

# TEXAS

EAST  
TEXAS  
SPECIAL  
ISSUE

## HIGHWAYS™

THE  
TRAVEL  
MAGAZINE  
OF TEXAS

# The Mystique of the East

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Lost in the  
Big Thicket

BY EDWARD CAREY

PAGE 34

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Sam Houston:  
Behind the Myth

BY MATT JOYCE

PAGE 58

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FEBRUARY 2020

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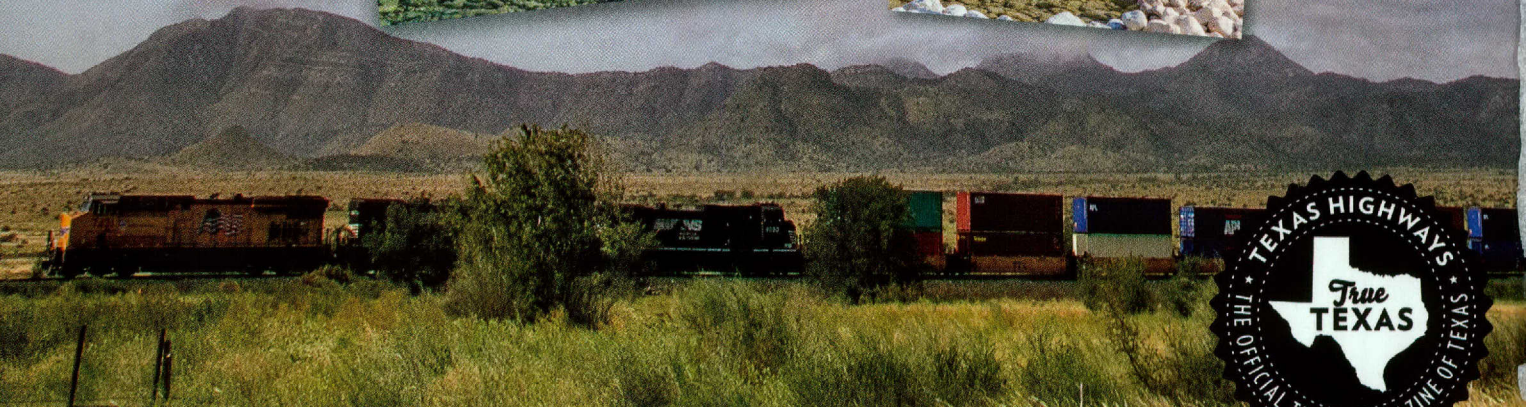
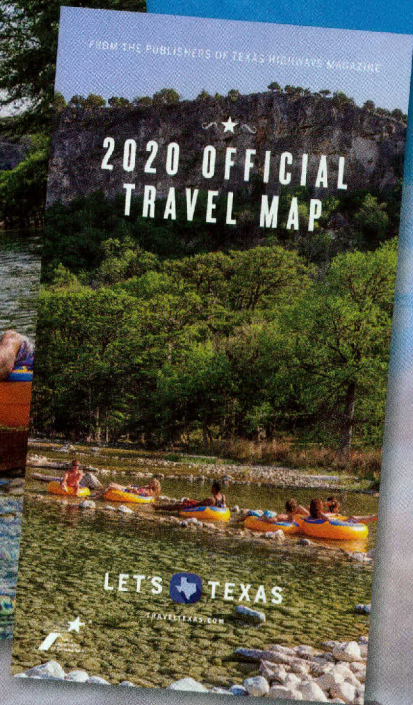


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**NOTE**

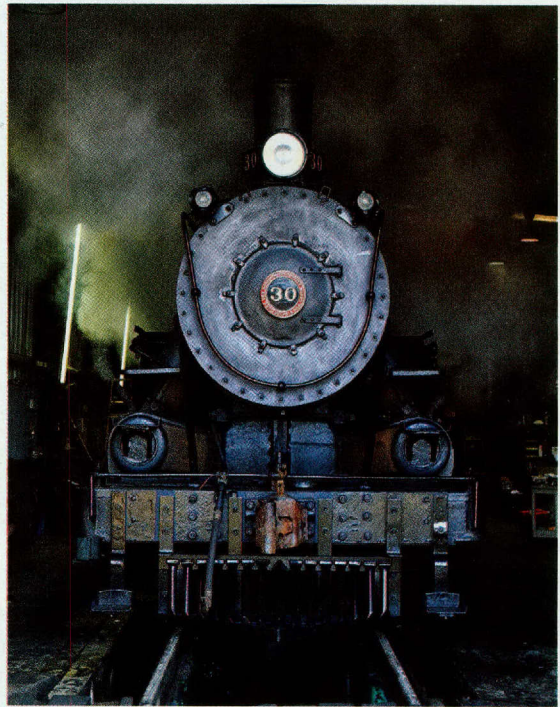
## The Enigmatic East

**E**ast Texas rewards the slow traveler. Unlike West Texas, where vast distances and remote landscapes require planning ahead, East Texas reveals itself most fully to the unconstrained wanderer. The divine is in the details.

We took our first East Texas trip as a family last March. My husband and I were looking for a spring break vacation away from the beach crowds and wanted to pick a location that would allow for an unhurried pace. We made sure to purchase tickets for the Texas State Railroad ahead of time for our train-loving 4-year-old boy, but we kept the rest of our plans loose. Since having kids, I don't know that I've taken a trip where nearly every day wasn't meticulously scheduled. It's a much more enjoyable way to travel, and I'd forgotten that.

Sometimes the hardest part of travel is the inevitable inconveniences that get in the way of our "perfectly laid plans." But if you're too busy consulting itineraries, you'll miss the singular feel of East Texas. To borrow a popular phrase, "East Texas is a mood." Writers included in this special issue describe it as "mythical," "lush," "unfathomable," "different."

On the boat tour we took on Caddo Lake in



Built in the late 1800s, the Texas State Railroad offers four-hour round trips between Rusk and Palestine.

Karnack, captain Ron Gibbs of Captain Ron's Swamp Tour remarked, "There are spots throughout this county that no humans have ever stepped foot in." Indeed, the region feels more untouched, otherworldly—certainly less urbanized—than the rest of Texas. From Caddo Lake to the Big Thicket, Gladewater to Beaumont, all 92 pages of this issue are devoted to the charms of the Piney Woods. Prepare to be enchanted.

*Emily R Stone*

**EMILY ROBERTS STONE**  
EDITOR IN CHIEF






# TOTALLY. UNEXPECTED.

It's all fun and games at the National Videogame Museum in Frisco, Texas. Home to more than 100,000 artifacts and 20 interactive exhibits, including an 80's-themed arcade and the largest PONG in the world, the NVM is the only museum in the U.S. dedicated to the history, evolution and success of the video game industry. Discover more at [visitfrisco.com/unexpected](http://visitfrisco.com/unexpected).

**Frisco**

 NATIONAL  
VIDEOGAME  
MUSEUM



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## On Getting Lost

There's no place in Texas quite like the Big Thicket. "Deeper and darker, bigger and thicker," Edward Carey writes. "The Big Thicket is an excellent place to leave everything behind, to be reminded of what life might be like without human beings."

*Story and Illustrations  
by Edward Carey*

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## Peeking Through the Pines

Photographer Dave Shafer spent months exploring the backroads of East Texas, guided by serenity and conversations with people he met along the way. In his photo essay, the personality of the Piney Woods emerges in all of its beauty and joy.

*Photographs by  
Dave Shafer*

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## Sam Houston's East Texas

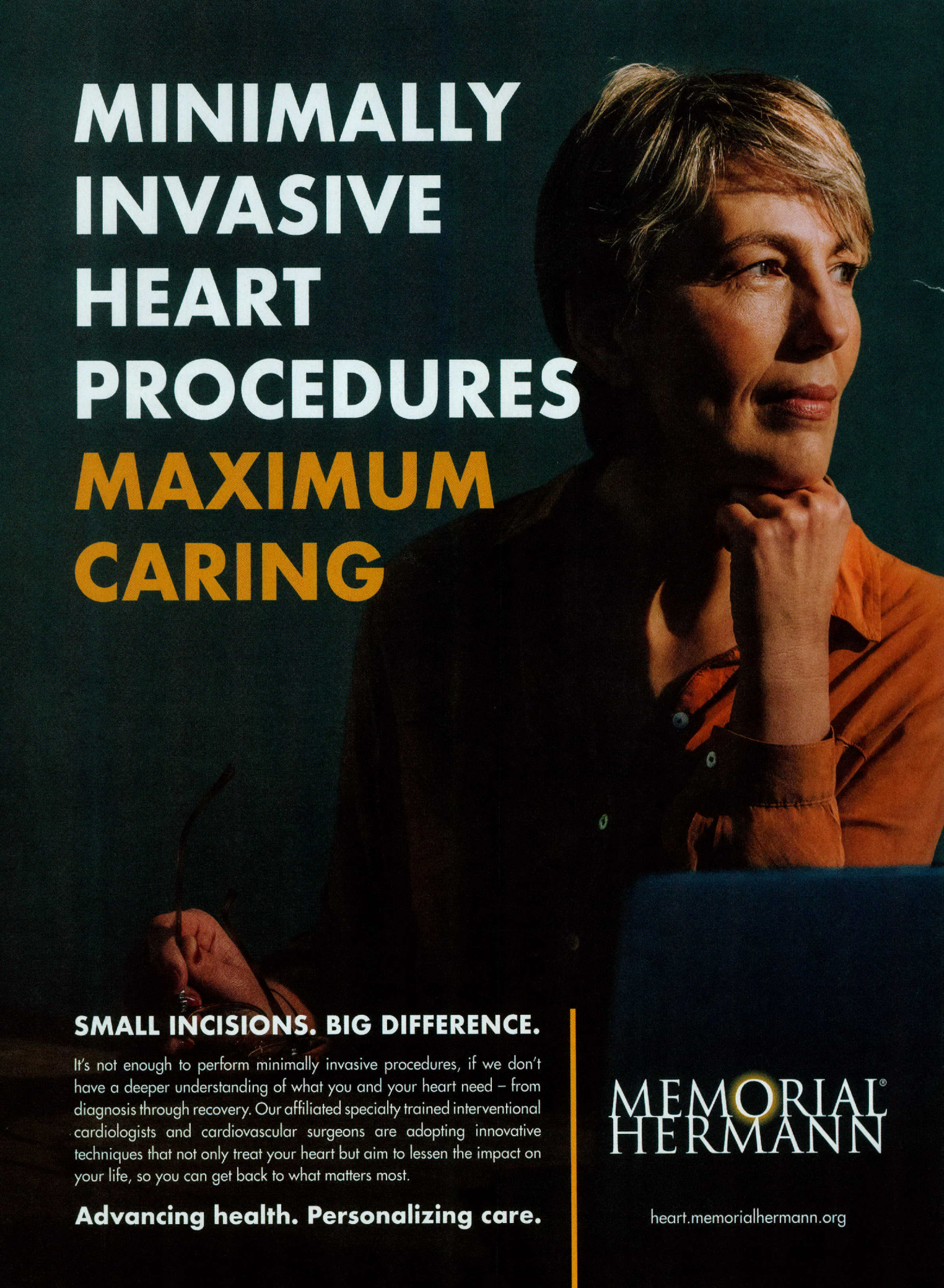
Sam Houston, at 38, was already an American celebrity when he crossed the Red River into Texas in 1832. And that's when things really got interesting. Up and down East Texas, we explore the places that shaped one of Texas' first heroes.

*Story by Matt Joyce  
Photographs by Sean Fitzgerald*



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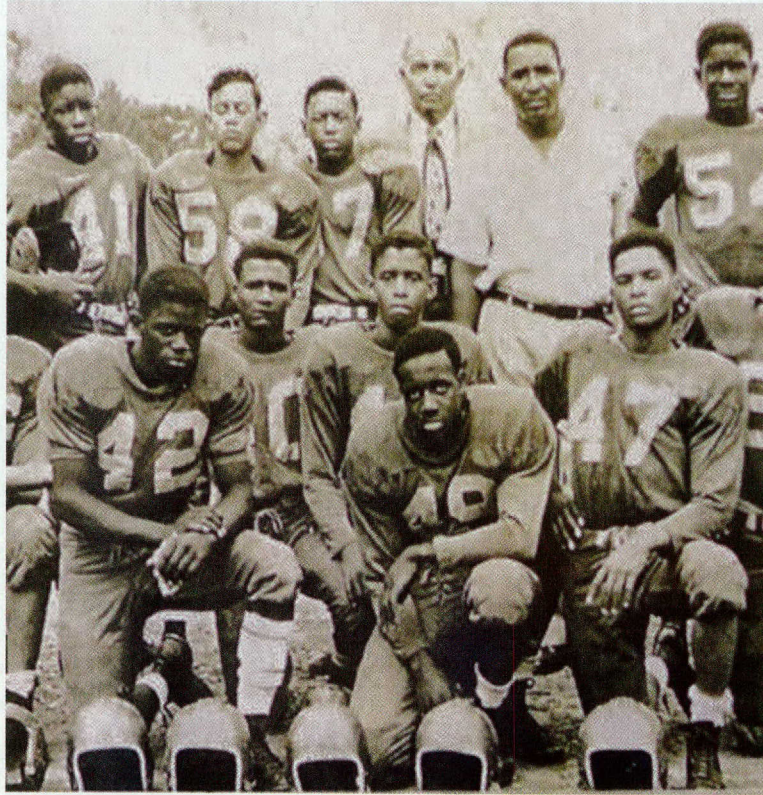
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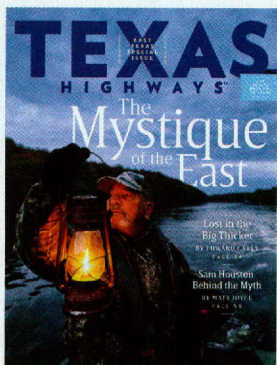
Speaking of Texas

Artist Trenton Doyle Hancock's parallel universe

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Vintage

The San Augustine square, 1943



**ON THE COVER**

Photo by Dave Shafer

Shot on Caddo Lake, Billy Carter of Johnson's Ranch Marina

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A man wearing a light-colored cowboy hat and a denim jacket is shown in profile, playing a guitar. The background is dark, and the lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of his clothing and the instrument.

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# Behind the Story



For “Peeking Through the Pines” (Page 42), photographer Dave Shafer (center) traveled through 22 East Texas towns to capture the essence of life in the Piney Woods. Shafer says his first shoot at Free Fishing Day at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens was one of his most memorable. “I didn’t have such high expectations going in,” he admits. “But everyone who was there was so happy. That joy was such a great kickoff for me. I thought, this is what I need to keep finding.” Between hitting planned events like the East Texas State Fair in Tyler and the World Championship Fiddlers’ Festival in Crockett, “I left some days for me to wander,” Shafer says. Roaming led him to the town of Corrigan, where he landed because he wanted to photograph a small high school football team playing on a grass field, which is a rarity these days. “Part of it makes you nervous, but part of it makes you excited,” Shafer says of impromptu shoots. “You just have to be open.”

## Featured Contributors



### Joe R. Lansdale

Nacogdoches-based Lansdale wrote this month’s Open Road essay, “From the Bottoms to the Tops” (Page 14), about his hometown of Gladewater, which is experiencing a revival. Lansdale is a prolific, award-winning author and screenwriter; some of his best known works include the crime novel *The Bottoms* and the Sundance TV show *Hap and Leonard*. Lansdale is a member of the Texas Institute of Letters and the Texas Literary Hall of Fame. He’s also a writer-in-residence at Stephen F. Austin State University.



### Edward Carey

The Austin-based author, artist, and professor penned and illustrated the feature story “On Getting Lost” (Page 34) about his first foray into the Big Thicket. “I loved the incredible diversity of the region—not just in animal and plant life, but in ghost stories and folklore as well,” he says. Carey was recently awarded a Guggenheim Foundation grant, which will allow him to take a break from teaching to complete a forthcoming novel. His seventh book, about the two years Geppetto spent inside the whale, will be published by Riverhead in October.

Photo: Elizabeth McCracken (bottom)

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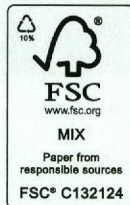
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MEET OUR MAKERS

# Rhyno Clayworks

**POTTER RYAN LUCIER** and graphic designer Melanie Pavao joined forces to form Rhyno Clayworks in Austin in 2011. Together, they update classic ceramic forms with contemporary surface treatments, sometimes glazing only part of a vessel while leaving other parts exposed. They offer an array of stoneware for home and garden, including birdhouses and planters, crocks and tumblers—and even a set of mugs printed with line-drawings of the heroes of the Texas Revolution. “I think I finally just reached a point where I knew I wanted more freedom and that I needed to be designing and creating as a full-time potter,” he says. “I was passionate about what I was doing. The rest I would figure out along the way.” **Shop more Rhyno Clayworks products at [shop.texashighways.com](http://shop.texashighways.com)**



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# MERGE



Traces of Texas is my favorite Facebook page, hands down. The Traces of Texas photo inside the back cover of your magazine leaves me speechless.

*Stephanie Sanders, Branson, Missouri*

## TEXAS EAGLES

We did the Vanishing Texas River Cruise up the Colorado with an amazing captain and guide and saw 10 eagles and many other birds, not to mention the beautiful falls. It was well worth the trip.

**Ken Emery, Belton**

## TRADE DAYS

I grew up going to First Monday Trade Days in Canton. Thirty to 40 years ago, it was awesome. Now, all the new-merchandise vendors have taken over in the pavilions. You have to go past the pavilions to find the good junk!

**Steven Davis, Tyler**

## PIEROGI QUEEN

Yum! As a gal whose maiden name ends in a Polish "ski," I wholeheartedly approve of this story. And now I have to schedule a trek to League City.

**@kookykrys**

## Fueled by History

The Magnolia Filling Station ["Fill 'er Up," January] stands on the land where Henri Castro built his house at the corner of Main (Fiorella) and Lafayette streets in 1844. Castro and his family lived there until 1865, the year he died in Mexico. Anton Baetz and his family lived in Castro's house beginning in 1872, and Baetz razed Castro's house and outbuildings in July 1893 so he could build a boarding house and his house, which is now the Castroville Cafe.

*T. Kent Keeton, Castroville*

## Dark Skies

I've lived between Shiner and Hallettsville on a ranch for over 40 years ["Dark Skies," December]. Sadly, I see the progress of light pollution slowly closing in. I hope we can find a solution.

*Andrew Kubena, Hallettsville*

The "Dark Skies" issue made me remember a canoe trip several years ago. We

only went about 90 miles—from Fort Worth to just south of Possum Kingdom Lake, maybe an increase in elevation of about 400 feet. I awoke in the middle of the night and thought I could touch the stars, they were so bright! It is good to get away from the city lights. But one needs to stay for the night.

*Tracey Smith, Fort Worth*

## Midcentury Fredericksburg

The article about Fredericksburg written by John Davidson ["Back to the Future," December] is an outstanding reconciliation of the times in the 1950s and '60s. I am about 5 years younger than John and grew up about two blocks north of him. I came back to Fredericksburg after attending Texas A&M and have witnessed the changes he spoke of.

*Paul F. Hannemann, College Station*

John Davidson's description of his neighborhood especially caught my attention because my husband's aunt lives in the

Coxes' old house. The alleys are still there, though more gravel than sand, and the area is no longer the edge of town!

*Anne Page, Rockport*

## Tales of Texas

I was amazed to read that J. Frank Dobie's old-time tales were "collected," since Dobie is considered the "father of Texas literature" ["In Defense of Dobie," October]. My dad was born in 1929 and lived in San Antonio with his great-grandparents, Melissa and James Hatch (1858-1945). James was a writer and was said to even have lived with the Indians so his stories would be more authentic. Many of his stories were published in *Frontier Times*. My father told how Dobie would visit James and for "\$5 and a fifth of whiskey" would purchase James Hatch's writings. So, I believe the term "collected" is accurate. Altogether, the article gave me a new appreciation for Dobie, and I learned many other interesting and positive things about him.

*Ginger Burkholder, Grey Forest*

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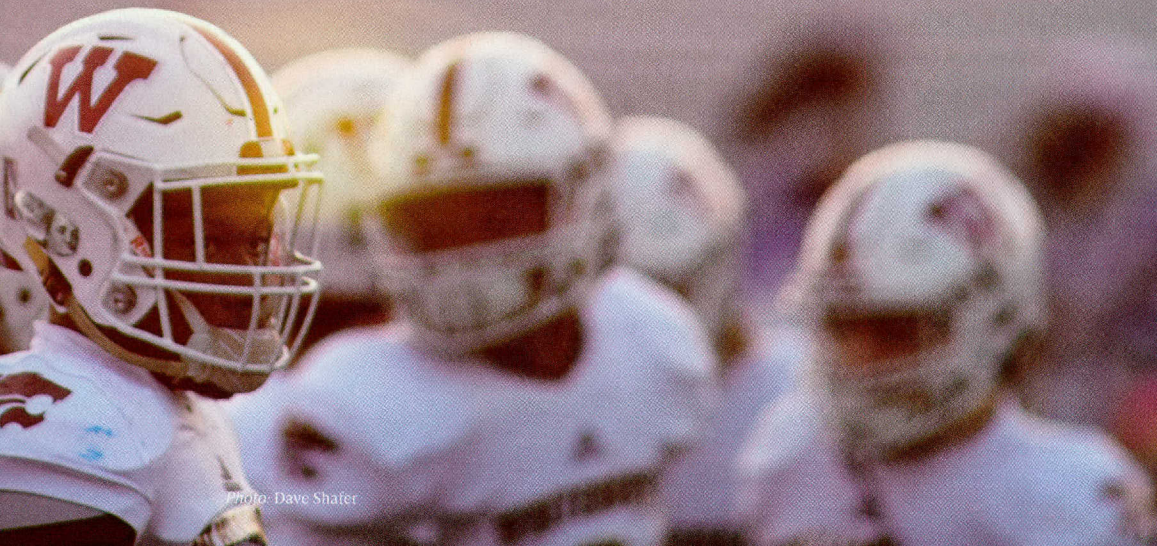
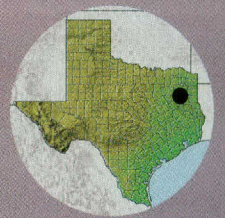






## Touchdowns in the Tomato

In a state crazy for high school football, few towns can boast a stadium as legendary as Jacksonville's Tomato Bowl. In this photo taken in October, the visiting Whitehouse Wildcats warm up for a Friday night game against the Jacksonville Indians. Jacksonville built the stadium in 1940 with assistance from the Works Progress Administration, naming it after the town's signature crop. Jacksonville Independent School District completed a renovation of the Tomato Bowl last year but retained its distinctive exterior of red iron ore rock.



