

★ TEXAS

TRAVEL LOG

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TRAVEL NEWS

THE ORIGINAL **Texas Declaration of Independence** is making a rare public appearance at the renovated **Lorenzo de Zavala State Archives and Library Building in Austin** for the 175th anniversary celebration of Texas Independence. The state archives and library will exhibit this piece of Texas history through San Jacinto Day on April 21.

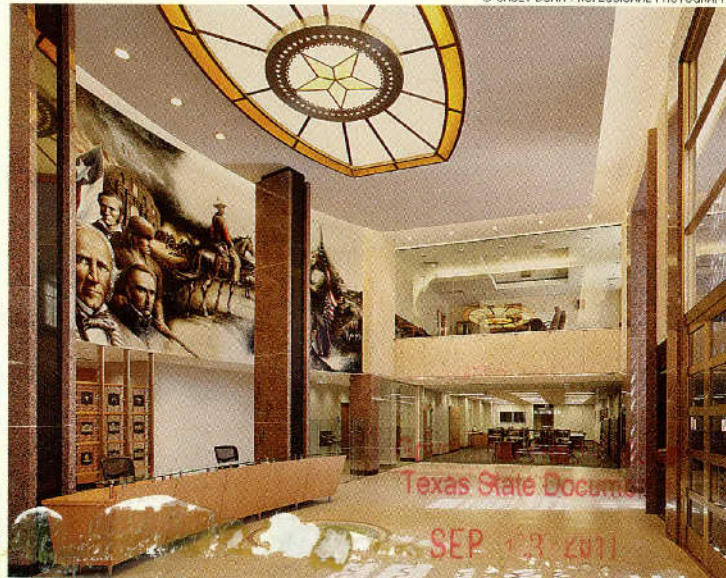
The declaration was signed on March 2, 1836 at Washington-on-the-Brazos to obtain independence from Mexico in hopes of establishing the Republic of Texas. The original survived, but the five handwritten copies—distributed to other major Texas cities—did not.

"We are the only state that was its own sovereign nation, so it's extremely unique in American history," state archivist Jelain Chubb told the Associated Press. "I think the other unique thing about it is the story of the document and its own survival. How did it survive when we know so many things get lost to history over time?" She added that sometimes documents survive from "benign neglect" and others because people understood their value.

This original document survived when the five handwritten copies, distributed to other major Texas cities, did not. Only a handful of the 1,000 copies still exist.

Along with the Texas Declaration of Independence, the library houses papers of Stephen F. Austin, the father of Texas; William B. Travis' letter from the Alamo; and the Matamoros Battalion flag captured at the battle of San Jacinto. Due to age and condition, some documents can only be displayed for limited periods.

The primary reason for the renovation was "to provide the proper environmental situation for archival materials and precious documents," says Mark Boone, a historian, architect and associate principal with Bailey Architects Inc. in Austin. "When



The newly renovated lobby of the Lorenzo de Zavala State Archives and Library in Austin.

the building first began housing the archives and library, today's technology wasn't available."

Chubb says, "We know better now. And so we're going to use those practices to make sure this document continues to survive on into the future, so 175 years from now, your grandchildren's grandchildren will be able to come here, and hopefully it will look quite a bit the same."

Texas State Library and Archives Commission Director and Librarian Peggy D. Rudd says, "I believe that if the Texas State Library and Archives did not exist, Texas would be poorer. And we are a part of the great conversation about Texas history."

For information, visit www.tsl.state.tx.us/agency/visit.html#lorenzo.

ARLINGTON hosts this year's **56th Annual Texas Travel Counselors Conference** from April 25–28. The conference—aimed at providing counselors from Texas Department of Transportation Travel Information Centers, AAA Texas, Texas Parks & Wildlife and city visitor centers with firsthand knowledge of the area's many attractions—will

celebrate many milestones for the area and for TxDOT's Travel Information Division.

This is the 50th anniversary for the Dallas Cowboys and Six Flags Over Texas. It is the 75th anniversary of the Miss Texas Pageant, the Cotton Bowl and TxDOT's Travel Information Centers. All of this comes on the heels of the Texas Rangers playing in the World Series and Cowboys Stadium hosting the Super Bowl.

