high and dry for years.

There are two highway overlooks where you can enjoy a picnic lunch while you take in a grand view of the highway bridge and Pecos canyon, but the Pecos River Nature Trail is part of the larger Amistad National Recreation Area, a National Park Service park.

To get to the park, make the turn off US 90 onto the side road (look for the

Artfully Yours
Salado

June 5,6,7,12,13 & 14, Tablerock's Horton Foote plays
June 6,7,13,14,20,21, Silver Spur's *Summer of Slapstick*
June 7, Institute's *Education: The American Civic Religion*
July 5,11,12,18,19,25,26, Silver Spur's Melodrama
July 19, 26 & August 2, *Salado Legends* at Tablerock
Aug 1,2,8,9,15,16,22,23, Silver Spur's Melodrama
August 2-3, Salado Art in the Park, 42nd Annual Art Fair
September 5,6,12,13,19,20, Silver Spur's *Fall into Fun*
October 3,4,10,11,17,18,24, Silver Spur's *The Foreigner*
October 10-11, Christmas in October at Civic Center
October 10,11,12 Chocolate and Art Festival
October 11, Fine Art Gallery Night, 5-9pm



Salado Art Fair

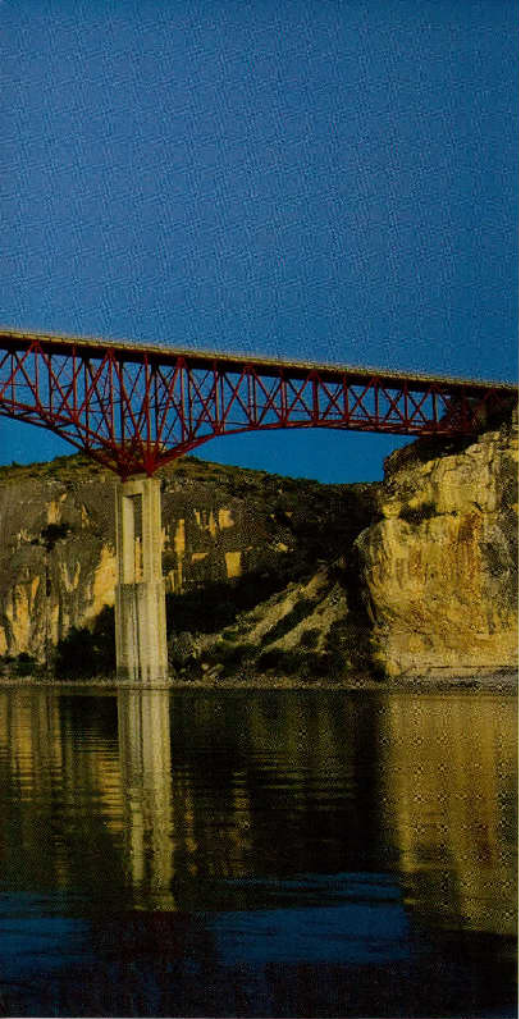


Salado Legends

**For more information
contact the
Salado Tourism Department
254-947-8634
www.salado.com**



Chocolate & Art Festival



From a sign overlooking the Pecos, you'll learn that the 300-foot cliffs patched with abstract patterns across the river are Devils River limestone. Off to the right is the highway bridge; to the left, you can see where the Pecos flows into the Rio Grande. When you scan the lower section of the cliff, you'll be able to visually trace

The nearby park offers not only a postcard-worthy view of the bridge and the Pecos River Canyon, but also includes the Pecos River Nature Trail.

the limestone foundation of the earlier river crossing road angling up the cliff. This crossing fell victim to the ravages of flood waters, a not-uncommon fate for historic structures spanning the Pecos.

This country is not just ruggedly beautiful, it also hides some amazing rock-art sites. Just a few miles up the road is



The rock art of the Lower Pecos region draws anthropologists, archeologists, and curious adventurers from around the world.

abandoned service station less than a mile east of the Pecos) and drive into the Amistad National Recreation Area. In its past life, this road served as Highway 90, and it still serves to transport you down to the boat ramp. Once you get to the expansive parking lot ringed by picnic shelters, you'll veer left to find the nature trail in the southwest corner of the park (in the opposite corner of the park from the park's boat landing).

What you'll learn as you read the trail's signs is that the live oak and ashe juniper that characterize the landscape of the Edwards Plateau to the north and east blend in with the plant life typical of the Chihuahuan Desert to the south and west. The ocotillo and cenizo make the country look much rougher and seemingly inhospitable. But your new knowledge of the plantscape will give you a greater appreciation for the diversity of the region. If you can make the trip after a spring rain, the spindly, spiky limbs of the ocotillo will be decorated with bright red blooms.



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Seminole Canyon State Park and Historic Site, where you can take a tour of Fate Bell shelter. Across Highway 90 from the state park, you'll find the Rock Art Foundation's White Shaman Preserve, where the rock-art site is open for tours to the public only on weekends.