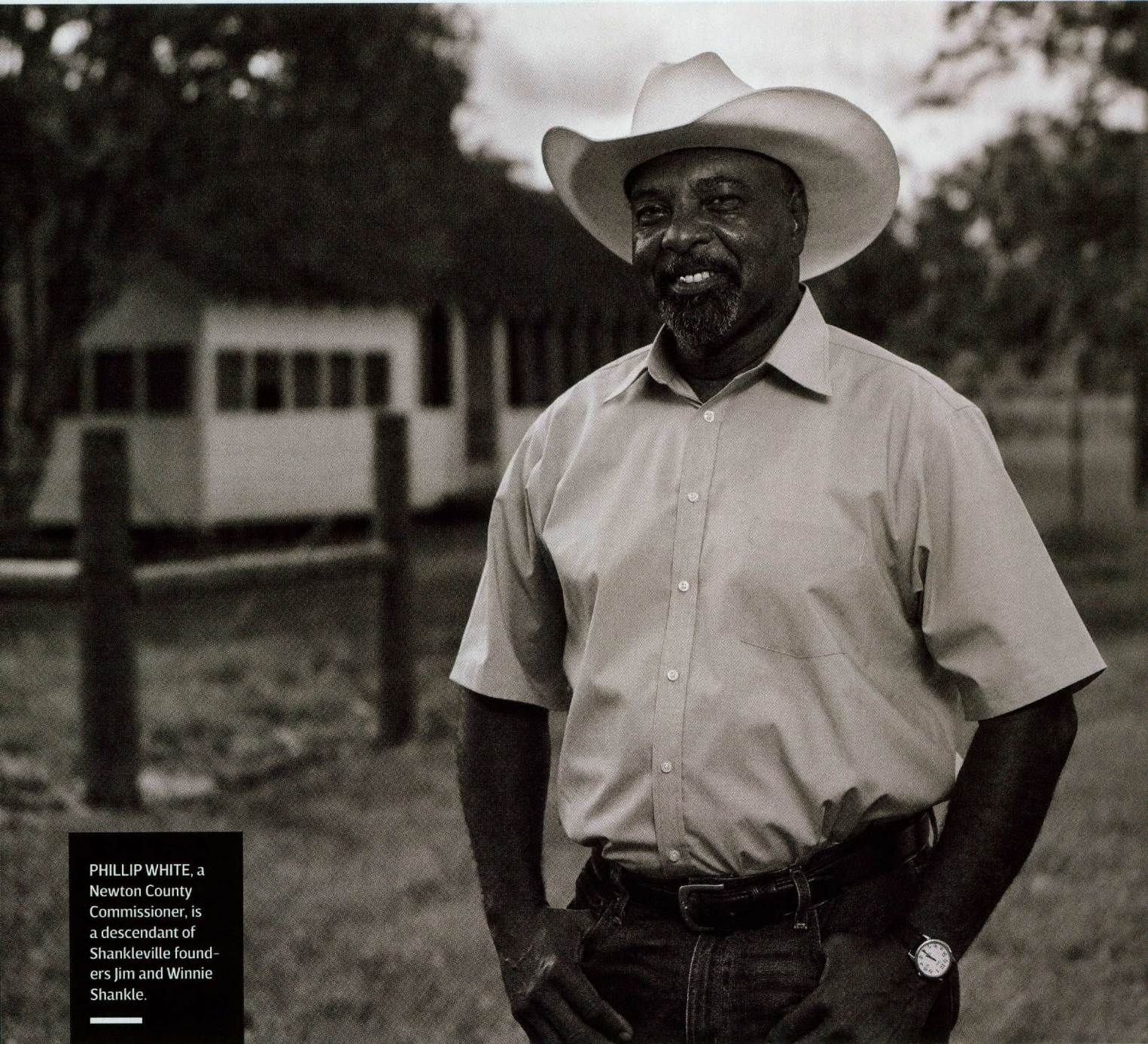




# Shankleville

Phillip White shares the epic love story that created one of Texas' first freedom colonies

By David Montgomery



PHILLIP WHITE, a Newton County Commissioner, is a descendant of Shankleville founders Jim and Winnie Shankle.



It's easy to bypass Shankleville, an East Texas community with no business district or convenience store. But what it lacks in stature, Shankleville makes up for in heritage—a proud history that resident Phillip White calls an “enduring love story.” White traces his ancestry to the town's founders, Jim and Winnie Shankle, an African American couple originally from Mississippi. When Winnie was sold to a Texas slave owner in the mid-1800s, Jim escaped and fled after her, swimming across the Mississippi River and traveling nearly 400 miles. The two reunited, and after emancipation, they settled this farming community of freed slaves. Today, Shankleville numbers no more than 100 people, but it got a burst of national attention last year when Michael Strahan, the retired football star and TV personality, discovered his ties to the community in an episode of PBS' “Finding Your Roots.” Sitting on the back porch of his family home, White, a Newton County commissioner, reflects on Jim and Winnie—his great-great-grandparents—and their legacy.

### No River Wide Enough

“It almost runs chills over your body to think about what my great-great-grandfather actually went through, how he had to swim the Mississippi River. I couldn't even imagine that. And then having to travel by foot all the way over here. That's a lot of love.”

### Freedom Colony

“This is one of the first slave colonies settled after emancipation. Jim Shankle was one of the first that settled back here to start a family. Having Shankle blood in me, I feel somewhat obligated to keep connected to the roots of the Shankle family. The Shankle family is one of the strongest bloodlines and well known to people in this area, especially anywhere in northern Newton County. Everyone here's related some way or another, either on the mother's or the father's side. I've got cousins all over the place.”

### Independent Spirit


“My dad and mother, they had 11 of us. My dad's means of providing for the family was raising crops, and he and my mother both had strong determination to raise the children without any type of governmental support or anything like that. They raised anything, from potatoes, green beans, peas, peanuts, and sugar cane—just about anything you could eat. I think there was very little

need for any grocery stores or anything. I remember when they used to take their corn to the mill and get cornmeal made of it. That's the sugar-cane mill out there—the shed is still there. We used to make sugar-cane syrup. As a child, I would haul sugar cane down here. It's hard to find now. There's very few people who fool with it anymore.”

### Big Fish

“I would say there are roughly 20 houses in Shankleville, kind of spread out. Burkeville is the nearest town, and there's a store there, about 2 miles from here. We have two major dams here. Sam Rayburn [Reservoir] is about 30 minutes from here, and Toledo Bend [Reservoir] is about 25 minutes from here. They're great for bass, perch, and catfish.”

### On the Porch

“I'm just a country boy at heart. A good afternoon is sitting on the front or back porch with a cup of coffee and watching God's creation—the wind blowing the leaves in the trees, the birds. You don't have your next-door neighbor over here 10 feet away from your house, blasting their music, music that you don't care about. If we stop talking, you can hear birds in the background, hear quail. You stick around long enough and pay attention, you can distinguish the different chirps of the birds.” 



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NUMBER OF STOPLIGHTS:

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YEAR FOUNDED:

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NEAREST CITY:

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MAP IT:

The Addie L. and A.T. Odom Homestead, a historic site, 194 County Road 1040 in Burkeville. (The spring where Jim and Winnie Shankle rediscovered each other in the mid-19th century is a short walk from the homestead.)







# From the Bottoms to the Tops

A fresh and new Gladewater emerges from its raucous honky-tonk past

By Joe R. Lansdale



Some say that deep in the East Texas woods, where the muddy Sabine River flows, there dwells a creature called the Goat Man. This furry, hoofed denizen of the dark woods lives under a swinging bridge, where he sates his taste for human flesh on unsuspecting passersby.

Or so went the legend when I was young, and perhaps that legend has played out now. Kids run the river and woods less, and spend minimal time beneath the swaying shadows of the pines and hardwood trees that once grew thick for miles. Stories grow not only out of the available environment, but also the use of the environment, so perhaps due to the

lack of attention to the Goat Man's world, he has ceased to exist.

Almost as mythical are the things that happened decades ago near the Sabine, where the long-gone Mint Club stood, its walls vibrating to a sound that pulsed with what some would have described then as primal wails and lustful howls. A sound condemned by churches and do-gooders far and wide, but ultimately adored by the masses. If it was indeed devil music, then the devil got his due.

The voices that squealed and roared over the airwaves of the defunct Gladewater radio station KSIJ 1430 were memorialized in wax, the singular method of the time. But the experience of hearing something that was unlike anything that had come before, in real time, has gone the way of the Goat Man.

In the 1950s, the Mint Club was referred to as the Gun and Knife Club. Back then, famous KSIJ disc jockey Tom Perryman said it was the kind of place "that if you didn't have a gun or knife, they'd give you one at the door."

Where the Mint Club stood there is now nothing more than a cement foundation and distant memories. The Mint was among the many rough-and-tumble honky-tonks that lined the highway outside the boundaries of Gladewater, not far from the Sabine River bridge,

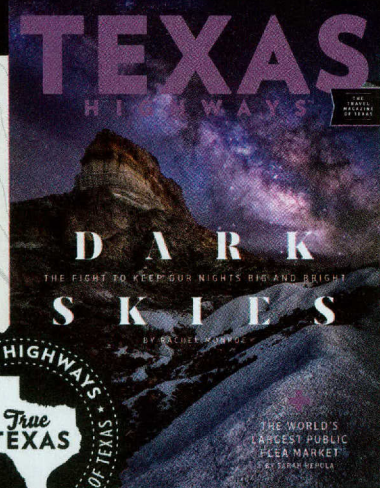


# Been There, Seen That.



HIDDEN GEMS IN BIG BEND

FEBRUARY 2019 ISSUE



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on what was called Hell's Half Mile. Out there, come night time, music was played and drunks were fueled. Those joints seemed like permanent establishments when I was young, but they have all gone the way of the dodo, phew, along with knifings, shootings, and midnight brawls.

On a spring day last year, under a sky threatening rain, I cruised from Nacogdoches—where I have lived for more than 40 years working as a writer of scripts and novels predominantly set in East Texas—to my old hometown, Gladewater. I planned to locate some musical ghosts I could perhaps invite home with me, as well as check out my hometown's revival. Gladewater had gone into a slow decline, like so many old towns in the area that suffered after the oil boom of the '30s. But recently citizens have revived it with new businesses, shops, and restaurants, thanks to renewed civic pride and new blood moving into town.

Some years back, driving through Gladewater was a depressing affair for me. It was a shadow of its former self, and looked ready to dry up and blow away. Now, it feels as if the old town's past has refreshed the place, with special attention not only to its antiques, but to its musical history.

Gladewater, in its own way, is as responsible for the birth of a new kind of music as are Sun Records and the Louisiana Hayride, considering it was a coveted destination for rockabilly troupes in the '50s. At the time, those performers must have seemed like space aliens to residents, gliding into small-town, postwar America buttoned-up tight, with greased-back hair and wardrobes that looked fleeced from a passing circus.

Acts like Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Ray Price, Jerry Lee Lewis, Hank Thompson, The Big Bopper, Jim Reeves, Bob Luman, and many others came to Gladewater for musical pit stops. In addition to the honky-tonks, they played at rodeos, ballparks, fairgrounds, and school auditoriums, and for all I know, people's living

rooms and backyards.

Gladewater is where rockabilly got its big boy pants. Perryman was responsible for a lot of this. Within those seven years when he was the radio king, the town of Gladewater provided a vehicle for Elvis and so many others to learn their trade and develop their brand of music. Much of it originated from black performers who were confined to race records. Back then they could often only be heard on radios late at night when the weather was right and the magic of electricity carried

**Gladewater is where rockabilly got its big boy pants. The town provided a vehicle for Elvis and so many others to learn their trade and develop their brand of music.**

their sounds to the ears of eager listeners, excited by a new kind of sound that made souls flare and feet dance.

Given the racial reality of the day, white performers introduced this singular form of American music to the masses. As black music contributed to the creation of rock 'n' roll, those white performers in turn opened up the doors of recognition for black performers. The two groups swapped soul and blues for country voices and backwoods guitar licks, all of it blending into something fresh and inspired.

Though KSIJ is gone, the building where the radio station operated still stands along US 80. On the fourth floor is a recording studio with prime acoustics

and a legendary pedigree. The station where Elvis, Cash, and others performed live seems to have frozen in time. For rockabilly and rock 'n' roll diehards, or even old-school country fans, the place should be declared a holy shrine.

The station is now home to Mauldin Productions. An enthusiastic and talented fellow named Chad Mauldin operates it. Like Sun Records, the music he's making has a distinctive sound signature, a subtle tremolo enhanced by the birch diffusion panels on the walls and high ceilings of the studio.

My daughter, Kasey Lansdale, is a musical performer whose last album, *Restless*, was recorded at The Cash Cabin Studio under the eye of John Carter Cash, the only child of June Carter and Johnny Cash. She decided to record two songs at Mauldin to touch on the location's uncommon lineage, as well as to make use of the fine studio. And if I can be forgiven a bit of fatherly enthusiasm, those cuts jump, and are to be included on Kasey's forthcoming album.

There are remnants of the past on the fourth floor that are more than recollections and original construction. There is Lewis' signature on the wall and on a soundboard that has been mounted in a hallway. Lewis seemed to have had an egotistical need to write his name on things. What may have been annoyances then are now valued artifacts of rockabilly history.

A photo of Elvis performing live in the sound room is mounted on the wall, and the black marks on a lower wall are said to be where Cash leaned against it and scuffed it with the heels of his shoes. It should also be noted that Cash wrote "I Walk the Line" in Gladewater, right before he stepped on stage for a performance there in 1956.

When I headed out of the studio, I drove past where the old bowling alley had stood. Once, in that parking lot, I made a bet inspired by the 1967 film *Cool Hand Luke*. In the movie, Paul Newman's



character ate 50 boiled eggs while in a Florida prison. So I boasted I could eat 50 raw ones. I did just that, managing to swallow them all, only to realize while others were sorting their money made from bets for or against my abilities, I had forgotten to bet on myself. I was a hero for about 15 minutes and the owner of a bellyache for two days.

I discovered other remnants of Gladewater's rockabilly past, like the Res-Mor Courts Motel on West Upshur Avenue, where Elvis and others boarded when they weren't staying in local homes as guests. Allegedly, there's even a guest card somewhere in existence with Elvis' signature on it, and a notation of which room he occupied.

The Res-Mor is now an apartment building, but it still bears the original outdoor sign announcing that the motel was air-conditioned. This was rare back when the best most places could manage for fighting the humid East Texas heat were damp swamp coolers, rotating fans, an open window, or a cold shower. Though the Res-Mor is no longer the rare air-conditioned business it once was, I hope new ownership leaves the old sign with its brag intact as a nostalgic echo to a fading past.

There was more to my journey than rockabilly. I was exploring Gladewater history at large, and The Gladewater Museum was the perfect place for that. It was once the town library, but was transformed into a museum in 2005. As a kid, I spent Saturdays and time after school sitting and reading there, checking out stacks of books to brighten a rather drab existence. Without those books the air seemed heavy, and the world looked gray.

On Saturdays, I'd read in the mornings at the library, walk over to Ritz Pharmacy (now a cool coffee and ice cream shop called The Screen Door), and buy a hamburger and a Coke. After a quick lunch, I'd head next door to what was then The Cozy Theater but is now an opry house. To pile on top of my digesting

hamburger, I would buy popcorn and candy, as well as another soft drink, stoking up for a daylong theatrical adventure.

I'd watch the kid show, cartoons, and an old-time adventure serial that I didn't realize wasn't new, and then stay for the double feature. Back then they didn't run you out when the movies were over. You could stay for another run through both films, and I often did.

The library and theater were salvation to me. Along with spending time

**The library and theater were salvation to me. Along with spending time on the Sabine River and running the woods, they may have been more important to my becoming a writer than most of my formal schooling.**

on the Sabine River and running the woods, they may have been more important to my education and preparation for becoming a writer than most of my formal schooling. Another plus: The Cozy Theater, like the Res-Mor, was air-conditioned.

But the theater promoted segregation. Black audiences had to enter by a separate door and climb the stairs to their isolated nest, confined to the balcony. Their money was fine, but not their association with white folk. That's something I sure don't miss, and it's a piece of Gladewater's past that I can happily let go of.

The library turned museum contains exhibits covering Gladewater's oil boom in the '30s. This was the key event that transformed Gladewater from a burg of several hundred to several thousand. Among the displays, there is a section on how people lived in the past, a segment on the famous Gladewater Roundup Rodeo, as well as the Gladewater High School football team—its coaches, and the players who went on to gridiron glory. Among them were Skip Butler, kicker for the Houston Oilers; John Floyd, wide receiver for the San Diego Chargers; Winston Hill, tackle for the New York Jets; and James Scott, wide receiver for the Chicago Bears.

My interest in football is surpassed only by my interest in watching water drip. Still, I used to sell programs at the football games, calling out, "Get your program! Get your program! Can't tell a player without your program!" It wasn't a living, but it was money.

More to my taste, of course, is the museum's section on Elvis, Cash, country music, and the rockabilly musicians who performed on Hell's Half Mile. The area earned its moniker for the honky-tonks, seedy night life, and prostitution there.

Moving around town, it's clear that Gladewater is no longer a busted-out oil town on the brink of dying. It's loving its past in a way that, strangely, makes it feel fresh and new. It may not have honky-tonks out past the Sabine bridge anymore, but it has antiques, and is now, according to the Texas Legislature, the Antique Capital of East Texas—a claim I can neither dispute nor affirm. What's distinctive is the town is acknowledging its past and using it to lean into the future.

Not a bad move, as one can only feast on the past for so long before it somehow turns on you and traps you in nostalgic amber, much of it nowhere near as good as remembered.

On the newer side is a business made up of relics of the past. Gladewater Books, a used bookstore stretching nearly an



entire city block, contains thousands of titles, from popular fiction to rarities and collectibles. When I was growing up, Gladewater couldn't support such a store. Had the store existed when I was a kid, I might have ventured inside, never to venture out, my skeleton to be found in some dark corner clutching an Edgar Rice Burroughs novel.

The town also boasts a number of fine restaurants not available in my youth. The main place to eat for teenagers then was a Dairy Queen on the outskirts of town, just off US 80 leading from Gladewater to Longview. It was next to the highway, and also to a road that led into the bottoms. A place of damp growth and dark mystery, it finds its way into a number of my novels, best known among them, *The Bottoms*.

The bottoms are gone now, covered by concrete and houses. It's hard to imagine how much of a teenage hub that Dairy Queen once was. Fights happened out back. People sat inside and out, and laughed and talked. Romances blossomed. Bellies were filled. Now, like the honky-tonks and the radio station, it is gone with the wind. The memories of it flutter about like falling leaves in the aging heads of those of us who went there with the dedication of the faithful visiting a religious shrine.

As I headed home, my head bursting with memories and revelations about the past, a black thunderhead formed above the tree line, the earlier threat of rain now a promise. Bright zippers of lightning flashed, and as I crossed the Sabine bridge, the wind picked up and shook my small car like dice in a loose fist.

The clouds burst open, and the rain came down. I drove home in the wet darkness, tasting the sweet-sour memories of my youth. I thought idly of the Goat Man. In the shiny new era of my hometown, I hoped he still lurked somewhere in the shadows, reminding us of the wildness of the past. **L**

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# DRIVE



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in Nacogdoches into  
a bookstore.





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from an eclectic  
mix of books owner  
Tim Bryant carefully  
selects.

# Turning the Page

The Bosslight is a shining example of the new independent bookstores cropping up in East Texas

By Gary Borders



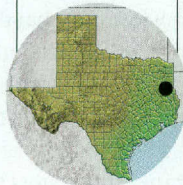
**T**im Bryant became a bookstore owner somewhat by accident. In 2010, around the time he published his first novel, *Dutch Curridge*, he owned a T-shirt shop in Nacogdoches called The Runaway Mule. The store was named for a famed incident in 1910 when a runaway mule upstaged a Marx Brothers performance at a local theater, prompting Groucho Marx to make up a ditty with this chorus: "Nacogdoches is full of roaches." Bryant had to explain the title of his store so often that he eventually printed the story on cards he handed to customers.

The T-shirt business was serviceable, but Bryant, always sporting a porkpie hat, began to do well selling copies of his book at the shop. Soon, other East Texas authors were asking him to carry their books. When Book People, the venerable independent bookstore in Austin, brought Bryant in for a book signing, he saw what a successful book-selling operation looked like. He renamed his place The Bosslight, purposely avoiding a convoluted backstory, and moved it up the street to the old Branch Patton Hardware. The building was constructed in 1888 and beautifully restored by its landlord, who lives in a loft upstairs. This completed Bryant's transformation into a full-fledged bookstore owner.

"We used to be a T-shirt shop with a few books," Bryant said. "Now, we just flipped, and we're a bookstore with a few T-shirts."