TTCC attendees will visit Cowboys Stadium, Rangers Ballpark, Six Flags Over Texas and Cedar Hill State Park, among many other sites in Arlington. Extensive tours of Grand Prairie and other surrounding areas also are planned.

Next year's conference will be held in Waco, and bids are currently being accepted for the TTCC 2013 host city.

THE TEXAS Old Route 66 Association, Historic Route 66 Merchants Association and the Amarillo Convention and Visitor Council announced that Amarillo and the Texas Panhandle have been selected to host the **2011 International Route 66 Festival**.

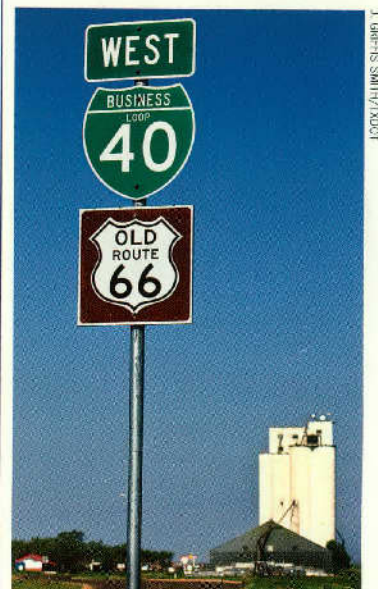
The four-day event, slated for June 9–12, brings Route 66 enthusiasts and travelers from across the globe.

Each year, the festival is held in a different city along the Mother Road, and this year marks a return to Texas. The first festival, *Run to the Heartland*, was held there in 1996.

"We are very proud to host this major event," says Eric Miller, director of communications for the Amarillo Convention and Visitor Council and a member of the Route 66 Festival Organizing Committee. "Route 66 is a huge regional magnet for traveler interest, making the celebration, preservation and restoration of Route 66 a cause with a huge heart. From Shamrock on the east to Glenrio on the west, Route 66 is 175 miles of history across the Texas Panhandle."

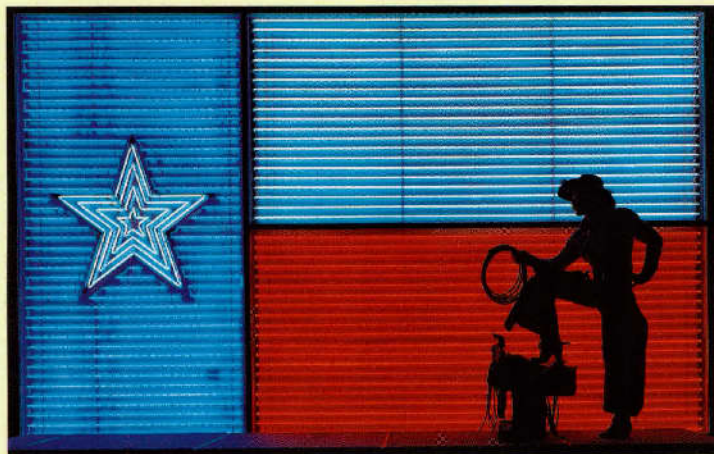
Highlights include the street festival on Amarillo's Historic Route 66 and the Will Rogers Awards Banquet. Other signature events include a Sock Hop & Texas Two Step at the Historic Nat Ballroom, car show, motorcycle rally, and Route 66 artists and collectors showing and selling their artwork.

There also will be the largest group of Route 66 authors ever gathered, including Michael Wallis (historian



J. BRETT SMITH/TXDOT

GRIFF'S TEXAS



The works of *Texas Highways* magazine Photo Editor J. Griffis "Griff" Smith are the subject of a special exhibit at the Sam Houston Memorial Museum.

BEGINNING March 5, the Sam Houston Memorial Museum will present *Griff Smith's TEXAS: A Retrospective Through The Lens and Images From Texas Highways* by J. Griffis "Griff" Smith, photography editor for *Texas Highways* magazine.

The exhibition, featuring about 50 photos, showcases the 25-year relationship Griff and *Texas Highways* have had in capturing the state, and its history, grandeur, diversity and uniqueness through photos. Because those images have encouraged the exploration of the state, the exhibit not only examines Smith's talents, but also *Texas Highways* contribution to tourism in Texas. The exhibit looks at the process—from concept to publication—of how Smith and the magazine staff define and carry out their mission.