And plan to come back to the area when you have time to do some birding and some boating. Kayaks are available, even for half-day rentals, at nearby Amistad Water Sports (830/734-6533). During a day trip in late March, we saw dozens of great blue herons nesting in precarious crags 100 feet or more above the water. A pair of osprey hunted along the shoreline and then streaked across the lake toward Mexico as we approached. Red-winged blackbirds perched in the trees along the lake's edge, and a vermilion flycatcher took off after getting a quick look at us.

When you have time for some paddling, a nearby site accessible only by water is Parida Cave, about two miles from the Pecos bridge boat ramp up to the Rio Grande channel. The trip takes a couple of hours. It's a significant site, protected

and maintained by the National Park Service. There's an NPS-maintained dock at the water's edge in front of the cave, so access to the shelter will be easy as long as the lake's water levels remain high.

A short and easy climb on marked pathways leads into the shelter. Once inside, you'll find interpretive signage that explains how archeologists believe Native Americans occupied this shelter between 4,000 to 10,000 years ago. In addition to the faded red, black, and yellow pictographs (rock paintings) that scatter across the shelter's walls, archeologists found clothing, fiber mats, sandals, and projectile points. In fact, the massive, dusty mound on which you'll be standing as you read the signs is a huge midden, layered with yet-to-be-interpreted clues to the lives of the ancient ones who left scores of amazing rock paintings—and hundreds of unanswered questions about their intentions.

Photographer BOB DAEMMRICH regularly visits the Lower Pecos region to explore new sites, and *TH* Editor CHARLES LOHRMANN tags along as often as possible.

TOP Tables

(continued from page 18)

Bebidas and Memories

FOR A DIFFERENT TAKE ON FONDA SAN Miguel, make a happy-hour visit. As lovely as the art-filled dining rooms are, the lush patio bar is Fonda's most special space. You'll think you've been transported to a Mexican resort as you sip a mango margarita, surrounded by a jungle of huge tropical plants, Paco, the talking parrot, and comfortable *equipale* furniture. Arrive before sunset to enjoy the light-filled glow of the glass atrium. The patio bar is full of wonderful nooks and crannies, each defined by original artwork and different furnishings. After that second mango margarita and round of ceviche, you'll swear the place dates back for centuries.

The Art Collection

STRIKING, LARGE-SCALE PAINTINGS and lithographs add another dimension to the dining experience here. Co-owner Tom Gilliland has collected so many artworks over the past three decades—including significant pieces by major Mexican artists—that different works are rotated into Fonda's changing exhibition about every six months. Bold, colorful, and evocative of life in Mexico, Fonda's art collection visually amplifies the big flavors of its food.

IF YOU ENJOY your minivacation at Fonda San Miguel, there's a way to extend the experience: Pick up a copy of *Fonda San Miguel: Thirty Years of Food and Art* as you leave. It features recipes, photographs of the food and restaurant, and luminous, full-page color reproductions of many of the artworks. As you pore over the book later, you'll relive Fonda San Miguel's multisensory pleasures many times over.

KATHERINE GREGOR indulges her love of armchair travel at Fonda San Miguel, where she is transported to Mexico by a fresh lime margarita.

A longtime patron of Fonda San Miguel, photographer J. GRIFFIS SMITH favors the *pescado Veracruzano*, which he describes as "amazing."

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11:30 a.m. Mayor's Luncheon
at the Coliseum

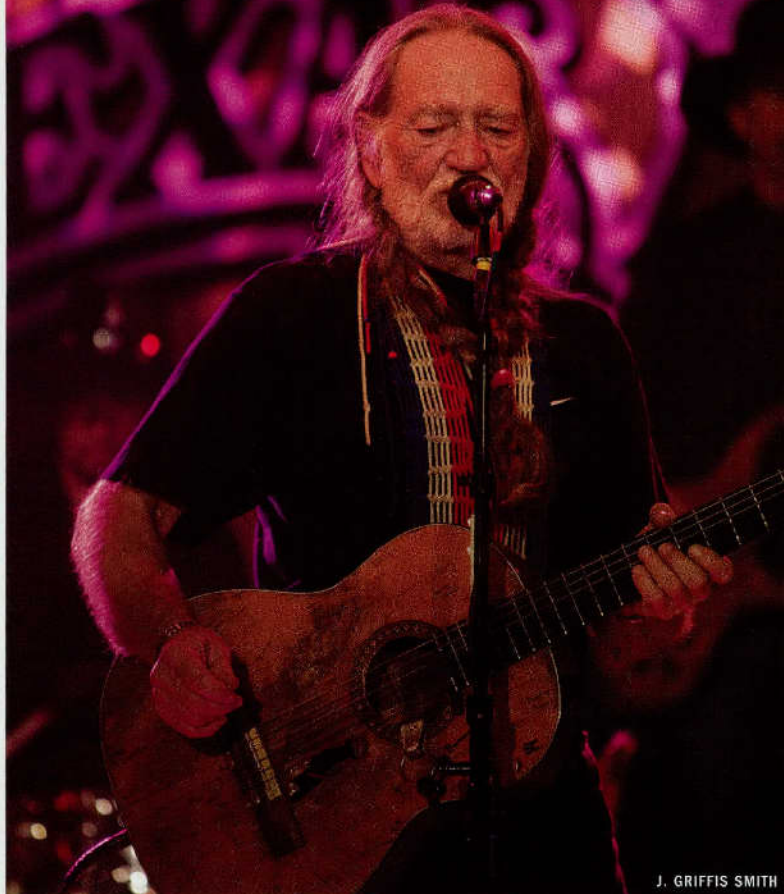
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IT'S JULY. IT'S TEXAS. IT'S WILLIE NELSON'S **Family Picnic**, people! **July 4** in **Selma**, at Verizon Wireless Amphitheater, just outside of San Antonio (210/657-8300 or 224-9600; www.vwatx.com), and **July 5** in **Houston** at The Showgrounds at Sam Houston Race Park (281/807-8760 or 800/211-3381; www.theshowgrounds.com). And what a lineup: Willie, Merle Haggard, Ray Price, Los Lonely Boys, Asleep at the Wheel, David Allan Coe, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Billy Joe Shaver, and more. Willie's on the road again. Why don't you join him? And, before and after the show, celebrate the Red Headed Stranger's first 75 years with his latest recording, *Moment of Forever*, and his new, first-ever, career-spanning, four CD deluxe box set, *One Hell of a Ride*.

