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TRUE, TEXAS: The Hometown You Wish You Had

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Texas Highways

THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

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Ranch Life near Bellville PAGE 19 «

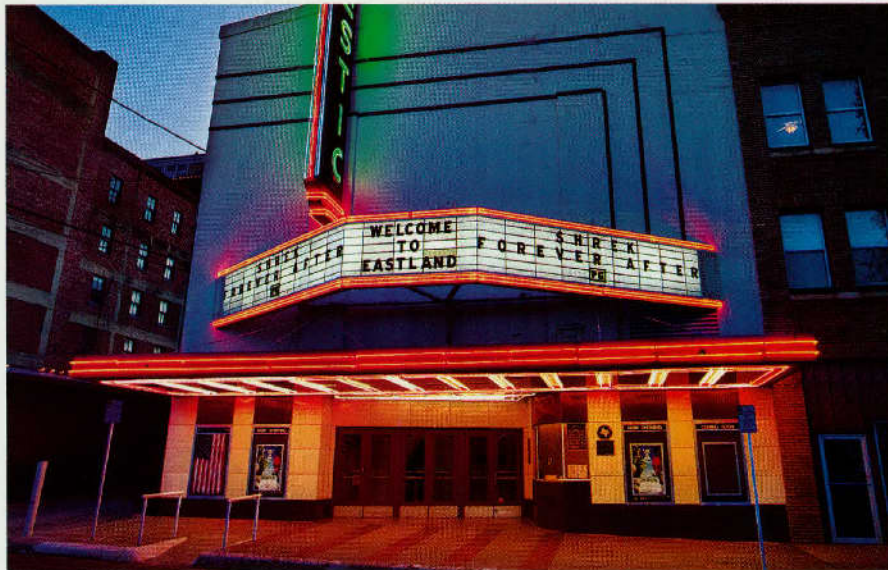
Sassy Brasseries PAGE 14 «

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J. GRIFFIS SMITH

Preserving a local landmark, such as the neon-bejeweled Majestic Theater in Eastland, requires collaboration with members of the community—as well as questioning assumptions about preservation realities.

Sense of Place or State of Mind?

AS I STROLL along Lamar Street from the historic Eastland Hotel to the Eastland County courthouse square, I feel like the modest ecosystem of local businesses operates in a different universe than do the motels and restaurants along Interstate 20 not far away. As I listen to the crowd of boisterous diners in Louise's Café, then survey the storefronts on the buildings around the square, I sense the potential for an active community. But the "Going Out of Business" sign on the design firm evidences the difficulties of keeping the doors open. The restaurants and motels along the Interstate relate to the larger world beyond Eastland County. Does that larger world want to concern itself with a town whose most famous "resident" is an embalmed horned lizard named Old Rip?

One landmark that draws in the Eastland community is the Majestic Theater (see page 36). Four nights a week, the neon marquee of the Majestic serves as a beacon, calling moviegoers in. But even that neon itself represents a significant commitment by the community organization that supports the theater. As Mike Zoellick, president of the Eastland Fine Arts Association, explained, "If we were a for-profit business, we couldn't afford to keep up the neon. There's a sign company in Abilene that's up here regularly, particularly after hail storms."

Like Eastland's Majestic Theater, many of the iconic destinations we feature in this issue (starting on page 24) also serve to help their individual communities maintain an identity. A recent article in the *New York Times* suggests that, throughout the Plains states of the U.S., communities are reviving the local theater to reinvigorate the community heartbeat. The same effort goes into preserving other landmarks—not always successfully.

These institutions and icons are fragile, if not outright endangered. Each one reflects a sense of purpose and a commitment to keep a locally focused vision alive. We're not saying they represent the only Texas. But we believe they do represent a sense of the True Texas. If these local institutions fade into memory, will the quirky and endearing communities survive? Let us know about your favorite local landmark that makes your community seem like True, Texas, to you.

Where is your True, Texas?

Tell us at www.texashighways.com/truetx.

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor

Texas Highways

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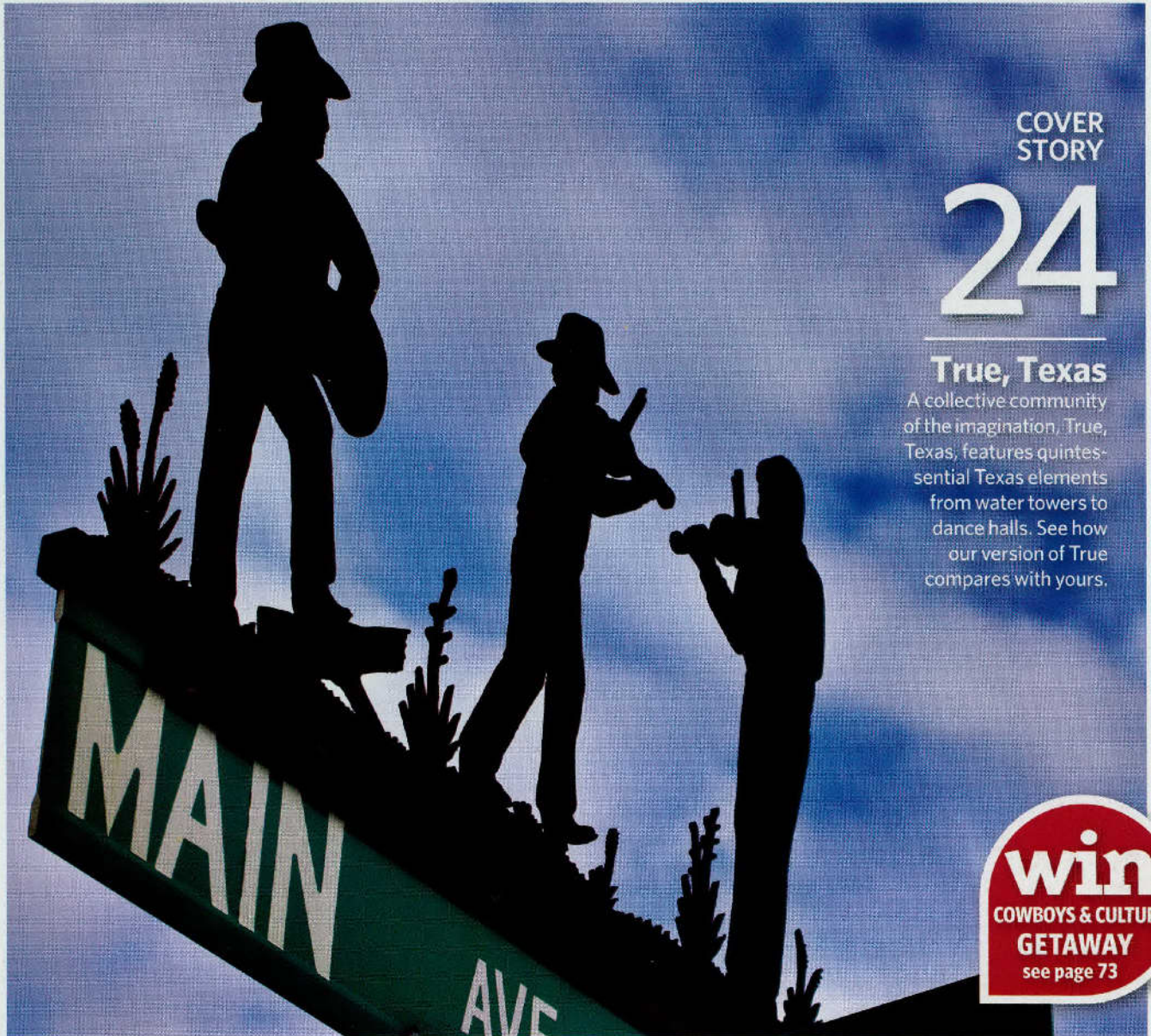
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COVER
STORY

24

True, Texas

A collective community of the imagination, True, Texas, features quintessential Texas elements from water towers to dance halls. See how our version of True compares with yours.

win
COWBOYS & CULTURE
GETAWAY
see page 73

features

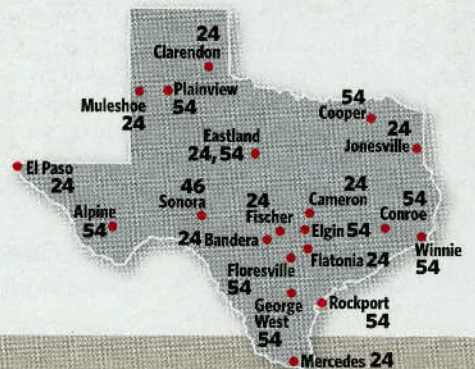
Check out www.texashighways.com for more travel information

46 | **Caverns of Sonora**
Often compared to a giant, sparkling geode, this world-class show cave displays its magnificent crystalline formations in a rugged setting southwest of Sonora.

Text by **RAE NADLER-OLENICK**
Photographs by **LAURENCE PARENT**

54 | **Fests Up!**
Choose a theme, any theme. Small towns across the state celebrate fall with fun and feasting. Think wacky mascots, carnival rides, and Elvis impersonators.

Text by **NOLA McKEY**

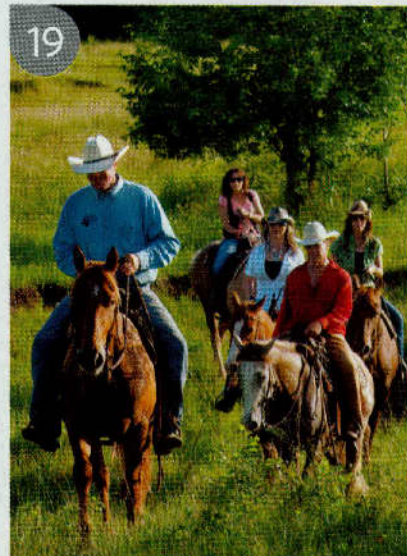




14



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19

departments

4 | Talk to TH

Readers sound off

Memories of a dude-ranch vacation and the Big Bopper.

7 | Postcards

Greetings From

(Just Off) I-35

From Art Deco café to dog museum, fun and funky attractions along I-35 make the journey a treat. *Plus:* A balloon festival lifts off in Plano, and an El Paso amphitheater hosts Movies in the Canyon.

14 | TH Taste

The Joy of French Cooking

Dining at Texas' new brasseries and bistros offers a bonus: lessons in French history and culture. *Plus:* Savoring Italian classics in Temple.

19 | Weekender

Texas Ranch Life

A 1,600-acre ranch near Bellville gives guests a chance to experience cowboy ways. When you're not horseback riding, you can relax in historic accommodations. *Plus:* It's State Fair time in Dallas.

64 | Speaking of Texas

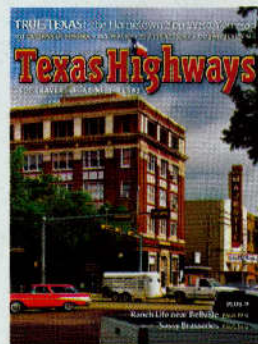
America's Singing Brakeman

Mississippi native Jimmie Rodgers loved Texas' wide-open spaces and untamed spirit. The "Father of Country Music" spent the last years of his life in Kerrville and San Antonio.

67 | TH Traveler

A roundup of September events

All things apple star in the Mason County Apple Fest, cyclists ride in the Corpus Christi-based "Conquer the Coast" event, and oenophiles celebrate the harvest at Grapevine's Grapefest.



About Our Covers

FRONT: Eastland's historic buildings, including the former Exchange National Bank and Majestic Theater, help preserve the town's identity. **Photo by J. Griffis Smith**

BACK: Pearl-draped Priscilla the Pig piques interest at Elgin's Hogege Festival. **Photo by Stan A. Williams**

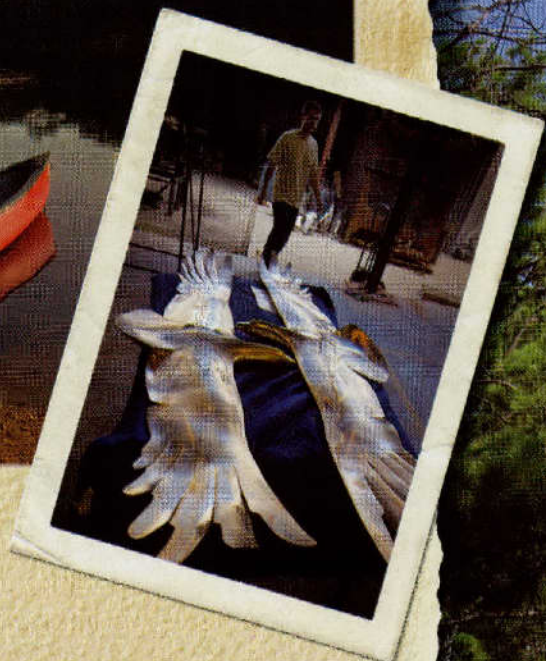
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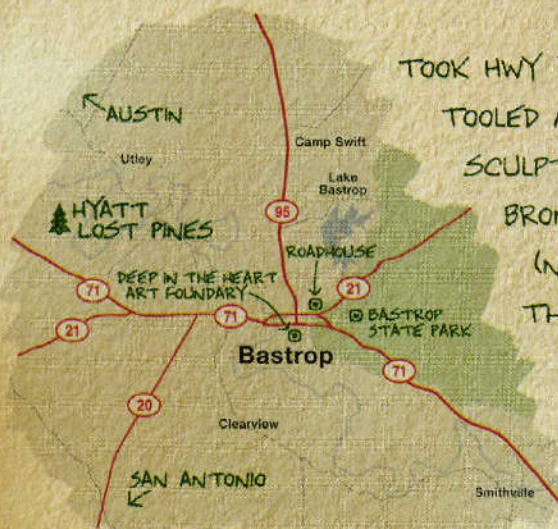
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HEAD FOR THE TREES.



TRIP #1 SHERWOOD FOREST MEETS SANTA FE



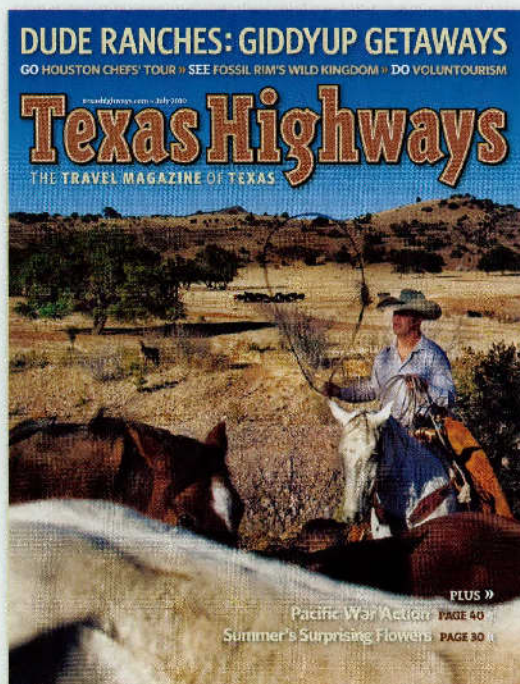
TOOK HWY 71 TO BASTROP STATE PARK. STUNNING. TOOLED AROUND IN A CANOE, CAUGHT A LOCAL SCULPTOR STUDIO NEAR THE LAKE. BOUGHT A BRONZE AT DEEP IN THE HEART ART FOUNDRY (NEW TROPHY FOR THE MANTELPIECE??) THEN A SHORT HOP TO THE ROADHOUSE FOR BURGERS AND MILKSHAKES—THE REAL DEAL. NEXT, IT'S OFF TO HYATT LOST PINES TO CHILL OUT IN STYLE.

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I based our whole vacation around *TH* and the great articles from the past year.

—KYLE JONES,
TH Facebook Fan



Dude, Where's My Ranch?

Regarding Dale Weisman's story on dude ranches [July]: We were city-folk until we spent some time on a dude ranch close to Bandera. Then, we were on the hunt for a place in the country. Finally found it in beautiful East Texas.

MARSHA HARRISON VALLIE
TH Facebook Fan

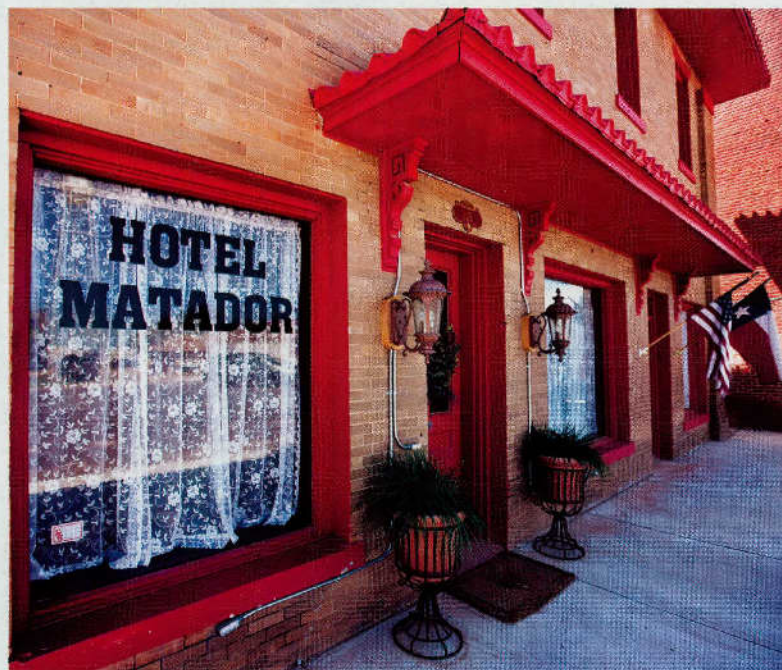
July Delight

As I have taken *TH* from month one, the magazine has always been good, but I really want to say that the July issue was outstanding. Issues like this one (and most of all the others) make me wish I were on your staff.

OLIVER DAVIS
Gonzales

Big Bopper

I enjoyed Tim Schuller's piece on the Texas Musician's Museum [June], and have interesting memories of J.P.



TH READER RECOMMENDATION

Olé to the Matador

NORTHEAST of Lubbock in **Matador** is a gem of an old hotel. First opened in 1915 and newly renovated, **Hotel Matador** has thoughtfully and tastefully decorated rooms (not fussy or cluttered), great, comfortable beds, probably the most outstanding breakfast you will ever eat, and nice innkeepers, too—three sisters whose ties to the region stretch back five generations. Go a little out of your way; it's so worth the detour.

JANE HEDGEPEETH, Austin

Hotel Matador Bed and Breakfast is at 1115 Main St.; 806/347-2939; www.hotelmatador.com.

➔ **TH READER
RECOMMENDATION**

The Lovin' Oven

I CAME across **The Lovin' Oven** on **Lancaster's** historic square. While the bakery may be known for wedding cakes, it has become a regular stop for my dessert needs (cookies, cakes, cupcakes, lemon bars). I highly recommend the carrot cake—it's extremely moist and almost melts in your mouth!