The exhibition, curated by Mac Woodward and Casey Roon of the Sam Houston Memorial Museum—with assistance from *Texas Highways* magazine and staff, the Texas Department of Transportation and the Canon Corporation—runs through June 30 in the Exhibit Gallery of the Katy & E. Don Walker, Sr. Education Center.

For more information, call (936) 294-1832 or visit www.samhouston.memorial.museum.

and the voice of the Sheriff in the Disney Pixar movie *Cars*), Akio Takeuchi and Jim Ross, who will participate in book signings.

"Our 2011 International Route 66 Festival is one heart beat that keeps the 'Mother Road' alive, as does every festival and tour (that travels) on Route 66," says Dora Meroney, treasurer of the Historic 6th on Route 66 Association and president of the Panhandle Tourism and Marketing Council. "Route 66 is 2,448 miles of what America was, what America is and what America can be."

For more information, visit www.route66internationalfestival2011.com.

MOBILE APP

TRAVELTEX.COM, the official travel website for the State of Texas, has launched a mobile site—<http://m.traveltex.com>—that allows users to take Texas on the road with an all-inclusive re-

source of Texas travel tools. This mobile site brings information on more than 400 cities, thousands of attractions and events, and vacation planning tools.

"As spring break and summer vacation rapidly approach, we encourage consumers planning a trip to visit TravelTex.com to learn more about the exciting vacation opportunities in Texas," says Julie Chase, director of tourism, Texas Office of the Governor, Economic Development and Tourism Division.

Those using the mobile site have access to Trip Planner, the site's interactive planning tool, which allows consumers to plan their Texas vacation and share itineraries with friends and family. The mobile site also features a "Near Me" GPS locator that highlights nearby attractions and events.

Those categorized attractions and events also are easily found through the site's search function. Free walking-tour podcasts and 20 documentary-

style videos showcase hot spots and off-the-beaten-path travel experiences throughout the state to enhance the visitor experience.

For additional travel planning support, site users may order a free copy of the *Texas State Travel Guide*, the state's premier travel publication, produced by Texas Department of Transportation's Travel Information Division.

In addition to the mobile site, TravelTex.com features new pages that highlight timely Texas happenings, including celebrations of the 175th anniversary of Texas Independence, and tips for planning the ultimate getaway in South Texas.

GUIDE UPDATE

ON THE HEELS of the newly released 2011 edition of the *Texas State Travel Guide*, revisions, deletions and additions are now being accepted for the 2012 edition.

The *Texas State Travel Guide* is the premier publication included in official Texas travel packets (along with the *Texas Accommodations Guide* and the *Texas Official Travel Map*). It reaches more than 1 million individuals interested in traveling the Lone Star State, and it is distributed to visitors at the 12 TxDOT-operated Travel Information Centers. Those who respond to Office of the Governor-Economic Development and Tourism advertising campaigns also receive the travel information packets.

Because of the guide's reach and its role as a valuable travel-marketing tool, it is essential that all content remain accurate and up to date, says Kathy Murphy, director of Texas Department of Transportation's Travel Information Division. "Texas is a big state, so we count on the communities to help keep us abreast of any new

attraction or changes to an existing one that would be relevant to the traveler using this handy guide."

The travel guide, which now includes a winery section, is designed to help introduce the traveler to the gems that communities offer.

Letters regarding the revision request were sent to community contacts, but Murphy welcomes additions to that contact list. Only changes from an official community representative, such as a chamber of commerce or city government, will be accepted.

The deadline for submitting corrections is May 27. Because of printing deadlines, submissions received after that date may not be included in the 2012 edition.

Revisions, additions and/or deletions may be sent (changes only, not full text) by e-mail to Kathy.Murphy@txdot.gov; by fax to (512) 486-5879; or by mail to Kathy Murphy, Texas State Travel Guide, PO Box 141009, Austin, TX 78714-1009. For questions, contact Murphy at (512) 486-5881.