More from TH Traveler—

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DEL RIO: July 4 Festivities/Fireworks July 4. www.drchamber.com 830/774-8558

EL PASO: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. El Paso Symphony Orchestra concert and fireworks. Chamizal National Memorial Amphitheater. 915/541-4481

EL PASO: Ysleta Mission Festival July 11-13. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. www.ysletamission.org 915/859-9848

EL PASO: Music Under the Stars July 13, 20, 27. Concerts begin at 7:30 p.m. Chamizal National Memorial Amphitheater. 915/541-4481

FORT DAVIS: Coolest Fourth of July Celebration July 4-6. Parade, barbecue, dance, fireworks, and more. www.fortdavis.com 432/426-3015

FORT STOCKTON: Fourth of July Celebration July 3-4. Rooney Park. www.fortstockton.org 432/336-2264

FORT STOCKTON: Summer Off the Patio July 10, 24. Outdoor concerts at the Annie Riggs Museum, 301 S. Main. 432/336-2167

FORT STOCKTON: Water Carnival July 17-19. Comanche Springs Swimming Pool. 432/336-2264

ODESSA: Happy Birthday USA! July 4-5. Globe Theatre, 2308 Shakespeare Road. 432/580-3177


ODESSA: Hot Summer Nights, Cool Music July 11, 18, 25. Concerts at Noel Plaza, 5th and Lincoln. 432/335-4682 or 432/337-1492

PECOS: Night in Old Pecos/Cantaloupe Festival July 26. www.pecostx.com 432/445-2406

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TH TRAVELER | July

GULF COAST

BAYTOWN: July 3 & 4 Celebration July 3-4. Live music, food, arts & crafts, fireworks, and more. Bicentennial Park. www.baytown.org 281/420-6597

BEAUMONT: Independence Day Celebration July 4. A Symphony of Southeast Texas concert, fireworks, and more. Riverfront Park. 409/838-3435

CLEAR LAKE AREA: Fourth of July Fireworks Over Clear Lake July 4. Clear Lake Park Boat Ramp. 281/488-7676

CLUTE: Great Texas Mosquito Festival July 24-26. Athletic events, rides, live music and more. Clute Municipal Park. www.mosquitofestival.com 979/265-8392

CORPUS CHRISTI: Big Bang Celebration July 4. Fireworks, ceremonies, and live music at the Cole Park Amphitheater, parade and bayfront run. Downtown Bayfront. www.cctexas.com 361/826-3460

CRYSTAL BEACH: Light Up the Night Celebration July 3. www.bolivarchamber.org 409/684-5940

DEER PARK: Fourth Fest July 4. www.deerparktx.gov 281/478-2050

EDNA: Texana Outback Fireworks Extravaganza July 4. Brackenridge Plantation Park. www.jacksoncountytexas.com 361/782-7146

EDNA: Fourth of July Fun & Games July 5. Lake Texana State Park. 361/782-5718

FREEPORT: Fishing Fiesta July 2-6. Municipal Park. 979/233-1047

FRIENDSWOOD: July 4 Celebration July 4. Stevenson Park. www.friendswood-chamber.com 281/996-3200

GALVESTON: Fireworks July 4. 37th and Seawall. www.galveston.com 888/425-4753

GALVESTON: July 4 Parade July 4. After the parade, enjoy a celebration at Sealy Pavilion. www.galveston.com

HARLINGEN: Fourth of July Parade & Family Fiesta July 4. Jackson Street, downtown. Live music and more at Gutierrez Park. 956/216-4910