KASEY CHESHER, Midlothian

The Lovin' Oven is at 181 Historic Town Square; 972/227-7280.

Richardson, who went on to become known as the Big Bopper. I grew up in Beaumont and was in the same class as Richardson at Beaumont High School (we graduated in 1947). Richardson was sort of a shy person, but played the guitar and sang at assemblies occasionally. After high school, he worked as an announcer for local radio station KTRM.

As the Big Bopper, he could really do the lingo and sing "Chantilly Lace" and other songs. We were so glad that his career was going well; he married happily and I seem to recall that they had a child. And then the plane crash—a real tragedy. I am so glad to see that he is remembered.

DOROTHY TROTTER
Fair Oaks Ranch

Sand Man

I recognized the sandcastle on the June cover. I'm the Port Aransas Sandcastle Guy, and this sculpture was a second lesson for my student Petrina Eggemeyer, at Avenue G and the beach in Port Aransas.

MARK LANDRUM
Corpus Christi

EDITOR'S NOTE: Nice work, Sandcastle Guy! Readers, for details on Mark Landrum's sand-sculpting lessons, go to www.sandrum.com.

Let Them Eat Cake

Thanks to Lois Rodriguez for the

"Triple Delight" article and the Tres Leches Cake recipe that came with it [TH Taste, May]. I made it for my husband's birthday and he and everyone else absolutely loved it!

CHRISSIE WARNER
San Antonio

Making Fall Memories ...

Texas Style!

Visit Historic
Johnson County
Courthouse



From a long stroll through antique alley to attending numerous other Fall events, **CLEBURNE** is the place to come for fun-filled vacation memories.

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➔ **TH** READER RECOMMENDATION



Catch a Rising Star

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MICHAEL D. MAY, Bryan

Main St. Bar-B-Q has moved from Main St. (above) to 901 W. College; 254/643-1240.

➔ CONTACT TH

We want to hear from you! Send feedback and recommendations to: Texas Highways, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. E-mail: letters05@texashighways.com. We reserve the right to edit items. Because we're unable to check out every recommendation, and because hours vary and details can change, please call ahead for more information.

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"Time on Earth" Jonathan Frank, Utah

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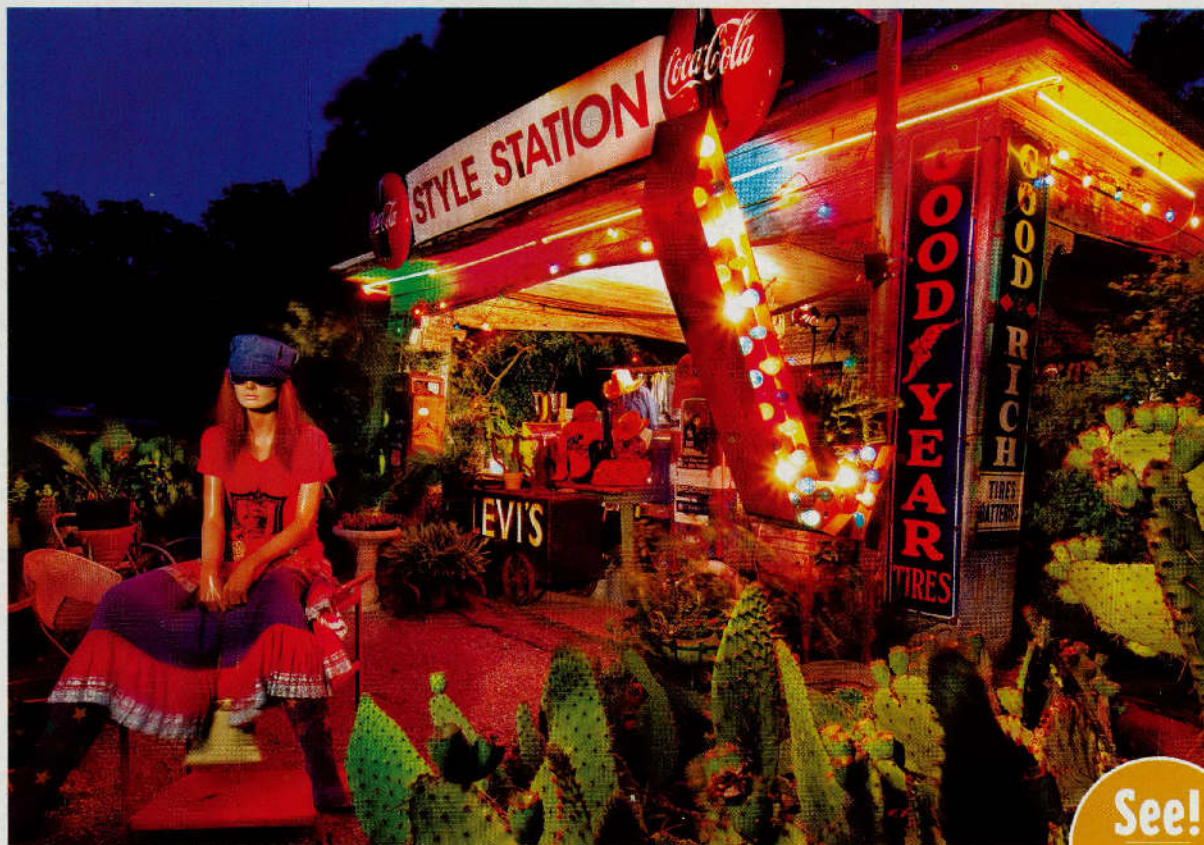


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09
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Postcards

➔ INSIDE: BRASSERIES AND BISTROS ...14 SADDLE UP AT TEXAS RANCH LIFE NEAR BELLVILLE...19



See!

The Dr Pepper
Museum in Waco

Greetings From (Just Off) I-35

A trio of roadside attractions well worth the journey Text by ANTHONY HEAD

SPEND A LOT OF TIME DRIVING ON Interstate 35, especially between Austin and Dallas/Fort Worth. Normally, my main goal is to cover the 230-plus-mile stretch as fast as I legally can. Recently, though, I vowed to savor the journey as part of the experience, and to slow down and explore the places I'd previously whizzed past.

Shortly after leaving Austin, such intention rewarded me with a delicious meal

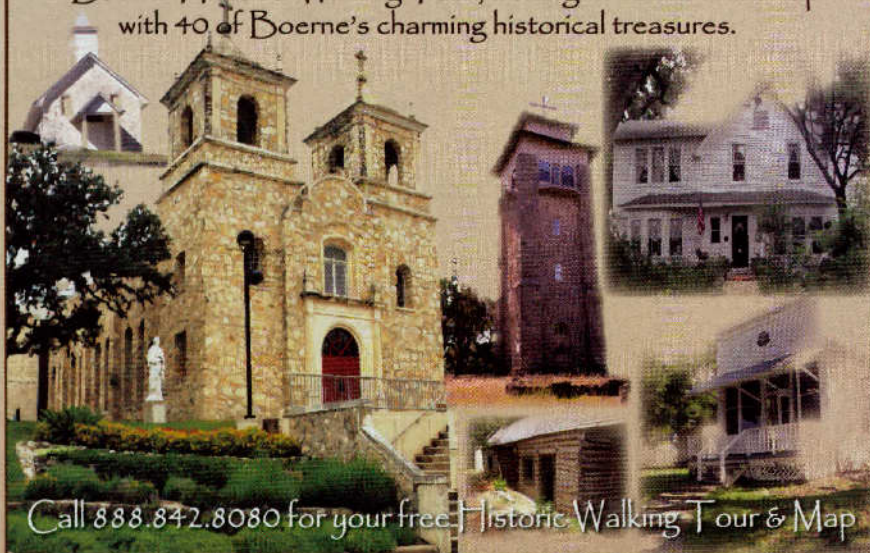
in Georgetown, at the popular Monument Cafe. Open since 1995, the café moved to its current location, a few blocks north of the town square, in 2008. Inside, framed black-and-white photographs of world-famous monuments, such as the Pyramids at Giza and Mission San José in San Antonio, decorate the walls. With retro-style chairs and shiny Art Deco lighting fixtures, Monument Cafe evokes nostalgia for roadside diners of the 1930s and '40s.

I sat at the counter and received a welcoming smile from my waitress, and quickly learned that the café offers the kind of small-town hospitality that makes new patrons regulars. The complimentary, made-from-scratch biscuits deepened my appreciation for flavorful comfort food. The menu lists sandwiches, salads, and

Open noon to 7 p.m.
daily, Style Station in
West is a veritable gold
mine of vintage wear.

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Butman Photography

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- West Texas Fair and Rodeo
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- Artfully Abilene Weekend
Sept 17-18
- West Texas Book & Music
Festival - Sept 20-25
- Big Country Balloon Festival
Sept 24-26
- Tejas Storytelling Association
Tumbleweed Festival
Oct 22-23
- 24fps International
Short Film Festival
Nov 5-6



burgers, along with classic versions of chicken-fried steak with cream gravy, cornmeal-crusted fried catfish, and pan-fried pork chops. Both my portabella-mushroom sandwich and

The menu of Georgetown's Monument Cafe includes many classics, including luscious strawberry milkshakes.

Georgetown's Monument Cafe evokes nostalgia for roadside diners of the 1930s and '40s.

the crisp sweet-potato fries that accompanied it tasted exceptionally fresh. For dessert, I polished off a slice of dark-chocolate icebox pie topped with whipped cream, plus a cup of aromatic coffee—these alone proved worthy of my stop.

Properly fueled, I returned to the road. Just north of Waco, a big yellow sign featuring the likenesses of three dogs enticed me to stop at the Antiquibles Antique Mall & Dog Museum.

Within a massive [continued on page 10]

Do!

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The weekend-long extravaganza features five balloon launches, as well as balloon glows, a fireworks show, live music, skydivers, food and beverages, and arts-and-crafts vendors.

More than 95,000 people from across the nation gather in Plano each year to take part in the largest balloon festival in Texas. Gaze at gleaming balloons decorating the night skies, send the little ones' imaginations sky-high at the Kids Fun Zone with inflatable rides and an obstacle course, and—for \$250—soar above Plano during your very own balloon ride.

"Having 100,000 people wave at you while you're taking off makes you feel kind of special," says Pete Carter, owner of Airventure Bal-

loonport, Inc., the festival's official ride vendor.

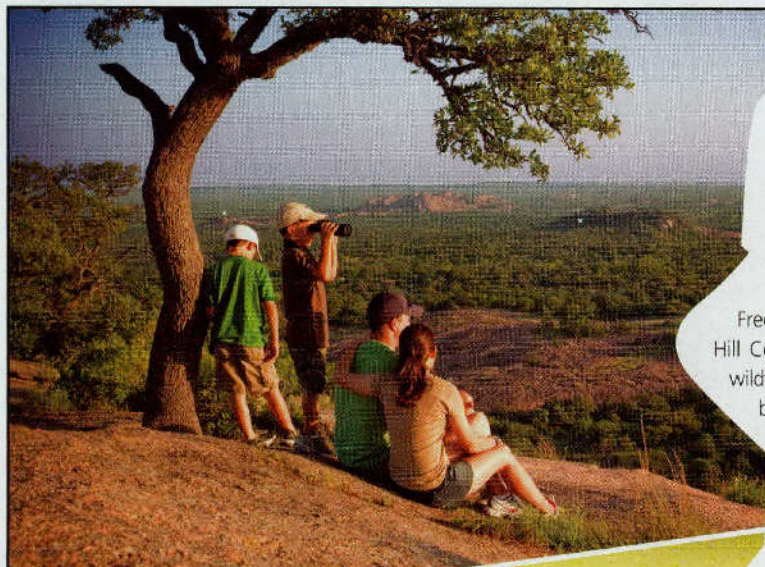
Carter says that passengers are awed by the 360-degree visibility they have in a hot-air balloon. "You can see and feel the air, and you can touch the top of the trees if you so desire and pick a leaf," he

adds. "That experience doesn't exist in any other medium of flight."

The Plano Balloon Festival takes place at Oak Point Park, the city's largest park and nature preserve, just minutes away from downtown. The 800-acre park offers a variety of wildflowers and miles of trails hugging Rowlett Creek.

To learn more, visit www.planoballoonfest.org or www.planocvb.net, or call 972/867-7566.

—Sheri Alzeerah



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continued from page 81] warehouse of antiques, the Dog Museum claims to be “the world’s largest public exhibition of dog items.” Admission is free. Owner and curator Barbara Hays told me the museum features more than 7,000 pieces and continues to grow.

“People are always bringing items for us to include,” says Hays. She and her husband, David, have collected dog-related memorabilia since 1967. “These days,”

The Dog Museum displays oodles of poodles (and any other kind of dog you can think of) in nearly every form imaginable.



she says, “we look for things that are extremely unusual or very rare, something that we haven’t seen before.”

“It’s a dog’s life” takes on a whole new meaning at Antiquities Antique Mall & Dog Museum in Elm Mott.

That’s a tall task considering the museum’s multitude of canine collectibles, such as an 18th-Century Flintlock rifle with a dog-head stock and a mechanical, 19th-Century bulldog replica. Display cases are packed with Meissen porcelain and colorful hand-blown glass figurines; print advertisements featuring the dogs from Buster Brown Shoes and Greyhound

Bus Lines cover the walls; and there are oodles of poodles (and any other kind of dog you can think

of) in nearly every form imaginable. I particularly enjoyed sifting through the black-and-white photographs, which date to the late 1800s, of people with their beloved canine companions.

If there is an omission in the collection, it's a print from the iconic and now kitschy series of paintings known as "Dogs Playing Poker" by Cassius Coolidge. Hays laughs and says she'd be interested in finding an original for the museum, "if the price were right."

Back on the road, it wasn't long before a weathered building and rusted pickup truck on the southbound side of the interstate caught my eye. I'd always assumed the mannequin seated in the back of the truck was somebody's idea of a gag. But this time, I took exit 349 on Wiggins Road

Stop at Georgetown's Monument Cafe for a memorable breakfast, lunch, or dinner.



to investigate. It turns out, the dummy is meant to call attention to the Style Station, a vintage clothing store housed in a 1928 building four miles south of West.

Owners Art and Rebecca DeVitalis have

altered little of the original structure, but they've packed the inside with racks of vintage wear for men and women, shelves of cowboy boots, costume jewelry and other accessories, and original clothing

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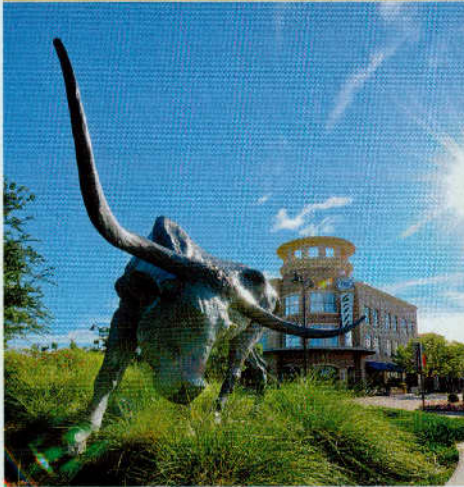
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Packed with vintage wear, shopping at Style Station is like going on a treasure hunt.

ing a rundown of celebrity clientele—from a Swiss model to an Italian count, and most recently, Oscar-winning singer/songwriter Ryan Bingham, who purchased a pair of cowboy boots. Customers joyfully add Style Station's varied inventory of Western pearl-snap shirts, vintage dresses, and Levi's jeans to their individual wardrobes.

After promising to return, I found myself back on I-35 and just a little closer to my final destination. At this rate, I realized I could be driving all day. But considering the surprises I'd already discovered, I decided to keep my eyes open for what the next exit could offer. **TH**

Texas Renaissance Festival

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I-35 Side Trips

Monument Cafe, 500 S. Austin Ave.,
Georgetown; 512/930-9586; www.themonumentcafe.com.

Antiquibles Antique Mall & Dog Museum,
94300 North I-35, Elm Mott; 254/829-1921;
www.antiquibles.com.

Style Station, 17265 North I-35, West; 254/
829-0447; www.stylestationonline.com.



Cinema Under the Stars

El Paso serves up films al fresco

SURROUNDED ON THREE SIDES BY THE FRANKLIN Mountains, El Paso's McKelligon Canyon Amphitheater offers an exciting twist on date night this fall with its second annual Movies in the Canyon event. The theater offers free showings of film favorites each weekend from mid-August through September. What better way to celebrate the arrival of autumn?

During its inaugural run, Movies in the Canyon featured a wide array of films, from family-friendly titles such as *Open Season* and *Peter Pan*, to more mature selections that included *The Shining* and *Platoon*. With last year's lineup as a model, this year's titles are sure to please a wide audience.

The canyon's breathtaking and dramatic landscape lies on the southeastern end of Franklin Mountains State Park. Created by the Texas Legislature in 1979, it is the largest urban wilderness in the continental U.S. The park sprawls across 37 square miles of scenic Chihuahuan Desert mountain terrain, all within the El Paso city limits.

If you can't make it out to El Paso this month, don't cross



Go!
Take a tram through Franklin Mountains State Park

McKelligon Canyon off your list. The amphitheater hosts spring, summer, and fall events, including the musical drama *Viva! El Paso*, which runs June-August. The park also provides a beautiful backdrop for recreational activities such as hiking, rock climbing, and mountain biking. Call 915/231-1100; <http://moviesinthecanyon.com> or www.visitelpaso.com.

Enjoy the 360-degree view atop 5,632-foot Ranger Peak via the Wyler Aerial Tramway in Franklin Mountains State Park.

—Haley Dawson

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See!

French onion soup recipe at texashighways.com/thtaste



The Joy of French Cooking

Brasseries and bistros bring French-inspired dishes to Texas

Text by **LORI MOFFATT**

I'M FASCINATED BY HOW DINING TRENDS HAVE SHAPED WHAT I know about geography, history, language, and other foundations of culture. It's the unexpected joy of discovering history through the portal of cooking. Lately, I've been curious about the many brasseries and bistros opening up across Texas, and the bonus is that I'm learning about the 18th-Century collapse of the French monarchy, the literary culture of Paris, and the French-Cajun-Creole melting pot of Louisiana.

In French, *brasserie* means "brewery." The conventional wisdom suggests that these informal eateries—characterized by such dishes as garlicky steamed mussels and steak *frites*, plus plenty of beer and wine—first appeared during the French Revolution, when chefs who no longer worked for ousted nobility took their culinary talents to the common man. In Texas, the brasserie and its close cousin, the bistro, take many forms, from gleaming concept restaurants to cozy hangouts where flirtatious servers and a long wait are part of the appeal.

My first stop, Brasserie Pavil in San Antonio, opened in late 2008 along the rapidly developing corridor of Loop 1604, northwest of downtown. Pavil's Corporate Executive Chef Scott Cohen, who trained at the Moulin de Mougins hotel in the south of France before making a career with the Watermark Hotel Company in San Antonio, oversees a restaurant that resembles a spacious version of the famous Brasserie Lipp—that favorite

Menu items at Brasserie Pavil range from escargots to classic roasted chicken. As per tradition, Pavil's bar offers a wide variety of beers.