FLOATING ART

TEXAS Department of Transportation's Port Aransas ferries are in for a makeover, thanks, in part, to an art contest that yielded 66 entries. Seven entries were selected to grace the ferry vessels, which connect Aransas Pass and Port Aransas to Corpus Christi, and one will be displayed in the new ferry operations building.

Ferry spokesperson Amy Loos says the boats have a revolving cycle of maintenance and repainting and, this year, three (Burnett, Goode and Dingwall) are up. "We decided to get the public involved by hosting an art contest and then displaying the winning entries on the boats," she says. Artists were asked to reflect the South Texas Coastal region.

The winning entries will be enlarged and screen-printed under the vessel's name (two per boat), for a two-year period. Though three winning entries were planned, Loos says many had equally high scores in the judging, so seven were chosen.

The winning entries were *Texas* by Theresa Coppock, *A Walk on the Beach* by Denise R. Martin-Tidwell, *Swimming in Sunlight* by Mary Catherine Gardner, *In the Wake* by Nena Murphy-Hale, *Trout of Color* and *Rainbow Runners*, by L. Carol Crozier, and *Nellie B* by Larry Felder.



Next year, Loos says another contest will be held for the other ships undergoing maintenance, and the process will repeat.

Loos says entries came from all over, and she hopes that there will be an even greater reach and number of entries next year.

The Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce helped sponsor the project by serving as a drop-off point for entries. They also supplied information to the community.

For more information about the ferries, visit www.dot.state.tx.us/travel/ferry_schedules.htm.

HISTORY TOUR

SAN ANGELO's cultural and recreational offerings earned it a spot on this year's **List of America's Dozen Distinctive Destinations** issued by the **National Trust for Historic Preservation**.

For 12 years the National Trust for Historic Preservation has annually selected communities across America that offered experiences that were different from the typical vacation destination. The selected communities feature dynamic downtowns, display stunning architecture, and cultural diversity, offer entertainment and showcase a "richness of character and exude an authentic sense of place."

"This year's Dozen Distinctive Destinations include some of America's best places to visit," says Stephanie Meeks, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "They combine historic appeal and modern culture in a way that keeps visitors coming back."

According to the Trust, San Angelo is "a frontier city with a rich past." It offers visitors an authentic Old West experience, a bustling downtown historic district and vibrant cultural offerings."

Other locations making the list are Alexandria, Va.; Chapel Hill, N.C.; Colorado Springs, Colo.; Dandridge, Tenn.; Eureka, Calif.; Muskogee, Okla.; New Bedford, Mass.; Paducah, Ky.; Saint Paul, Minn.; Sheridan, Wyo. and Sonoma, Calif.

For more information, visit www.PreservationNation.org.

HOUSTON Museum of Natural Science introduces a new exhibition, **Texas! Making History Since 1519**, that explores the state's unique roles as a Spanish colony, part



Fort Concho National Historic Landmark, and reenactments held here, helped San Angelo earn its status as a Distinctive Destination.

of the Mexican *frontera*, an independent Republic and as the 28th state to join the Union.

The exhibit, which opens **March 6**, allows visitors to explore Texas' rich legacy of perseverance, determination, diverse heritage and unique spirit through the stories of its central events, famous icons and larger-than-life pioneers.

It showcases key figures like French explorer René Robert Cavellier de La Salle who, by accident, established the first European colony in Texas and empresario Stephen F. Austin who built a colony in Mexican Texas and started a population boom. Texas Army Commander in Chief Sam Houston and frontiersmen Davy Crockett, among others, also are represented, as are events like the June-teenth Order; The Battle of Gonzales, which launched the Texas Revolution; and the capture of Gen. Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto.

This special exhibition, which included a VIP night on the occasion of Texas' 175th anniversary of independence, was organized by the Houston Museum of Natural Science with assistance from The Heritage Society, Houston, The San Jacinto

Museum of History, the Dallas Historical Society; and The Torch Collection, Houston.

For more information, visit www.hmns.org.

EIGHT YEARS after **Space Shuttle Columbia STS-107 broke apart over East Texas** on re-entry, **Hemphill** offers the new **Patricia Huffman Smith Museum "Remembering Columbia,"** that honors the lost crew and tells the story of space exploration from Columbia's first mission to its last.