HOUSTON: Chevy's Freedom Over Texas July 4. Live concerts from country music stars, fireworks, a mini-auto show, rides, games, and more. Eleanor Tinsley Park at Buffalo Bayou. www.chevysfreedomovertexas.com 713/247-3500

HOUSTON: Target Summer Symphony Nights July 4. Houston Symphony concert and fireworks. Miller Outdoor Theatre, 100 Concert Dr., Hermann Park. www.milleroutdoortheatre.com 281/373-3386

LAKE JACKSON: Fourth of July Celebration & Fireworks July 4. 979/297-4533

MISSOURI CITY: July 4 Celebration July 4. Buffalo Run Park. www.missouricitytx.gov 281/403-8500

PORT ARANSAS: Deep Sea Roundup July 3-6. Includes fly, surf, and offshore fishing. Roberts Point Park. www.paboatmen.org 361/749-6339

PORT ARTHUR: Independence Day Celebration July 4. Lamar State College—Port Arthur. 409/984-6101

ROCKPORT: Patriotic Boat Parade July 4. Little Bay, adjacent to Rockport Beach Park. 361/729-6445

ROCKPORT: Rockport Art Festival July 5-6. ACND Festival Grounds. 361/729-5519

ROSENBERG: Family Fourth Celebration July 4. Seabourne Creek Park. www.visitrosenberg.com 832/595-3525

SAN BENITO: Resaca Fest July 4. Live music, games, fishing, and fireworks. Heavin Resaca Trail, 300 Resaca Dr. www.cityofsanbenito.com 956/361-3804

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: Fourth of July Fireworks July 4. Bayside between Marlin and Red Snapper streets. 956/761-6433

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: Texas International Fishing Tournament July 30-Aug. 3. South Padre Island and Port Isabel waters. www.tif.org 956/943-TIFT

VICTORIA: July 4 Blastoff July 4. Community Center Grounds. www.victoriatx.org 361/485-3200

WHARTON: St. Paul Lutheran Church Annual Ice Cream Social July 25. 979/532-2336

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: Fourth of July Symphony & Fireworks July 4. Auditorium Shores at The Long Center. www.austinsymphony.org 512/476-6064

BOERNE: Abendkonzerte July 1, 15, 29. Evening concerts with The Boerne Village Band. Main Plaza. www.visitboerne.org 830/249-7277

BOERNE: July 4 Fireworks July 4. City Park/Kendall County Fairgrounds. 830/249-7277

BRADY: July Jubilee July 5. Parade, rodeo, street dance, and fireworks. www.bradytx.com 325/597-3491

BUDA: Red, White & Buda July 4. City Park. www.budachamber.com 512/295-9999

CASTROVILLE: Fourth of July Parade July 4. Downtown Castroville. www.castroville.com 830/931-2262

CASTROVILLE: July 4 Hot Dog & Apple Pie Celebration July 4. 501 Madrid. 830/538-2218

FREDERICKSBURG: Gourmet Chili Pepper & Salsa Festival July 25-27. Wildseed Farms. www.wildseedfarms.com 830/990-8080 or 866/839-3378

JUNCTION: Freedom Celebration July 4. Arts & crafts, food, games, and fireworks. City Park. www.junctiontexas.net 325/446-3190

KYLE: Independence Day Celebration Fireworks July 4. Gregg-Clarke Park, 1300 W. Center St. www.kylepard.com 512/262-3939

LAMPASAS: Spring Ho Festival July 7-13. www.springho.com 512/556-5301

MARBLE FALLS: Independence Day Celebration July 4. Lakeside Park. www.marblefalls.org 830/693-2815 or 800/759-8178

OZONA: Knights of Columbus July 4 Celebration July 4. Baseball Complex. 325/392-2827

SAN MARCOS: Summerfest July 4. Entertainment, a river parade, and fireworks. San Marcos Plaza Park. www.tourсанmarcos.com 888/200-5620

STONEWALL: July 4 Celebration July 4. Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site. 830/644-2252

TAYLOR: Fourth of July Fajita Cookoff & Fireworks July 4. Murphy Park. 512/791-1230

TAYLOR: 59th Annual Taylor Rodeo July 18-19. East Williamson County Events Center. 512/970-8756

WIMBERLEY: VFW 63rd Annual Rodeo July 3-5. VFW Arena. www.wimberley.org 512/847-2201

WIMBERLEY: Fourth of July Parade & Jubilee July 4. Downtown. www.wimberley.org 512/847-2201