Parisian hangout of Marcel Proust and André Gide. Cohen did his research on both surroundings and menu: Geometric floor tiles, antiqued mirrors on the walls, pressed-tin ceiling panels, and a 40-foot-long zinc-and-mahogany bar are classic brasserie decor elements. As per tradition, an outsized clock—several feet in diameter—is visible from most tables; legend has it that French dockworkers in the 1800s relied on these brasserie timekeepers to get them back to work on time.

Of the dishes I sampled, which included a seared tuna appetizer with tangy hollandaise; an array of raw oysters served with mignonette sauce; and a beet-and-california salad, mellowed with toasted almonds and crisp haricots verts, I most enjoyed the lush French onion soup, that brasserie classic. Pavil's sous chef, José Yanez, may tinker with traditions elsewhere on the menu, but he sticks with the basics here, caramelizing the onions in

butter for several hours before adding rich beef stock, then topping individual bowls with slices of hearty bread and nutty Gruyère before sending them off to the broiler.

Pavil resembles a spacious version of Paris' famous Brasserie Lipp.

Still, Yanez tells me that his favorite dish at Pavil is the halibut. "We sear the fish on one side," he says, "then we add a tomato-clam broth, shaved garlic, and crushed pepper, and serve it with a sautéed lemon-herb risotto cake and a lightly wilted arugula salad."

For a 180-degree change of attitude,

I visited the popular Justine's Brasserie in Austin. For months after its opening in late 2009, stories of long weekend waits kept me away (as per true brasseries, Justine's rarely takes reservations but serves dinner until the wee hours). On a recent Wednesday night, though, I finally discovered the reason for the buzz. While patrons played *pétanque* (a bowling game similar to horseshoes) on the crushed-gravel lawn, my dining companion and I sat at a cozy wooden table inside the restaurant's converted 1937 bungalow, sipping wine and enjoying the people-watching while we lingered over our meal. I savored the plump grilled scallops, their sweetness balanced with slices of salty, meaty lardons; my tablemate, who had been craving a burger, found an exceptional example in Justine's Royale with Cheese, a house-ground patty topped with Gruyère and served with crunchy *pommes frites*.

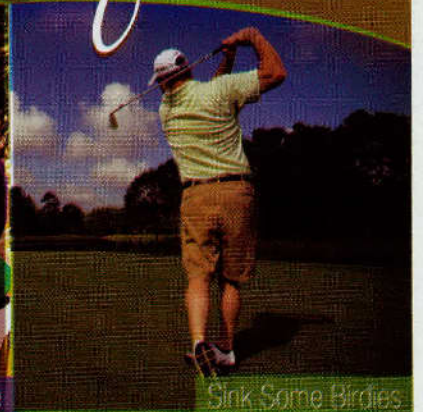
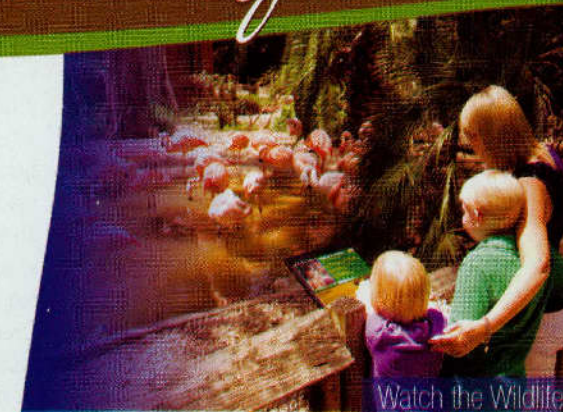
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Taste



Slabs of antique mesquite contribute a warm ambience to **Bistro Alex in Houston.**

tradition, Texas chefs like to mix it up—especially if they have ties to the French-inspired Cajun and Creole cuisines of Louisiana. To

learn what *those* variations were about, I paid a lunchtime visit to **Bistro Alex**, which occupies a cozy, clubby spot in Houston's new **Hotel Sorella** at CityCentre, a 15-minute drive west of downtown.

The brainchild of Alex Brennan-Martin, whose family originated New Orleans' famous **Commander's Palace**, **Bistro Alex** benefits from novel and delicious cuisine as well as inspired decor. Sage-colored walls and slabs of antique mesquite lend a warm ambience in which to enjoy Chef Juan Carlos Gonzalez' interpretations of French Creole cuisine... with a twist. "New Orleans cuisine, like the cooking in my native Puerto Rico, emphasizes what I call 'soul food' elements," says Gonzalez. "We do a crispy fried snapper—a popular New Orleans dish—and serve it with a sauté of Texas citrus and vegetables. But then for a Latin twist, I'll drizzle chimichurri sauce on top."

As the restaurant filled with businesspeople from the nearby Energy Corridor, I shared a bowl of the Brennan family's famous turtle soup, aromatic with sherry and

PHOTO: COURTESY BISTRO ALEX © SHANNON OHARA

Boots courtesy of J.B. Hill Boot Co.

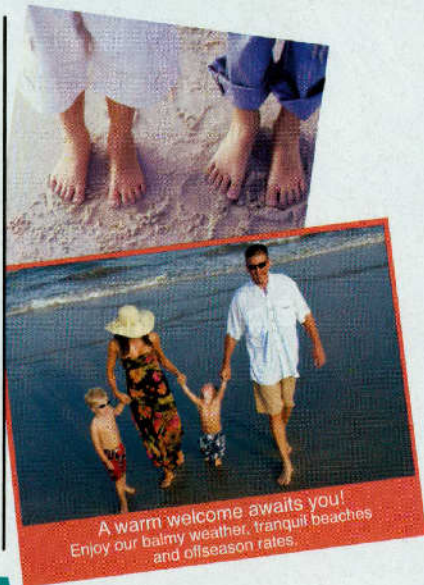
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thyme; as well as a satisfying andouille sausage flatbread, accented with grilled green onions and mustard greens. "We call what we do here "Texas Creole,"" says Brennan-Martin. "I think of Houston as where Louisiana and the Southwest come together. Ultimately, at any restaurant, we—as human beings—want to share a bit of conviviality in the breaking of our daily bread."

For dessert, my companion and I shared a classic French crème brûlée. As we chatted and savored the contrast of crunchy praline crust and creamy custard, I thought about how chefs—like artists in other genres—continually borrow from each other, follow and reject trends, and sometimes expand the worldviews of the public. *Bon appétit.* **TH**

Brasseries & Bistros

AUSTIN HOUSTON
SAN ANTONIO

Brasserie Pavil is at 1818 N. Loop 1604 West in San Antonio. Call 210/479-5000; www.brasseriepavil.com.

Justine's Brasserie is at 4710 E. 5th St. in Austin. Call 512/385-2900; www.justines1937.com.

Bistro Alex, in the Hotel Sorella, is at 800 W. Sam Houston Pkwy. North in Houston. Call 713/827-3545; www.bistroalex.com.

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Taste

Do!

Visit Pignetti's for Wednesday-night wine tastings



Along with pizzas, pastas, and chicken, veal, and beef dishes, Pignetti's serves more than a half-dozen fish preparations for lunch and dinner.

Viva Italia!

Pignetti's brings Italian classics to Temple

FOUNDED IN 1881 TO SERVE AS A HUB for the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe Railway, Temple today still harbors numerous examples of 19th- and 20th-Century architecture, especially downtown. A stroll through the business district (along with a visit to the Railroad & Heritage Museum) makes for an interesting afternoon—especially if you stop for a meal at Pignetti's, which has served Texas interpretations of classic Italian salads, pastas, pizzas, seafood, and meat dishes for almost a decade. "Our regular customers love our chicken marsala and wood-fired pizzas," says co-owner Mariano Beltran.

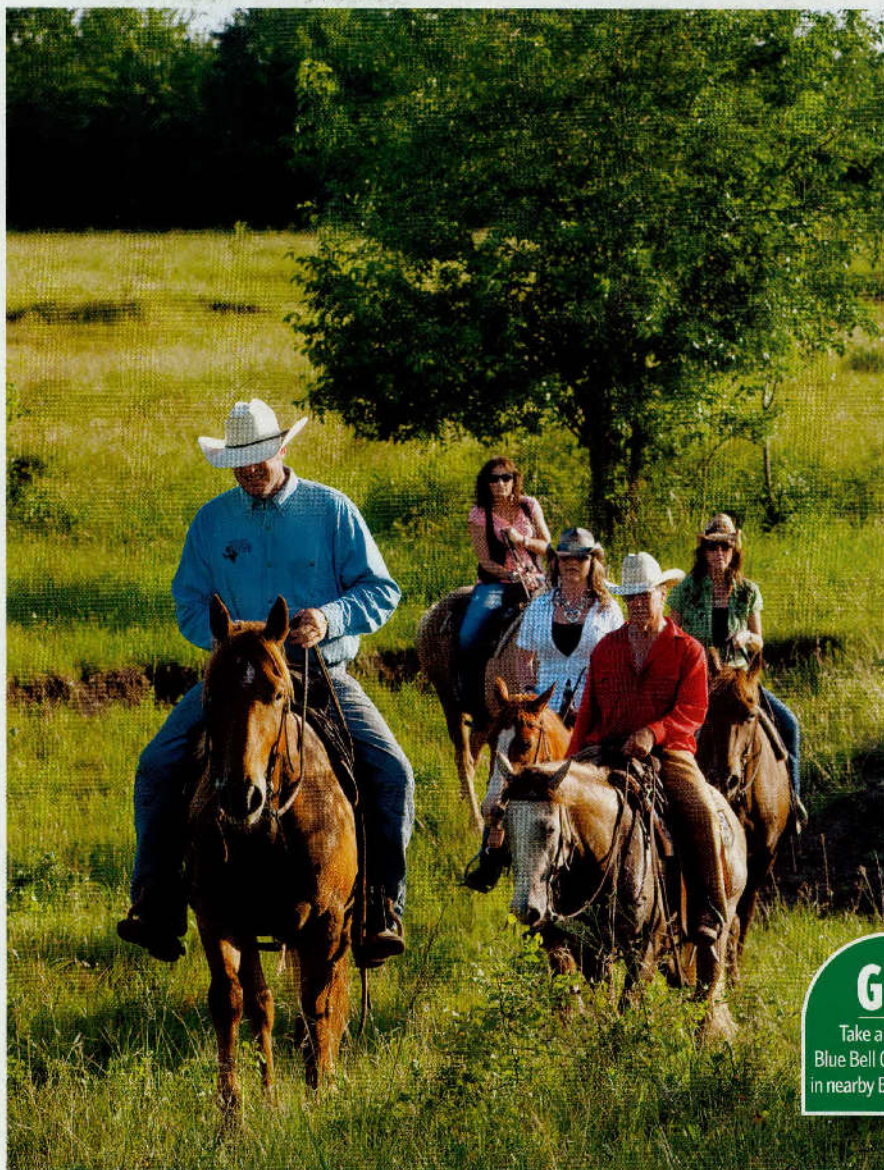
In 2009, Pignetti's won its third Award of Excellence from *Wine Spectator* magazine, a nod to the restaurant's selection of international wines. On Wednesday evenings, Pignetti's offers a popular wine-tasting event, featuring a flight of four wines along with appetizers for \$10. "Usually we highlight a region from Italy," says Beltran, "and we contrast those wines with some from Spain, Chile, or California."

Pignetti's is at 14 South 2nd St. in Temple. Call 254/778-1269. —Lori Moffatt

Texas Ranch Life

A 1,600-acre spread near Chappell Hill attracts wannabe cowboys and cowgirls from around the world

Text by **JUNE NAYLOR**



Go!

Take a tour of Blue Bell Creameries in nearby Brenham

As we ride, John shows us the magnificent Longhorns he raises as beef cattle and the small herd of buffalo he maintains at the ranch.

TAKING A FEW FRIENDS WITH ME TO ENJOY ONE OF MY FAVORITE PARTS of the state, I drive about an hour northwest of Houston, deep into the undulating countryside, to the Lonesome Pine Ranch in Austin County. One of three area ranches owned by Bellville attorneys John and Taunia Elick, the Lonesome Pine is a guest ranch with a reputation for generous hospitality. Folks from all over Texas and from places as faraway as Japan and The Netherlands come here to lose themselves in an experience the Elicks call Texas Ranch Life. I'm eager to investigate the offerings for myself.

I arrive expecting we'll ride horses and explore the lush landscape that has become so popular with visitors to nearby Chappell Hill and Round Top. I figure we'll relax the rest of the time, perhaps go fishing in one of the ranch's numerous lakes and ponds, or maybe even wander down the road to Bellville to eat brisket and ribs at the Silver Saddle Smokehouse, a barbecue joint the Elicks opened earlier this year. Little do I realize that the couple keeps an unlikely combination of diversions at the ready.

First on the agenda is horseback riding, but John Elick doesn't allow folks to jump on his horses and ride off toward

Lonesome Pine cowboy Craig Bauer and owner John Elick (in red) lead several guests on a horseback tour of the ranch.

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the sunset, no matter how much experience they claim. He spends up to an hour beforehand instructing guests in horsemanship inside a large arena at Lonesome Pine headquarters. Early in my adventure, I learn that I'm hardly the skilled horsewoman I've fancied myself. When I climb atop a gorgeous palomino named Goldchina, the horseback training I had as a child seems to have faded over time; however, after John's humbling and constructive critique, I soon feel trail-worthy.



John leads us out for a two-hour ride, during which we explore verdant, rolling pastures. Swells crowned with clusters of live oaks provide views that take my breath away. As we ride, John shows us the magnificent Longhorns he raises as beef cattle and the small herd of buffalo he maintains at the ranch. Depending on the time of day and year, John says, you can see deer and turkey, too. Back at headquarters, some of the guests join John and ranch cowboys in rounding up cattle. Using all-terrain vehicles known as "mules," other ranch hands carry the rest of us out to the cattle pens, where we can watch the action. Later that afternoon, my friends and I sit atop iron fence rails surrounding a special arena and observe John atop one of his grand cutting horses. We watch in awe as he guides his mount

The 1850s Confederate House features 12-foot ceilings and original hand-stenciling.

Everything's Bigger in Texas

From corny dogs to the Cotton Bowl, the State Fair of Texas offers fun to the max

Do!

Say "howdy" to Big Tex



THE THEME OF THE 2010 STATE FAIR OF TEXAS—

"Super-Sized Fun"—reflects the annual event's marvelous mix of entertainment and excitement for all ages. Going strong since its Dallas debut in 1886, the fall extravaganza takes place this year September 24–October 17. The lineup features the traditional Texana of the 4-H and FFA Livestock Auction of Champions, a massive carnival midway with America's tallest Ferris wheel, the most extensive new-car-and-truck show in the Southwest, a 52-foot-tall cowboy named Big Tex, and, of course, the highly anticipated UT vs. OU Red River Rivalry at the fairgrounds' historic Cotton Bowl.

In addition to the Red River Rivalry and the annual State Fair Classic, which matches Grambling State and Prairie View A&M, another game comes to the Cotton Bowl this year during the fair: Texas Tech vs. Baylor. Admission to the fair is included in the ticket price for each competition, allowing fans to spend time at the fairgrounds before and after the games.

The fair always boasts a wide range of live music, and this year's program includes the Eli Young Band, Laura Bell Bundy, the Josh Abbott Band, and Intocable. Fair-goers can also take in the Fall Garden Exhibit, held in a new, 8,000-square-foot greenhouse; see *Shrek! The Musical*; and enjoy other nightly attractions, such as the "Illumination Sensation," a light-and-dancing-water show, and the Starlight Parade. Make plans this fall to head to the birthplace of Fletcher's Corny Dogs, and have super-sized fun at the State Fair of Texas. Call 214/565-9931; www.bigtex.com.

—Haley Dawson

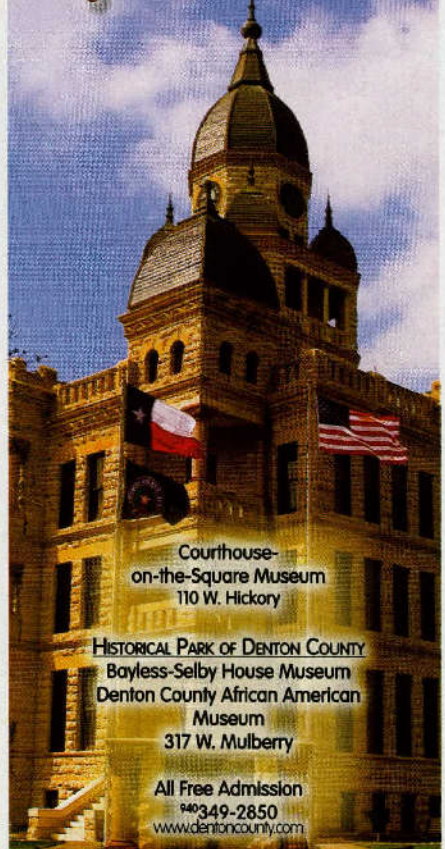
The Wave Swinger tops the list of attractions for many State Fair of Texas visitors.

through a series of graceful, intricate moves, showing how cowboys separate specific calves from a herd.

After the ride, the mini-roundup, and the cutting-horse demonstration, we gather in the spacious barn (where the Elicks often entertain parties of up to

200 people) for a cold beer. We talk about how these age-old experiences thrive in the modern west, and John and Taunia tell us about the international visitors who've tried their hands at roping dummy calves, searing fiery-hot brands onto wood or leather, cracking bullwhips, and riding a

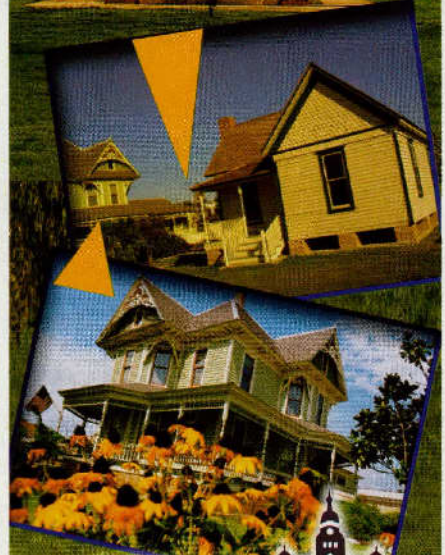
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mechanical bull—all activities the Elicks are happy to schedule upon request.

Then, Taunia shares an unexpected ranch diversion: She offers to show us her collection of eight historic houses on the Lonesome Pine. The structures provide accommodations for Texas Ranch Life guests—my friends and I have claimed the Creekside House—and also showcase Taunia's extraordinary passion for restoration and renovation. Since 1997, Taunia has found and purchased about a dozen dilapidated 1800s houses in various parts of Austin County, rescued them from demolition, and relocated most to the Lonesome Pine. Her impressive achievements in saving and overhauling the homes, most of which feature a large center hall and painting and stenciling by German-Texan craftsmen, were the focus of a story in *The New York Times* last fall.