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thebosslight.com

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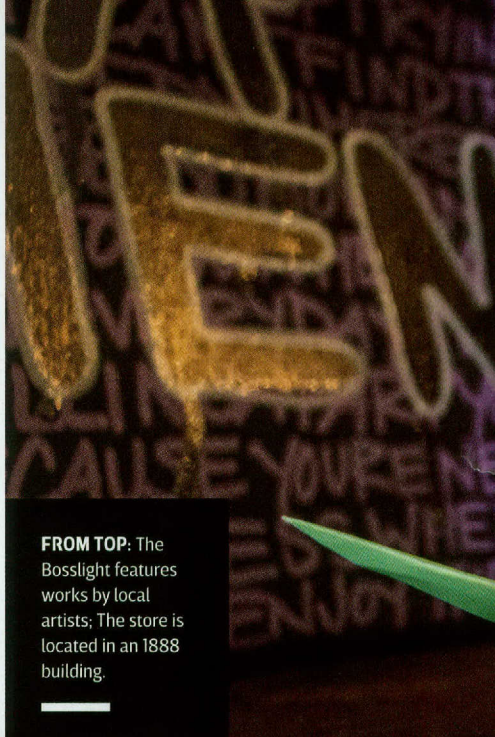


Bryant has operated The Bosslight for the past three years on a busy corner in downtown Nacogdoches. Because space is very limited and The Bosslight is essentially a one-man operation, Bryant personally selects all the books, which include works by local and regional writers, bestselling fiction and nonfiction, and Texas history. He also fills special orders nearly daily.

The Bosslight's motto is "Books, Shirts, Community." Bryant fulfills the community aspect by sponsoring various events,

including book signings, poetry readings, musical performances, and even a one-act play. "We try to have as expansive a view of local arts as we can," he said. "That's the engine that drives this place."

In addition to books, The Bosslight sells T-shirts from the old Runaway Mule, eclectic paintings and sculptures, jewelry, and other items from the sizable artist community in this university town. The bookstore is a popular stop among tourists in a downtown whose mix of restaurants, retail, and art galleries draws



**FROM TOP:** The Bosslight features works by local artists; The store is located in an 1888 building.

### Bookmark This

A number of bookstores have opened in East Texas in the past several years, reflecting a national trend. Oren Teicher, CEO for the American Booksellers Association, contends that customers like the authenticity of a physical store and supporting local business. Here's a sampling of independent bookstores across East Texas:

#### Absolutely Fiction

Despite its name, this bookstore, opened in 2016, sells nonfiction volumes as well. Owner Becky Jackson, a former librarian and chain bookstore employee, is especially proud of the children's books collection, which is the largest section in the store. "I love selling kids' books because they're up-and-coming readers," she said.  
 903 S. Redditt Drive, Lufkin.  
 936-639-4143;  
[absolutelyfiction.com](http://absolutelyfiction.com)

#### The Blind Pig

Manager Christina Meek describes the store, opened in 2019, as a "modern-day speak-easy," with books in the front and a bar in the back. There are used books of all genres, plus the store hosts various events, such as trivia night, kid's readings, and open mic shows.  
 129 S. Main St., Paris.  
 903-231-5122;  
[the-blind-pig-book-store.business.site](http://the-blind-pig-book-store.business.site)

#### The Bookstore in Kilgore

This house turned law office turned bookstore nestled next to the Kilgore College campus opened in 2017 and is filled with approximately 10,000 used books. It also has several shelves of new books by regional authors. Owners Stephen and Paige Woodfin offer a trade program for customers.  
 1012 Houston St., Kilgore.  
 903-984-0061;  
[thekilgorebookstore.com](http://thekilgorebookstore.com)

#### Gladewater Books

This downtown store, opened in 2007, sells only used books but has an enormous—and searchable—collection of more than 300,000 titles. Owners Pete Adams and Elizabeth DeRieux purchased some of their inventory at auction from Booked Up, writer Larry McMurtry's bookstore in Archer City.  
 109 E. Pacific Ave., Gladewater.  
 903-845-4843;  
[gladewaterbooks.com](http://gladewaterbooks.com)



visitors year-round.

Bryant's family has been part of Nacogdoches since he was 8, when his father took a faculty position at Stephen F. Austin State University. After high school, he worked as a musician and songwriter, playing piano for a time in New Orleans with an English folk-rock band. (Bryant still plays in a blues-punk band, Thirty Miles of Davis, which performs locally.)

Bryant eventually returned to Nacogdoches and enrolled in SFA's creative writing program. His mentors were John

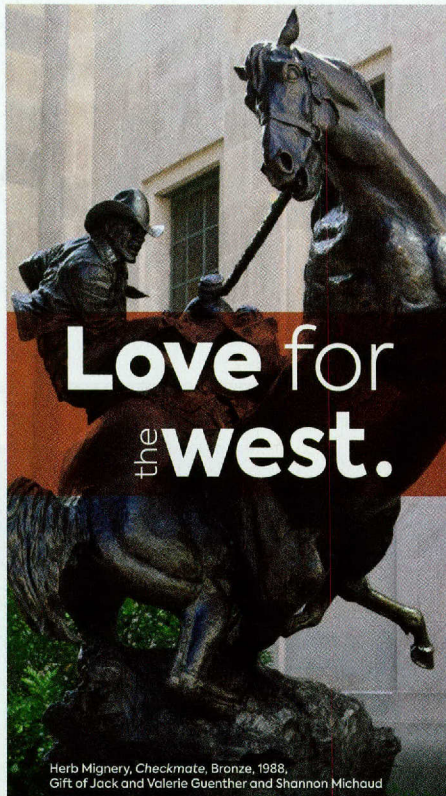




writing program. His mentors were John McDermott, who co-founded the program; and Joe Lansdale, a writer-in-residence and author of the Hap and Leonard series. "When I was 12, my grandmother told me I was going to be a writer," Bryant said. "It just took me nearly 40 years to realize she was right." Bryant's ninth novel is with his agent, who is shopping it around to publishers.

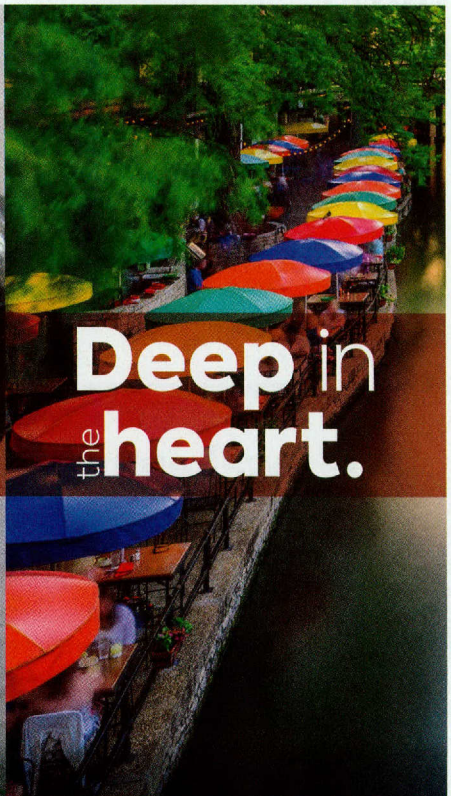
Lansdale, a frequent visitor to The Bosslight, said the bookstore is a central gathering place for local artists, writers, and book lovers. Chairs and two tables take up part of the rear of the store, where folks hang out. "The Bosslight for me is a haven for books, art, conversations of all kinds, not to mention book clubs, poetry, and music," Lansdale said. "It's an oasis for the artistic-minded."

Bryant routinely confronts the challenges of running an independent bookstore. He said it's not a profession you get into to get rich, but with his side gig as a novelist, he can "put beans on the table." Ultimately, it comes down to the third word in The Bosslight's motto. "I love books, and I love people," Bryant said. "I love the connection you make when you talk about books with people." 📖



Herb Mignery, *Checkmate*, Bronze, 1988. Gift of Jack and Valerie Guenther and Shannon Michaud

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# There Will Be Oil

The 1930 discovery of the East Texas oil field—the largest in the contiguous United States—changed communities like Kilgore forever

By Robyn Ross

## Crude Awakening

Spindletop, the landmark gusher near Beaumont, put Texas on the oil map in 1901 and began shifting the state's economic focus from agriculture to petroleum. Three decades later, wildcatters near the East Texas town of Kilgore tapped into an even larger reservoir of oil—one that continues to produce today.

Kilgore's population ballooned from a few hundred to more than 10,000 in the early '30s as the railroad brought an influx of characters fleeing the Great Depression. Boomtown diversions like movie theaters and baseball clubs offset the chaos, and oil revenues helped build Kilgore College. East Texas oil also fueled the Allied forces during World War II.



## Camping Out

Many oil-field workers lived in “tent houses,” temporary, cabin-like dwellings with wooden and canvas walls and a canvas roof. Over time, some families added sturdier walls and a better roof to turn a tent into a home. Visitors to the Gaston Museum can explore an original, fortified tent house.

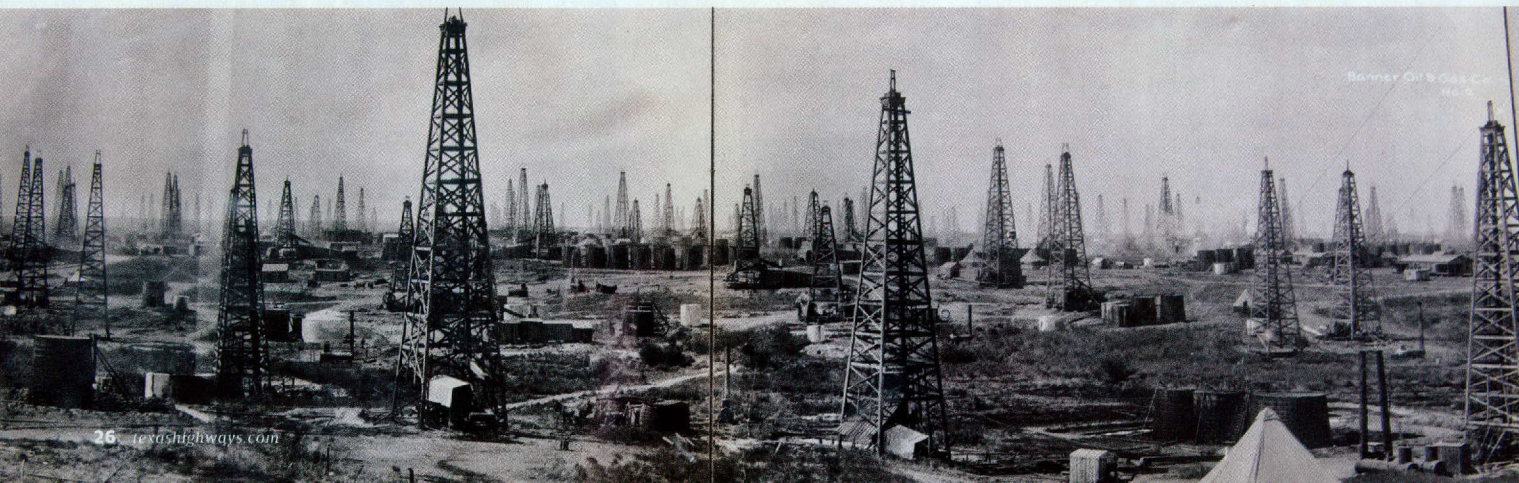
### GASTON MUSEUM

6562 State Highway 64, Joinerville  
903-722-9016; [gastonmuseum.org](http://gastonmuseum.org)

## The World's Richest Acre

Oil companies and prospectors drilled everywhere, including the Presbyterian church, where members tore down their sanctuary to drill in its place, and the Kilgore National Bank, where oilmen drilled a well right through the floor. By 1940, 24 wells were pumping in one city block, leading to its moniker, “The World's Richest

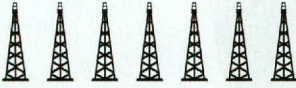
Acre.” By the early 1960s, all but one derrick had been removed from that block, as production declined. But in the '90s, the Kilgore Historical Preservation Association turned the space into a park and added 12 more derricks to recreate the historic skyline. Located at Commerce and Main streets, it now celebrates the town's oil-boom history.





# 1,000+

The number of derricks in Kilgore during the 1930s boom.



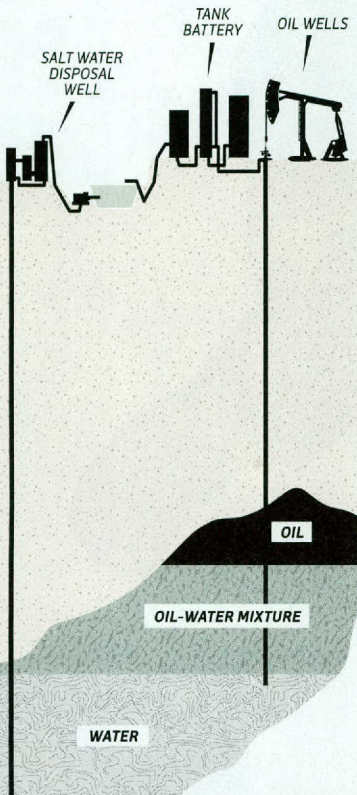
# 5,379,780,304

As of 2017, the number of barrels of oil the East Texas oil field has produced.



# 42

The number of gallons of oil in a barrel.



## Well, Well, Well

The East Texas Oil Museum, on the Kilgore College campus, examines the environmental, financial, and social impact of the oil boom.

**EAST TEXAS OIL MUSEUM**  
1301 S. Henderson Blvd., Kilgore  
903-983-8295;  
easttexasoilmuseum.com



## Boomtown, USA

Walk the recreated 1930s main street—a living, breathing (take a close look at the mannequins) replica of a town transformed by the oil boom. Visit the general store, *Gusher Gazette* newsroom, and movie theater, where you can watch *The Great East Texas Oil Boom*.

## Rock Bottom

Take the Elevator Ride to the Center of the Earth, an eight-minute simulated journey inside a repurposed freight elevator. “Descend” through layers of sediment while a puppet named Professor Rockbottom explains the geology of the East Texas oil field.

## Inner Core

An exhibit running April 25 to June 6 will offer an up-close look at the Woodbine Formation, where East Texas wells struck oil about 3,500 feet below the earth’s surface. View three 30-foot-long rock samples called geologic cores.

## Salt of the Earth

The Woodbine Formation, where the wells struck oil, is a layer of sandstone packed with both oil and salt water. Since 1942, the East Texas Salt Water Disposal Company has injected the salt water that the wells pump to the surface back into the Woodbine. This strategy maintains underground pressure and allows the oil wells to keep producing. The company currently reinjects almost 900,000 barrels of salt water per day.

## Drill Team

The wildcatter Columbus Marion “Dad” Joiner was undeterred by research advising against drilling near Kilgore. Along with Joseph Idelbert Durham (aka “Doc”) Lloyd, a snake-oil salesman masquerading as a geologist, Joiner persuaded investors to finance his drilling operation on Daisy Bradford’s farm, about 16 miles south of Kilgore. His third well on her property, the Daisy Bradford No. 3, hit the jackpot in October 1930. As the first to tap into the massive East Texas oil field, which stretched 40 miles long and 12 miles wide, it was referred to as the “Discovery Well.” The well is still active and can be found with a hand-drawn map available at the East Texas Oil Museum. The derrick and the crowds are gone, but a solitary pump jack nods to itself as the breeze whispers through the pines. **L**





# Hairy, Very

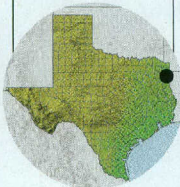
Capture a little Bigfoot  
in Jefferson

By Clayton Maxwell



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“If there were a Sasquatch in Texas, he’d be here,” says Angie, a tour guide at Johnson’s Ranch Marina in Uncertain, as she steers a mud boat through the cypress-draped misty waters of Caddo Lake. “But there are some great hunters around here, so he’d probably end up mounted on somebody’s wall.”

The lore around Sasquatch in these parts of East Texas is so compelling that for some, the furry, hulking creature also known as Bigfoot is as good as real. At the Shady Glade Cafe in nearby Karnack, a popular greasy spoon with a boat dock on the edge of Caddo Lake, diners can dig into a 16-ounce bacon-topped Sasquatch Burger on a jalapeño bun with fries for \$13.99 while admiring Sasquatch décor, like a sign that cautions: “Please don’t feed the Sasquatch.”

There have been so many reports of Sasquatch sightings in this region that Carey Heaster Jr., a past mayor of Jefferson, located about 18 miles northwest of Caddo Lake, proclaimed the city the Bigfoot Capital of Texas. Jefferson deserves the title. It hosts the Texas Bigfoot Conference, an event the Texas Bigfoot Research Center sponsors, bringing together more than 300 true believers to compare theories and sightings. Just across the street from the Jefferson Convention and Visitors Bureau, a 5-foot Bigfoot sculpture with menacing red eyes stands guard at the entrance to the Port Jefferson History and Nature Center’s 1.1-mile walking trail along Big Cypress Bayou. Keep your eyes out on the trail: There are reportedly a couple of real Bigfoots hidden among the thickets.

Last summer, I stopped by the convention and visitors bureau, where I purchased a mini-Sasquatch to have and to hold for \$5. “I can’t say Bigfoot’s real,” says Danielle Eigenmann of the visitors bureau, “but a lot of people do come to the conference with records of their sightings. Who’s to say? I keep an open mind.” As a sign at the Shady Glade Cafe implores: Don’t Stop Believing. 🐼

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# Where South Meets West

Country music, boudin, and kayaking on the border of Texas and Louisiana

By John Lumpkin

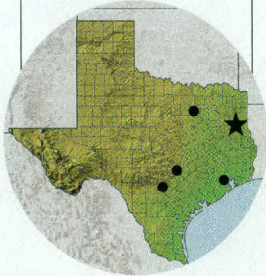


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Approaching the East Texas hamlet of Carthage, I tune the car radio to KGAS-FM, which broadcasts country music, farm shows, and local news. It sets the mood for a spring weekend in the Piney Woods.

"People ask, 'Is this more of the West than the South, or the other way around?'" says Tommie Ritter Smith, president and CEO of Carthage's Texas Country Music Hall of Fame and the Tex Ritter Museum. "The answer to both is yes."

That's not surprising. Carthage is the seat of Panola County, which borders Louisiana. And cotton—the historic crop of the old South—dominated the economy before natural gas displaced it.

Here you'll find Panola College's rodeo team training under the pines, and menus offering boudin and brisket side by side.

During my weekend of exploring Carthage, this Piney Woods town revealed itself to be a place where two cultures—Southern and Western—intertwine.



STAY



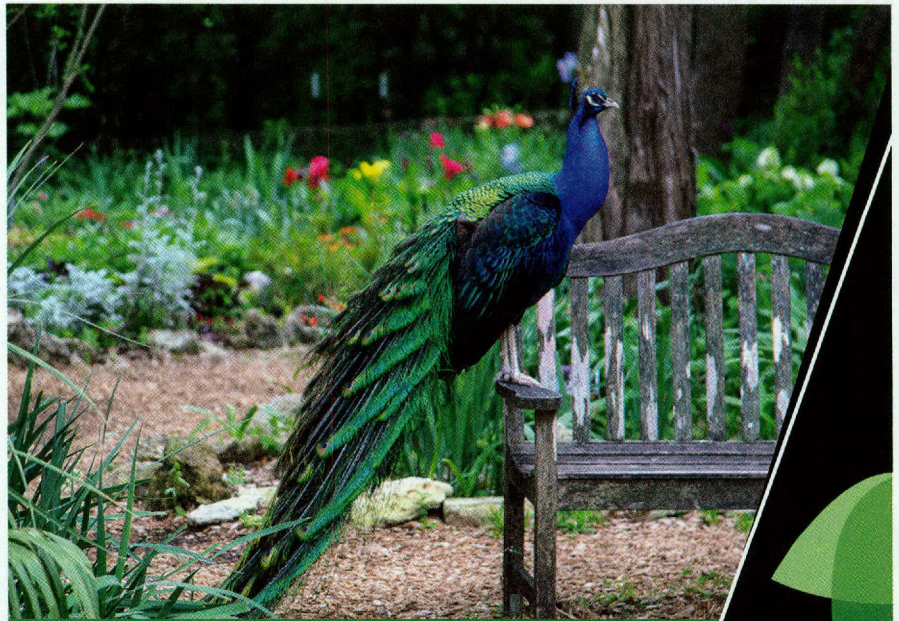
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# Friday

**11 A.M.**  
**Soda Shop Stop**

Scott Reeves, owner of Sunflower Mercantile & Soda Shop, is an example of how Carthage's historic town square has come full circle. Reeves' great-great-great-grandfather, pioneer Jonathan Anderson, donated the land where the square sits so Carthage could become the Panola County seat in 1848.

It was natural for Reeves, a distant cousin of country singer Jim Reeves, to return to Carthage after a career in religious music and make a home with his wife, Kelly Reeves. They renovated a pharmacy and opened Sunflower, a starting point for an afternoon of shopping. "It's where people can go and just enjoy talking to one another," he says.

Sunflower's grilled cheese sandwiches and iced tea make ideal fare for a picnic on the square. The sundaes, which are prepared at an old-fashioned soda fountain; and the malts—poured from a 1930s milkshake machine—are reminders of the former pharmacy's features. After browsing Sunflower's collectibles, customers often continue on to nearby boutiques like Hobby Horse, The Fudge and More Store, and Chicken Row Market.

**2 P.M.**  
**Sculpture Trail**

The square spotlights two trail-blazing Panola County women with evocative sculptures: Dr. Mildred Faye Jefferson, the first African American woman to graduate from Harvard Medical School, and Margie Elizabeth Neal, the first female Texas State Senator. Created by Bob Harness, the sculptures are part of a collection that make up an unofficial trail around town. Several blocks west of the square,

Harness' statue of "Singing Cowboy" Tex Ritter and his horse Flash sits in front of the museum bearing Ritter's name.

**5 P.M.**  
**Lake Views and Barbecue**

Tree-lined Lake Murvaul is worth the 25-minute drive from town. Its marina has boat ramps, campgrounds, cabins, and an RV park, along with a warm-weather swimming hole. Whether overnighting at the marina's rustic accommodations or express hotels in town, visitors can enjoy a tranquil afternoon peering across calm waters from shoreline benches.

Not far away on Farm-to-Market Road 1970, the bucolic barbecue haven of Chuck's Country Smoke House awaits. Pitmaster Chuck Terrell left his Dallas sales job and renovated a rundown shed on family property. The brisket at Chuck's is smoked over red or post oak embers for 17 to 18 hours and spends the last three hours or so wrapped tightly in butcher paper to retain its juices. Boudin links are sold separately or chopped up with brisket and traditional sausage for Chuck's most popular sandwich, the Susie Q, served on jalapeño-cheese sourdough and named for a customer who insisted on such a mixture. Chuck's doesn't sell alcohol, but it's OK to sip what you bring in a cup.