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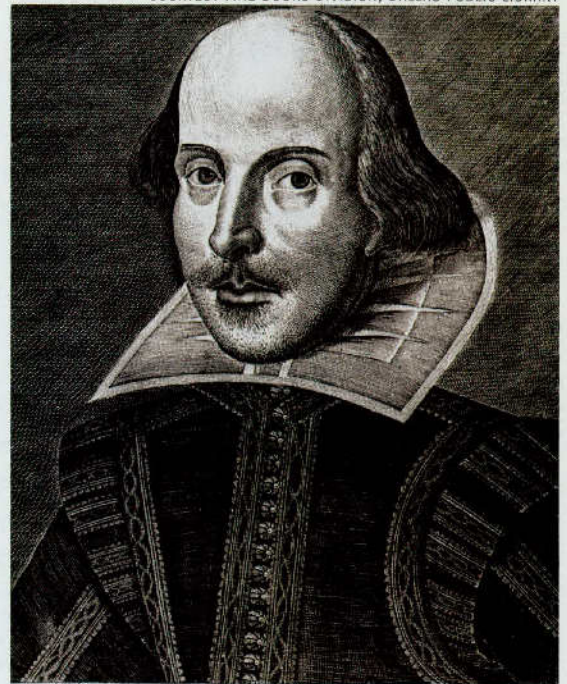
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www.sonoratx-chamber.com 325.387.2880

Get Thee To, Y'all

"ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE, AND ALL THE MEN AND WOMEN MERELY players," wrote William Shakespeare. The playwright supreme's works continue to thrill throughout the world, because they're as powerfully poetic today as when his prodigious pen produced them back in the 16th and 17th centuries. What a colossal catalog of conflict, comedy, plot, and dialogue didst this most honored wordsmith convey for the ages! Thankfully, it's celebrated this and every summer at **Shakespeare festivals** in **Kilgore (July 3-August 3; www.texasshakespeare.com, 903/983-8601), Round Top/Winedale (July 16-August 10; www.shakespeare-winedale.org, 512/471-4726), Dallas (June, July, and October; www.shakespearedallas.com, 214/559-2778), Wimberley (July 28-August 5; www.emilyann.org, 512/847-6969), Abilene (June 26-July 5; www.acu.edu, 325/674-ARTS), Houston (August 1-10; www.milleroutdoortheatre.com, 281/FREE-FUN), El Paso (August 21-23, 28-30; www.outfortheatre.org, 915/760-8630), and Odessa (August 28-September 14; www.globesw.org, 432/580-3177 or 332-1586), as well as at spring performances in Austin (May), San Antonio (May), and Baker Shakespeare at Rice University in Houston (March).**



PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: Zero to 60 July 1-Sep 7. (Began Jun 12) Automotive fine art exhibit at the Grace Museum. www.thegracemuseum.org 325/673-4587

ABILENE: Big Country July 4 Family Festival July 4. Nelson Park. 325/672-1712

ABILENE: Original Team Roping World Finals July 4-12. Taylor County Expo Center. 325/677-4376

AVERY: Historic Avery Tomato Festival July 4-5. Downtown. www.cityofavery.com 903/244-3920

BIG SPRING: Pops in the Park—An Evening of Patriotic Music & Fireworks July 3. Comanche Trail Park Amphitheater. www.bigspringchamber.com 432/263-7641 or 866/430-7100

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

BUFFALO GAP: Tour de Gap July 26. Old Settlers Reunion Grounds. 325/695-6311

CHILDRESS: 120th Annual Childress Old Settlers Rodeo & Reunion July 18-19. 940/937-2329

DALHART: July 4 Fireworks Display July 4. Rita Blanca Lake. www.dalhart.org 806/244-5646

DALHART: KXIT Annual July Bash July 5. Concert at Rita Blanca Coliseum. www.dalhart.org 806/244-5646

DARROUZETT: Deutches Fest July 4-6. 806/624-2631

DUMAS: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. www.dumaschamber.com 806/935-2123

JACKSBORO: Summerfest July 31-Aug 2. Twin Lakes Community Activity Center. 940/567-2666

LITTLEFIELD: Lamb County Centennial Celebration July 27-28. www.littlefieldmuseum.com 806/385-9001

POSSUM KINGDOM: Fireworks at Hell's Gate July 5. Popular fireworks display over Possum Kingdom Lake. www.possumkingdomlake.com 940/779-2424

QUANAH: Hardeman County 150th Birthday July 28-Aug 2. 940/663-2222

SAN ANGELO: Holiday Salutes at Fort Concho July 4. www.fortconcho.com 325/657-4444

SNYDER: Fourth of July Celebration July 3-4. Scumy County Towle Memorial Park. www.snyderchamber.org 325/573-3558

STAMFORD: Texas Cowboy Reunion Rodeo Parade July 2. Downtown. www.stamfordcoc.org 325/773-2411

VERNON: Independence Day Parade & Fireworks July 3. 940/552-2564

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Say Cheese

WHAT BETTER PLACE TO HAVE A CHEESEBURGER COOKOFF and Festival than smack dab in the middle of beef, wheat, and dairy country? Indeed, the Panhandle community of **Frona**, in Parmer County, 65 miles southwest of Amarillo, is the official Cheeseburger Capital of Texas. Find out why on **Saturday, July 19**, as teams competitively cook at City Park to decide this year's champion. Think John Belushi in the famous *Saturday Night Live* sketch, or Steve Miller's rockin' request for a cheeseburger on "Livin' in the USA." Good cheap eats and drinks with lotsa fun! For more information, go online at www.fronachamber.com, or call 806/250-3491.