Taunia has rescued about a dozen dilapidated 1800s houses from demolition and relocated most of them to the Lonesome Pine.

The two-bedroom Lakehouse, her first house project, overlooks a 13-acre lake about two-and-a-half miles from the ranch headquarters. Reasonably priced and extremely private, it remains the most popular lodging for couples or small families. The Creekside House at the ranch headquarters (Taunia's personal favorite) offers three bedrooms elegantly decorated with fine fabrics and heavy, wooden, antique furniture in pristine condition. Each room has a private bath, and the house has an ample, colorful kitchen in which guests can make breakfast and visit over coffee if they decide to opt out of the communal breakfast at headquarters.

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When the houses are lifted for moving, it's fun to see what's underneath," says Taunia. "Many have beautiful, hand-hewn cedar or cypress beams. And it's always exciting to find original paint and stenciling beneath layers of cloth and wallpaper."

One of her current projects is an 1830s house she hopes to move from nearby Industry to a private spot on a seven-acre lake on the Lonesome Pine. She hasn't decided what she will do with two other old houses and a barn that beg restoration on the Elicks' Eagle Roost Ranch along the San Bernard River in south Austin County, some 20 miles from the Lonesome Pine.

After the tour, we leave Taunia at the barn to sort out tomorrow's breakfast menu, and my gang retires to the Creekside House porch, where we sink into comfortable wicker chairs. Looking beyond the towering oaks to watch the night sky fall, seeing glittering stars that never seem as bright at home, we settle easily into the ranch's nocturnal rhythms.

This, I learn, is the most common activity at Texas Ranch Life. After a deep night's sleep in my antique, four-poster bed with downy pillows and a fluffy comforter, I join Taunia and John, my friends, and other guests around the massive table in the barn's modern, attractive kitchen. It turns out that

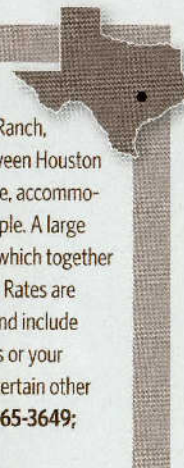
all of the visitors have spent the previous evening stargazing, and rediscovering the bliss of silence.

As we pour more mugs of coffee and enjoy the ranch's own Longhorn sausage and a cheesy brunch casserole with homemade salsa, Taunia talks about when the couple's three daughters will be back home on a visit from college, and John chats with fellow ranchers who stop in to talk about cattle and horses. By now, my friends and I feel as though we're part of the family and don't want to leave. We just want to stay here and live the ranch life. **TH**

Guests relax at The Lodge, an early-1900s house with longleaf-pine floors and beaded ceilings.

Texas Ranch Life

is based at the Lonesome Pine Ranch, southeast of Chappell Hill, between Houston and Austin. Lodgings vary in size, accommodating between two and 13 people. A large group can book all the houses, which together accommodate up to 60 people. Rates are \$140-\$500 nightly per house and include breakfast at ranch headquarters or your lodging. Horseback riding and certain other activities cost extra. Call 979/865-3649; www.texasranchlife.com.



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J. GRIFFIS SMITH

TRUE

CITY LIMITS

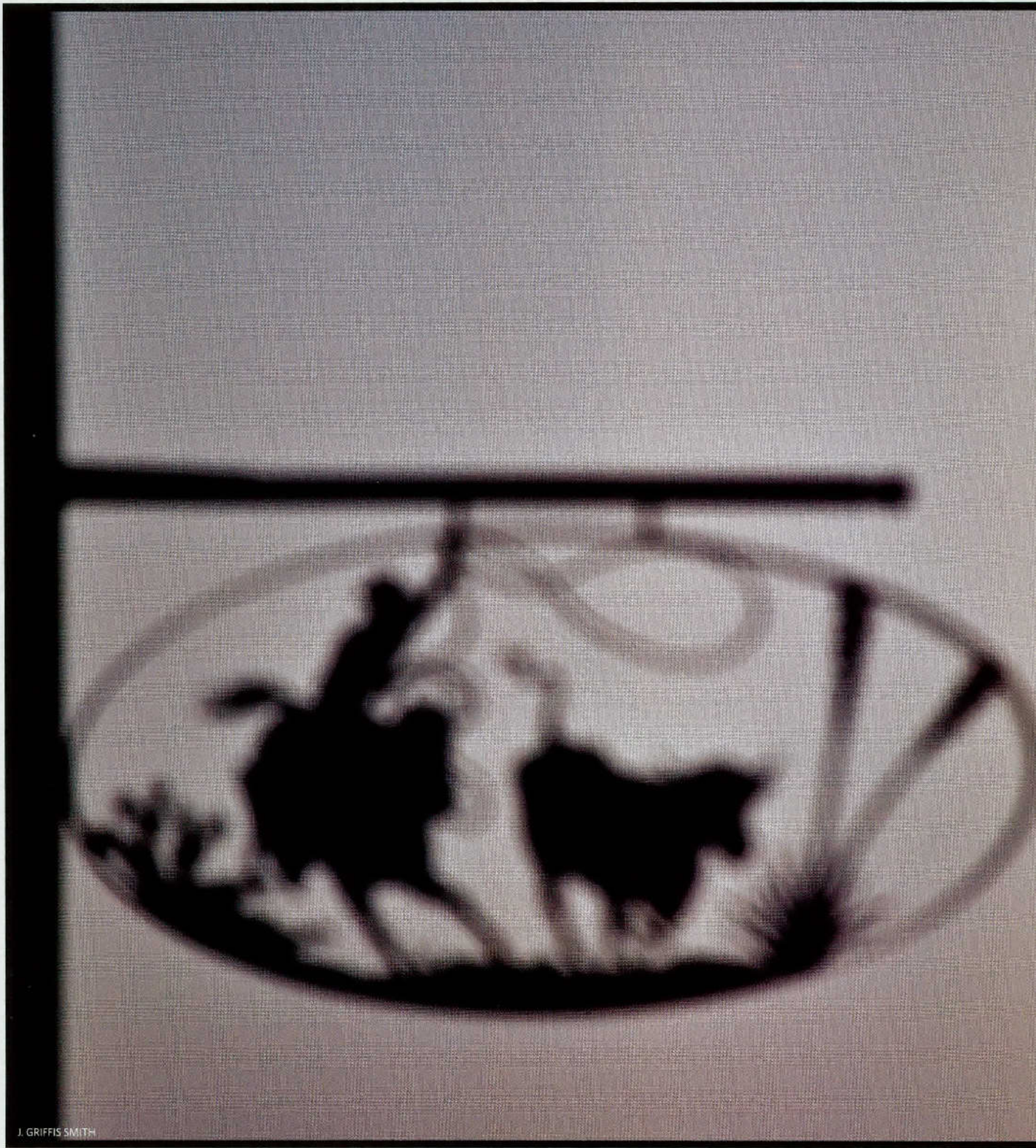
POP. 1,836

What is True, Texas? The bold-faced greeting from a gleaming water tower. The creaky, timeworn floors of a rural dance hall. Local chatter and clatter from the kitchen at a roadside diner. The roar from fans in the stands at a high school football game. The whimsical fiberglass homage to the local mascot that you pass every day. All of these elements symbolize True—a collective community of the imagination.

True may be your hometown, or the one you wish you had.

Where is True, Texas? Experience the True community in towns as tiny as Fischer (pop. 20) or in bustling cities like El Paso (pop. 751,296). True comes to life in the architectural grandeur of the restored Donley County Courthouse, the community core of Clarendon; in the craftsmanship of bootmakers such as Henry Camargo in Mercedes; and in the echoes of laughter and applause resonating through Eastland's Majestic Theater.

Of course, in a state as big as Texas, there are many more examples of that special state of being, construed to be the quintessential town of True. Where do you find True, Texas? Let us know at www.texashighways.com/truetx. →



J. GRIFFIS SMITH

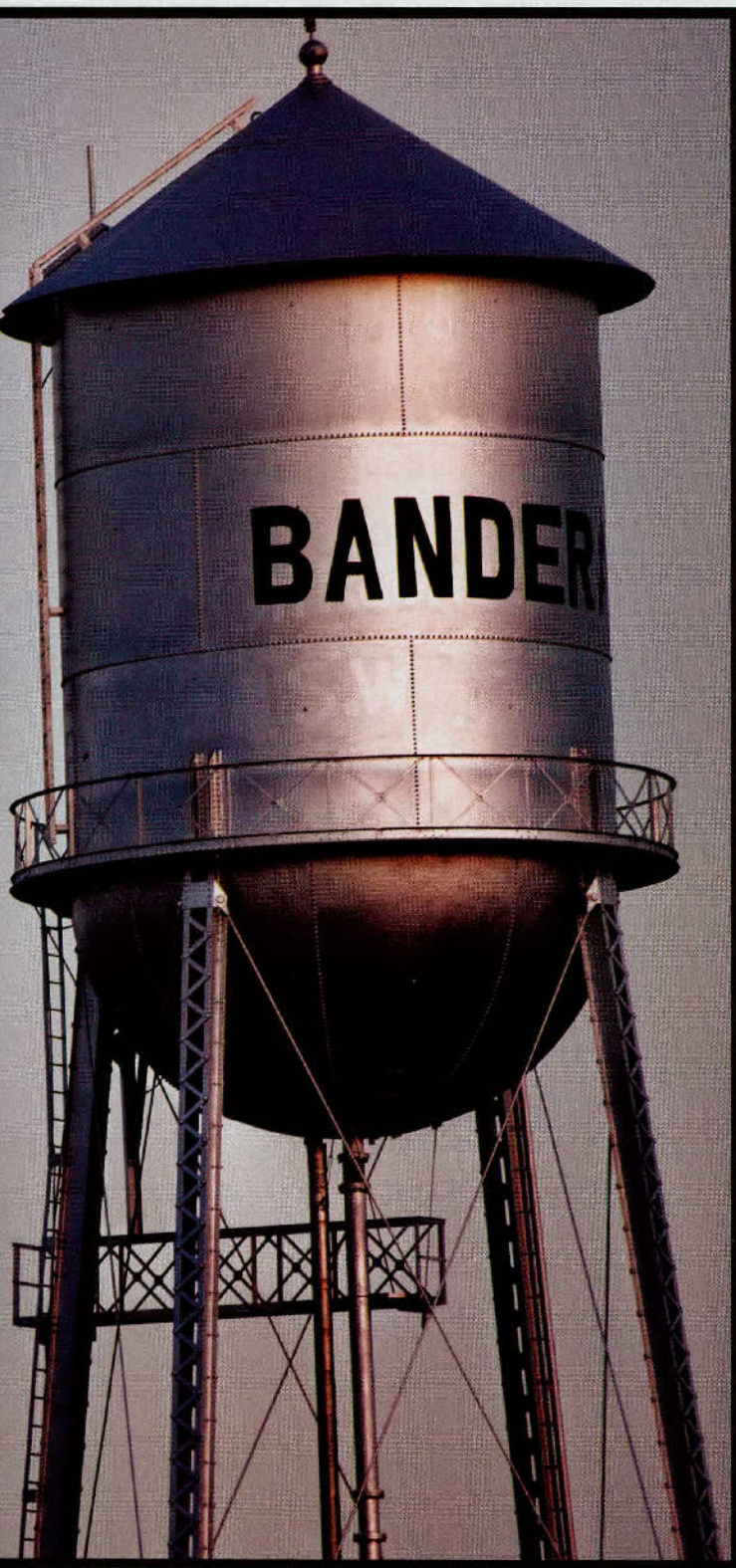
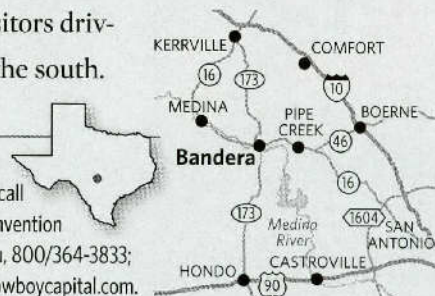
WATER TOWER BANDERA

CONSTRUCTED in 1947 in the style known as “Tin Man,” Bandera’s 50,000-gallon water tower is emblematic of the water towers that stand sentry (both literally and figuratively) at the heart of many Texas towns.

Essentially a practical device for storing water, the tower also serves as a landmark and a unifying symbol for the community. Most water towers have the town’s name emblazoned on the side; many add the name and image of the high school mascot. Some bear a catchy slogan (“Remember Goliad”) or pay homage to a famous native son (“San Benito: Hometown of Freddy Fender”). A few towns have even designed their water towers to reflect local symbols (Luling’s watermelon, Poteet’s strawberry, Kermit’s frog).

How important is this municipal billboard? When the Bandera City Council decided to refurbish the town’s Tin Man in 2008, it initially declined to spend the extra money to repaint the local football team’s claim to fame on the side. A minor uprising ensued, boosters soon raised the necessary funds, and today, the words “State Champs 2002” still greet visitors driving in from the south.

For information about Bandera, call the Bandera Convention & Visitor Bureau, 800/364-3833; www.bandercowboycapital.com.





J. GRIFFIS SMITH

COURTHOUSE

DONLEY COUNTY COURTHOUSE,
CLARENDON

"THESE MAGNIFICENT governmental buildings reflect the independence and fortitude of a resolute people determined to create order and permanence out of a vast wilderness ...," writes former U.S. Congressman and preservationist Michael Andrews in *Historic Texas Courthouses* (Bright Sky Press, 2006). And nowhere was such order better maintained than in the Donley County seat of Clarendon, founded in the late 1870s as a Christian Temperance Colony by a Methodist minister and his brother-in-law. With no saloons or other dens of debauchery, the Panhandle town earned the nickname "Saints' Roost." In the late 1880s, citizens moved the townsite six miles south to be next to the railroad, and along with other signs of a thriving community, the Donley County Courthouse soon appeared. The 1890 Romanesque Revival-style structure, built of St. Louis-pressed bricks and limestone, underwent extensive restoration in the early 2000s, which included reconstruction of the third floor and the return of a corner tower and other architectural details. The impressive edifice shines among the 230 historic Texas courthouses still serving as centers of local government—and symbols of community pride.

The Donley County Courthouse (open Mon-Thu 8-5, Fri 8-4) is at 300 S. Sully St. in Clarendon, 806/874-3625. For details on other local attractions, contact the Clarendon/Donley County Chamber of Commerce at 318 S. Kearney St., 806/874-2421; www.donleytx.com.

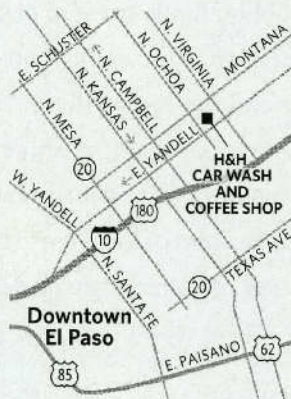
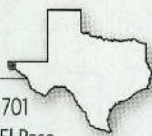


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H&H CAR WASH
AND COFFEE SHOP, EL PASO

PROOF THAT EL PASO'S eclecticism extends beyond the multiculturalism you might expect in a thriving border city. Case in point: The funky and welcoming H&H Car Wash—an unlikely carwash-diner founded by Syrian immigrants in 1958, serves some of the best *carne picada* in town (and offers an impeccable \$12 carwash, to boot). “Originally, we served sandwiches, burgers, and tacos,” says Maynard Haddad, who runs H&H with his brother Kenny. “But we focus now on Mexican food. A friend in Missouri told us about a cut of meat called tri-tip—that’s why our *carne picada* is so good. We cut it in cubes, then cook it with tomatoes, onions, and jalapeños.” Or maybe it’s so good because H&H hasn’t changed much in half a century—it still sports the same three turquoise tables and countertop, still the same 12 chrome barstools, still the same hand-washed finish on your car. And El Paso still offers plenty of fun for the adventuresome traveler.

H & H Car Wash and Coffee Shop is at 701 E. Yandell Dr., just north of downtown El Paso. Diner and carwash hours: Mon-Sat 7-3. Call 915/533-1144.





J. GRIFFIS SMITH

HOTEL

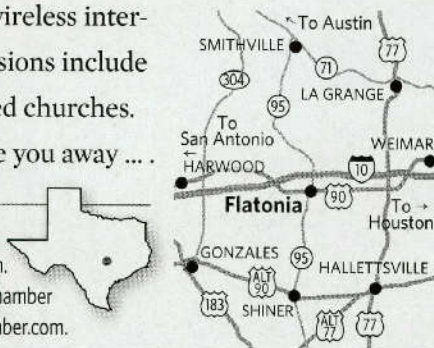
OLLE HOTEL,
FLATONIA

IF YOU'RE JUST LOOKING for shelter as you travel from Point A to Point B, any nondescript lodging will do. But if atmosphere and amenities count, more sophisticated accommodations are in order. While grand structures such as Hotel Galvez in Galveston, or The Driskill Hotel in Austin, spring to mind, don't discount the possibilities of a more intimate space. Especially if it's an historic hotel in the rolling hills of picturesque Fayette County.

The 10-room Olle Hotel lies in Flatonia, a tiny town along Interstate 10, smack-dab between San Antonio and Houston. Constructed from 1899 to 1901, the two-story Colonial Revival-style building was first used as a hotel in 1915. (A wood-frame boardinghouse built in the early 1880s occupied the site until the current brick structure replaced it.) Otto and Agnes Olle purchased the building in 1926 and opened the original Olle Hotel, which operated until 1967.

Except for a brief time, the hotel then sat vacant until it reopened to enthusiastic visitors in 2005. Owner Kathryn Geesaman offers guests an intriguing combination of understated luxury and local flavor: pillow-top mattresses and pigs-in-a-blanket from a Czech bakery, signature fine toiletries and antique bathtubs, high-speed wireless internet and fresh flowers. Nearby diversions include artisan shops, museums, and painted churches. The restful, country setting will take you away ...

The Olle Hotel awaits your visit at 218 S. Market Ave. in Flatonia, 361/772-0310; www.ollehotel.com. For information about Flatonia, call the Flatonia Chamber of Commerce at 361/865-3920; www.flatoniachamber.com.