# Saturday

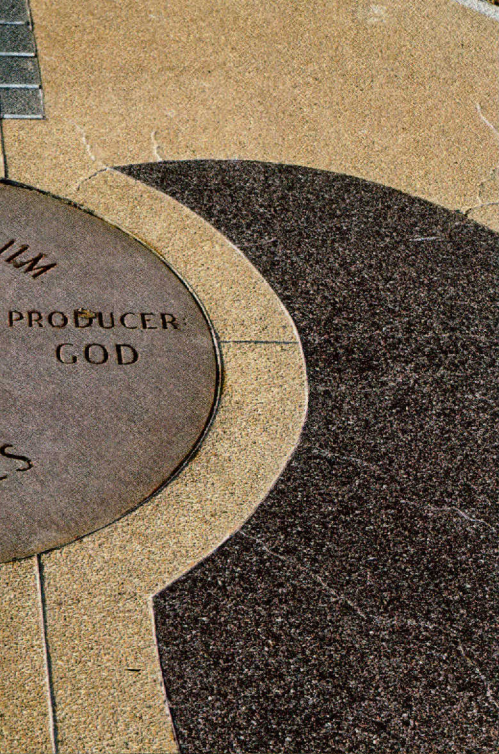
**10 A.M.**  
**Country Beat**

Head northeast on US 79 to find the statue of Panola County native Jim Reeves, his gravesite, and that of his beloved dog, Cheyenne. A quiet viewing of the statue begins a day dedicated to Carthage's country music heritage. Reeves first tried minor league baseball, but injuries led him to a job in



**OPENING SPREAD:** Esquire Theater. **THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Jim Reeves Memorial; Chuck Terrell, of Chuck's Country Smoke House, and family; a movie poster at the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame; Sunflower Mercantile & Soda Shop; statue of Dr. Mildred Faye Jefferson in the town square.





Photos: Nathan Lindstrom

broadcasting and a stand-in performance on the legendary radio show *Louisiana Hayride*. His soft baritone rendition of “He’ll Have to Go” in 1959 hit No. 1 on country charts before his untimely death in a plane crash in 1964.

Reeves, the late Tex Ritter, and Willie Nelson were in Texas Country Music Hall of Fame’s 1998 inaugural class. By 2002, Smith, the Hall of Fame CEO whose father was Tex Ritter’s cousin, helped open the current museum in downtown Carthage. Tex Ritter’s son John, the late star of TV’s *Three’s Company*, and other family members donated their vast collection of Tex Ritter’s artifacts as a start.

Cases of memorabilia line the museum’s pathways, from Nelson’s bandana and Waylon Jennings’ black hat, to the guitar of Anson’s Jeannie C. Riley, whose “Harper Valley PTA” ascended to the top of the charts in 1967. Other honorees include Mac Davis, who sang “Texas in My Rearview Mirror,” and Ernest Tubb, the “Texas Troubadour” whose career took off in the 1940s. Visitors can also listen to scores of country hits on the museum’s jukebox.



#### 6 P.M. **Live From The Esquire**



Dine at the Texas Tea Room, a restaurant located in an old bank building on the town square, where you can order grilled creole salmon or black pepper whiskey beef medallions with smashed potatoes.

Afterward, the nearby Esquire Theater hosts the Country Music Hayride, which features local musicians and guests jamming on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month for \$8 admission. Up to a dozen artists perform, from up-and-comers to longtime professionals. Guitars outnumber fiddles, and there may be as many ball caps on

stage as cowboy hats. Standards like “Faded Love” and “Honky Tonk Angel,” crossovers like “Blue Bayou,” and less familiar tunes like “Keep Drinking Until I Get Better Looking” fill out the playlists.

## Sunday



#### 8 A.M. **Country Roads or a River**

During the spring, the Panola County backroads navigate forests blooming with native wildflowers and dogwoods, redbuds, and Carolina jessamine.

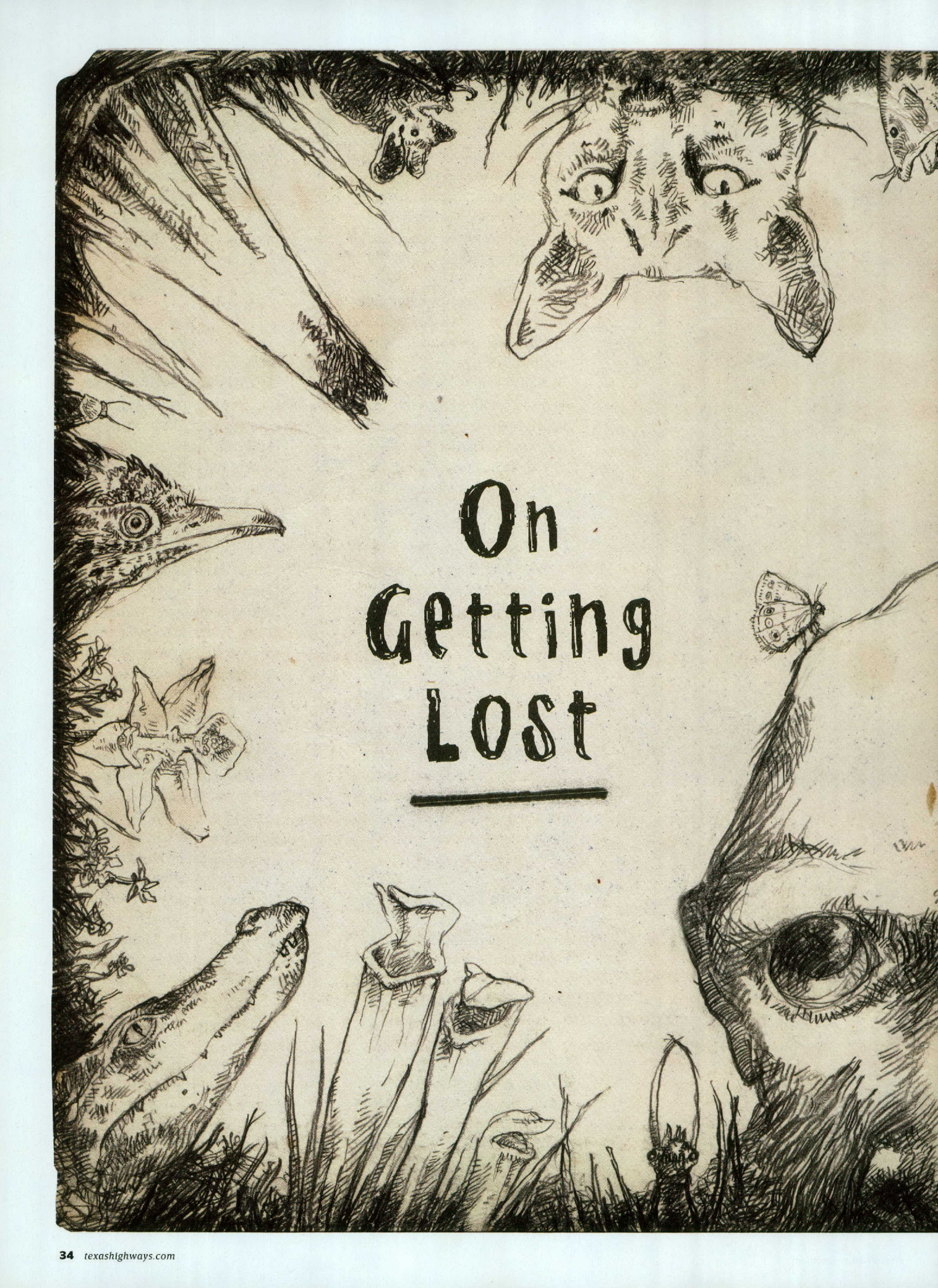
Just before FM 31 becomes Louisiana Highway 765, a left turn into a gravel-strewn clearing reveals a Texas Historical Commission plaque, which explains the significance of a weathered granite shaft nearby. Placed in the wilderness by surveyors in 1841 to mark the border of the Republic of Texas and the United States, it is the only known “international” marker now wholly inside the U.S.

A more ambitious day begins at the public boat ramp where FM 2517 crosses the Sabine River, the put-in for one of Texas Parks & Wildlife’s newest paddling trails, the 15-mile Sabine Sandbar Trail. “The river has beautiful sandbars for rest or camping without running into issues with landowners,” says Dr. Michael D. Banks, a retired dentist and conservation advocate from Jacksonville. **L**

#### CAMP OUT

Lake Murvaul Park and Marina offers RV, campground, and cabin accommodations 10 miles southwest of Carthage. 638 County Road 1234. 903-693-6562; lakemurvaul.us

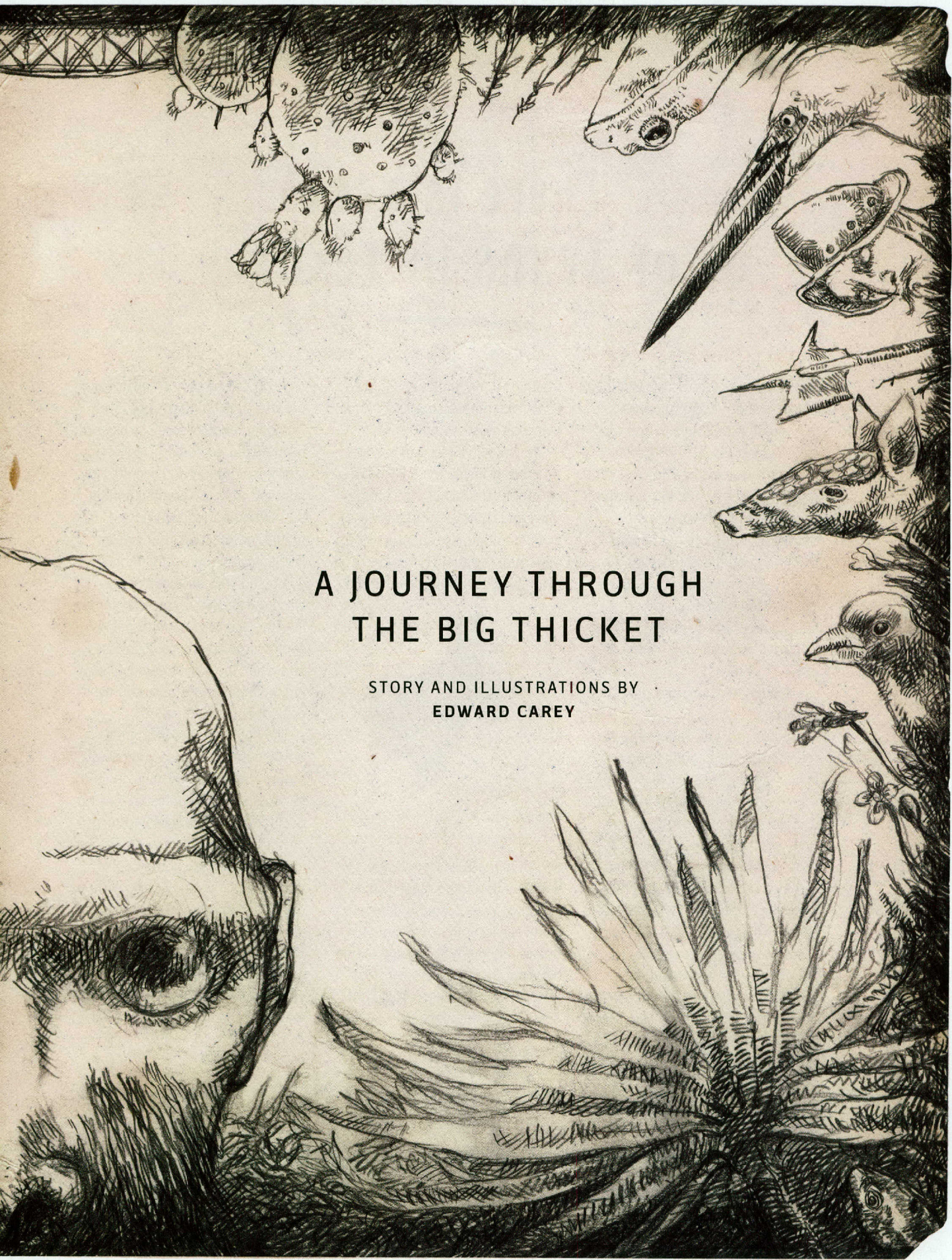




On  
Getting  
Lost

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# A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIG THICKET

STORY AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
EDWARD CAREY



# There is a lot of Texas in Texas.

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It's enough to make a little islander like myself quite agoraphobic. I grew up in rural England and was sent away at the age of 7 to exist for long terms in large houses with many other boys. The best escape from those places was to wander the grounds and to imagine in some threadbare copse how being away from all of it might be. Then I went to London, where the landscape is mostly humans. Then I married an American. Then I moved to Texas.

I needed to change my definition of space.

I'm not very tall, and mostly I've felt shorter since coming here. While living in Texas, I've written three books set in Victorian London and one in French Revolutionary Paris. I illustrate the books I write mostly with black and white, somewhat Gothic images. I always draw the characters I write about because it's the best way of getting to know them. There's something about living far away from your home that makes it easier to write and draw about it. The distance is

freeing. I don't think I could have conceived of these books without being far away from Europe.

The book I've just finished is set entirely inside the belly of an enormous fish, where the protagonist finds himself unhappily, lost from mankind. I've spent a lot of time thinking about homeland and belonging, especially since finding

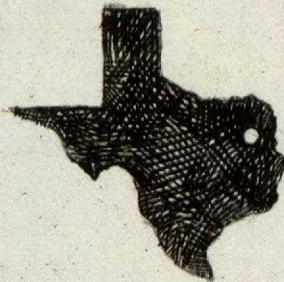


figure A: THE BIG THICKET AREA

myself in the Texas landscape. I've been out to see the rugged landscapes of West Texas, and there I could see for miles and could fit several Englands, it seemed to me, between myself and the horizon. But that was the desert Texas, and Texas is not singular.

Texas can be very green, too, as my wife, two children, and I were reminded on the journey eastwards from Austin. In the Big Thicket, my latest exploration of the state, you may see what the world could be without human interference. Here in this complicated knot, nature is telling you how it might look if you and your kind had never existed. The area is a product of the ice age. Glaciers shunted species southwards over huge distances, and when the ice retreated, it left behind an extraordinary confluence of environments.

The Big Thicket is one place, but also multiple—as if almost all nature rushed to this one spot. Here in a mere 113,000 acres are Eastern deciduous forests, Southwestern deserts, Southeastern swamps, and the landscape of the Central prairies. It's like Noah's ark, without Noah. The number of species of plants and animals in this limited region is dumbfounding. It is a place of multitudes, of astounding variety. One trek here will in no way resemble another trek just a

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WHO KNOWS WHAT IS HIDING IN THE GREAT DEPTHS OF THE THICKET?  
STANDING ON A PATHWAY, IN A SMALL SAFE PART OF IT, YOU HAVE THE  
FEELING THAT IT WOULD BE EASY TO STEP INTO OBLIVION.





figure B: STRANGE KNEES

handful of miles down the path. Scientists call it the “biological crossroads” of North America.

Who knows what is hiding in the great depths of the Thicket? Standing on a pathway, in a small safe part of it, you have the feeling that it would be easy to step into oblivion ... just close your eyes, reach out your foot, and get lost, so very lost.

It seems perfectly obvious that humans have for the most part kept the Big Thicket at a distance. Three groups of Native Americans skirted it but never fully lived here: the Atakapas, the Caddos, and the Alabama-Coushattas. Only in the 1800s did people really start to live in this unfathomable place, and these people were largely white Protestants called the Dog People

because they used a locally bred dog, called a cur, in their hunting.

Mostly people have chosen to leave the Big Thicket alone, until of course, inevitably, human industry attacked this wonderfully complicated oasis—for lumber, for gas, and for oil. Human activity, in pincer movements, chipped away at the Thicket until it reached the state it is in today, a mere 3.7% of its original size. It was 3 million acres large and now has shrunk to 113,000. And yet what remains continues to feel somewhat aloof from mankind.

There are 40 miles of trails and waterways, so there is still a Big Thicket to get utterly lost in. Lostness seems the main human chapter of this extraordinary place. The

humans who went into this unruly place wanted to be lost, and there seem to be few better hiding places. Convicts fleeing prison lost themselves here, and most famously, a group of some 75 deserters, called Jayhawkers, mostly avoided the Civil War deep inside the Thicket. For who would want to go in there after them all?

I am more used to negotiating the gloomy lanes of London, and felt somewhat ill-equipped to walk along the trails with my son. After an hour of wandering around Turkey Creek admiring the cypress trees and the strange “knees” of their roots that rise above the ground and look like ancient teeth or sitting rabbits, I suddenly realized that we had got lost, that we





figure C: THE GIANT SLOTH



figure D: THE LEGEND  
OF THE SPLIT BONNET



figure E: THE SNOWY EGRET



were somehow off the path and going in circles. Only by the sensible direction of my 12-year-old was the path found again. During those few, brief minutes, this European urbanite felt the great immenseness, the great non-human presence of this place. I was not home; I was far from home.

Even in Texas this was an unfamiliar place to me. Deeper and darker, bigger and thicker. It was in those moments, both bewildering and liberating, that the Big Thicket seemed to reveal itself. The moment you stop and keep still, the life starts to buzz and hum, tweet and rustle and caw about you. The Big Thicket is an excellent place to leave everything behind, to be reminded of what life might be like without human beings.

Is it any wonder then that this magnificent confluence of nature, thick and dense and ancient, should seem to humans a place of mystery? Don't go into the woods, the fairy tales tell us. Don't go into the woods, don't ever go into the woods. Terrible, dangerous things live there. Yes, yes, they did. The giant sloth was here 10,000 years ago; so were saber-toothed tigers; so were dire wolves. Tapirs once upon a time. Human legends are here, too. Human ghosts are said to be in the Big Thicket. Having misplaced the path a little, I'd be inclined to believe the stories.

There's a remarkable local

legend of a man lost in the woods who came across an old woman whose face was concealed by a split bonnet who gave him some rancid water before disappearing. There are perhaps spent conquistadors inside the Thicket still looking for treasure. But most legendarily, the Big Thicket may contain a Bigfoot. It has been sighted many times, but as is the nature of this famously shy creature, none of these have been definitively corroborated. The Big Thicket also reportedly used to have, perhaps to balance out its hirsute occupant, a Nude Man—some sort of hermit who lived in the Thicket for nine years, surviving on wild fruit and armadillo. But facts again are a little hard to come by.

Factually, the Big Thicket includes in its great variance some 60 different species of mammals (this does not include Bigfoot), 86 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 97 species of fish. Of plants, it boasts some 1,300 species of trees, shrubs, vines, and grasses. It is a staggering checklist.

And yet, despite all that it's known for and all that it holds, I had never heard of the Big Thicket before this trip. It does not announce itself like some theme park attraction. It has none of that crassness—there are no huge signs, there's no Ripley's Believe It or Not! nearby. It does not make any great discernible boasting of its potentially lofty, hairy, upright, peram-

bulating individual, but rather its presence creeps into you. It takes a few steps and if you then keep still, the Big Thicket opens itself up to you. It cannot help itself; it is so full of life.

Jason Ginder, chief of interpretation at the Big Thicket National Preserve, describes the area with studied eloquence: "For the visitor, there are so many different ways to explore the Big Thicket. Everyone can find a different piece of it. There's no one way to visit it, unlike some other parks. Here you can create your own adventure."

Why are you here?

To see a snowy egret?

To visit with the four different types of carnivorous plants?

To see the 2,000-year-old cypress trees?

In conversation, Ginder does not favor one particular animal or plant. Rather, he says so insightfully, "The power is in the small things, sitting down and giving the environment the opportunity to reveal itself. Stop and sit for a moment. Give the wildlife a chance to return to normal. And it very quickly comes to life."

That was precisely my experience. Joined by my wife and daughter, our family walked around the Big Thicket for a few hours and gradually, just as Ginder suggested, we succumbed to its sounds, letting its conversation take us over. This was different from the other ver-

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DON'T GO INTO THE WOODS, THE FAIRY TALES TELL US. TERRIBLE, DANGEROUS THINGS LIVE THERE. YES, YES, THEY DID. THE GIANT SLOTH WAS HERE 10,000 YEARS AGO; SO WERE SABER-TOOTHED TIGERS; SO WERE DIRE WOLVES. TAPIRS ONCE UPON A TIME. HUMAN LEGENDS ARE HERE, TOO.





figure F: CARNIVOROUS PLANTS



figure G: THE GHOST ROAD

sions of Texas we knew. We'd seen the Hill Country and Big Bend; we'd been to Corpus Christi and Galveston Island. But this was something else. We stayed in a perfectly equipped log cabin on the edge of McNeely Lake, where cypress trees with their extraordinary roots emerged out of the water just by us, as if they were wading toward land, something like Tolkien's ents. All felt very alive, and all was kind to us.

Though there is not, perhaps, an enormous amount of human life and business to get stuck into around the Thicket, we can boast two exceptional meals. The first was at Caroline's Quality and Quantity, where in a modest clapboard house excellent barbecue is served. Caroline's sausage is as good as any I've eaten



elsewhere in Texas or England or Germany.

The other was at The Pickett House, in a large dining hall decorated by vintage circus posters, where only one meal is ever on the menu, and all is dealt with in an arrangement called boarding house service. (There are no menus; big bowls arrive and are replenished; you eat until you're full; you clear your own plates away.) We ate biscuits and corn bread, black-eyed peas, collard greens, chicken and dumplings, and the best fried chicken I have ever eaten.

Coming back from The Pickett House, which closes its doors at

worker who is trying to find his lost head; or the light is from conquistadors searching for treasure in the dark; or it is the light of the fire still burning from The Kaiser Burnout, when a Confederate officer tried to use flame to route out those Jayhawkers. A more scientific approach names the phenomenon as gas from the swamps, or least spectacularly of all, as reflected car lights from the town of Saratoga.