In February 2003, Hemphill and the surrounding area were one of the key search areas for debris from the space shuttle Columbia. The community came together to assist NASA in an unprecedented air, ground and water search, recovering more than 80,000 pieces. It was said that if a community member didn't help with the search, they cooked for the volunteers. If they didn't find any debris, they welcomed strangers into their home who told stories about the debris they found.

On Feb. 1, this year, the Sabine County Columbia Memorial Committee and the J.R. Huffman Public

Library combined forces to create and welcome the eighth memorial for the Space Shuttle Columbia STS-107 and the Patricia Huffman Museum's grand opening.

On view are many items and artifacts from NASA, its contractors, the families of STS-107 crew members and others. There also are two simulator interactive devices that emulate shuttle and orbiter activities.

Each crew member lost in the tragedy is honored with a designated area of remembrance that includes personal items donated by their loved ones. Also receiving their own designated areas are the Texas Forest Service employee and the helicopter pilot who lost their lives during the recovery effort.

For more information, call (409) 787-4827 or visit www.hemphilltxlibrary.com.

GARDENS CLOSE

FOR 15 YEARS, visitors have come to **Katy** to get a **unique glimpse of China** via the scaled-down versions of The Great Wall, Forbidden Palace and Terra Cotta Warriors at **Forbidden Gardens**, but on Feb. 13, the attraction **gates closed to make way for the expansion of Grand Parkway**.

In early February, the attraction's tour coordinator Alicia Mendez told *The Katy Sun*, "It wasn't until about three weeks ago that we got the news that we would be closing, and it came as a pretty big shock. We are really sad to see it go because it is so unique."

The attraction opened in 1996 when the owner, Ira Poon, aimed to bring the wonders of ancient China to the American public. It grew to offer nine different exhibits, including an army of 6,000 1/3-scale terracotta soldiers, a 1/20-scale replica of the imperial family's Forbidden City and a 1/3-scale replica of the Tomb of the First Emperor Qin Shi Huang-di. Mendez says the boundary for the Grand Parkway easement is going to pass right by the current site of the emperor's tomb replica.

Attraction items were sold during a public sale. In the days before its closing, the now stripped-down website offered a simple message saying, "It is with a heavy heart that we announce our final days of business. We want to thank everyone who has visited, who we've worked with, or have helped us out over the past years. Thank you for letting us be part of the Katy community."

TEXAS TRIVIA

Where will you find a passport that pays off in a Texas way?

In honor of Texas' 175th anniversary of independence from Mexico, there is a special passport that can be stamped at selected sites along the Texas Independence Trail, earning the holder a commemorative gift.

The City of Gonzales, Goliad State Park, Presidio La Bahia, San Antonio Missions National Park, San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site, San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site, Texas Department of Transportation, The Alamo and Washington-on-the-Brazos are working collectively as stopping points along the Texas Independence Trail. The passports are available at each location, where they also may be validated with a special commemorative stamp. Upon completing the passport, it can be sent in, where it will be returned along with a special commemorative gift.

For more information, visit www.texasindependence-trail.com.

TEXAS TRIVIA

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TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

VISITOR NUMBERS as of January 31, 2011

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Year-to-Date Visitors	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	4,846	-3.83	4,846	-3.83
ANTHONY	4,661	-32.29	4,661	-32.29
CAPITOL	5,451	+3.69	5,451	+3.69
DENISON	22,317	+25.05	22,317	+25.05
GAINESVILLE	15,025	-29.59	15,025	-29.59
LANGTRY	2,918	-20.81	2,918	-20.81
LAREDO	6,240	-32.53	6,240	-32.53
ORANGE	32,049	+10.90	32,049	+10.90
TEXARKANA	5,442	-65.44	5,442	-65.44
VALLEY	21,442	-38.28	21,442	-38.28
WASKOM	18,114	-31.51	18,114	-31.51
WICHITA FALLS	9,369	+11.64	9,369	+11.64
CENTER TOTALS	147,874	-19.43	147,874	-19.43

*Compared to last year

Dial toll-free (800) 452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers (8 a.m.–6 p.m. daily, Central Time)

www.traveltex.com • www.texashighways.com
www.txdot.gov • www.dontmesswithtexas.org

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