J. GRIFFIS SMITH

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

C.H. YOE HIGH YOEMEN,
CAMERON

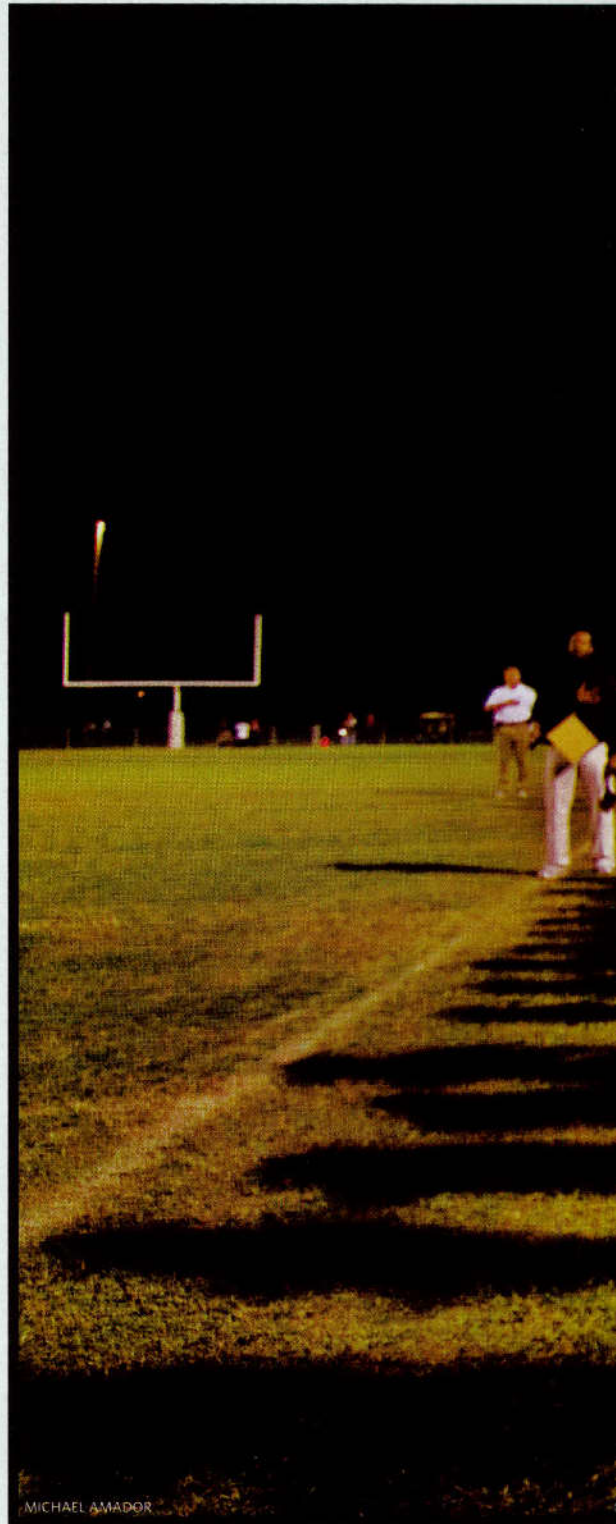
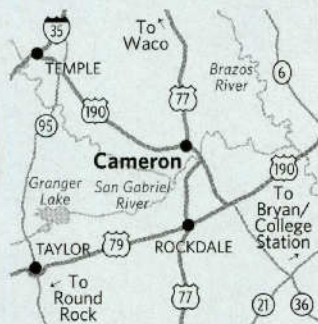
TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL is a massively popular, all-inclusive enterprise. Its governing organization, the University Interscholastic League, includes well over 1,000 member schools. From cheerleaders and marching bands to team mascots and helmet logos, the game provides a tradition of touchdowns and town pride throughout the Lone Star State.

C.H. Yoe High School's team, the Yoemen, serve as our representative example of this enduring fall favorite. Charles H. and Caroline (Carrie) Meyers Yoe were active philanthropists in the Milam County town of Cameron and financed a new high school in 1921.

C.H. Yoe preserves plenty of history with 30 district football championships, a state title in 1981, and an annual rivalry with neighboring Rockdale for the "Battle of the Bell." More than half of the boys in Yoe's student body are part of the team, which boasts a school mascot/logo of a Robin Hood-style archer. The Houston Astros' CEO Drayton McLane Jr. is a proud Cameron Yoe graduate.

Texas high school football season is on the way. As the Beach Boys suggested in their 1963 hit, be true to your school.

The Milam County seat of Cameron, at the intersection of US 77 and Texas 36, lies within a triangle formed by Waco, Bryan/College Station, and Austin. Contact Cameron's C.H. Yoe High School at 254/697-3902; www.cameronisd.net.



MICHAEL AMADOR





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

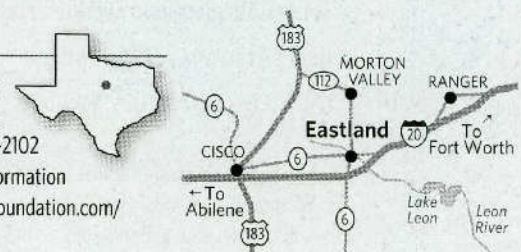
MOVIE PALACE

MAJESTIC THEATER,
EASTLAND

IN 2007, Preservation Texas proclaimed historic small-town theaters as that year's candidates for the state's most endangered places. And Eastland's Majestic Theater might easily have joined the ranks of other terminally endangered movie palaces except that a dedicated band of enterprising preservationists joined forces with the local government to take over the building more than 20 years ago and bring the operation back from the dead.

These days, through the guidance of the Eastland Fine Arts Association, the Majestic comes to life anew every Thursday through Monday night, casting its lavish neon spell on moviegoers. The Majestic is rather more grand than most small-town theaters, in part because town father C.U. Connellee first built it as a performance venue for variety shows during Eastland's original boom years of the 1920s. Because of that early grandeur and the addition of the multistory marquee in the late 1940s, the Majestic can seat 800 customers (although 500 ticket sales now define a good weekend).

The Majestic Theater is at 108 N. Lamar St. in Eastland, 254/629-2102 or 254/629-1322 (information line); www.eastlandfoundation.com/majestic.html.



ARTISAN

HENRY CAMARGO,
CAMARGO'S BOOTS, MERCEDES

TEXAS IS HOME to dozens of outstanding custom bootmakers, and the image of the single artisan practicing his or her personal brand of magic at an individual workbench stands clear as an embodiment of the small-town state of mind.

Today's bootmaking operations often focus as much on flash and glamour as they do on practical bootmaking. Even so, a family-owned boot shop is the antithesis of the assembly line of mechanized construction, and the door to the shop opens onto a world where time is reckoned differently than it is in any kind of contemporary digital framework.

Even though movie stars and business moguls spend thousands on a one-of-a-kind pair of boots, some bootmakers offer custom options that fit the average person's budget.

Of course, the custom bootmaker serves a different market than the typical shoe repairman, or the harness maker of times gone by. Stories abound about how the early bootmakers set up shop along the cattle trails. When cowboys came through headed in one direction, the bootmaker would measure their feet. When the trail riders returned on the way home, their boots would be ready. It's reassuring to know that artisans still establish personal relationships—and preserve their ties to history—today.

Camargo's Handmade Boots is at 710 W. Second St. in Mercedes, 956/565-6457; www.camargoboots.com.





J. GRIFFIS SMITH

GENERAL STORE

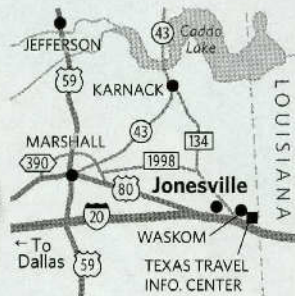
T.C. LINDSEY & COMPANY,
JONESVILLE

WHEN YOU WALK through the screen doors of T.C. Lindsey & Company General Store, brace yourself for a captivating trip back in time. Since the store opened in 1847, some important things have stayed the same—regulars keep coming to this heart of Jonesville, and tourists still find their way here to absorb its anachronistic essence. The store, started by town namesake William Jones, has been in the Vaughan family (T.C. Lindsey was an in-law) since 1870. Today part general store and part museum, T.C. Lindsey features well-stocked aisles with run-of-the-mill goods and a few hard-to-find items such as old tools, bonnets, rare jellies, and hoop cheese portioned with a 100-year-old cutter.

Look beyond the tool-lined walls to discover a mesmerizing lair of antiques. The museum's collection began with a few rusty farm tools in the 1960s; it now features thousands of items, including farming equipment and outmoded household items, from an old cotton gin to a well-worn dentist's chair.

Back on the front porch, the echoes of conversations from Texas' early days are almost palpable. From here, it's clear that T.C. Lindsey & Company continues to embrace its simple authenticity.

T.C. Lindsey & Company General Store is between Marshall and the Louisiana border, at 2293 FM 134 in Jonesville, 903/687-3382.



STAN WILLIAMS



FISCHER HALL



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

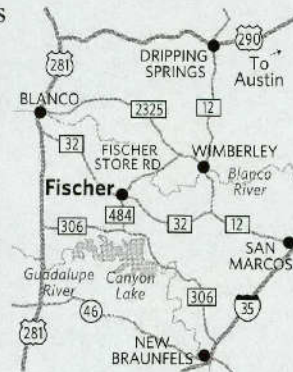
J. GRIFFIN SMITH

DANCE HALL

FISCHER HALL,
FISCHER

SIGHTSEERS exploring the famous Devil's Backbone, the scenic stretch of Farm-to-Market 32 between FM 12 and Blanco on the western edge of the Hill Country, often stop midway at the former trading-post town of Fischer (population today, fewer than 20) to wonder about its barn-style, whitewashed dance hall. Erected in the late 1800s by the Fischer Agricultural Society as a community gathering spot, Fischer Hall still serves as a venue for weddings, reunions, and other social events. If you're lucky enough to receive an invitation to an event held here, or to chance into an ad hoc tour (ask at the adjacent nine-pin bowling alley), don't miss the opportunity to tour this relic from Central Texas' rural history. Inside the simple hall, there are no central support beams; instead, the builders relied on a German method of using laminated, curved wooden arches on the ceiling—an architectural style that lends itself to unimpeded dancing.

Fischer Hall (on Fischer Store Rd. just northeast of FM 484) is available for parties and community events. For information, call the bowling alley (no set schedule, but try evenings) at 830/935-4800.





J. GRIFFIS SMITH



THE MULE

WITHOUT ANCESTRAL PRIDE OR HOPE FOR OFFSPRING, THE MULE—ALONG WITH BUFFALO, HOUND AND LONGHORN—MADE TEXAS HISTORY. IN WAR HE CARRIED CANNON ON HIS BACK. BECAUSE HE WAS AVAILABLE TO HAUL FREIGHT, FORTS ROSE ON FRONTIERS. INDIANS ATE HORSES HITCHED TO CART OR COACH, BUT LET TOUGH MULE-MEAT GO BY.

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



TOWN MASCOT


THE MULE,
MULESHOE

Muleshoe. Memorable, fun to imagine, and a name that conjures up multiple Clint Eastwood Westerns.

The iconic symbol of the West Texas town of Muleshoe is the lovable, mighty mule, of course. And, Muleshoe has the tangible artifacts to honor its famous beast of burden: an impressive, life-size memorial that begs a photo; a muleshoe archway at the Muleshoe Heritage Center; and Benny Douglas Stadium, where the Muleshoe High School Mules make playoff runs (they were the undefeated 2008 2A, Division 1 football state champions). It all makes for a celebratory combination of happy horse “whinny” and delighted donkey “hee haw,” a good kick, and a Lone Star State salute.

Named after historic Muleshoe Ranch, this High Plains agricultural center sprouted up along the BNSF railroad line. Twenty miles south of town, migratory birds and human visitors flock to the panorama of Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge.

Smart, stubborn, and tough, the mule is cool.



Muleshoe is 70 miles northwest of Lubbock on US 84. The National Mule Memorial is near the Muleshoe Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture at 115 E. American Blvd., 806/272-4248; www.muleshoe.org.





ANGEL WINGS & CORAL TREES

CAVERNS *of* SONORA

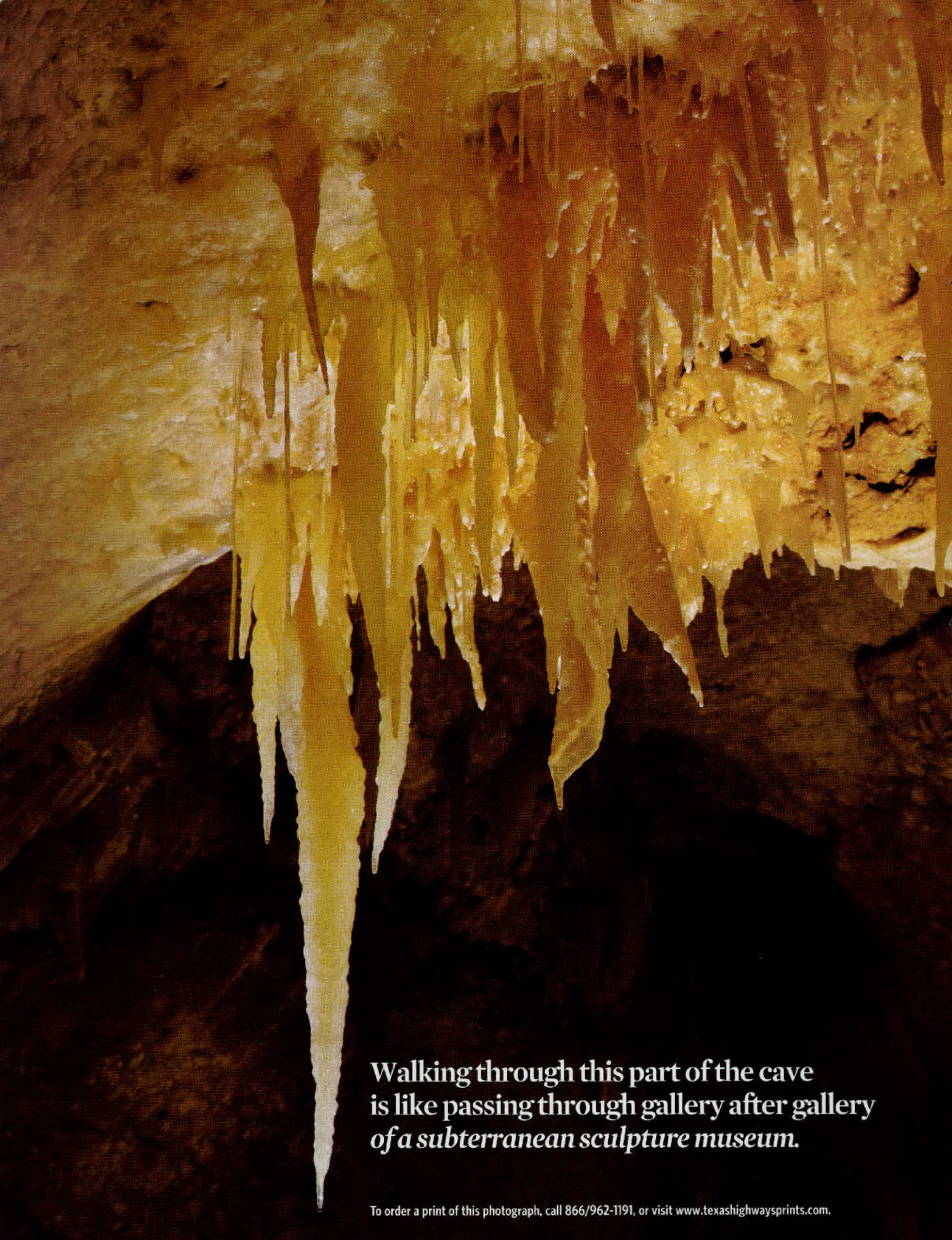
Recognized as “the most beautiful show cave on the planet,”
the Caverns of Sonora celebrates 50 years of inspiring awe.

Text by RAE NADLER-OLENICK *Photographs by* LAURENCE PARENT



No rock in sight. Visitors follow a carefully established path through crystal-covered surfaces at the bottom of Caverns of Sonora.

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



**Walking through this part of the cave
is like passing through gallery after gallery
of a subterranean sculpture museum.**

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

Some caves scatter their treasures over many miles of underground passageways. Not so the Caverns of Sonora in southwest Sutton County, which displays its beautiful, varied crystalline formations in a compact setting. Once you're inside the "decorated" section of the cave, the space envelops you like a giant, sparkling geode. "It's internationally recognized as the most beautiful show cave on the planet," says George Veni, Executive Director of the National Cave and Karst Research Institute in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

The Caverns' beauty lay concealed from human eyes for many years, even after its initial discovery in 1905 on the Mayfield Ranch by a shepherd and his dog. Over the next half century, many a cowboy and local youth explored the dusty, 500-foot passageway that led to the brink of a seemingly impassable, deep pit.

In mid-August 1955, a trio of experienced cavers from Abilene—brothers Bob and Bart Crisman and their friend James Estes—stopped by the Mayfield Cave, as it was called then, after spending most of the day exploring another Sutton County cave. Unlike those before them, they spied a way around the pit, via a high ledge. Pressed for time, they didn't proceed any farther. However, they shared their discovery with other cavers, and about two weeks later, five daring young Dallas men breached the chasm.

"I was first in line," says C.E. (Jack) Prince, now a retired electrical engineering professor who lives in Austin. He says the transit, though tricky, was not as bad as it first appeared. "The ledge was rough, like sandpaper, not that easy to fall off of," he explains. With his back pressed tight against the wall of the cave, Prince inched his way to the other side, and then set up a safety line for his companions—Allen Cain, Pete Cobb, Jack Allen, and Claude Head.

Once across the ledge, the explorers were in for a surprise. "We expected to just see more of what we had been seeing," says Prince. "We were amazed at the way the cave was changing." In place of barren, dry terrain, a marvelous realm of dazzling formations appeared before their headlamps as they ventured deeper inside.

Today, the tourist trail at the Caverns of Sonora runs alongside the 45-foot-deep chasm (called the Devil's Pit), where, if you peer upward into the shadows, you can still make out the ledge Jack Prince and his friends crossed in 1955. Caverns guide Bill Sawyer points out the historic spot as he leads my husband, Walter, and me through the cave. So far, we've walked from the natural entrance along passageways distinguished by a few fossils and small, round

formations called "cave popcorn" on the walls. But once around the pit and beyond the Sponge Rooms—so named because of their porous walls—the scenery magically transforms into the wonderland those early

The living formations in Sonora Caverns create a mysterious "wonderland" effect.

explorers beheld with such amazement. Sawyer tells us we've now entered the "active" part of the cave.

Here, a breathtaking array of formations—stalactites, stalagmites, flowstone, and more—continue their age-old process of growth, as acidic water slowly dissolves the surrounding limestone, beginning a series of chemical reactions that result in successive, ever-larger calcite deposits. Wet and shimmering, the fantastical shapes represent nature at work before our eyes. Walking through this part of the cave is like passing through gallery after gallery of a subterranean sculpture museum. "War clubs"—knobby, asymmetrical stalactites, or calcite formations that hang from the cave ceiling—give way to icy-smooth stalagmites, followed by a forest of rare "coral trees."