Whatever the cause, we thought we'd better see for ourselves.

It was twilight when we turned the car off the highway and entered the path. How to describe it?

It was like journeying in a card-

something. Twice. Three times. I'm not exactly sure now. They looked like headlights coming toward us but then veered off suddenly and disappeared. When we got to the place they were last seen, nothing was there. And still that lit O—O of our sweet relief, O of our hopes and rescue—was still far away, and still the spectacular light show, though dimming, was switched, ever changing before us. Finally, as the O, or the eye of the road, blinked shut to show that night had fallen, we reached the end and were back in civilization.

Whatever it was that we saw down that long path was

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DID WE SEE THE STRANGE LIGHTS OF THE SARATOGA GHOST ROAD? WE SAW SOMETHING. TWICE. THREE TIMES. I'M NOT EXACTLY SURE NOW. WHATEVER IT WAS THAT WE SAW DOWN THAT LONG PATH WAS VERY BEAUTIFUL.

6 p.m. on the weekend, we decided we'd better try one of the Big Thicket's most famous locations: the ghost road.

On Farm-to-Market Road 1293, between the community of Saratoga and the forgotten town of Bragg Station, is a 7-mile track surrounded by woodland. Oaks, pines, sweet gums, wax myrtles, arrowwoods, and hollies form an impressive green tunnel, through which the only escape appears to be the other end. The branches on both sides link limbs and canopies to form a very long holloway.

The ghost road—we'd read about it beforehand—reveals in the night mysterious lights that many believe to be a spectral presence. The lights have been variously explained as the lamp of a decapitated railroad

board theater's concertina walls, or inside a child's kaleidoscope, or the beautifully painted backdrops of a Victorian theater, flat on flat of changing landscape, the scenery continually changing like cards in a deck being swapped over and over and over again, greens on blues and browns. Always when you thought the road might end, another stretch of the tunnel, another card, another theatrical flat revealed itself. All the while, the light was going out, the day was giving up. At the end of the road, at the furthest end of the road, way in the distance, was a little "O" of light from the street lamps along the highway on the other side, which we bumped toward and never seemed to reach.

Did we see the strange lights of the Saratoga ghost road? We saw

very beautiful.

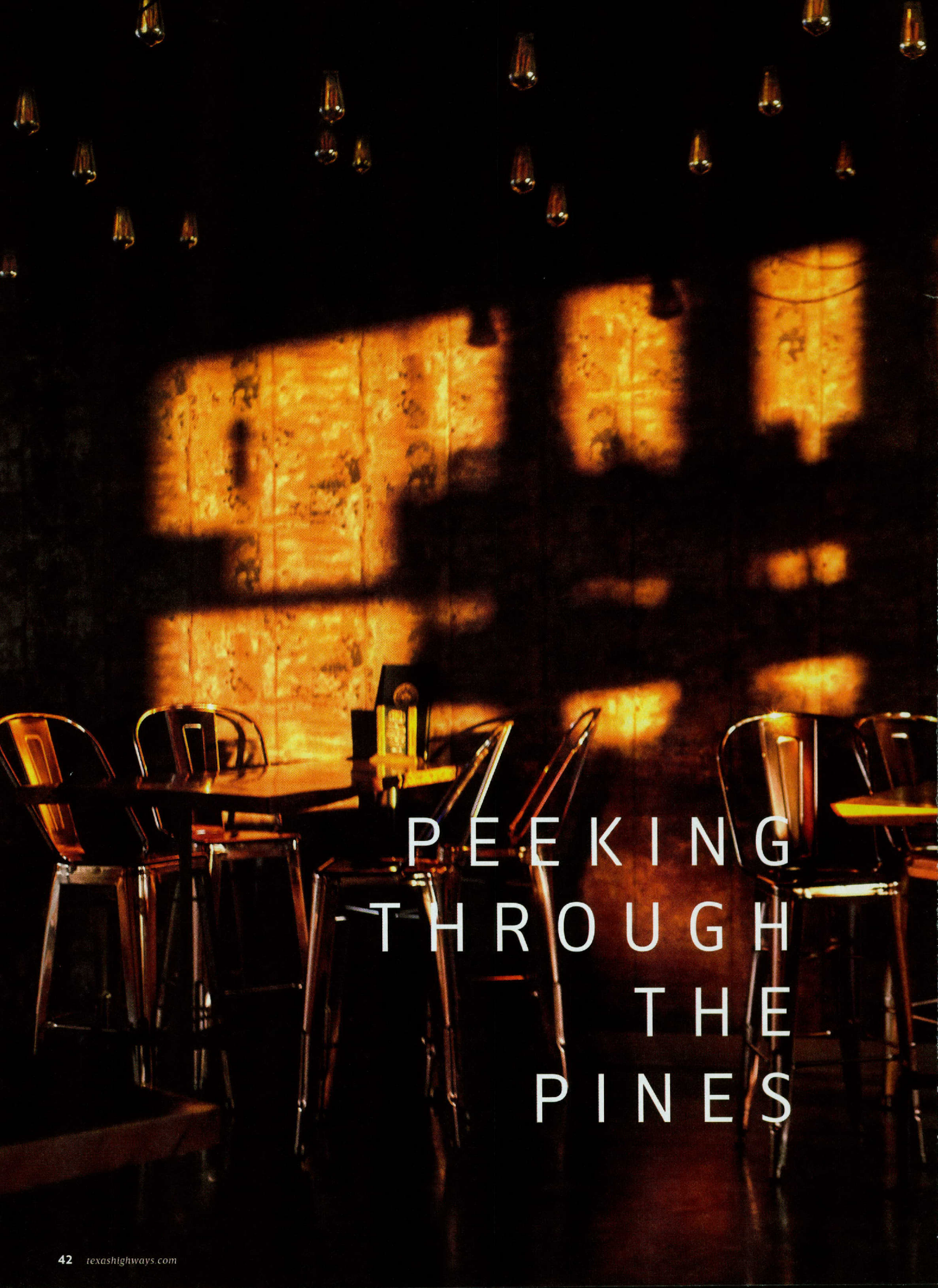
The children, behind us, were uncharacteristically silent.

It felt like we'd got lost again.

The next morning it was time to leave the Big Thicket, which seemed more than a weekend visit out of our daily urban existence in Austin. Rather it felt like a step out of Texas, as if we'd traveled much further away. We reset ourselves by returning to a path that we had used many times before. We took the Galveston-Port Bolivar ferry because we wanted to feel we were found again and to see dolphins and pelicans. From there we wound our way back home, having got, very wonderfully, lost.

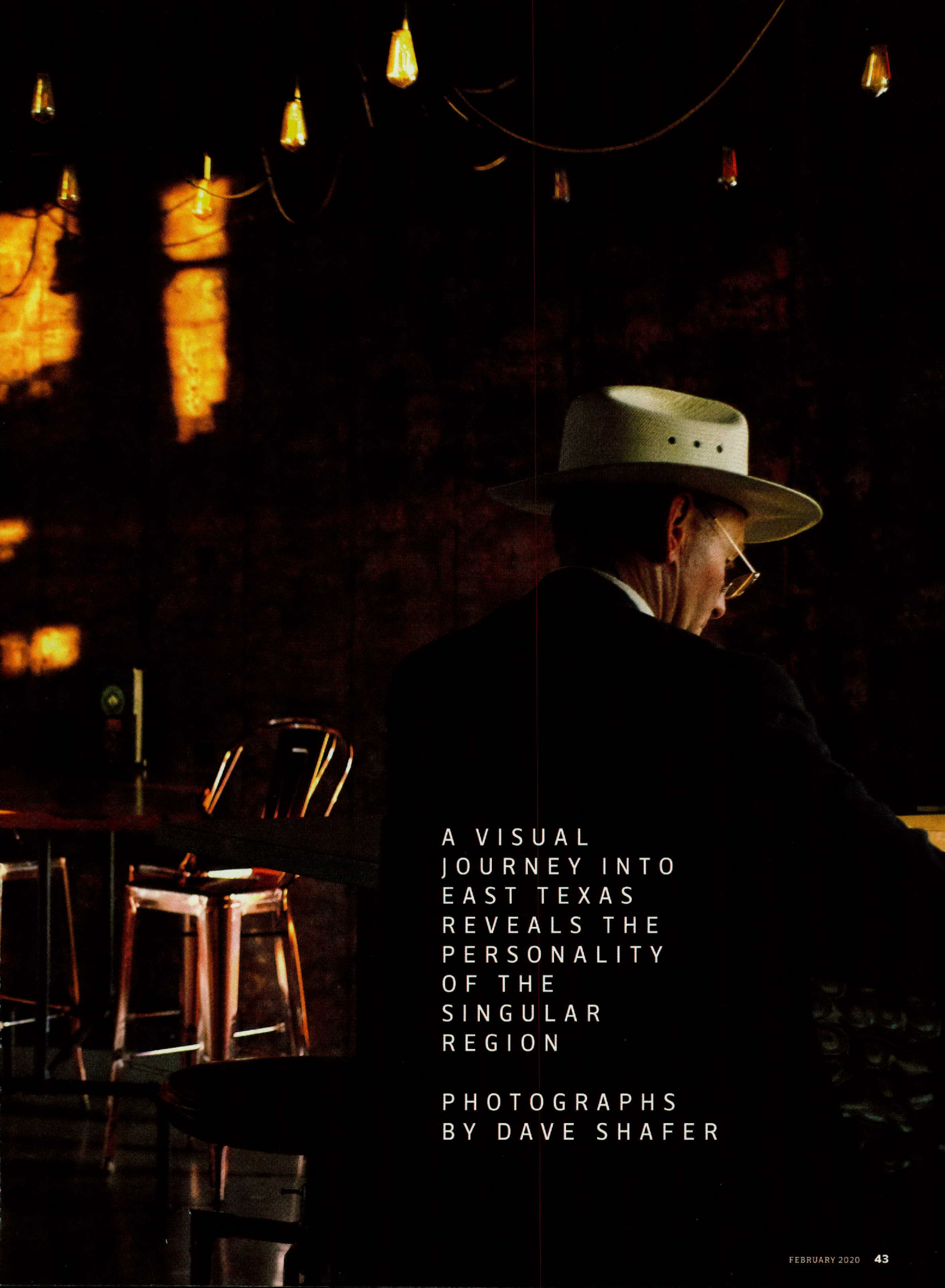
Do go into the woods. Do go into the woods. ♣





PEEKING  
THROUGH  
THE  
PINES

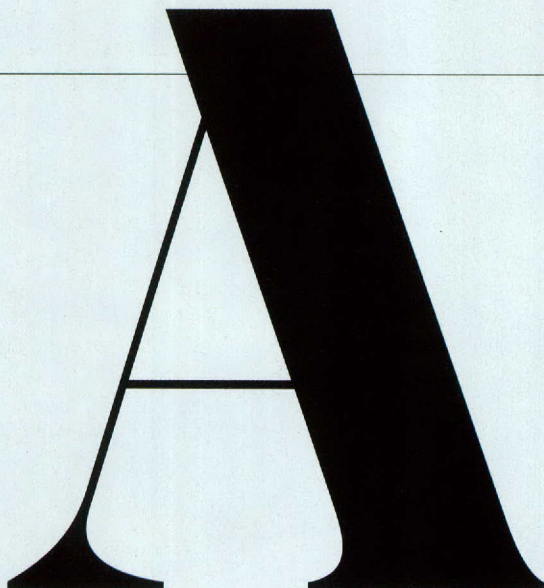




A VISUAL  
JOURNEY INTO  
EAST TEXAS  
REVEALS THE  
PERSONALITY  
OF THE  
SINGULAR  
REGION

PHOTOGRAPHS  
BY DAVE SHAFER





certain mystery shrouds East Texas. With no major metroplexes and few flashy attractions, it's often overlooked by those traveling through the state. But if photographer Dave Shafer learned one thing from exploring the region during the past year, it's that East Texans like it that way. "I'm not sure I want to show you how good this place is," a woman in Palestine told him.

Over the years, Dallas-based Shafer has photographed East Texas subjects for many publications, including *Texas Highways*. But this was his first opportunity to wander freely and soak in the sights, traditions, and flavors that define the Piney Woods—a chance to slowly uncover what others ignore or overlook.

"I've been there enough to know it's different than everywhere else in Texas," Shafer says. "It feels a little slower, like the volume's turned down a bit. I know I'm going someplace special that has its own drum beat."

He started off with beloved staples: the Texas State Railroad that runs between Palestine and Rusk, Caddo Lake, and the Tomato Festival in Jacksonville. Meandering down countless backroads led Shafer to more unknown locales—he visited 22 towns in total—like Malakoff, Timpson, and Corrigan. "I wanted to give myself plenty of room for serendipity and conversations," he says.

And despite the tongue-in-cheek response from the woman in Palestine, people were mostly happy to talk. Shafer says he discovered a lot through the simple question, "What's East Texas for you?"

The photographs featured here—a small selection of the 11,000 Shafer took—aim to share some of those answers. "There's a lot more here than what people know," Shafer says.

But we'll keep that between us.

—Kimya Kavehkar



**OPENING SPREAD:** A businessman enjoys a handcrafted cocktail and newspaper at Nine Flags Bar & Grill in Nacogdoches' Fredonia Hotel. "It may be one of the oldest towns in Texas, which many historic buildings pay tribute to, but the downtown area feels very much in the present," Shafer says.

**PALESTINE (TOP AND RIGHT):** Nuns climb the steps of Sacred Heart Catholic Church—built in 1893—for Wednesday evening mass. "I got to spend the day with this 101-year-old survivor of the industrial age," Shafer says of this Texas State Railroad train. "I rode in the cab with the engineer and firefighter. The engine makes a great noise as it rumbles and rattles down the tracks."







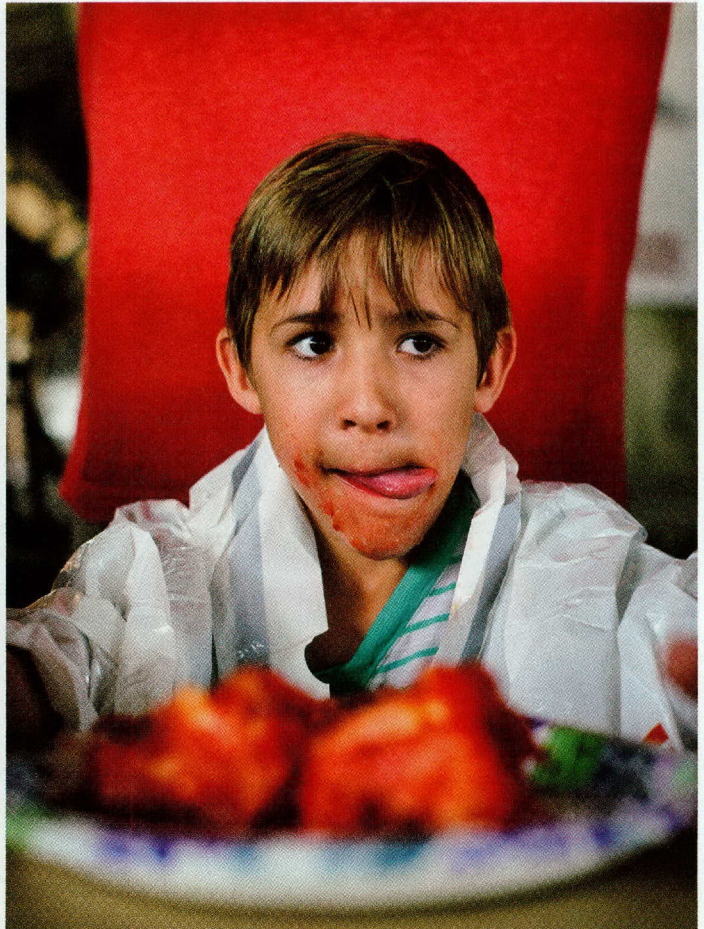






**KILGORE (FAR LEFT AND TOP):** Karsen Conser is captain of the Kilgore College drill team, the Rangerettes. "I had the privilege of spending a Saturday in October with these impressive ladies," Shafer says. "The talent, pride, and discipline on display will give you goosebumps."

**JACKSONVILLE (BOTTOM, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT):** A Jacksonville High School tuba player readies himself before the marching band's half-time performance. Todd Dillon attends Tomato Fest in June. "Jacksonville supplies Texas' tomatoes," Shafer explains. "The town celebrates this with a car show, mascots, and, of course, a tomato-eating contest." At the 100-year-old Texas Basket Factory, an employee organizes the baskets as they enter the drying ovens.







**NACOGDOCHES (TOP):** In the old schoolhouse at Millard's Crossing—a reconstructed historic village—a copy of *Sanders Third Reader*, an early American textbook, rests on an ink-stained desk.

**HUNTSVILLE (BOTTOM):** Although Church's BBQ (an extension of the New Zion Missionary Baptist Church) closed its doors in November, it fed the community for 53 years. Cynthia Archie (pictured) kept true to the recipes of Annie Mae Ward, the church member who started the barbecue restaurant.

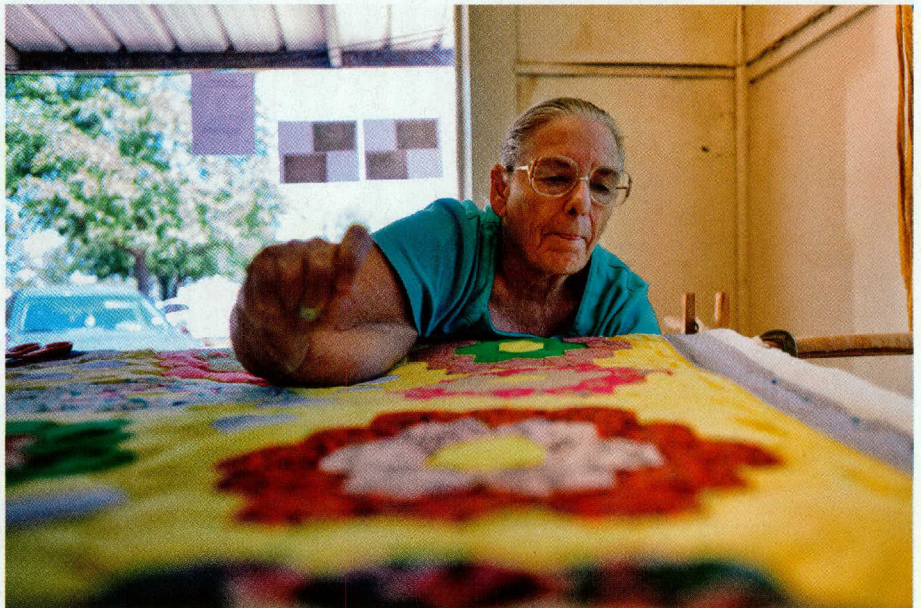






**MALAKOFF (TOP):** Cooper Busch owns Dry Creek Taxidermy. "His business that he runs with his son is not only the place to bring your prized trophy deer, but also where the local retired men gather to discuss the important issues of the day," Shafer relates.

**TIMPSON (BOTTOM):** Judy Samford is a member of the group RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program). The skillful quilters make and sell works to benefit organizations like the Timpson Volunteer Fire Department and the food bank.







**CENTER (TOP AND BOTTOM):**

Workers at Wiggins Farm pick and throw watermelons—one of Texas' largest agricultural products. Rio Theatre owner Mike Adkison changes the letters on the marquee. The moviehouse proclaims to have been "bringing Hollywood to Shelby County since 1926."

**CANTON (RIGHT):** "Spending time at First Monday Trade Days can really bend your perception of time and space as you walk the many rows of vendors," Shafer observes. "All the people seemed to blend together—then in the distance strode Denis from Bremond with his chicken, Sally, to see what was good."











**SULPHUR SPRINGS (TOP):** Chris Wiesinger finds and saves heirloom red spider lily bulbs, or *lycoris radiata*, and propagates them on his farm. "He has always loved to find old homesteads and gain access from the families to dig and save these East Texas icons," Shafer says.

**HIGHWAY 19 (BOTTOM):** Somewhere on State Highway 19 a sign lets you know Texas okra is available at a nearby vegetable stand.







**COMO (TOP):** "This old Chevrolet is tougher than the barn that has provided it shelter for decades," Shafer says.

**ATHENS (BOTTOM):** Free Fishing Day at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in June brought out many grandfathers and grandsons, all vying to win various contests. "This youngster, on his way home, enjoyed seeing the fish in their environment at one of the display tanks," Shafer shares.











**CROCKETT (FAR LEFT):** Porter Hendrix, a fourth-generation fiddler, competes at the World Championship Fiddlers' Festival for the first time. "Young and old make the trip to Crockett to perform and try to win a trophy and bragging rights," Shafer explains. "But it's really just a great excuse to see old friends, meet new ones, and jam endlessly."

**CORRIGAN (TOP):** One of the Alto Yellow-jackets ices his ankle during their 3A match-up with the Corrigan-Camden Bulldogs.

**TYLER (BOTTOM):** April Pledger and her miniature Hereford calm each other before stepping into the show ring at the East Texas State Fair. "Seeing the dedication and care these families give their kids and the show animals, and the respect and responsibility these kids take on, is impressive," Shafer says.