J. GRIFFIS SMITH

PINEY WOODS

CENTER: What-A-Melon Festival July 11-12. Downtown Center Square. www.shelbycountytxchamber.com 936/269-9088 or 936/598-7512

GILMER: Yamboree Fireworks July 3. www.yamboree.com 903/843-2413

HENDERSON: July 4 Parade & Fireworks July 4. Downtown and Lake Forest Park. www.hendersontx.us 866/650-5529

HUNTSVILLE: Old-Fashioned Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Kate Barr Ross Park. Downtown Square. www.huntsvilletx.gov 936/291-5420

JEFFERSON: Jefferson Salutes America Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Otstott Gazebo, Lafayette St. www.jefferson-texas.com 903/665-3733

JEFFERSON: 20th Annual Jefferson Heritage Triathlon July 13. Lake O' the Pines. www.jefferson-texas.com 903/665-2672

LONGVIEW: Great Texas Balloon Race July 11-13. East Texas Regional Airport. www.greattexasballoonrace.com 903/753-3281

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

NAPLES: Watermelon Festival July 25-26. 903/897-2037

TENAHA: Independence Day Celebration July 4. www.shelbycountytxchamber.com 936/248-3841

TIMPSON: Frontier Days July 5. Downtown and SoSo Park. www.shelbycountytxchamber.com 936/254-2603

TYLER: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Lindsey Park. www.visittyler.com 800/235-5712

WINNSBORO: Fourth of July Fireworks in the Park July 4. City Park. www.winnsboro.com 903/342-3666

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ADDISON: Addison Kaboom Town July 3. Addison Circle Park, 4970 Addison Circle Dr. www.addisontexas.net 800/233-4766

BASTROP: Patriotic Festival July 5. Fisherman's Park. www.bastropchamber.com 512/321-2419

BEDFORD: 4th Fest Independence Day Celebration July 4. Bedford Boys Ranch, 2801 Forest Ridge Rd. www.ci.bedford.tx.us 817/952-2323

BELTON: 84th Annual Fourth of July Celebration & PRCA Rodeo July 2-5. Bell County Expo Center. www.beltonchamber.com 254/939-3551

BONHAM: Kueckelhan Ranch Rodeo July 23-26. 7036 N. Texas 78. 903/583-5337

BRYAN: Bryan Breakfast Lions Club 38th PRCA Rodeo July 17-19. Brazos County Expo Arena, 5827 Leonard Rd. 979/589-1789

COLLEGE STATION: International Fourth of July Celebration & Fireworks July 4. George Bush Presidential Library and Museum. <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu> 979/691-4069

COLUMBUS: Texas' Oldest Independence Day Celebration July 4. Beason's Park. www.columbus-texas.org/chamber 979/732-8385

COMANCHE: 67th Annual Comanche Open Rodeo July 18-19. Comanche Rodeo Grounds. www.comanchechamber.org 325/356-5976

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COMMERCE: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Bicentennial Park. 903/886-3950

DENISON: July 4 Extravaganza July 4. Munson Stadium. www.denisontexas.us 903/465-1551

ELGIN: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Downtown and Veterans Memorial Park. www.elgintx.com 512/281-5724

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

FORT WORTH: Mimir Chamber Music Festival July 3, 5-6, 8, 10-11. TCU's PepsiCo Recital Hall. www.mimirfestival.org 817/257-5443

FRISCO: Freedom Fest July 4. City Hall Plaza and Pizza Hut Park. www.friscofreedomfest.org 972/292-5086

GAINESVILLE: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Leonard Park. 940/668-4530

GARLAND: Star Spangled Fourth Festival July 4. Firewheel Town Center. www.starspangledfourth.com 972/205-3896

GATESVILLE: July 4 Festivities & Parade July 4. Cotton Belt Depot. 254/865-1179

GIDDINGS: Fireman's Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Fireman's Park, US 290 W. www.giddings.net 979/542-2311

GRANBURY: Annual Fourth of July Celebration July 4-6. www.granburychamber.com 817/573-1622

GRAND PRAIRIE: Earth, Wind & Fire July 9. Nokia Theatre. www.nokialivedfw.com 214/373-8000

HONEY GROVE: Liberty on the Square July 4. www.honeygrovechamber.com 903/378-7211

IRVING: Fourth of July Pops Concert & Fireworks July 4. Williams Square in Las Colinas. www.iring.symphony.com 972/831-8818

LAKE DALLAS: Lake Cities Fourth of July Celebration July 4. City Park. www.lakedallas.com 940/497-2226

LEWISVILLE: Red, White & Lewisville July 4. Live music and fireworks. Vista Ridge Mall. www.visit.lewisville.com 972/219-3401

McDADE: 60th McDade Watermelon Festival July 12. 512/273-0018

McKINNEY: Red, White & BOOM! July 4-5. Historic Downtown McKinney. www.mckinneytexas.org 972/547-2660

PARIS: Tour de Paris Bicycle Rally July 19. Paris High School, 2400 Jefferson Rd. www.tourdeparis.com 800/727-4789