Once the trail rises, offering a new perspective, visitors can glimpse passageways on four different levels of the cave. Moving along, we pass a clear, green pool and then encounter translucent "soda straws"—possible precursors to stalactites—many over three feet long, with water droplets clinging to them. Some of the soda straws have grown at an angle because of airflow, and drapery has formed on the bottom sides; these formations are

Speleothems 101

SCIENTISTS think that the Caverns of Sonora formed about a million years ago through the action of hydrogen sulfide-infused water on the 300-foot-deep Segovia limestone bed. The H₂S gas, associated with deep, underlying petroleum deposits, rose to the water table along a fault (fracture with displacement), where it formed sulfuric acid. The acidic water then penetrated the rock through pre-existing cracks (joints, faults, and bedding planes), dissolving and widening them until the cracks became the size of passages. Eventually, the water level dropped, and speleothems (formations) began to grow.

Speleothems from moon milk to cave bacon abound in the Caverns of Sonora, but the cave is famous for the uncommon abundance and variety of its helictites, including some rarely seen in other caves, such as snake-dancer and fishtail helictites. Though damaged, the one-of-a-kind Butterfly formation remains the cave's icon. —Rae Nadler-Olenick



TOP LEFT: Angel wings are blades of pure, clear calcite that grow slowly from tiny fissures in the cave wall. ABOVE: Coral-covered stalactites grow down from a helictite ceiling. ABOVE RIGHT: Drip water fills Horseshoe Lake, which is unable to drain deeper into the cave because the crystal-covered floor is not permeable.



Wet and shimmering, the fantastical shapes represent nature at work before our eyes.

called “angel wings.” Around the next turn, we’re standing in a space filled with some of nature’s most delicate and exquisite creations—helictites. These formations, which grow on cave walls and ceilings, take many different shapes—some are a riot of stems and curlicues, while others bear fanciful but appropriate names, such as “snake dancers” and “fishtails.”

When Walter and I marvel at the variety of formations in the cave, Sawyer says, “I’ve worked here 19 years, and I still haven’t seen it all.”

As we push farther along, landscapes from canyon-like vistas to intimate alcoves come into view, adorned with all manner and all sizes of formations, both smooth and textured.

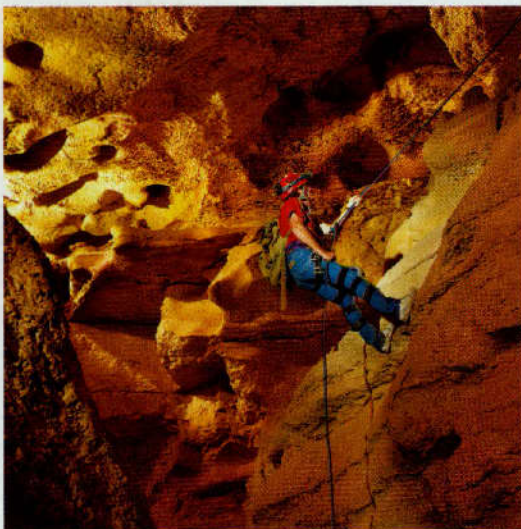


In one spot, “moon milk”—a calcium-magnesium material that’s paste-like when wet—appears to cascade from a hole above our heads. Elsewhere, strips of “cave bacon” cling to the ceiling, their contrasting color bands revealing stark changes in surface vegetation over the eons of their growth. Extraordinarily slow-growing monocrystalline (single crystal) formations, which look like slender, squarish stalactites, grow in an area called the Crystal Palace.

The Caverns’ lighting system showcases its treasures in a lustrous glow. The cave’s developer, the late Jack Burch, pioneered the concept of commercializing a cave in order to protect

it. A caver himself, he created the trail and installed the lights with a few handpicked helpers. In anticipation of increased traffic, Burch also designed the special airlock doors that preserve the natural conditions (71 degrees, 98 percent humidity) needed to prevent the cave from drying out. The Caverns, which opened to the public in 1960, still reflects his vision.

As our tour draws to a close, we see the Caverns’ most beloved formation—a pair of fishtail helictites aptly named the Butterfly—the only formation of its kind in the world that can be viewed by the



On the Wild Side

SINCE 2000, the Caverns of Sonora has offered a **Discovery Challenge Adventure Tour** for those who want to experience more of the cave than can be viewed from its well-lighted, paved trails. Visitors who take the four-hour tour have a chance to relive some of the excitement that the early explorers felt as they crept toward the deep pit through narrow passageways of mundane rock—illuminated only by their headlamps—before they hit the Caverns' beauty jackpot.

"They're looking for adventure," says Caverns guide Bill Sawyer. Families, scout groups, college students, and others have donned helmets, lights, and kneepads and taken the tour. Sawyer designed the tour carefully to enable people to stretch their horizons while remaining safe. There's plenty of crawling and squeezing—some of it in muddy conditions—to provide a challenge. At the same time, anyone can opt out of any leg of the trip without slowing down the rest. "If they're claustrophobic, they don't have to do the tight crawls," Sawyer explains. "If they're afraid of heights, they don't have to do the rappel. There is always an alternate route."

The trip's climax is "the drop": a 40-foot rappel into the Devil's Pit, that once-formidable barrier to the dazzling world beyond. Wearing a seat harness and a "Figure 8" rappelling device (all supplied by the Caverns of Sonora) and belayed by Sawyer from above, participants gently lower themselves, one by one, down a rope to the bottom. After everyone has descended, the group climbs up a ladder up to the tourist trail and exits via the decorated part of the cave.


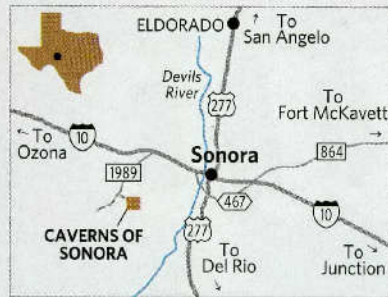
The general reaction? "They love it," says Sawyer. "For some people, it's the thrill of a lifetime."

—Rae Nadler-Olenick

ABOVE: The Discovery Challenge Adventure Tour ends with a professionally supervised, 40-foot rappel into the Devil's Pit.



The "decorated" part of the cave envelops you like a giant, sparkling geode.


 TH ESSENTIALS


Caverns of Sonora

THE CAVERNS OF SONORA is 15 miles southwest of Sonora, off Interstate 10. Take Exit 392 south onto RR 1989 (Caverns of Sonora Rd.), and follow the road signs to the Caverns. The Caverns opens daily year round except Christmas Day; guided tours are offered throughout the day. Special "adventure tours," photography tours, and large-group tours must be arranged in advance. The visitor center offers fossils, rocks, books, and jewelry, as well as snack items, including fresh, homemade fudge. RV and tent camping is available, along with potable water, electricity, and restrooms with showers. Call 325/387-3105 or 325/387-6507; www.cavernsofsonora.com.

The White Giants are columns worn smooth at the top by air currents; calcite is deposited below as knobby coral.

general public. The five-and-a-half-inch-wide phenomenon remains beautiful, but it's also a reminder of human destructiveness. In 2006, the Butterfly was vandalized. The upper half of its

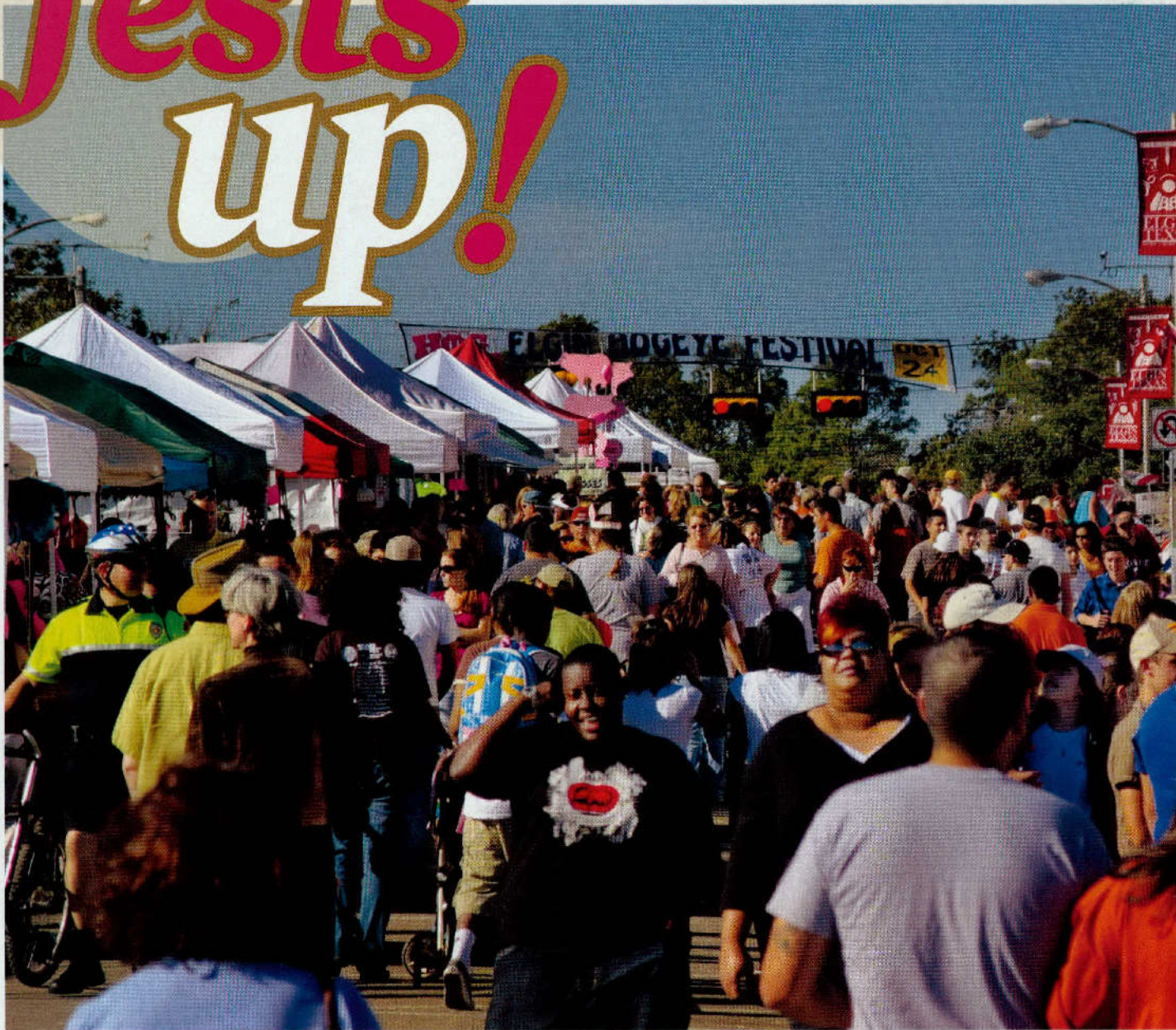
right wing was broken and carried off by a visitor; the perpetrator has never been caught. The incident brought Texas show-cave owners together to successfully lobby Texas lawmakers to make cave vandalism a felony.

We exit through the incongruously bare, yet intriguing, Belly of the Whale, an area where once-plentiful helictites were corroded away to the bedrock by airflow long before humans entered the cave. Leaving behind the Caverns' underworld magic for the glare of day, I'm very conscious that there's far more here than the eye can take in during one visit. I'll be back. **TH**

Longtime caver RAE NADLER-OLENICK participated in the Caverns of Sonora Restoration Project (1992-2005) for eight of its 14 years. Photographer LAURENCE PARENT grew up in part at Carlsbad Caverns National Park and has loved exploring caves since he was a child.

fests up!

Small-town Celebrations on Tap from Plainview



IN TEXAS, FALL DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN BRISK BREEZES AND cooler temperatures. Here, the start of the season is tied more to events than the weather. The kids go back to school, the pools close, and on Friday nights, staccato drumbeats and shouts from enthusiastic fans emanate from the local football stadium. Fast on the heels of these harbingers comes another abiding autumn tradition—small-town festivals.

There, the predictability ends, however, because these Texas celebrations are as diverse as the small towns that host them. Check out a festival in your area, or choose one that interests you and plan a trip. Chances are, you'll create a fall tradition of your own.

ABOVE: Set in Elgin's historic downtown, the annual Hogeye Festival features feasting and fun, as well as a full arsenal of pig puns.



STAN A. WILLIAMS

Cowboy Days, Plainview, September 18. While this action-packed community celebration adds new items to its lineup every year, the Down Ol' Broadway Cattle Drive & Parade remains the signature event. Real cowboys and cowgirls drive real cows—including several Longhorns—two miles through downtown Plainview, from the historic Santa Fe depot to Broadway Park, recalling the cattle drives of the late-1800s.

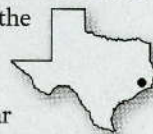


The Old West theme continues during the actual festival with a Cowboy King and Queen Contest, cow-patty bingo, performances by a trick roper, stagecoach rides, mechanical bull/horse rides, a stick-horse race, chuck-wagon meals (an authentic cowboy breakfast, plus a lunch featuring

brisket, cobbler, and homemade ice cream), a ranch rodeo and dance, and even cowboy church. Other events include the Hale on Wheels Bike Ride (four Hale County routes from 21 to 62 miles long), a classic-car show, several giant, inflatable, children's activity pads, a rock-climbing wall, two-step demonstrations, and live country-western music. Call 806/296-1320; www.myplainview.com (click on "Cowboy Days").

Texas Rice Festival, Winnie, September 29-October 3.

Started more than 40 years ago to celebrate the area's rice harvest, this festival has evolved into a weeklong event that delights locals and tourists alike. The entertainment this year features live music by Kevin Fowler, Aaron Watson, and Wayne Toups & ZyDeCajun, street dances, parades, pageants, carnival rides, children's games and activities, an antique-car show, a livestock show, and a Longhorn show. The event resembles a county fair, thanks to a rice-cooking contest and competitions in art, photography, welding, and ice cream-eating. And speaking of eating, the Rice Festival is



KEVIN STILLMAN

A kids' area at Conroe's Cajun Catfish Festival offers activities from painting to pony rides. Other highlights include gumbo, boudain, catfish, and crawfish pie.



For a comprehensive list of statewide festivals, visit www.traveltexas.com, click on "Events," and search for "Festivals."

known for its outstanding Cajun specialties—rice balls, crab balls, boudain, gumbo, étouffée, and pistolettes—as well as funnel cakes and other standard carnival fare.

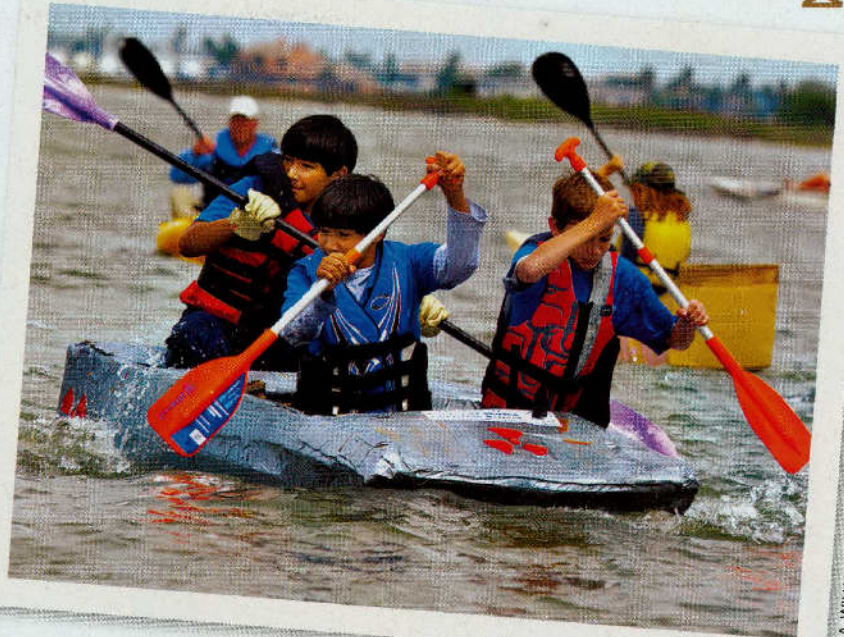
"Pre-festival events" include an open horse show on September 18 and a barbecue cook-off on September 24-25. The latter features a dance, washer- and horse-shoe-pitching tournaments, carnival rides, fireworks, and gospel singing. Call 409/296-4404; www.texasricefestival.org.

Ripfest, Eastland, October 2.

Eastland's most famous resident, a tenacious horned lizard by the name of Old Rip, provides the inspiration for this annual celebration. According to legend, a young Rip was placed in the cornerstone of the former Eastland County Courthouse in 1897 and was found alive 31 years later when the cornerstone was removed prior to the courthouse's



An artisan bends glass rods into ornaments during Alpine's Artwalk, a November event that showcases the West Texas town's vibrant gallery scene. With entertainment by the likes of Ray Wylie Hubbard, it's fast becoming a music festival, too.



STAN A. WILLIAMS

One of the highlights of the Rockport Seafair is the cardboard-boat race. A craft called *Nuclear Fisherman* came in first at last year's event.

from turkey legs to corn dogs. Be sure to pay your respects to Old Rip before you leave. Call 254/629-2332 or 877/2-OLD-RIP; www.eastlandchamber.com.

Floresville Peanut Festival, Floresville, October 5 and October 7-9.

One of the oldest festivals in Texas, the Floresville Peanut Festival dates to 1938, when residents began celebrating the harvest of the local cash crop. Today, it honors the area's peanut heritage (look for the "Big Peanut" sculpture on the courthouse lawn) and includes a full slate of activities. The event begins on Tuesday with Goober Games (games and activities for children). On Thursday, the carnival opens, and Queen Tunaep (peanut spelled backward), King Reboog (more trick spelling), and their court are crowned in an elaborate coronation that has a different theme each year. Friday and Saturday activities include two parades, a peanut brittle contest, a washer-pitching tournament, a classic-car-club tour, arts and crafts, and special tours of the Wilson County Historical Museum. Besides the



usual festival fare, crowds line up for gorditas, shrimp kebabs, fresh-roasted corn, and *aguas frescas*. Visitors can also buy roasted peanuts, peanut butter, and other peanut products.

A street dance on Friday night features two local bands, and a second one on Saturday night features country musician Kyle Park and country-rock band Jason Boland & the Stragglers. Several other bands provide entertainment Saturday afternoon. Call 830/391-4089; www.floresvillepeanutfestival.org.

Cajun Catfish Festival, Conroe, October 8-10.

Catfish is only one of the delicious foods you'll find at this free-wheeling celebration. How about shrimp, seafood gumbo, frogs' legs, crawfish pie, boudain, red beans and rice, or gator-on-a-stick? A Go Texan display also offers a "tasting tour" of Lone Star wines and food products.

While the noshing here is outstanding, other aspects of the event will also vie for your attention. There's actually a Cajun Catfishing Contest beforehand with prizes



demolition. As word spread, the phenomenon brought a measure of fame not only to Old Rip, but also to Eastland. Old Rip now lies in state inside a diminutive, velvet-lined coffin in the current courthouse; his remains can be viewed anytime through a window that flanks Main Street.