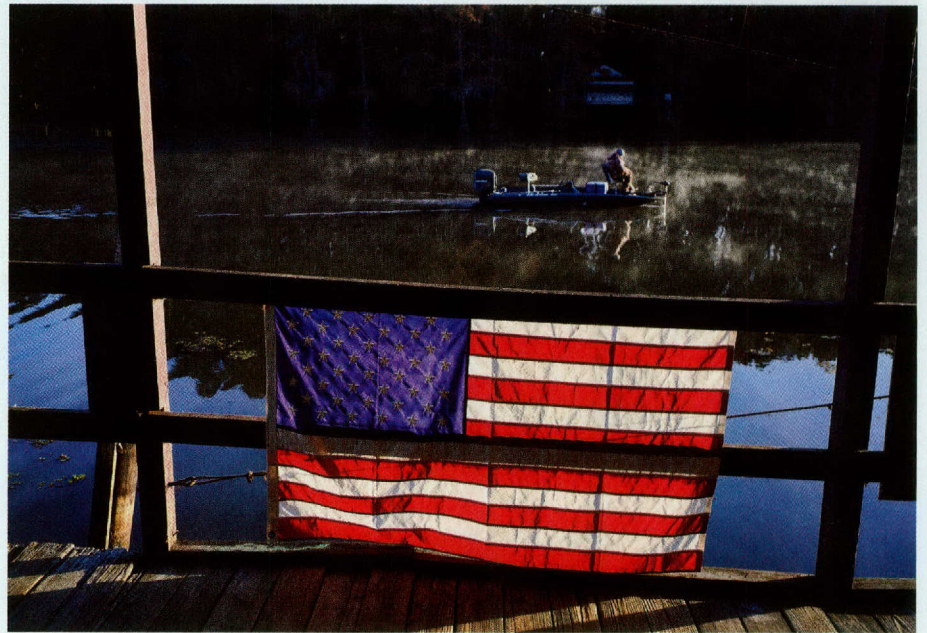


**UNCERTAIN (TOP AND FAR RIGHT):**

“On this 22-degree morning in November, fog was coming off the water, and a fisherman was off to catch his limit of crappie on Caddo Lake,” Shafer says. Bobo watches over the minnow tanks and life preservers at Johnson’s Ranch Marina. Established in 1908, it is the oldest inland marina in Texas.

**NAPLES (BOTTOM):**

“The smell of animals, earth, and leather on a steamy July evening in Naples lets you know that the Watermelon Festival & Rodeo is here,” Shafer says. “This rural community puts on one of the best rodeos you’ll see with good kids, tough cowboys, and the Queens of the Rodeo.”









A tall, slender, fluted monument with a five-pointed star at the top, set against a sunset sky. The monument is reflected in a body of water in the foreground. The text "Sam Houston's" is written in a large, white, cursive font, and "EAST TEXAS" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it.

*Sam Houston's*  
EAST TEXAS





EXPLORING THE LIFE

OF TEXAS' FIRST NATIONAL HERO—

THE MAN AND THE MYTH

BY MATT JOYCE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SEAN FITZGERALD





A grassy park on the bank of the Houston Ship Channel marks a monumental moment in Texas history—though it’s easy to miss it if you don’t stop to read the fine print. Tankers, trucks, trains, and pipelines converge in an orderly swarm on the petrochemical refineries that line the channel today. But 183 years ago, Texas soldiers presented a captive Antonio López de Santa Anna to General Sam Houston here, one day after the Texans’ triumph over Mexican troops in the Battle of San Jacinto.

Propped against an oak tree in the Texas Army’s camp and nursing a musket-ball wound to his ankle, Houston resisted his men’s thirst for blood revenge. Though outraged over the massacre of Texas rebels in the preceding weeks at the Alamo and Goliad, Houston opted to spare Santa Anna’s life, strategically using the captive *presidente* to discourage a follow-up attack by Mexican reinforcements and secure Texas’ independence. A marble memorial and spindly oak mark the events of April 22, 1836, but the actual tree is lost to history.

“This is easily one of the most important places in the history of the United States,” contends Denton Florian, executive producer and director of the documentary film *Sam Houston: American Statesman, Soldier, and Pioneer*. Yards away, a tanker blasts its horn and fishermen amble down to the waterfront, rods and buckets in hand. “It happened right here,” he continues. “Sam was the only one standing between Santa Anna and a blade, bullet, or rope. He had a pragmatic military reason for it, but he also said, ‘We’re better than that.’ If we wanted to be respected around the world, we had to show that we were different.”

Stories about Houston are like lumber in the framework of Texas history. Houston traversed countless miles across Texas during its construction as a state, his name listed in a roll call of pivotal moments. Few historical figures left such well-documented footsteps, and historians have followed suit with expansive biographies. Houston’s name remains ubiquitous, tagged to Texas’ largest city and every imaginable spinoff, from universities to sports teams.

But just as in Houston’s day, Texas is always changing. Demographers estimate the state’s population will grow 60 percent to 47 million people in the next 30 years, including millions of newcomers from faraway places. Every day, tiny Texans are born and wizened historians die; memories fade and buildings crumble. Collectively, what do we really know about Sam Houston?

Clues to the man and the myth—Texas’ first national hero—abound in East Texas, the historical gateway to this state from the U.S. and the population base during the frontier days. From the Red River borderlands to the Piney Woods and the Gulf Coast, artifacts of Houston’s life manifest on street corners and in museums.

## ON THE ROAD

Houston arrived in Texas in 1832—part ambitious settler, part political operative. Thirty-nine years old, he was already famed as a War of 1812 veteran, congressman, Tennessee governor, and protégé of President Andrew Jackson. With commanding charisma, Houston was as famous for his tribulations as his accomplishments. Back in Tennessee, his first wife, Eliza Allen, left him after only 11 weeks. For the rest of his life, Houston would never explain why. Under a cloud of shame, Houston resigned the governorship and dropped out of society. He found his way to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), where he lived with the Cherokee for three years and garnered the nickname “Big Drunk.” He ran a trading post, married a Cherokee woman named Diana Rogers for a brief time, and advocated for the Native Americans, combating corruption among government agents. That issue led to a Washington, D.C., street fight in which he beat up a congressman from Ohio.

**OPENING SPREAD:** The San Jacinto Monument; a portrait from about 1860 at the Sam Houston Memorial Museum. **CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** An 1826 Houston portrait; the Red River, where Houston first entered Texas; in Nacogdoches, a statue in Eugenia Sterne Park depicts Houston and Chief Bowles.







Though he was reprimanded after a trial in the U.S. House of Representatives, Houston's spirited self-defense rekindled his political career just as Texas was bubbling with action.

Houston crossed the sandy Red River in December 1832 at Jonesborough, a town claimed by both Arkansas Territory and Mexico at the time. Historical markers on Farm-to-Market Road 410 recall the village, which in today's terms was northeast of Paris near the State Highway 37 bridge at Albion. But Jonesborough itself washed away long ago. Cattle pastures and soybean fields blanket the bottoms down to the river, a rippled course framed by cream sandbars, bluffs of red mud, and wispy green willows.

"Sam Houston spent his first night in Texas at my ancestors' house in Jonesborough, so the story goes," says Jim Clark, a history buff and banker in nearby Clarksville. Jim's great-great-grandparents James and Isabella Clark ran the Jonesborough ferry, and their son Pat Clark published a history of the region in 1919, *North Texas, 100 Years Ago*. It includes an account of Houston's visit: "When Houston was helped to venison the next morning, he said, 'I believe this very deer crossed the river with me yesterday; for an Indian with a deer that he had killed came over in the boat that carried me.'"

Houston cut a wide swath across East Texas, spending much of his time traveling, whether by horse, mule, buggy, or steamboat. He seems to have been constantly on the move, starting with the high-stakes maneuvering of the Texas Revolution. When Texas was a republic and then a state, Houston's political campaigns and duties as president, governor, and U.S. senator bounced him around the state and back-and-forth to Washington, D.C. Meanwhile, he



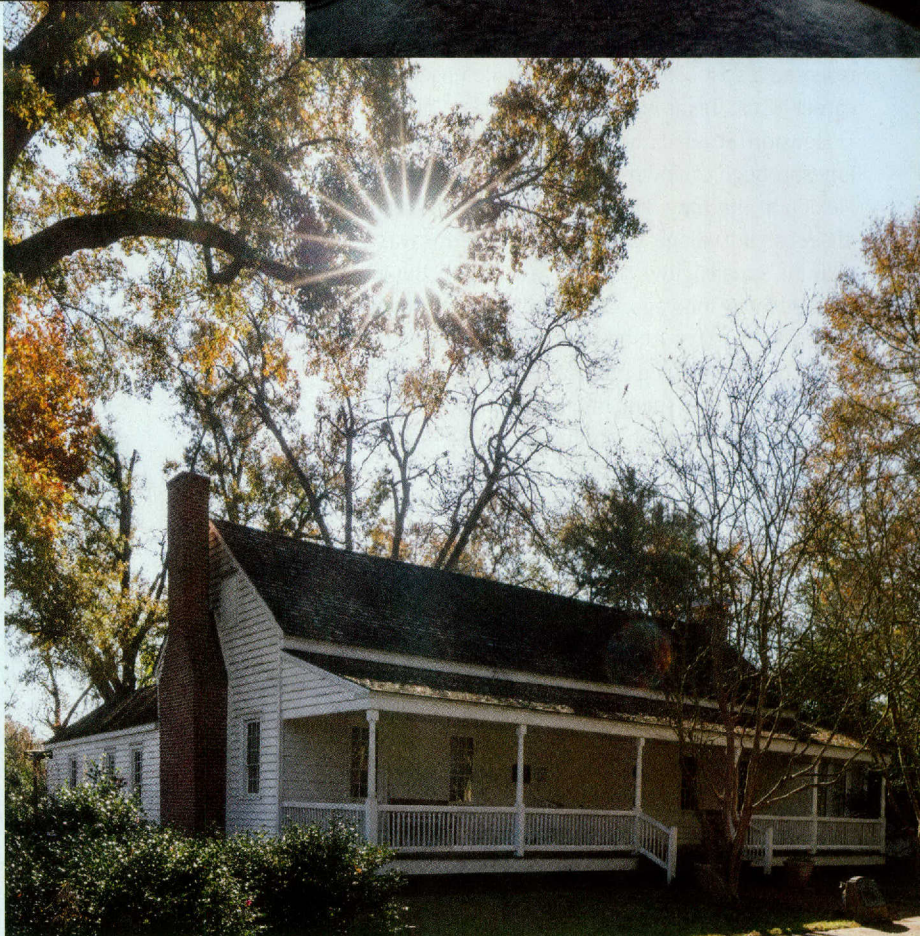




couldn't ignore his family and law practice at home—he lived in at least 10 different places during his 31 years in Texas. Texans of Houston's day had no choice but to hustle. Land rich and cash poor, they built their biggest towns in East Texas—nearest the U.S. economy and buffered from the most hostile of warring Plains tribes.

"As president of Texas for two terms, most of Houston's travel was official and necessary, such as inspecting army conditions, or to Indian councils to try and keep peace on the frontier," says James L. Haley, a historian and author who wrote the 2002 biography *Sam Houston*. "Travel in Texas was rugged—poor roads, poor accommodations—but with his wife, Margaret, in Houston and the capital in either Austin or Washington on the Brazos, he had to make that trip frequently."

Houston had a penchant for fine horses, but his private secretary convinced him to try a mule. "He was mortified at riding a mule," Haley says, "but once he acquired 'Bruin' he could make the trip from Austin in three days instead of four, and he rode him habitually for years."







## Sam Houston's EAST TEXAS

**The Sterne-Hoya House Museum and Library,**  
211 S. Lanana St., Nacogdoches. 936-560-5426;  
[ci.nacogdoches.tx.us/629/historic-sites](http://ci.nacogdoches.tx.us/629/historic-sites)

**The Sam Houston Memorial Museum,**  
1402 19th St., Huntsville. 936-294-1832;  
[samhoustonmemorialmuseum.com](http://samhoustonmemorialmuseum.com)

**The General Sam Houston Folk Festival**  
May 15-17 on the grounds of the Sam Houston  
Memorial Museum. [gshff.com](http://gshff.com)

**The Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas,**  
571 State Park Road 56, Livingston. 936-563-1100;  
[alabama-coushatta.com](http://alabama-coushatta.com)

**San Jacinto Museum of History at the San Jacinto  
Battleground State Historic Site,**  
1 Monument Circle, La Porte. 281-479-2421;  
[sanjacinto-museum.org](http://sanjacinto-museum.org)

**The San Jacinto Day Festival**  
features a reenactment of the Battle of San Jacinto.  
April 18 at the San Jacinto Monument.  
[sanjacinto-museum.org](http://sanjacinto-museum.org)

**CLOCKWISE  
FROM TOP LEFT:  
A blacksmith  
at the Sam  
Houston  
Memorial  
Museum; a  
Houston bust by  
Elisabet Ney at  
the San Jacinto  
Museum in La  
Porte; Sam  
Houston's honor  
ring; along the  
Houston Ship  
Channel, a marker  
near the site where  
Santa Anna surren-  
dered to Houston;  
the 1830 Sterne-  
Hoya House Mu-  
seum and Library  
in Nacogdoches.**

## REDLANDS RAMBLER

Such travel must have required a buoyant spirit to overcome the weather, the beasts of burden, and the perpetual dependency on strangers—whoever was willing to help push a cart through the muck or host a boarder for the night. When he first crossed into Texas, however, Houston made his way to Nacogdoches, where he already had a friend in Adolphus Sterne, a German merchant and the town's top civil official. At the time, the town of 1,300 was the hub of the restless Redlands, a frontier outpost simmering with opportunists and end-of-the-liners.

Sterne and his wife, Eva Catherine Sterne, built their dogtrot home in 1830 from pine wood, using bois d'arc stumps for piers. In the 1980s, Nacogdoches restored the home with its red-brick chimney, long porch, and wood-shingled roof. Houston's fingerprints are all over the Sterne-Hoya House Museum and Library, including in a parlor that's maintained as the Sternes would have kept it. The displays include an 1833 merchant account book showing Houston's purchase of six grogs (a sugary rum cocktail) and reproductions of letters he wrote in the "criss-cross" style. Paper was in short supply, but with horizontal and vertical lines of script on each side, Houston could squeeze four pages of writing onto one sheet.

In about 1833, the Sternes' parlor hosted Houston's baptism into the Catholic Church. In *The Raven*, biographer Marquis James notes Houston was known as a "Muldoon Catholic," one of many Americans inducted into the faith in Texas by an Irish priest named Miguel Muldoon. Why all the converts? Mexico required landowners to be Catholic.

About two years later, as the Texas Revolution commenced, Houston returned to the Sternes' home for a treaty conference with Chief Bowles, who lived in a nearby Cherokee settlement. In exchange for peace and neutrality during the revolution, Houston promised Texas would grant East Texas land to the Cherokee.

The museum keeps a marble table in the center of the parlor to tell the story of the



meeting. “Chief Bowles walks into the parlor to sign this document, and he sees all these white men sitting around the room, and he sees the big marble centerpiece table,” explains Morgan Tingle, a tour guide. “He assumes it’s the seat of honor for him because he’s the guest at these talks. And so he climbed on top of the table and sat there.”

Once Texas became a republic, the government reneged on the treaty in spite of Houston’s objections, leading the Cherokee to fight Texas soldiers in 1839 at the Battle of the Neches, where Bowles was killed. Houston argued for policies of coexistence with the native population, but his political adversaries repeatedly acted otherwise. Still, the historical memory of “The Raven”—Houston’s Cherokee name—garners respect among native descendants.

In the early 1860s, Houston successfully lobbied to exempt men in the Alabama and Coushatta tribes from Confederate conscription. At the Livingston-area reservation of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, a monument to those warriors stands on a lawn within sight of the tribe’s headquarters and casino. The marker occupies the spot of an old “treaty oak” where Houston and tribal leaders would meet to discuss current affairs, says Bryant Celestine, the tribe’s historic preservation officer. “We refer to Houston as ‘grandfather’ to this day,” he adds.

## AT HOME IN HUNTSVILLE

Further south, in Huntsville, Native Americans once camped on a hill overlooking the Houston residence during Sam’s tenure as a U.S. senator (1846–59). A gazebo occupies the old campsite among the pines near 19th Street, above the Sam Houston Memorial Museum on the campus of Sam Houston State University.

“As he would come home, he would make his way through East Texas and visit with various people,” says Michael Sproat, the museum’s curator. “And there would be an encampment of Native Americans who had set up their tents and waited for him to keep track of news from the national scene.”

Houston’s spirit suffuses the 15-acre complex, which protects structures from when Sam and his third wife, Margaret Lea, lived here from 1848 to 1858. The Houstons had lived on a 2,000-acre plantation east of town, but with Sam frequently gone to D.C., Margaret opted to move to what was then a 200-acre property on Huntsville’s outskirts. Houston was famously deferential to Margaret, a refined Alabamian whom historians credit with coaxing Houston off the booze and into the Baptist church. Visitors can poke their heads into the Houstons’ two-story dogtrot home, where four of their eight children were born; Houston’s law office; and the Steamboat House, a Houston residence that was relocated from its original site elsewhere in town. Its parlor is set up just as it was for Sam’s funeral in 1863.

In the museum’s rotunda, exhibits chronicle Houston’s life and times with a collection that gives the impression you’ve stepped into the Houstons’ personal storage vault. In one display, the saddle Santa Anna rode at San Jacinto; in another, Margaret’s pocket hymnal; in another, Sam’s signature jaguar-skin vest, a gift he received from the Cherokee. Houston intentionally mislabeled it a leopard-



**“I DIDN’T KNOW MUCH HISTORY AT THAT TIME, BUT I KNEW SAM HOUSTON LIVED HERE. I KNEW HE WAS A BIG DEAL AND THAT HE WAS A PART OF THIS COMMUNITY. SO IT MADE HIM A REAL PERSON RATHER THAN A MYTHICAL FIGURE OR A HERO.”**





**FROM LEFT:** The 67-foot Sam Houston statue along I-45 in Huntsville; Houston's "leopard-skin" vest at the Sam Houston Memorial Museum in Huntsville.

ard-skin vest because, he said, "A leopard never changes its spots."

The Houstons' old home comes alive each May during the General Sam Houston Folk Festival, when visitors can watch as blacksmiths pound out molten steel nails and seamstresses spin yarn from wool on a wooden wheel. The event charges the current of historical imagination that inhabits the museum and the whole of Huntsville. Touring the Sam Houston museum is a rite of passage for Huntsville-area students—roughly 10,000 visit annually on school field trips. In fact, both Sproat and his colleague Mac Woodward, the museum director, visited as children.

"It had a great influence on me," says Woodward, who served as Huntsville mayor and on the City Council. "I didn't know much history at that time, but I knew Sam Houston lived here. I knew he was a big deal and that he was a part of this community. So it made him a real person rather than a mythical figure or a hero."

## LEGENDARY STATUS

While the Sam Houston Memorial Museum personalizes Houston, Huntsville also gives him the hero treatment in the form of a 67-foot-tall statue. Artist David Adickes built the concrete façade likeness against a backdrop of pine and sweetgum trees along Interstate 45. Climbing isn't allowed, but if you could somehow sit on Big Sam's head, you and the general could see nearly all the way to San Jacinto, site of his defining moment.


San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site in La Porte preserves the marshy, brush-covered prairie where the Battle of San Jacinto unfolded. Back in 1936, 100 years after the conflict, Texas didn't mess around when it came time to honor the state's centennial. The most audacious example is the San Jacinto Monument, a 570-foot art deco shaft topped by a 220-ton star. The base holds the monument museum, where exhibits tell San Jacinto's story with a film, paintings, and artifacts related to key players in the battle.

The collection includes the oldest-known image of Houston, a

miniature painting from 1826, when he was a 33-year-old congressman from Tennessee who probably had never entertained a thought of moving to Texas. The museum also displays Houston's "honor ring," a gold band inscribed with the word. His mother gave it to him as a boy, and he wore it on his pinkie the rest of his life.

On the trail of Houston artifacts across East Texas, it doesn't take long to chip through the mythic portrayal of Houston to reveal his humanity. He had his failings. He owned slaves, a conflicting reality of the era; he drank too much before giving it up; his temper got him into a street fight that made the national news; and he was part of Texas' first-ever official divorce (the legal separation from Eliza Allen in Tennessee). But he's also remembered for his resilience. He got knocked down repeatedly, but he was never afraid to start over. He took principled positions in the face of popular public sentiment, including his support of Native Americans and his Unionist stand in secessionist Texas. When he refused to pledge allegiance to the Confederacy, he was kicked out of the governorship, his final public office. As the ring now preserved at the San Jacinto museum suggests, Houston lived life with a resonating sense of integrity.

Back along Buffalo Bayou, filmmaker Florian marvels at the consequences of Houston's decision to spare Santa Anna's life. It was a watershed moment that precipitated Texas independence and its subsequent annexation into the United States. Without statehood, there likely wouldn't have been the Mexican-American War or Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, with which the U.S. bought the territory encompassing much of Texas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

"Think about a map of the United States and the change of sovereignty of all that land," Florian says. "Houston had a temper, but he had the ability to rein in his emotions and make the right decision not to kill Santa Anna. You never really know what the consequences of a decision are going to be—an ethical decision, a pragmatic decision. And in this case they were enormous." 