ROUND TOP: 158th Fourth of July Parade & Celebration July 4. www.roundtop.org 979/294-3117 or 979/249-3151

SEGUIN: Freedom Fiesta July 3-5. Downtown Central Park. www.seguintx.org 830/401-5000 or 800/580-7322

SEGUIN: Biggest Small Town Fourth of July Parade in Texas July 4. 830/401-5000 or 800/580-7322

SHINER: Half-Moon Holidays July 4-5. Friday night dance at Legion Park. Saturday cookoff, children's activities, live music, and fireworks at Green-Dickson Park. www.shinertx.com 361/594-4180

SWEET HOME: Chicken & Polka Fest July 13. Sweet Home Community Center. www.sweethomehall.com 361/594-3644 or 361/293-9034

TEAGUE: 79th Annual Teague Fourth of July Rodeo July 3-5. Rodeo Arena, City Park. 254/739-2061

TEMPLE: July 4 Family Fun Fest July 4. Miller Park. www.discovertemple.com 254/298-5610

WACO: Fourth on the Brazos July 4. Concert and fireworks. Indian Spring Park. www.waco-texas.com 254/750-5781

WALLIS: WOFF (Wallis Old-Time Fun Festival) July 26-27. Wallis American Legion Hall. 979/478-2349 or 979/478-6362

WASHINGTON: Fireworks-on-the-Brazos July 4. Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site. www.birthplaceoftexas.com 936/878-2214 or 888/273-6426

WEATHERFORD: Parker County Peach Festival July 12. Three magic words: Parker County peaches. Celebrate their ripe and juicy magnificence in historic downtown Weatherford. www.visitweatherford.com 888/594-3801

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

COTULLA: Fourth of July Jamboree July 4. Veterans Park, Courthouse Square. 830/879-4166

EAGLE PASS: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Downtown parade and America's birthday celebration with fireworks in Shelby Park. 830/773-4343

MISSION: North American Butterfly Association's Annual Count July 12. World Birding Center, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park. 956/584-9156

PEARSALL: North American Carne Guisada Cookoff July 19. www.loscazadores.com 830/334-5959

SAN ANTONIO: Earth, Wind & Fire July 11. Popular R&B/funk/soul band plays the Majestic Theatre. www.majesticempire.com 210/224-9600 or 210/226-3333

SAN ANTONIO: Concert Under the Stars July 17. San Antonio Botanical Garden. www.sabot.org 210/207-3250

WESLACO: Fourth of July Celebration July 4. Isaac Rodriguez Park, 1200 E. 6th St. 956/973-3172

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

FOR A FREE PRINTED COPY of an even more detailed, quarterly schedule of events, write to *Texas Events Calendar*, Box 149249, Austin 78714-9249. Or, call 800/452-9292 from anywhere in the U.S. or Canada, between 8-6 Central.

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

SEND FUTURE EVENT INFORMATION TO: *Texas Events Calendar*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009; fax: 512/486-5879; e-mail: trv-tec@dot.state.tx.us. Listing deadlines: Spring (Mar, Apr, May) Dec 1; Summer (Jun, Jul, Aug) Mar 1; Fall (Sep, Oct, Nov) Jun 1; Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb) Sep 1.



HOTELS OF TEXAS

Abilene (2)
Alice
Alpine
Alvin
Amarillo (2)
Angleton
Anthony
Arlington
Atlanta
Austin (2)
Austin Area (Round Rock)
Austin Area South
(Buda Bay City)
Baytown
Beaumont
Beeville
Benbrook
Big Spring
Borger
Brady
Brenham
Bridgeport
Brownfield
Brownsville
Buffalo
Burleson
Burnet
Canton
Canyon
Carthage
Cedar Park
Center
Childress
Clarendon
Cleburne
Cleveland
Clifton
Clute
Coleman
Comanche
Copperas Cove
Corpus Christi (5)
Corsicana
Dalhart
Dallas (4)
Dallas Area (Addison)
Dallas Area (Garland)
Dallas Airport Area
(Irving) (2)
Dayton
De Soto
Decatur
Deer Park
Del Rio
Denton
Donna
Dumas
Duncanville
Eagle Pass
Edinburg
Edna
El Campo
El Paso (2)
Falfurrias
Forney
Fort Stockton
Fort Worth (3)
Fort Worth Area
(Lake Worth)
Franklin
Fredericksburg
Freer
Galveston
Gatesville
George West
Glen Rose
Gonzales
Graham
Granbury
Gun Barrel City
Hallettsville
Hamilton
Harlingen
Hebbronville
Henderson
Henrietta
Hereford
Hillsboro
Houston (11)
Houston Area
(Humble) (2)
Houston Area
(The Woodlands)
Houston Area (Webster)
Ingleside
Jacksonville
Jasper
Johnson City
Junction
Katy
Kaufman
Kerrville
Kilgore
Killeen
Kingsville