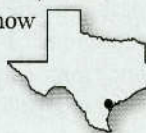
Whether Old Rip really slept for three decades or not, there's nothing sleepy about Ripfest. It kicks off with a parade and includes a pageant, a classic-car show, a dog show, a 5K race, a fish fry, live music, arts and crafts, children's games and activities, bull riding, and festival treats



The Down Ol' Broadway Cattle Drive & Parade sets the stage for a slew of other Old West-themed events at Plainview's Cowboy Days.

awarded at the festival for the top three largest catfish. A kids' area includes carnival rides, interactive games, pony rides, and a petting zoo. Five stages present three days of nonstop entertainment: headliners Cowboy Mouth, Reckless Kelly, and Wayne Troups; an Elvis impersonator; dance groups; and local bands, including some impressive young musicians. Call 800/324-2604; www.conroecajuncatfishfestival.com.

Rockport Seafair, Rockport, October 8-10. Serious beach lovers know that fall is one of the best times to visit the coast, and in 1974, Rockport residents



began hosting the Rockport Seafair each October. Instead of falling leaves and pumpkins, the theme is "Celebrate the Sea."

The opening ceremonies feature a flyby and a salute to the military, as well as a parade. Other highlights include cooking demonstrations from local chefs, a boat show, arts and crafts, a gumbo cook-off, a baked-desserts contest, crab races, and a children's activity tent. There's a special category for water entertainment, which includes a cardboard-boat race, kayaking, kayak-obstacle-course racing, a walk through Texas wetlands, Texas A&M Wetland Explorer boat rides, and kite boarding. The entertainment features



more than 10 bands, Polynesian dancers, kinetic-movement dancers, and a talent show. Diners feast on fresh seafood from fried jumbo shrimp to fish tacos.

After enjoying the balmy winds, varied entertainment, and great food, you may decide that spending three days on the coast is a perfect way to initiate the season. Call 361/729-6445; www.rockportseafair.com.

Delta County Chiggerfest, Cooper,

October 16. Contrary to what you might think, Chiggerfest doesn't celebrate chiggers, but rather the end of chigger season in East Texas. One of the

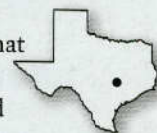


signature events is a 5K Run/Walk, which encourages participants to "run the chiggers out of Delta County." Other highlights include a pancake breakfast, a Lil' Miss and Lil' Mister Chigger pageant, a cake walk, an arts-and-crafts competition, sidewalk-chalk art, a shoebox-float contest, a health fair, a bicycle rally, a pet parade (costumes encouraged), a raffle, and a kids' zone with multiple activities. Food vendors offer turkey legs, sausage-on-a-stick, and other festival fare. The entertainment includes rock-and-roll oldies group The Blandelles, an Elvis impersonator, dance groups, live music, and a street dance. With new events added each

year (cheer competitions, an antique-car-and-tractor show, and more kids' activities new in 2010), Chiggerfest threatens to run those annoying little critters out of the county for good. Call 903/395-4314; www.deltacounty.org.

Hogeye Festival, Elgin, October 23.

To understand the Hogeye Festival, it helps to know that Elgin bills itself as the Sausage Capital of Texas, a nod to its best-known product—Elgin Sausage. Southside Market & Barbecue has been making the tantalizing links since 1882, and Meyer's Sausage



**fests
UP!**



Two boys ham it up in front of one of the pink pigs that populate downtown Elgin during the Hogeye Festival.

Company has been producing several flavors of sausage since 1949. So it's no surprise that residents go hog-wild for this family-friendly festival. Set on Main Street in Elgin's National Register historic district, the event kicks off with the Elgin Sowpremes, a local singing group, riding in on Harleys.

The day is filled with more pig puns, of course, as well as plenty of community spirit and fun. The lineup includes the Road Hog Car Show, a BBQ Pork Cook-Off, the In a Pig's Eye Dart Contest, the crowning of King Hog or Queen Sowpreme, the Hogalicious Dessert Contest, and the Pearls Before Swine Art Show, as well as live music on two stages, a children's pet parade, cow-patty bingo, a brick-toss, arts and crafts, a carnival, and other "hamtastic" events. Feasting is also part of the program, with vendors offering some of the best sausage-on-a-stick you'll ever eat, soul food (including collard greens and cornbread), brisket tacos, and egg rolls. Call 512/281-5724; www.elgintx.com. [continued on page 72]

Texas Highways

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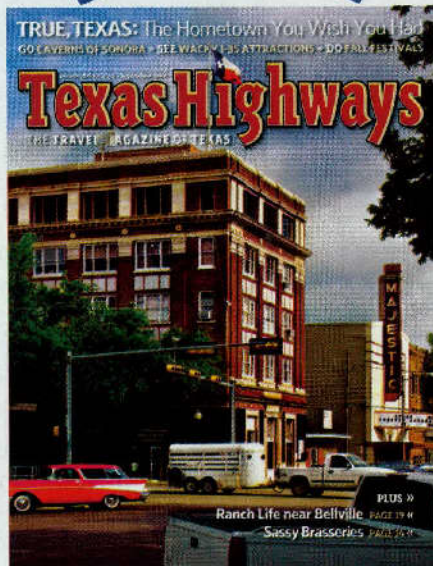
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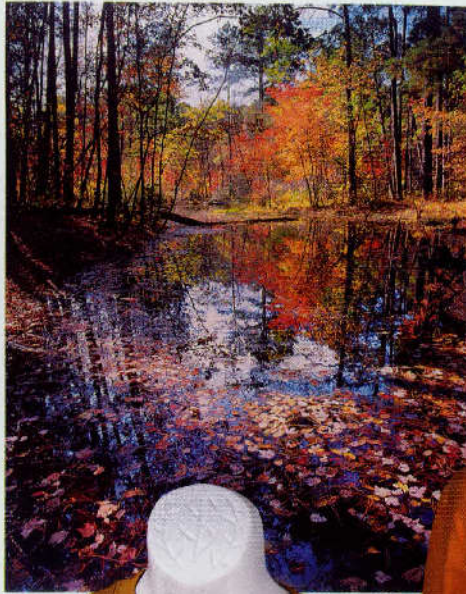
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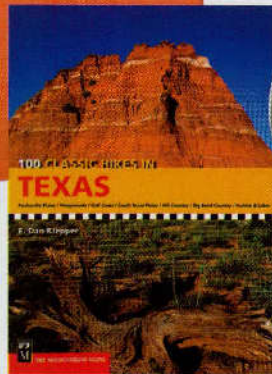


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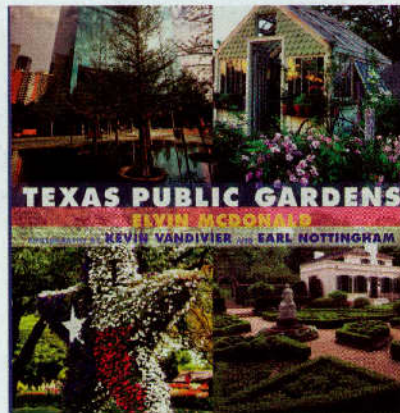
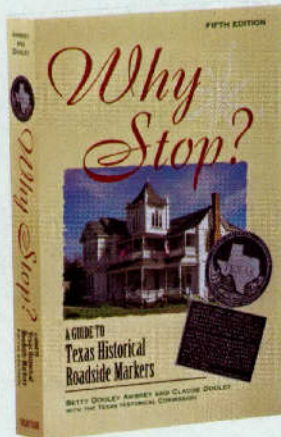
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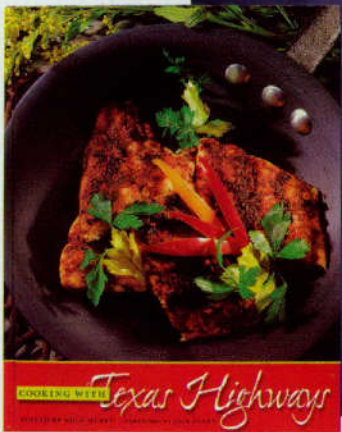
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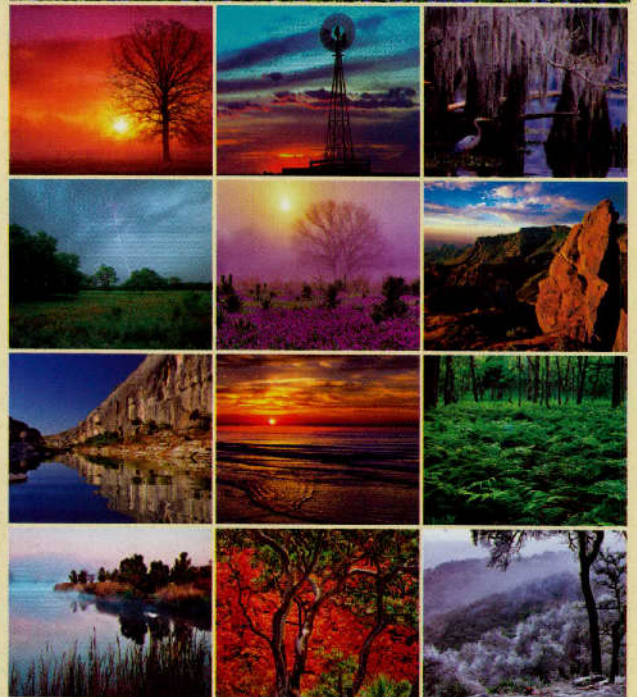
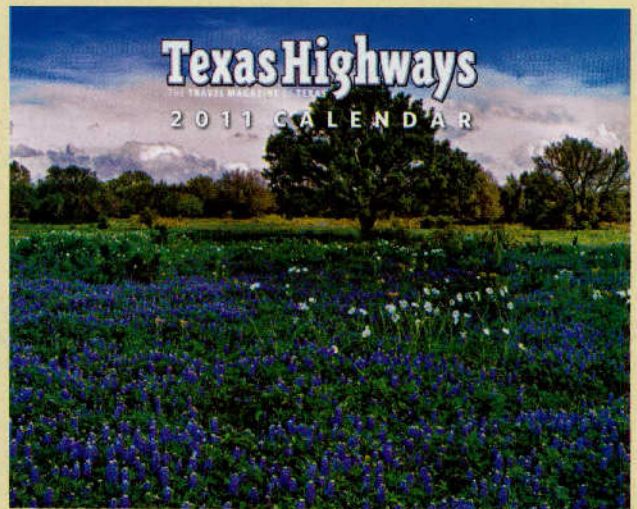
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America's Singing Brakeman

Jimmie Rodgers' influential time in Texas

Text by **ROB McCORKLE**

In 1928, Jimmie Rodgers' recording of "T for Texas" brought him national fame. A Mississippi native, he spent his last years in Kerrville and San Antonio.



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IMAGINE THE COMMOTION THAT would erupt if B.B. King, Eric Clapton, or Willie Nelson sat on a bench in downtown Blanco or Marfa and started playing. Yet, that's the equivalent of what happened roughly 80 years ago when Jimmie Rodgers (1897-1933), the Mississippi native known as the "Father of Country Music," launched into an impromptu performance on a Texas street corner or courthouse square.

One story tells of Rodgers returning to his Temple motel after a show in the spring of 1929. As he strummed his guitar and sang his eclectic country blues from an open window, he drew such a legion of locals that authorities intervened to break up the ensuing traffic jam.

But Rodgers' affinity for Texas often receives little attention. In fact, Rodgers performed during the 1929 opening of San Antonio's Majestic Theatre, and upon eventually settling in that city, he hosted a popular radio show there. Rodgers also lived for nearly two years in Kerrville, recorded frequently in Dallas,

barnstormed from Borger to Beaumont, and took frequent Texas road trips in his beloved Model-A Ford.

Also known as "America's Blue Yodeler" and the "Singing Brakeman" owing to his trademark yodel and days working on the railroad, Rodgers rocketed to stardom as the Roaring Twenties morphed into the

Rodgers rocketed to stardom as the Roaring Twenties morphed into the Great Depression.

Great Depression. During a seven-year career cut short by tuberculosis, Rodgers created a new musical style that inspired the likes of Lefty Frizzell, Hank Snow, and Merle Haggard. Rodgers was the first inductee into the Country Music Hall of Fame, hung out with humorist Will Rogers, recorded with Louis Armstrong and Bob Wills, and sold millions of records for Victor Records.

In the summer of 1929, hoping that Kerrville's climate might lessen the effects of his lung disease, Rodgers moved with his wife and daughter into a two-story, hilltop home he called "Blue Yodeler's Paradise." The home still stands at 617 West Main, but it's a private residence. In fact, today's traveler will find scant traces of the famous recording artist's nearly two years here.

However, locals have paid tribute since the 1980s to their celebrated hometown legend with an annual Jimmie Rodgers tribute on the Schreiner University campus. In recent years, the fest has been expanded to encompass a broader swath of Texas music genres (see sidebar).

In the biography *Jimmie Rodgers: The Life and Times of America's Blue Yodeler*, author Nolan Porterfield describes Rodgers' music as an amalgam of hill-billy, blues, country, and Tin Pan Alley

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A Jimmie Rodgers tribute during Kerrville's Texas Heritage Music Day celebrates the singer's legacy.

A Jimmie Rodgers Tribute

AS IT HAS IN YEARS PAST, A NOONTIME TRIBUTE TO JIMMIE RODGERS

will anchor Kerrville's annual Texas Heritage Music Day celebration, held September 24 on the Schreiner University campus. More than 50 performers, artisans, historical reenactors, and storytellers will gather at the Robbins-Lewis Pavilion to celebrate Rodgers' life and music and provide insight into Texas culture.

This year's lineup will include several descendants of Jimmie Rodgers, along with Texas singer-songwriters Adam Carroll and Owen Temple. All events are free. Call 830/792-1945; www.texasheritagemusic.org.

—Rob McCorkle



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standards. No matter how one describes his musical style, classics like “T for Texas” and “In the Jailhouse Now” still shine some 77 years after Rodgers' death.

Dr. Kathleen Hudson, a Texas music historian who directs Kerrville's Texas Heritage Music Foundation, believes Rodgers' significance in America's music heritage derives from an originality that borrowed from the blues, railroad workers' hollers, and popular music. But she thinks there's

another reason why Rodgers' songs still resonate so strongly with his fans.

“Even as he faced his own mortality, even as the Great Depression caused so much suffering, Jimmie was singing songs about hope,” says Hudson. “That's what really moves me when I look at the story of his life. Even though he knew his time was short, he chose to live life to the fullest, to create and write songs, and to leave something behind.” **TH**

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APPLE LOVERS, UNITE FOR THE MASON County Apple Fest, held in Mason on September 4 from 10-4. From frozen apple-cider slushies to apple arts-and-crafts and games, this annual celebration on the lawn of the historic Mason County Courthouse offers everything any apple addict could desire. Flaunt your food flair at the apple-baking contest. Participate in The Great Topaz Treasure Hunt. See the Little Miss Apple Blossom Style Show. Witness a William Tell archery contest. Bob for apples. Enjoy live music. And revel in the fruits of Labor Day weekend. Call 325/347-1808 or 325/347-5758; www.masoncountyapplefest.org.



September Events

BIG BEND COUNTRY

ALPINE: Big Bend Balloon Bash September 4-6. Hot air balloons soar above Alpine and the Davis Mountains. Sierra La Rana. www.bigbendballoonbash.com 432/837-7486

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK: Top of Texas Hiking Series: Emory Peak September 4. www.cdri.org 432/364-2499

DEL RIO: Oktoberfest September 25. Whitehead Memorial Museum. <http://whiteheadmuseum.org> 830/774-7568

EL PASO: Chopin Music Festival Concert September 4. Chamizal National Memorial Theatre. www.elpaso-chopin.com 915/584-1595 or 915/533-0348

MARFA: Marfa Lights Festival September 3-5. www.marfacc.com 432/729-4942 or 800/650-9696

MIDLAND: SeptemberFest September 10-12. Museum of the Southwest. www.museumsw.org 432/683-2882

ODESSA: Southwest Shakespeare Festival September 2-19. Globe Theatre. www.globesw.org 432/580-3177

ODESSA: Permian Basin Fair & Exposition September 10-18. www.permianbasinfair.com 432/550-3232

PECOS: Diez y Seis de Septiembre Festival September 10-12. 432/445-2309

GULF COAST

BAYTOWN: Grito Fest September 11. Bicentennial Park. www.baytown.org 281/420-6597

BEAUMONT: Symphony of Southeast Texas September 25. Julie Rogers Theatre. www.sost.org 409/892-2257

A promotional poster for the 30th anniversary of Oktoberfest in Fredericksburg, Texas. The top half features a photograph of a man in a traditional German hat and a woman in a white blouse dancing. Below the photo, the word "OCTOBER" is written in large, white, serif letters. Underneath "OCTOBER" are the numbers "1 2 3" and the year "2010". The word "Oktoberfest" is written in a large, stylized, orange and yellow font. Below that, it says "30TH ANNIVERSARY" in white letters on a red background. At the bottom, the website "www.oktoberfestinfbg.com" and "FREDERICKSBURG • TEXAS" are listed. On the left side of the poster, there is a vertical text block: "Help celebrate the fun and flavor of one of Fredericksburg's favorite festivals... 1-866-839-3378". There is also a small inset photo at the bottom left showing a crowd of people at the festival.