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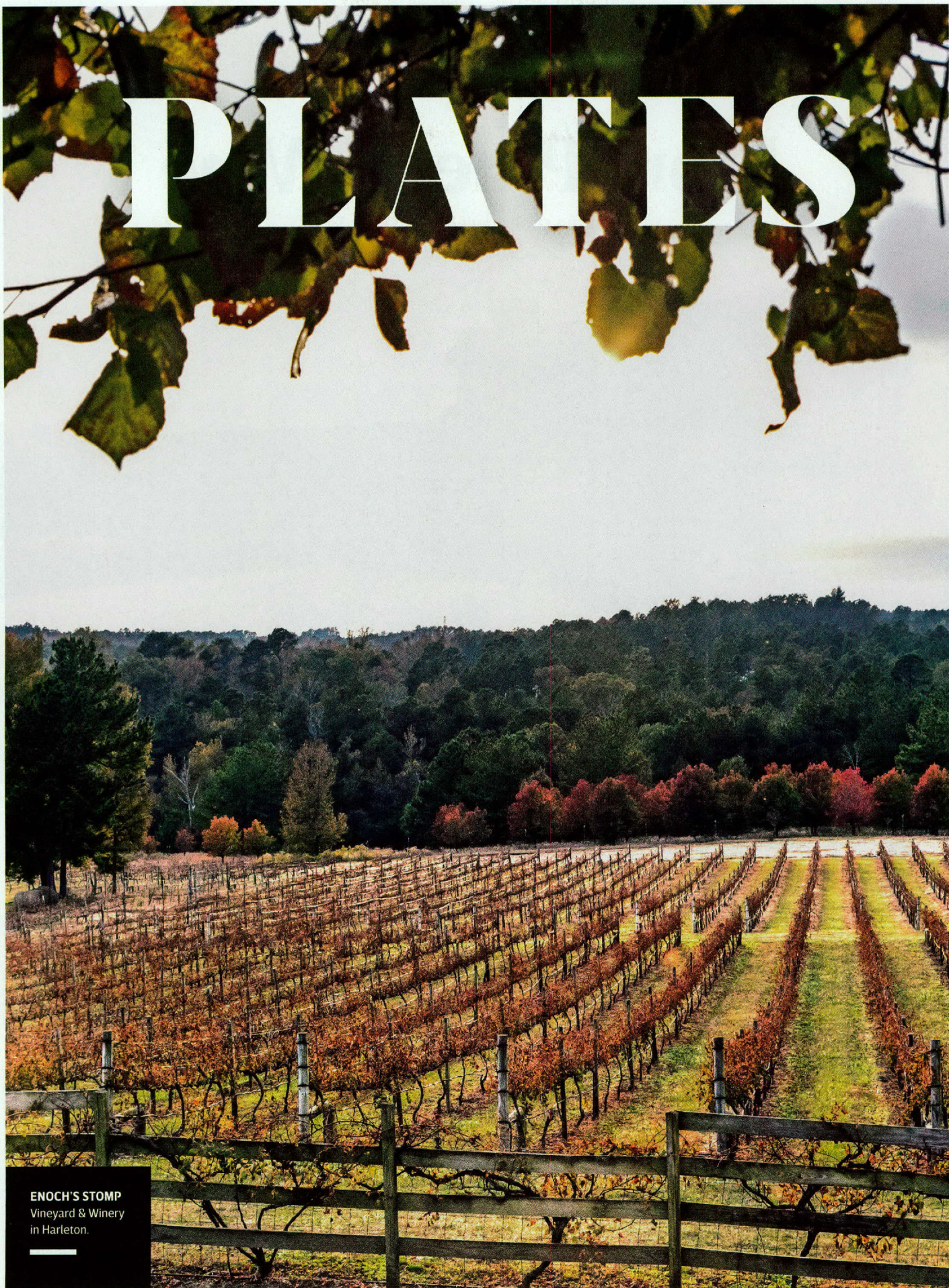
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# PLATES



**ENOCH'S STOMP**  
Vineyard & Winery  
in Harleton.



# From Pine to Wine

Tour three superb wineries in East Texas

By Lori Moffatt



**FROM LEFT:** Enoch's Stomp restaurant; Kiepersol Vineyards & Winery also produces bourbon.

**A**t Kiepersol Vineyards & Winery, south of Tyler, a resident flock of guinea hens provides the soundtrack for an afternoon of wine tasting. Their squawks, which sound like something between fingernails-on-a-blackboard and a chainsaw, might surprise unwitting guests. Yet these South African birds are the vineyard's first line of defense against agricultural pests—and just one sign that East Texas winemakers do things a little differently.

Texas now has more than 500 wineries, mostly in the Hill Country and High Plains regions but also in far-flung corners of the state. The most popular region for wine tourism in Texas is the Hill Country, especially along US 290 between Johnson City and Fredericksburg. This stretch is so popular that wineries from Lubbock, Comanche, and Bryan have set up tasting rooms there to reach customers. Last year, Los Pinos Ranch Vineyards in Pittsburg, a town of fewer than 5,000 residents between Dallas and Texarkana, opened a US 290 tasting room in a shared space with San Saba's Wedding Oak Winery. Some visitors expressed surprise that East Texas wineries existed at all.

In fact, there are more than 20 wineries and vineyards along the self-guided Piney Woods Wine Trail—three of which are spotlighted here. They offer tours, tastings, and dining, with hearty doses of innovation.

For a map and details about the wineries and vineyards on the Piney Woods Wine Trail, see [pineywoodswinetrail.com](http://pineywoodswinetrail.com).

## Kiepersol Vineyards & Winery

In 1984, the late Pierre de Wet, a farmer by trade, immigrated to the United States with his two young daughters, Marnelle and Velmay. Initially, he harvested rice in California but eventually moved to the Tyler area to work in a rose nursery. When his daughters were in high school, the de Wets began planting Kiepersol's first grapevines amid rolling hills and pines that reminded them of their home in Kiepersol, South Africa. These days, under the stewardship of Marnelle Durrett and Velmay Power, Kiepersol makes 14 varietals from grapes grown on 63 acres surrounding the site. The winery also operates a 15-room bed-and-breakfast, restaurant, distillery, demonstration kitchen for cooking classes, and tasting room overlooking



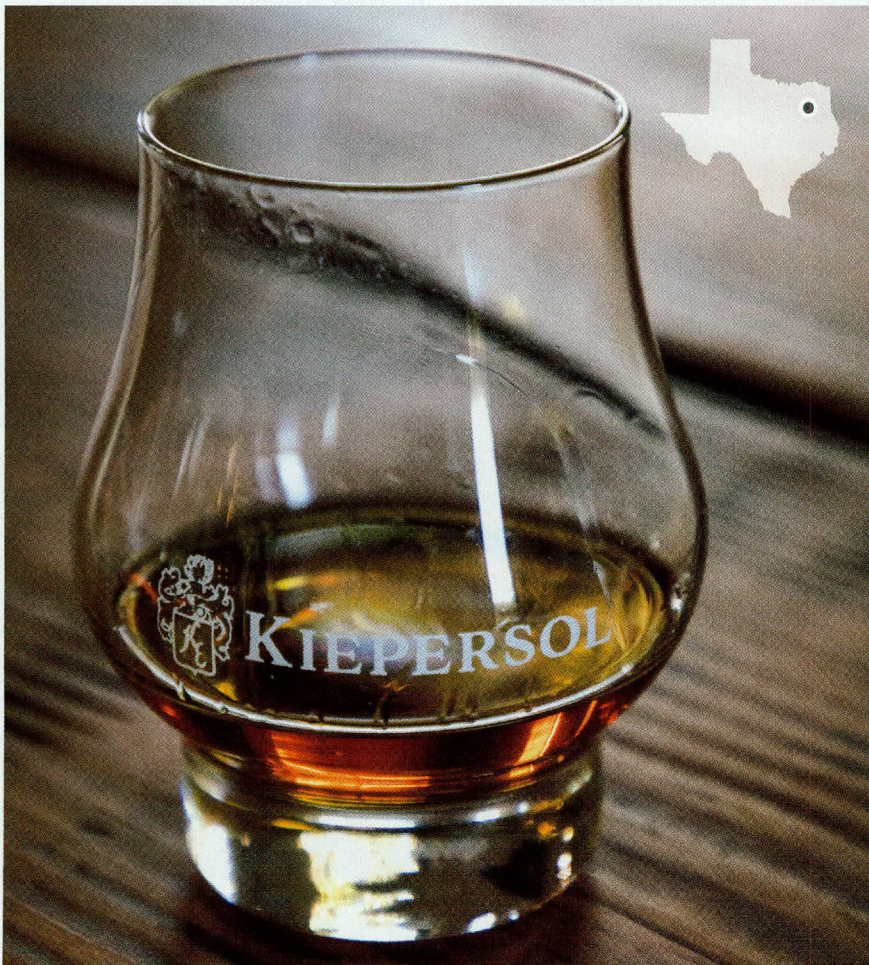
rows of sangiovese, cabernet sauvignon, merlot, and syrah vines. This was no easy feat, as East Texas' rainfall and humidity mean that these traditional grapevines, known as vitis vinifera, often fall victim to an insect-borne bacterial blight called Pierce's disease. "When Pierre first planted these grapes in the late 1990s, a lot of people told him it was impossible to grow vitis vinifera grapes in East Texas," Kiepersol winemaker Alex Lee says. "But Pierre saw the benefits of the slope and the good drainage, and he understood the importance of the right timing for picking. He said, 'Watch me do it.'" Since 2003, all wines here have been made with 100-percent estate-grown grapes.

Kiepersol opened a distillery to craft vodka from grapes in 2012 and followed that with rum and bourbon made from Texas molasses and corn. But winemaking remains the heart and soul of the business. "East Texas has a reputation for being a region where people like sweet wines," Lee says. "And while sweet

wines are strong sellers for us, our top three—merlot, cabernet sauvignon, and syrah—are dry. I like to say our style is 'comfort wine.' They're not aggressive or overly tannic. Texas grapes tend to taste of bright, juicy fruit, and that's the style I like myself."

After a tour of the operation, most guests linger in the sunny tasting room to sample flights, including a taste of Kiepersol's ruby port-style wines, crisp rosés, or one of the best-selling merlots. "Our merlot is a lot lighter in color and body than you might be used to," Lee says. "That is what the vineyard brings, and we want to tell a story of the place. We want people to come out here and have a wine that speaks of Texas."

Winery and distillery hours: Tue-Sat 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Restaurant hours: Tue-Fri 11 a.m.-9 p.m. and Sat 7 a.m.-9 p.m. 3933 FM 344 E., Tyler (see website for directions, as some GPS systems reflect incorrect information). 903-894-8995; kiepersol.com



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# PLATES

## Los Pinos Ranch Vineyards

Meandering north through Gladewater and Gilmer, you'll arrive at Los Pinos Ranch Vineyards, where winemaker Arnulfo Perez and his team specialize in Mediterranean-style varietals grown in the High Plains around Lubbock. They also make an award-winning white wine from estate-grown blanc du bois grapes, an American hybrid that's resistant to Pierce's disease. This crisp, aromatic wine

sets just the right mood for enjoying live music on the deck as the sun sets behind the vineyards.

Perez, who grew up in a farming family near Cárdenas, San Luis Potosí, Mexico, takes advantage of relationships he's nurtured in Spain as he coaxes flavors and aromas from sangiovese, cabernet sauvignon, tempranillo, and other grapes he receives from his growers. Natural fer-

mentation using native yeasts, cold-soaking the grapes before fermentation, and long aging in oak barrels echo traditional Old World winemaking techniques.

A visit to Los Pinos encompasses more than good wine; managing partner Gerald Jones says his goal was to create a getaway. Guests can stay overnight in a rustic cabin overlooking rows of black Spanish grapes (brought to America by Spanish missionaries). There is also lodging next door at Relax and Wine Down, which has three casitas. A restaurant at the winery serves wood-fired pizzas and tapas, and an adjacent gift shop and tasting room offers samples of Los Pinos' many wines.

On any given year, more than 90 percent of the wines Perez makes come from Texas grapes. "But growing grapes is agriculture, and it's unpredictable and dependent on Mother Nature," Jones says. "We have to deal with the cards that nature deals us every year. That's the beauty and challenge of making wine."

Hours: Fri 4-10 p.m.; Sat noon-10 p.m.; and Sun noon-4 p.m. There's one cottage on-site and three others on an adjacent property called Relax and Wine Down; see [relaxandwinedown.com](http://relaxandwinedown.com). 658 CR 1334, Pittsburg, 903-855-1769; [lospinosranchvineyards.com](http://lospinosranchvineyards.com)

### LOS PINOS RANCH

Vineyards' 2018 rosato; guests are welcome to linger at Los Pinos and even stay in its rustic cabin overnight.





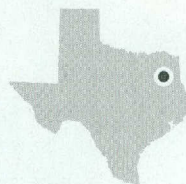


**ENOCH'S STOMP** serves pepperoni, caprese, and steak and goat cheese pizzas at its restaurant.

## Enoch's Stomp Vineyard & Winery

On what was once a 90-acre horse ranch in Harleton, Enoch's Stomp Vineyard & Winery takes an educational approach to wine. The teaching happens in a hillside tasting room and restaurant overlooking its estate-grown blanc du bois grapes. Here, wine director Jonah Kral and his team of wine ambassadors lead tastings, conduct wine classes, and embark on tours of the vineyards. "Every class starts with a palate-introduction exercise that has nothing to do with wine," Kral says. "We actually start with jelly beans and chocolate, which help people become aware of the flavors they're detecting." The classes have become so popular that Enoch's Stomp recently opened a tasting room and coffee shop in nearby Jefferson.

Enoch's Stomp makes wines from estate-grown grapes and fruit brought in from West Texas—and sometimes from Chile and Washington state. "We had a windstorm come through in March right when our plants



were budding, and we had a 10 percent harvest this year," Kral says. "When you get into farming, you have to embrace the fact that you have incredible harvests some years, and while the next might not be so bountiful, you could wind up making the best wines you've ever produced."

Last year, Enoch's Stomp released 27 different wines, an all-time high. "Because a lot of what we do is educational, our large wine list lets us compare wines made from Texas grapes to those made out of state," Kral says. "We teach people to think about acidity, sweetness, body, tannin, and alcohol content—the 'big five' of wine-tasting. Also, every white wine will have some notes of citrus and flowering plants, and every red will have red fruit, black fruit, or blue fruit. Think about those things, and the world of wine will open up to you." 🍷

Hours: Wed–Thu noon–6 p.m.;

Fri noon–10 p.m.; Sat 11 a.m.–10 p.m.;

and Sun noon–6 p.m. Winery tours take place Fri at 4 p.m. and Sat at 1 and 3 p.m.

871 Ferguson Road, Harleton. 903-240-1587; enochsstomp.com

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## PLATES



**MAYHAW  
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# Are You Ready For This Jelly?

A couple in Huntington cultivates mayhaw trees to make East Texas' signature jelly

By Susan L. Ebert

In the February drabness of bare-branched hardwoods, frothy white flowers burst from small thorny trees deep in the understory of the East Texas Piney Woods.

Generations of families have noted their locations—sometimes flagging the trees with orange tape, ribbon, or twine—to be able to find the trees again once the canopy leafed out. For by May, the white blossoms of these trees will become clusters of firm red berries called mayhaws. They've been prized since antebellum times as a source for syrup, wine, and especially jelly—similar in flavor to tart apple, but with a sassy, wild kick.

Found across the Deep South and only north and east of the Trinity River in Texas, these thorny hawthorn trees traditionally grow around nearly impenetrable soupy hardwood bogs called “baygalls”—smaller, and often shallower, than swamps. As deforestation increases and their natural habitat shrinks, wild mayhaw trees are becoming increasingly rare, yet the hunger for mayhaw jelly shows no signs of waning.

Wynn and Pam Havard's Jellytree Mayhaw Farm in Huntington, one of the

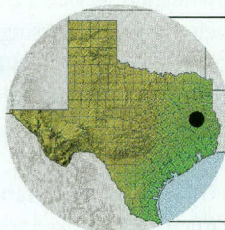
handful of East Texas' mayhaw orchards, hopes to satisfy this appetite with its handcrafted mayhaw jelly.

The Havards sit on the porch of their commercial canning kitchen, housed in a cabin a few hundred yards from their residence. Behind the canning kitchen, mayhaw trees stand at attention in orderly rows spanning 3 acres. Inside the canning kitchen, half-pint jars of mayhaw jelly and 8-ounce bottles of mayhaw syrup glisten on the front counter.

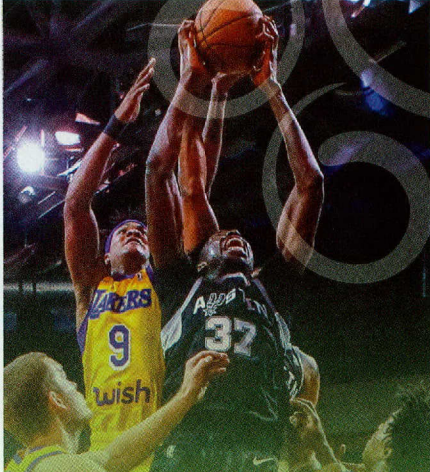
Wynn, whose robust nature belies his 70-plus years, settles into a chair to reminisce while Pam proffers a plate of her mayhaw jelly-filled thumbprint cookies.

“As a youngster, I helped my family gather mayhaws each May,” Wynn says. “We'd hook up the horses to a sled and drag it out to an old open pond and the nearby baygalls. The mayhaws would be floating in the water, so we would walk around in the water and scoop them up with sieves, then pour them into No. 3 washtubs on the sled.”

Families worked together in the jelly-making process, first boiling the fruit with water, sugar, and pectin before straining and pouring it into glass jars to turn this



**JELLYTREE  
MAYHAW FARM**  
493 Ozias Road, Huntington.  
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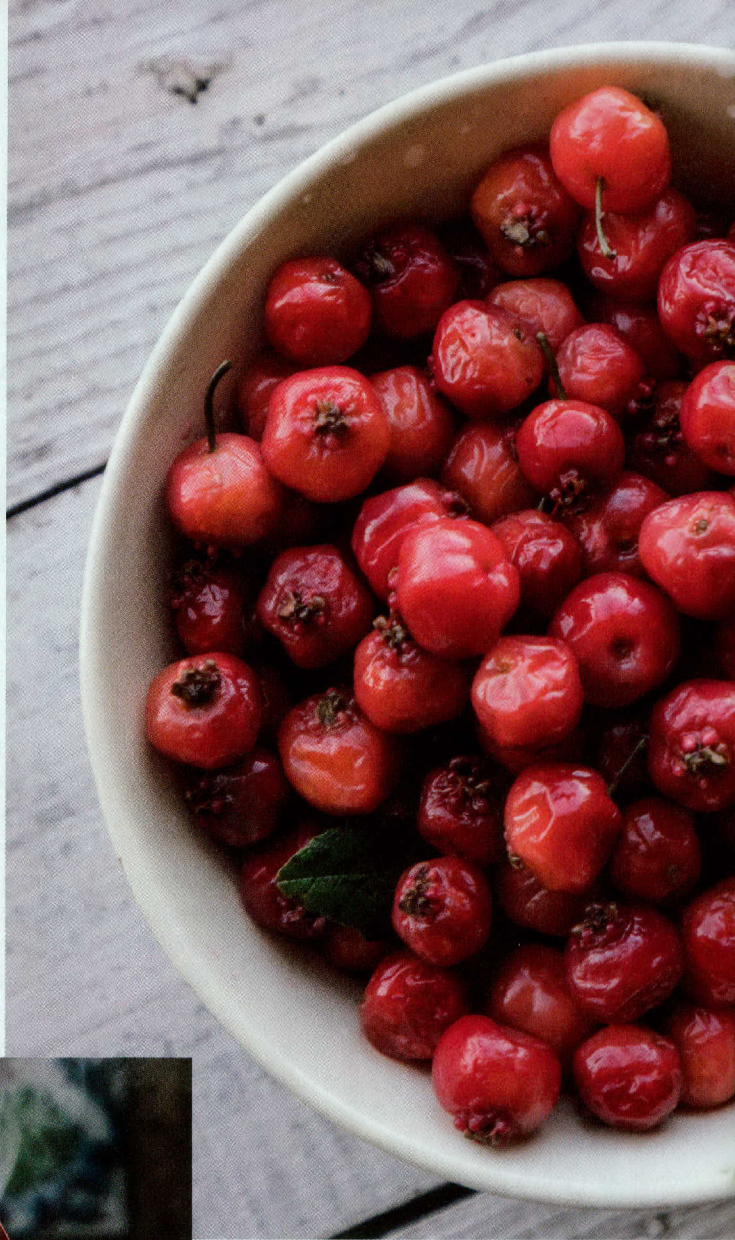
Texas Stars Hockey

CedarParkfun.com





**PAM HAVARD** runs the commercial kitchen at Jellytree Mayhaw Farm, producing mayhaw jelly from the tart red berries found in East Texas.



ephemeral springtime fruit into a year-round treat. East Texans slather the jelly on hot buttered biscuits, use it as a base for sauces, and add it to pies and cakes. Mayhaw syrup poured onto pancakes or waffles elevates a breakfast staple to a culinary delight.

The couple, who will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary later this year, began its mayhaw orchard venture about six years ago. Wynn tends the approximately 125 trees while Pam helms the commercial kitchen operation. "I worked in the food service industry for 10 years before going to nursing school," Pam says, "and as a nurse, I did kitchen inspections for assisted-living facilities. That experience gave me a head start in setting up my commercial kitchen.

"After Wynn retired from the Post Office and I retired from my nursing





**“My favorite thing about making mayhaw jelly is keeping the old ways and traditions alive. It’s culture, history, family, and society all rolled together.”**

jellies including muscadine, American beautyberry, and redbud blossom; specialty jellies including peach-habanero and pepper; strawberry and blueberry jams; and other sweet treats such as peanut brittle over the winter holidays. “Jams and jellies vary by season,” she says, “but we almost always have mayhaw jelly.”

Jellytree’s farm store is open on jelly-making days: Tuesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. throughout the year. “Any other times, folks can call first, and I’ll meet them there,” Pam says, adding that she also takes phone orders and ships jellies. The harvest window is very short—around the third week of May—so Pam advises foragers to store the berries in the freezer until jelly-making time. “Mayhaws freeze quite well,” she says. “In fact, I think the jelly from frozen ones is superior. The freezing and thawing ruptures the cells’ walls, releasing more juice and flavor.”

Even with the bounty their orchard provides, the Havards treasure the tradition of foraging for this East Texas delicacy. It’s a portal to the past, a touchstone with ancestors, and a ritual they relish sharing with their grandchildren.

“We still like to gather the wild ones,” Wynn confesses. “We’ll take our boat down to Sam Rayburn Reservoir near Mud Creek and scoop them up with a sieve, just as I did as a boy.”

In fact, the jelly Pam made from wild berries took first place in the 2019 Angelina County Fair, with Wynn’s jelly from his cultivated mayhaws coming in second.

He’s hoping to reverse that order in 2020, he admits with a grin. 🐾

career, we saw this as something we could do together,” she says, noting their regular presence at the Angelina County Farmers Market. In 2018, they canned 1,768 jars of jelly—primarily for sale at their farm, the farmers market, and The Candle & Gift Shoppe in Lufkin.

Pam relies on a simple formula: just mayhaws, sugar, and Sure-Jell (a brand of pectin). “Wynn sterilizes the jars while I make batches of jelly,” she says, noting that jelly needs to be cooked in relatively small batches to gel properly. “My favorite thing about making mayhaw jelly is keeping the old ways and traditions alive,” she adds. “It’s culture, history, family, and society all rolled together.”