La Grange
La Porte
Lake Dallas
Laredo
Levelland
Lewisville
Lindale
Littlefield
Livingston
Llano
Lockhart
Longview
Lubbock (2)
Lufkin
Lufkin Area (Diboll)
Madisonville
Mansfield
Marble Falls
Marshall
Mathis
Mc Allen
McKinney
Mexia
Midland Area (Odessa)
Midlothian
Mineola
Mineral Wells
Mission
Monahans
Montgomery
Mount Pleasant
Nacogdoches (2)
Navasota
New Boston
New Braunfels
New Caney
North Richland Hills
Orange
Ozona
Palestine
Pampa
Paris
Pearland
Pearsall
Pecos
Perryton
Plainview
Plano
Pleasanton
Port Aransas
Port Lavaca
Portland
Post
Quanah
Raymondville
Refugio
Rio Grande City
Rio Grande Valley Area
(Weslaco)
Roanoke
Robstown
Rockdale
Rockport Area
(Fulton Saldo)
San Angelo
San Antonio (11)
San Antonio Area
(Boerne)
San Antonio Area
(Floresville)
San Antonio Area
(Seguin)
San Benito
San Marcos
Schulenburg
Seagoville
Sealy
Shamrock
Sinton
Snyder
Sonora
Stafford
Stephenville
Sugar Land
Sulphur Springs
Sweetwater
Taylor
Temple
Terrell
Texas City
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Tyler
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Readers RECOMMEND...

TIPS FROM OUR READERS

YOU CAN'T go wrong at **Old Mill BBQ & Burritos** in **Pecos**. From barbecue to Mexican food to some of the best hamburgers west of the Pecos River, they have it all. Don't miss the daily lunch specials.

JAIME JAQUEZ, *Austin*

Old Mill BBQ & Burritos is at 1318 S. Eddy St.; 432/447-6106.

MY HUSBAND and I ate at **Cowcatchers Steaks** in **Bulverde**. It is truly a Hill Country dining experience. Just outside the entrance, there's a woman who makes delicious biscuits on an open flame, just like in the chuck-wagon days. Longhorn cattle wandering nearby greet you as you enter the restaurant, which is housed in a turn-of-the-20th-Century building with furniture created by local craftsmen. The food is great, including the peach cobbler. Both my husband and I ordered the certified-Angus steaks.

JENNIE WITTY, *Boerne*

Cowcatchers Steaks is at 1100 Bulverde Rd.; 830/980-6080; www.cowcatchers.net. Steaks are cooked to your liking and come in a variety of sizes, from petite filet (8 oz.) to a 2-inch ribeye (22 oz.).

IF YOU like really good enchiladas, then I recommend a visit to **El Patio Restaurant** in **Austin**. This small, family-owned eatery has been serving up enchiladas near the University



In addition to serving steaks, Potter's makes its hamburger patties by hand and cooks them to order.

THE BEST rib-eye steaks in Texas can be found at **Potter's Bar and Grill** in **Breckenridge**. They're so tender that you can cut them with a fork.

MR. AND MRS. JOE BELLER, *Dalhart*

Potter's Bar and Grill is at 3218 W. Walker St.; 254/559-9192.

of Texas campus since 1954. The enchiladas are some of the best you'll find anywhere.

TERRY ROWAN, *Pflugerville*

El Patio Restaurant is at 2938 Guadalupe St.; 512/476-5955.

TASTY burritos, enchiladas, borracho beans, salads, and more can be found at **Fuzzy's Taco Shop** in **Fort Worth**. You should definitely try the tempura shrimp tacos—they are truly exceptional.

MARCUS SINCLAIR, *Fort Worth*

Fuzzy's Taco Shop is at 2917 W. Berry St.; 817/924-7943. For the tempura shrimp tacos, shrimp are dunked in a tempura batter, deep-

fried, and then topped with lettuce, tomato, cilantro, and Feta.

IT HAS been a while since I visited a Polish deli, so when I entered **Stanley's Home Made Polish Sausage** in **New Braunfels**, I knew I was in for a treat. I ordered the smoked-Polish-sausage sandwich with mustard while my friend got the submarine sandwich loaded with ham, Krakow salami, mortadella, cheese, lettuce, and tomatoes. In addition to selling a variety of meats (beer salami, hot links, sausage, etc.) and fresh pierogi dumplings, the deli also has an impressive selection of imported Polish goods like sauerkraut, jams, jellies, and candies. I felt like I was back in Poland.

ED MARGULSKI, *Seguin*

Stanley's Home Made Polish Sausage is at 215 S. Seguin Ave.; 830/632-7868.

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.

Next month... It's up, up, and away as we soar the skies at several **hot-air balloon festivals**. We'll also dine at a number of **notable restaurants** in **Amarillo**, orchestrate our way through the **Houston Theater District**, and explore some of the best **wineries** that **North Texas** has to offer. Bottoms up!

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window on
TEXAS

SUMMER STORM Photographer Jeremy Woodhouse captured this fast-moving storm as it passed over Inks Lake State Park, near Burnet. Opened in 1950, the 1,201-acre park offers boating, fishing, and camping, along with guided nature walks, geology hikes, and canoe tours.

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