PHOTO: MASON COUNTY APPLE FEST

CORPUS CHRISTI: The Art of the Brick: Nathan Sawaya September 23–November 28. Exhibition of LEGO building blocks as an art medium. Art Museum of South Texas. www.artmuseumofsouthtexas.org 361/825-3500

CYPRESS: Bridgeland Nature Fest September 25. Oak Meadow Park. www.bridgeland.com 281/304-5588

FREEPORT: Blues Festival September 3–5. Main Street. www.freeportbluesfestival.com 979/549-9896

GALVESTON: Sinatra Sings Sinatra September 25. The Grand 1894 Opera House. www.thegrand.com 800/821-1894

GROVES: Texas Pecan Festival September 16–19. Lions Park, 6200 Jackson. www.texaspecanfestival.com 409/962-3631

HARLINGEN: CineSol Film Festival September 3–19. www.cinesol.com 956/793-8783

HOUSTON: Houston Ballet September 9–19, 23–October 3. Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center. www.houstonballet.org 713/227-2787

HOUSTON: Houston Symphony September 16–19. Jones Hall. www.houstonsymphony.org 713/224-7575

KEMAH: Jazz Festival September 17–19. Kemah Boardwalk. www.kemahboardwalk.com 281/334-9880

LEAGUE CITY: Oak Tree Festival September 25–26. League Park. 281/338-1599

RICHMOND: Celebrate! Fort Bend Cultural Festival September 18. Fort Bend Museum. www.fortbendmuseum.org 281/342-6478

ROCKPORT: Hummer/Bird Celebration September 16–19. www.rockporthummingbird.com 361/729-6445

VICTORIA: Czech Heritage Festival September 26. Community Center. www.victoriaczechs.org 361/573-4383

WINNIE: Texas Rice Festival September 29–October 3. Winnie-Stowell Park. www.texasricefestival.org 409/296-4404

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: The Neon Show September 16–October 2. Austin Details Art + Photo. <http://austindetailsart.com> 512/391-0999

BANDERA: Celebrate Bandera September 3–5. www.celebratebandera.com 800/364-3833

BERTRAM: Oatmeal Festival September 4–5. www.oatmealfestival.com 512/355-2197

BOERNE: Kendall County Fair, Parade & Rodeo September 3–5. Kendall County Fairgrounds. www.kcfa.org 210/834-1282

BRADY: World Championship Barbecue Goat Cookoff September 3–4. Richards Park. www.bradytx.com 325/597-3491

FREDERICKSBURG: Renewable Energy Roundup & Green Living Fair September 24–26. Marktplatz. www.the roundup.org 877/376-8638

HARPER: Frontier Day & Rodeo September 4. Community Park. www.harpercommunitypark.com 830/864-4912

HONDO: Medina County Fair September 18–19. www.medinacountyfair.org 830/426-5406

KERRVILLE: Wine & Music Festival September 3–5. Quiet Valley Ranch. www.kerrvillefolkfestival.com 830/257-3600

LAKEHILLS: Cajun Festival & Great Gumbo Cookoff September 25. Civic Center. www.cajunfestival-medinalake.com 830/751-9904

LUCKENBACH: Mike Blakely's Tex-Americana Fandango September 10–12. www.luckenbachtexas.com 830/997-3224

OZONA: Davy Crockett Festival September 25. www.ozona.com 325/392-2547

STONEWALL: Sesquicentennial Celebration September 18. www.stonewalltexas.com 830/644-2735

UTOPIA: Utopiafest September 24–26. Four Sisters Ranch. www.utopiafestival.com 512/496-2798

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: West Texas Fair & Rodeo September 9–18. Taylor County Expo Center. 325/677-4376

ABILENE: Big Country Balloon Fest September 24–26. Red Bud Park. 325/795-0995

AMARILLO: Tri-State Fair & Rodeo September 17–25. www.tristatefair.com 806/376-7767

BOYS RANCH: 66th Annual Cal Farley's Boys Ranch Rodeo September 4–5. www.calfarley.org 806/372-2341

BUFFALO GAP: Chili Super Bowl September 3–5. 325/674-1224

www.gonzalestexas.com



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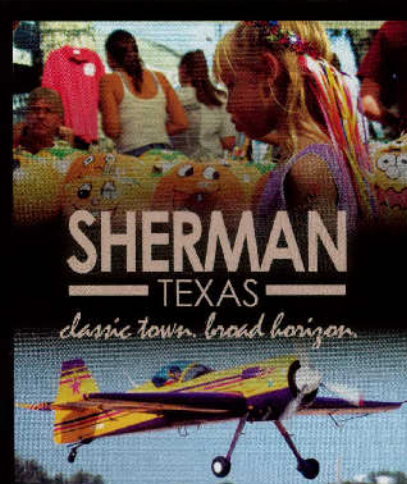
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➔ **TH SPOTLIGHT**

Cycling the Coast

BICYCLE THE BEAUTIFUL TEXAS GULF COAST during the 7th Annual **Conquer the Coast** cycling event, September 24-25. The tour begins in **Corpus Christi** at Whataburger Field. Cycling criteriums will take place both Friday and Saturday at a course set up nearby. Cyclists will gather early Saturday, September 25, to participate in either a leisurely 10- or 25-mile cruise along scenic Shoreline Boulevard and Ocean Drive on Corpus Christi Bay, or take a 65-mile tour of the Coastal Bend. The longer route crosses the Harbor Bridge to Portland, and proceeds through Ingleside, Aransas Pass, onto the Port Aransas ferry, through Port Aransas, Upper Padre Island, and back along Ocean Drive and Shoreline Boulevard to Whataburger Field. Call 361/881-1800 ext. 224; www.conquerthecoast.org.

CANADIAN: The Rat Pack is Back September 25. Live Las Vegas big band. Texas Crown Performance Hall. www.texas-crownhall.org 806/323-2567

EDEN: Fall Fest September 24-25. www.edentexas.com 325/869-3336

HENRIETTA: Clay County Pioneer Reunion September 16-18. www.claycountyjailmuseum.org 940/524-3465

IDALOU: Apple Butter Festival September 11-12. Apple Country at Hi Plains Orchards. www.applecountryorchards.com 806/892-2961

LEVELLAND: Texas' Last Frontier Ranch Heritage Tour September 25. www.ci.levelland.tx.us 806/894-4062

LUBBOCK: Buddy's Birthday Bash September 7. Buddy Holly Center. www.buddyhollycenter.org 806/775-3560

LUBBOCK: National Cowboy Symposium & Celebration September 9-12. Lubbock Memorial Civic Center. www.cowboy.org 806/798-7825

QUANAH: Fall Festival September 11. Downtown. 940/663-2222

VERNON: Vintage Vernon Ghost Tour & Folk Festival September 25. Downtown. www.vernontexas.net 940/553-3104

WICHITA FALLS: Falls Fest September 24-26. Lucy Park. www.fallsfest.org 940/692-9797

PINEY WOODS

GLADEWATER: Arts & Crafts Festival September 18-19. www.gladewaterartsandcrafts.com 903/845-5501 or 800/627-0315

KILGORE: Festival of Arts & Music September 24-25. www.downtownkilgore.com 903/988-4117

LONGVIEW: Gregg County Fair September 10-11, 13-18. www.greggcountyfair.com 903/753-4478

THE WOODLANDS: Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers September 24. Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. www.woodlandscenter.org 281/363-3300

TYLER: East Texas State Fair September 23-October 3. East Texas State Fairgrounds. www.etstatefair.com 903/597-2501

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PRAIRIES AND LAKES

- ADDISON:** **Oktoberfest** September 16-19. Addison Circle Park. www.addisontexas.net 800/233-4766
- BEDFORD:** **Labor Day Weekend Blues & Barbecue Festival** September 4-5. www.bedfordbluesbbq.com 817/952-2128
- BELTON:** **Central Texas State Fair** September 3-5. Bell County Expo Center. www.centraltexasstatefair.com 254/933-5353
- BONHAM:** **Autumn in Bonham Bicycle Rally & Cookoff** September 24-25. www.bonhamchamber.com 903/583-4811
- BRENHAM:** **142nd Washington County Fair** September 15-18. www.washingtoncofair.com 979/836-4112
- BROOKSHIRE:** **Texas Maze at Dewberry Farm** September 25-November 21. www.dewberryfarm.com 281/934-FARM
- BRYAN:** **Fiestas Patrias Mexicanas** September 18-19. Historic Downtown Bryan. www.fiestaspatrias.org 979/575-2910
- BUFFALO:** **Stampede** September 18-19. Harriman Park. 903/322-5810
- CALDWELL:** **Kolache Festival** September 11. Courthouse Square. www.burlesoncountytx.com 979/567-0000
- CALDWELL:** **Burleson County Fair** September 22-26. Burleson County Fairgrounds. 979/567-2308
- COLUMBUS:** **Colorado County Fair** September 8-11. Colorado County Fairgrounds. www.coloradocountyfair.org 979/732-8385
- COMMERCE:** **Bois d'Arc Bash** September 24-26. 903/886-3950

- DALLAS:** **Dallas Symphony Orchestra** September 9-12, 18, 23-26, 30-October 3. Meyerson Symphony Center. www.dallasymphony.com 214/692-0203
- DALLAS:** **Two Gentlemen of Verona** September 22-26, 29-October 2. Samuel Grand Amphitheater. www.shakespearedallas.org 214/559-2778
- DALLAS:** **State Fair of Texas** September 24-October 17. Fair Park. www.bigtex.com 214/565-9931
- DENTON:** **Blues Fest** September 18. Quaker Town Park. www.dentonblackchamberonline.org 940/382-9100
- ENNIS:** **O'Reilly NHRA Fall Nationals** September 23-26. Texas Motorplex. www.texasmotorplex.com 972/878-2641
- FORT WORTH:** **Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra** September 10-12. Bass Performance Hall. www.fwsymphony.org 817/665-6000
- LA GRANGE:** **Fayette County Fair** September 2-5. Fayette County Fairgrounds. www.fayettedcountyfair.org 979/968-3911
- LEWISVILLE:** **Western Days Festival** September 24-25. www.visitlewistexas.com 972/219-3401
- MANSFIELD:** **Pecan Festival** September 25. Rose Park. www.mansfieldchamber.org 817/473-0507
- MCKINNEY:** **Oktoberfest** September 25. www.downtownmckinney.com 972/547-2660
- MOODY:** **Cotton Harvest Festival** September 25. www.moodycottonharvestfestival.org 245/366-8603
- MURPHY:** **Maize Days** September 25. www.murphy maize days.com 972/468-4006

- NEW BERLIN:** **Sausage Festival** September 5. 830/420-3185
- PALESTINE:** **RailFest** September 4-5. www.TexasStateRR.com 888/987-2461
- POTTSBORO:** **Frontier Day** September 25. Friendship Park. www.pottsboroughchamber.com 903/786-6371
- SEGUIN:** **Fiestas Patrias/Diez y Seis Celebration** September 17-18. Seguin Coliseum. www.visitseguin.com 800/580-7322
- SERBIN:** **Wendish Fest** September 26. www.texaswendish.org 979/366-2441
- SPRINGTOWN:** **Wild West Festival** September 18. www.springtownchamber.org 817/220-7828
- SULPHUR SPRINGS:** **Hopkins County Fall Festival** September 11-18. Hopkins County Regional Civic Center. www.hopkinscountyfallfestival.com 903/885-8071
- WACO:** **Skittles Waco Wild West Century Bicycle Tour** September 24-25. Indian Spring Park. www.wacowildwest.com 254/772-2453
- WEST:** **Westfest** September 3-5. Czech polka festival at West Fairgrounds. www.westfest.com 254/826-5058
- ## SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS
- BEEVILLE:** **Diez y Seis de Septiembre Celebration** September 11. Bee County Expo Center. 361/358-9124
- EAGLE PASS:** **Diez y Seis de Septiembre Celebration** September 15. Plaza San Juan. 830/773-9255 or 888/355-3224

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→ **TH SPOTLIGHT**

Heard Through the Grapevine

CELEBRATE THE CHARM, ROMANCE, AND WONDER of the vineyards' harvest at the 23rd Annual **GrapeFest** on September 17-20 in **Grapevine**. GrapeFest, the largest wine festival in the Southwest, presents festivalgoers with wines from more than 30 Texas wineries as well as wines from across the nation and the world. Kids in tow? Not a problem. GrapeFest accommodates the family with live music, arts-and-crafts booths, carnival rides, midway games, and ice carving. Step into the action feet-first and take part in the GrapeStomp competition, stomping 20 pounds of grapes for a chance to win the "Purple Foot" Award. Call the Grapevine Convention & Visitors Bureau at 800/457-6338: www.grapevinetexasusa.com.

McALLEN: CineSol Film Festival September 18-19. Cine El Rey. www.cinesol.com 956/793-8783

POTH: Bicycle Ride to Remember September 11. www.cityofpoth.org 830/484-2111

SAN ANTONIO: Fotoseptiembre USA September 1-30. International photography festival. www.fotoseptiembreusa.com 210/737-8255

SAN ANTONIO: Pachanga del Rio September 9. River Walk. Culinary offerings from more than 20 River Walk establishments. www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com 210/227-4262

SAN ANTONIO: Jazz'SAlive September 18-19. Travis Park. www.saparksfoundation.org 210/212-8423

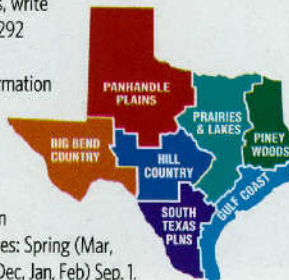
WESLACO: Fiestas Patrias September 19. City Park. 956/973-3155

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.



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Not to brag – but when the temperature drops, action heats up in Seguin. So stay at any of our B&Bs, lakefront vacation homes or 500+ hotel rooms. And have a ball all fall, starting with these special events:

September

- 11 9th Annual Pontiac Car Club Show
- 12 Mid Texas Symphony featuring Van Cliburn Silver Medalist Yeol Eum Son, pianist
- 17-18 Fiestas Patrias Celebration
- 25 Main Street Trade Days

Golfers: register early for the October 15 Classic Golf Tournament!

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MANSFIELD?



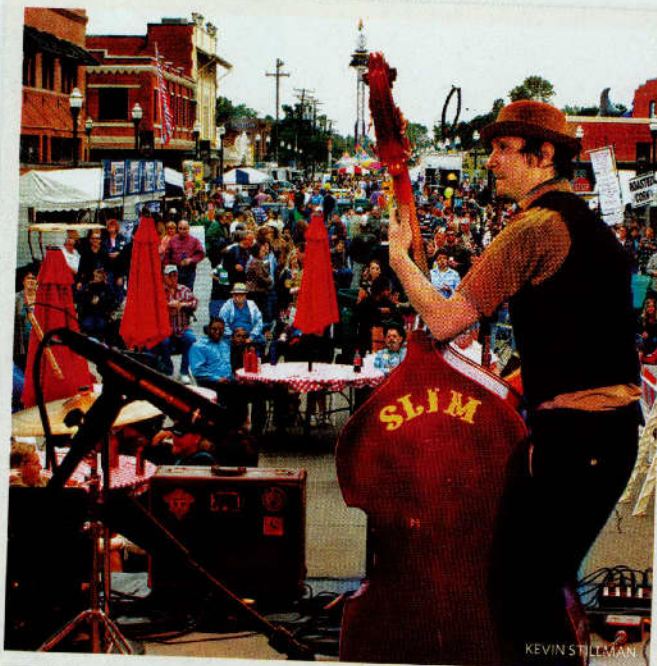
WWW.WHERESMANSFIELD.COM

fests up!

© continued from page 60]

George West Storyfest, George West, Novem- ber 6.

For more than two decades, some of the best storytellers in the nation have gathered in George West annually to share their gift with appreciative audiences. The festival's slogan, "Good Times, Great Stories," reflects the atmosphere well. Two of the signature events are the Texas Liar's Contest and Ghost Stories (the latter takes place after dark). This year's program takes place on four stages and features Oklahoma Choctaw Tim Tingle, Irish-American Yvonne Healey, motivational speaker James Ford, and a variety of other storytellers. Cowboy poets Dennis Gaines and John Campbell will also perform, as will



Laissez les bon temps rouler! The Howdies' Christopher Slim plays upright bass during the Cajun Catfish Festival.

cloggers, Tejano bands, gospel singers, and other musicians.

Not all the action takes place on stage. There's a community breakfast, a classic-

car show, a Little Red Wagon Parade, and a living-history presentation on 19th-Century Texas trail drives, particularly those led by town founder George W. West. Children's activities include a petting zoo, pony rides, a moonwalk and other giant, inflatable activity pads, face-painting, and a wetlands exhibit. New this year: a 5K run/walk. Food vendors sell barbecue-on-a-bun, fajitas, burgers, funnel cakes, and other festival food, and a street dance closes out this diverse celebration. Call 361/449-2481; www.georgeweststoryfest.org.

Artwalk 2010, Alpine, November 19- 20.

Alpine's gallery scene sparkles more than usual during the town's annual Artwalk: Not only do local galleries offer paintings, photography, and sculpture, but Alpine businesses also get into the act, providing space for additional works. The entire downtown area becomes a carnival for art lovers. An open-air art and food market also contributes to the vibe, adding the tempting aromas of funnel cakes, fajitas, and turkey legs. An Art Attack area provides space for kids to do sidewalk-chalk art, see art demonstrations, and make a simple craft. And this year, an Art Car parade joins the lineup.



Kiowa Plaza (at Alpine's only four-way stop) offers free entertainment both evenings; Ray Wylie Hubbard headlines on Saturday. The program also includes classic belly dancers, Tahitian dancers, local musicians, and several Texas singer-songwriters. With all the eye candy, food, and great music on hand, the Artwalk attracts more aficionados each year. Call 432/837-3067; www.alpinegallerynight.net. **TR**

Senior Editor **NOLA McKEY** marvels at the variety of Texas' small-town festivals. "There's no telling what Texans will decide to celebrate," she says. "The truth is, the theme of the festival isn't nearly as important as the community spirit it builds."

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CONTEST RULES

(no purchase necessary)

1. Only one entry per person. Mailed entries must be on postcards. Enter online at www.texashighways.com (see the "Where in Texas Are You?" contest link). To be eligible for the drawing, each entrant must include the correct answer (judges' decisions are final), as well as his/her name, mailing address, and daytime phone number.
2. Entrants must be 18 years of age or older. Current employees of the Texas Department of Transportation and their immediate families are not eligible.
3. If entering by mail, send postcards to: Texas Highways Contest, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. All entries must be received by September 27, 2010. Texas Highways is not responsible for late, lost, or misdirected entries.
4. The winning entry will be drawn on September 28, 2010. We will attempt to notify the winner the same day. If we cannot contact the winner directly by 5 p.m. on September 30, 2010, another entry will be drawn.
5. Prizes not transferable and may have an expiration date. Some additional expenses, such as taxes and tips, are not included in the package. Lodging and transportation certificates are subject to availability, and not valid during high-capacity or holiday weekends. Reservations required.
6. Meals, unless specifically noted here, are not included.
7. Reservations for all activities must be made at least two weeks prior to arrival.
8. The winner is solely responsible for any income taxes incurred.
9. Entrants' contact information will be shared with Southwest Airlines and the Fort Worth Convention & Visitors Bureau. The information will not be further shared or sold by these entities.
10. By entering the contest, contestants agree to the above rules and regulations.

Where in Texas Are You?

Name this historic town east of Temple and you could win a Fort Worth "Cowboys and Culture" getaway! Enter by mail, or online at www.texashighways.com. (See contest rules at right.) The winner and a guest will receive:

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Round-trip airfare to Dallas Love Field from any city served by Southwest Airlines.

Stay!

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Eat and Play!

\$100 gift certificate to Sundance Square (dining, shopping, entertainment).

PLUS TWO TICKETS TO EACH OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Four Day Weekend Improvisational Comedy
- Stockyards Championship Rodeo at Cowtown Coliseum
- Billy Bob's Texas (showroom seats to a concert, subject to availability)
- Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
- National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame
- Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame
- Fort Worth Zoo

Our thanks to the Fort Worth Convention & Visitors Bureau and Southwest Airlines for providing this "Cowboys and Culture" prize package. Texas Highways readers love Fort Worth!

For Fort Worth travel information, contact the Fort Worth Convention & Visitors Bureau at 800/433-5747; www.fortworth.com.

Find our fares online. Only at southwest.com.



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