In fact, Pam still makes her jellies in an ancient Farberware jelly pot that belonged to Wynn’s mother. She also markets limited amounts of her other wild

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**FROM TOP:** The Gulf Shrimp Bahn Mon at Monica's Restaurant; an assortment of housemade condiments, including pickled carrots.



# Global Meets Local

Chef Monica Cobb brings East Texas roots and worldly experience to her Beaumont restaurant

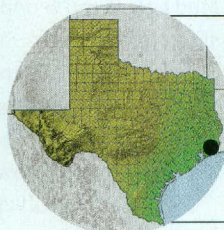
By MM Pack

**I**n the tiny foyer of Monica Cobb's namesake restaurant in Beaumont, a chalkboard sign reads: "No matter where you go in life ... one thing you can count on is being greeted with food. That's the strength in our cultural connection. We honor this path and we honor you."

Cobb speaks from experience—she's traversed the globe in pursuit of international flavors and diverse cooking gigs for more than 20 years. She brings what she's learned to Monica's Restaurant, which opened in 2016 and serves dishes based on the many cultures that influence southeast Texas, from Vietnamese to Cajun to Italian. For example, her Bahn Mon sandwiches—inspired by the Vietnamese/French banh mi—are served on *bolillos* (rolls) from nearby Ana's Mexican Bakery. One variety is stuffed with broiled Gulf shrimp, soy aioli, cucumber, curried remoulade, Asian slaw with Thai basil and mint, mango chile vinaigrette, red curry honey glaze, and sriracha.

Cobb's career in the kitchen started on her family's farms near Kirbyville in the Big Thicket area. Her grandfather raised dairy cattle and farmed vegetables. The family also butchered hogs and smoked sausages. "We were self-sustaining—growing, canning, and eating what we produced," she says. "I could make cornbread by age 7, though the cast-iron skillet was too heavy for me to lift."

After high school in the early 1990s, Cobb spent a summer in New Orleans and began her wandering years. She spent time in Austin and Washington state before returning to Beaumont's Lamar University to study nutrition. "My friends were all artists, and I wanted to be one, too, but what I could do was cook," Cobb says. "I decided



**MONICA'S RESTAURANT**  
 6385 Calder Ave., Suite H, Beaumont.  
 Open Mon–Fri 11 a.m.–3 p.m.  
 Private evening and weekend dinners available.  
 409-554-0730; monicas-restaurant.com





to practice art through cooking. But I needed to see more of the world.”

Cobb set off once again. This time she road-tripped to Los Angeles and cooked for two years at the Sunset Strip’s Spago—Wolfgang Puck’s Michelin-starred celebrity hot spot—while earning a degree at Westwood Culinary Academy. For the next few years, she was a private chef in Venice Beach and for a group of artists and architects at three Burning Man festivals in Nevada. Then, she spent six months in Cairo, Egypt, establishing an Asian-themed restaurant on a Nile riverboat owned by the uncle of an acquaintance. After eating her way across Europe for six months, she returned to Texas in 2003. “My journey continues,” she says, “even though it brought me back to Beaumont.”

Upon returning to southeast Texas, Cobb developed her reputation for creative cooking using local sources by holding monthly pop-up “Renegade Dinners” at unorthodox locations and operating the Bahn Mon food truck. In Beaumont she’s found plenty of fresh, local, and sustainable ingredients that fit splendidly into her “chef-driven, farm-fresh” ethos. “We sit on a culinary gold mine here,” she says.

The gems found on her menu include produce from Donna’s Farm in



**FROM LEFT:**  
Monica Cobb (left)  
with crew member  
Amanda Wright; a dark  
chocolate cherry bread  
pudding from Monica’s.

## “My friends were all artists, and I wanted to be one, too, but what I could do was cook. I decided to practice art through cooking.”

Fannett, 14 miles south of Beaumont; and meat pastured at Wild Earth Texas in LaBelle, 23 miles south of Beaumont. Seafood is straight from a Gulf company called Seafood Lover, and Cobb is loyal to TexJoy spices and Seaport coffees (both from Texas Coffee Company, a Beaumont business founded in 1921). She ardently supports the Beaumont Farmers Market, the nucleus of the area’s food community.

Commitment to local products can sometimes be problematic though. When Tropical Storm Imelda inundated

the area last September, roads and highways were underwater, fields and greenhouses were flooded, and supply chains were cut off. “My biggest challenge is staying the course that I’ve set,” Cobb says. “If I can’t get access to the ingredients and products that meet my standards, I won’t go to second best. Sometimes it’s hard to help customers understand why their favorites go off the menu.” That’s when she gets creative with her daily specials, which have included a New Mexican chile cheeseburger, a Japanese pork milk-bread sandwich, and Szechuan wok noodles with chicken or pork.

Cobb leans heavily on her rural East Texas roots, global culinary adventures, and devotion to local ingredients. And she is committed to her heartfelt belief in the power and connectivity of hospitality and good food. “We have such a strong food culture here, and we need to make the most of it,” she says. “Beaumont should be a food destination.”



# TEXANA



The Columbia Rosenwald School preserves elements of a 1930s-era classroom.

## Educational Sanctuaries

In the early 20th century, African American communities rallied around vital Rosenwald schools

By Brooke A. Lewis

**A**teenage Diane Paul poses in her marching band uniform—one leg hitched in the air, her hand perched carefully on her hip—with a wide grin on her face. Captured in black and white in the fall of 1963, the photo hangs among other memories and artifacts displayed in the 1930s school that now houses the Annie E. Colbert/Rosenwald School Museum in Dayton. “We’re delighted to have this building in our lives,” says Paul, who attended the Annie E. Colbert School from first grade through her high school graduation in 1965. “It really is a source of pride.”

Located about an hour northeast of Houston and named for a local pioneering African American public school teacher, the school was one of about 5,000 Rosenwald schools built across the South between 1912 and 1932 to educate African American children. In



Texas, the Chicago-based philanthropic project worked with communities to build more than 450 Rosenwald Schools, most of them in East Texas.

The schools were part of a larger effort that originated from an alliance between Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Co.; and Booker T. Washington, a leading African American public figure in politics and education in the early 20th century. Together, they set out to fill an educational void for black children who were otherwise ignored or undereducated by public schools during the segregation of the Jim Crow era. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, by 1928, roughly one-third of all African American children and teachers in the rural South benefited from Rosenwald schools.

### A Rare Partnership

Though Rosenwald and Washington came from vastly different backgrounds, the two men bonded over their common concerns about discrimination. Born into slavery in Virginia in about 1856, Washington worked doggedly for an education and in 1881 helped found the Tuskegee Institute, a black university in Alabama. Rosenwald, born to Jewish-German immigrant parents in Illinois in 1862, dropped out of high school to work for his uncles' clothing-manufacturing business in New York City—a career path that led him to become president of Sears, the Amazon of its time.

“They were similar kinds of people,” says Stephanie Deutsch, author of the 2011 book *You Need a Schoolhouse: Booker T. Washington, Julius Rosenwald, and the Building of Schools for the Segregated South*. “They were both very pragmatic. They weren’t philosophers, weren’t dreamy. They were very reality-based, both of them.”

Deutsch, whose husband is Rosenwald’s great-grandson, describes how Rosenwald was concerned by a race riot that occurred in 1908 in his hometown of Springfield, Illinois. Around that same time, the Jewish community in America was raising money for Jews

in Russia, Poland, and Ukraine, where they were targets of organized violence, known as pogroms, which were often condoned by the state. The businessman saw a parallel between the discrimination faced by African Americans and Jews, a perception reinforced when he read Washington’s 1901 memoir, *Up From Slavery*.

**Rosenwald didn’t believe in handouts; his funding required local efforts. To help build the schools, communities contributed material, labor, fundraising, and organization.**

In May 1911, the two men met when Rosenwald hosted Washington for a visit in Chicago, including a tour of Sears’ headquarters. Washington asked Rosenwald to be on the board of Tuskegee, and that fall, Rosenwald took a group of family and friends to visit the university. A friendship blossomed, and Washington took a trip to Rosenwald’s home the next spring.

Washington shared with Rosenwald his dream of building schools for African American children in places where such schools were either underfunded or non-existent. In 1870, because of racist barriers to education, 80 percent of African Americans were illiterate, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The number had improved by 1910, but still roughly a third of the black population over age 14 could not read or write.







**Rosenwald Schools in Texas**

The Texas Historical Commission's database of Rosenwald Schools has identified 39 extant buildings—seven listed on the National Register of Historic Places—including schools in Lockhart, Cedar Creek, Pleasant Hill, De Kalb, Wolfe City, Beeville, and Seguin. Two of the former schools—both covered in this story—have been converted into museums.

([thc.texas.gov/rosenwald](http://thc.texas.gov/rosenwald))

**Annie E. Colbert/Rosenwald School Museum**, 231 S. Colbert St. in Dayton, is open the third Saturday of each month 11 a.m.–1 p.m. Plans for a Black History Month event in February were pending at press time. Call Frosty Pruitt, 936-391-0720; facebook.com/Colbert.Rosenwald

**Columbia Rosenwald School**, 247 E. Brazos Ave. in West Columbia, is open Thu–Sat 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Tours available for groups of 10 or more. On Saturdays in February, the school will host events with speakers and music in honor of Black History Month. 979-345-3340; [columbiarosenwaldschool.com](http://columbiarosenwaldschool.com)



**FROM LEFT:** Colbert School alumni Glenn Ray Brown, Frosty Pruitt, James Grays, Brenda St. Julian Trahan, Diane Paul, and Ivory Kelley.

Rosenwald donated \$25,000 to Tuskegee in 1912, and with his blessing, Washington used \$2,800 of that to help build six schools in Alabama, the first of what would become known as Rosenwald schools. Rosenwald established the Julius Rosenwald Fund a few years later to continue such efforts, but he didn't believe in handouts; his funding required matching local efforts. To help build the schools, communities contributed material, labor, fundraising, and organization. The first Rosenwald schools opened in Texas in 1920 and operated into the 1960s, when school districts were forced to comply with the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that outlawed school segregation.

**Columbia Rosenwald School**

When Naomi Smith moved to West Columbia in 1970, she noticed an interesting racial dynamic in the town about 60 miles south of Houston. "The schools were desegregated, but the community was not," says Smith, who is white.

Smith, now 82, has been involved in restoring the Columbia Rosenwald School for more than two decades, in part because she could relate to the African Americans the school was built to serve. As a child, she attended a one-

room schoolhouse in Louisiana that was segregated by race and gender. "You can't plan for the future without remembering the past," Smith notes.

Originally built in East Columbia in 1921, the Columbia Rosenwald School educated students from first through eighth grade until 1949. Over time, the building became a hay barn and was largely forgotten. Then, in the 1990s, while developing an education exhibit for the Columbia Historical Museum, museum officials learned of the old school in East Columbia. The museum acquired the building in 2002, moved it to downtown West Columbia, and opened the Columbia Rosenwald School as an interpretive center in 2009.

The school stands today as a tribute to the resilient

continued on page 83

**"If we say it never existed, then it goes away from the consciousness of the powers that be. We have to keep our history alive. What better way than a museum?"**



# TRAVEL RESOURCE GUIDE

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| 1 Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau         | 19 Friends of Gillespie County Country Schools          | 37 San Angelo Convention & Visitors Bureau         |
| 2 Bandera County Convention & Visitors Bureau  | 20 Galveston Island Section                             | 38 South Padre Island Convention & Visitors Bureau |
| 3 Beaumont Convention & Visitors Bureau        | 21 George Boutwell's Texas Collection                   | 39 Texas Department of Agriculture Farmers Markets |
| 4 Blanco Chamber of Commerce                   | 22 Georgetown Convention & Visitors Bureau              | 40 Texas Historical Commission Real Places         |
| 5 Briscoe Western Art Museum                   | 23 Go Round Rock  | 41 Texas Parks & Wildlife                          |
| 6 Bullock Texas State History Museum           | 24 Grapevine Convention & Visitors Bureau               | 42 Texas State Railroad                            |
| 7 Cedar Park Tourism                           | 25 Greenville Convention & Visitors Bureau              | 43 Visit Bastrop                                   |
| 8 City of Austin Parks & Recreation            | 26 Holocaust Museum Houston                             | 44 Visit Bay City                                  |
| 9 City of Bryan                                | 27 Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort & Spa                | 45 Visit Big Spring                                |
| 10 City of Denison - Tourism                   | 28 Irving Arts Center                                   | 46 Visit Frisco                                    |
| 11 City of Grand Prairie                       | 29 John Jay French Museum and The Chambers House Museum | 47 Visit Granbury                                  |
| 12 City of Harlingen CVB                       | 30 Kerrville Convention & Visitors Bureau               | 48 Visit Lubbock                                   |
| 13 City of Odessa/Starbright Village           | 31 Laredo Convention & Visitors Bureau                  | 49 Visit The Woodlands                             |
| 14 City of Port Isabel                         | 32 Lufkin Convention & Visitors Bureau                  | 50 Visit Tyler                                     |
| 15 Cuero Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture   | 33 Messina Hof Winery                                   | 51 Waco Convention & Visitors Bureau               |
| 16 Dallas Arboretum                            | 34 Nacogdoches Convention & Visitors Bureau             | 52 Waxahachie Convention & Visitors Bureau         |
| 17 Dripping Springs Visitors Bureau            | 35 National Museum of the Pacific War                   | 53 West Texas Co-op                                |
| 18 Fredericksburg Convention & Visitors Bureau | 36 Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce             |  |



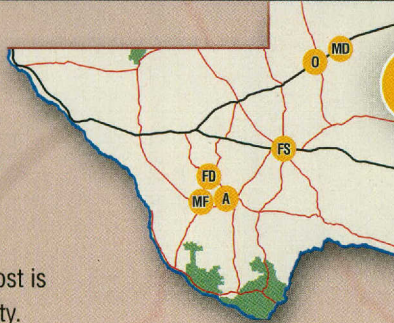
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**Mar 28-29 - The Southwest 100 Race**

**Apr 12 - Easter Egg Hunt & Picnic in the Park**



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**Feb 12-16** - All Breed Dog Show

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**Jan 3-11** - Sandhills Stock Show & Rodeo

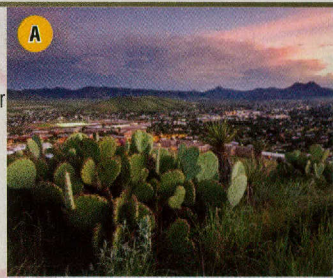
**Feb 7-9** - Midessa Boat, RV, Sport & Gun Show

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[visitalpinetx.com](http://visitalpinetx.com)

**Feb 21-22** - Lone Star Cowboy Poetry Gathering

**Apr 16-18** - Trappings of Texas exhibit/sale of contemporary western art & gear



A



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**Mar 6** - Texas History Days

**Apr 22-25** - Big Bend Open Road Race

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[visitmarfa.com](http://visitmarfa.com)

**Mar 12** - Marfa Book Co: Feeding by Reree Gladman, Novelist & Artist

**Mar 13** - Marfa Book Co: R. Gladman Art Exhibit



MF



TEXANA | continued from Page 80

students who attended. Smith, who leads tours, says some students would come for the day without any lunch. The teacher responded with typical resourcefulness: The school planted a garden in the back, and students would tend the garden and raise chickens for their meals.

Inside the school, memories remain, including a blackboard with the words of the song "Lift Every Voice and Sing" written in chalk. Smith says a former principal once described how each school day began with the Pledge of Allegiance and singing the song known as the National Black Anthem. "Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last, where the white gleam of our bright star is cast."

### Keeping History Alive

Back in Dayton, the Annie E. Colbert School replaced an earlier black school that was burned down around 1931, possibly from arson. Despite such challenges, the new school thrived. Its teachers were both caring and demanding. They pushed their students to continue their educations, recalls James Grays, 72, who attended first through 12th grades at the school.

"Many of them wanted us to go on to college and do something with our lives," Grays says. "They encouraged us to get a higher education; they talked to us about HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities). Some of them assisted us in getting into those schools."

Restored and opened as a museum in 2011 (on the grounds of today's Colbert Elementary School), the Dayton school takes visitors back to the Rosenwald schools of decades ago with its large windows, where natural sunlight pours in. Rows of old wooden desks face the teacher's desk at the front of the room, and historical photographs ring the walls.

"If we say it never existed, then it goes away from the consciousness of the powers that be," Paul says. "If I don't see it, it never happened. We have to keep our history alive. What better way than this building and a museum?"



# Retreat... Relax in Kerrville

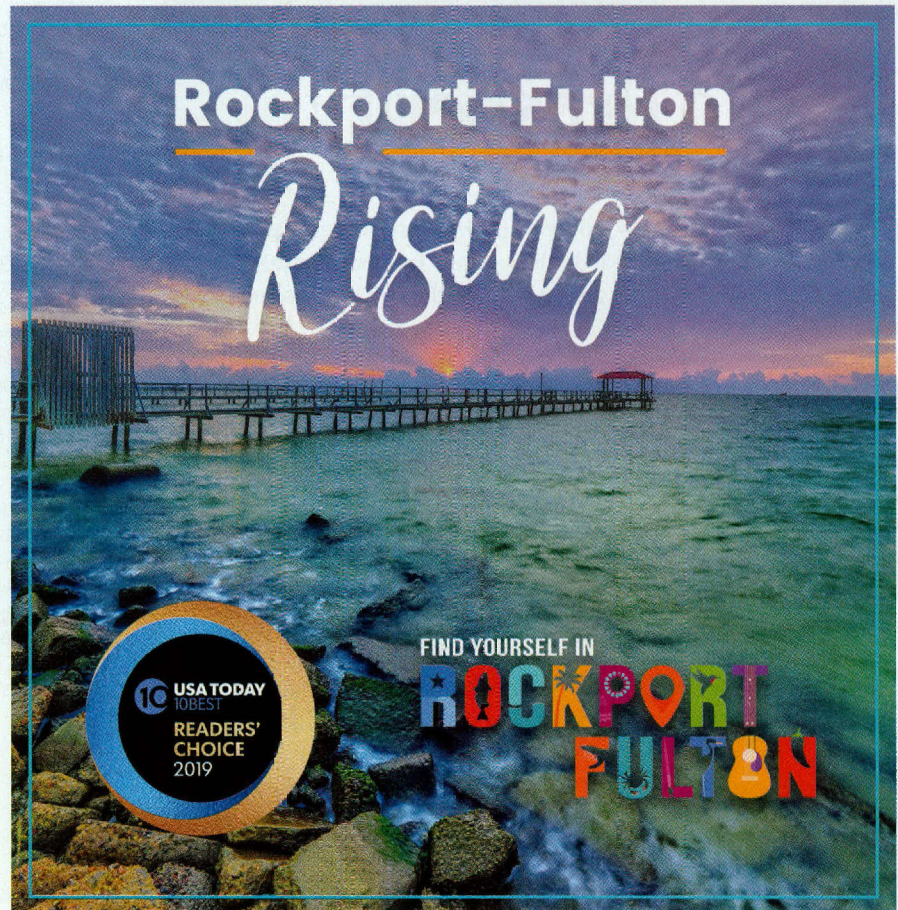
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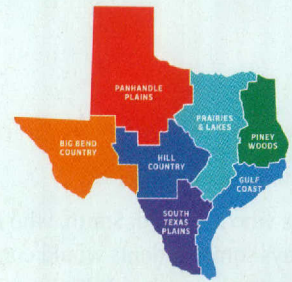
# Rising

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# EVENTS



## To Prosperity

Ring in the Chinese New Year

The Crow Museum of Asian Art of the University of Texas at Dallas has celebrated the art and culture of Asia for more than 20 years. That mission is demonstrated annually through the museum's signature event, the Chinese New Year Festival. The party takes place a full month later than the Western New Year, on Feb. 1, and caters to the area's increasing diversity.

According to the Greater Dallas Asian American Chamber of Commerce, Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racial group in the Dallas area and make up nearly 19% of the suburb of Plano's population. Unsurprisingly, the Crow Museum's extravaganza has expanded as well. "Now, multiple generations of the Asian and greater Dallas community have grown up celebrating with the Crow Museum as a family," says Caroline Kim, the museum's director of development.

The festivities will include traditional dragon and lion dances, kung fu demonstrations, and arts and crafts. According to the Chinese calendar, 2020 is the Year of the Rat. The first in the line of Chinese zodiac animals, rats are seen as a sign of wealth because they multiply rapidly. That means prosperous times could lie ahead, which is all the more reason to celebrate.

—Mikela Floyd Kinnison

Chinese New Year Festival, Feb. 1  
NorthPark Center,  
8687 North Central Expressway,  
Dallas.  
214-979-6430; crowcollection.org

### BIG BEND COUNTRY

#### ALPINE Plein Air Painters of the Four Corners

Through March 22  
Members of the Plein Air Painters of the Four Corners exhibit their images of Big Bend regional landscapes at Museum of the Big Bend, located on the Sul Ross State University campus. *Museum of the Big Bend*, 400 N. Harrison St. 432-837-8143; [museumofthebigbend.com](http://museumofthebigbend.com)

#### ALPINE Lone Star Cowboy Poetry Gathering

Feb. 21-22  
This new event continues a decades-long Alpine tradition of celebrating cowboy poetry and preserving Western heritage through music and literature. *Sul Ross State University*, 400 N. Harrison St. 432-244-9967; [lonestarcowboypoeetry.com](http://lonestarcowboypoeetry.com)

#### COMSTOCK The Border to Badlands Ultra Race

Feb. 29  
Experience the desert wildlife, striking flora, and incredible views of where Seminole Canyon meets the Rio Grande at this race. Distances range from 5K to 50 miles. *Seminole Canyon State Park*, US 90, West Park Road 67. 432-292-4464; [ultraexpeditions.com/the-border-to-badlands-ultra](http://ultraexpeditions.com/the-border-to-badlands-ultra)

#### EL PASO Sun City Scavenger Hunt

Through Dec. 31, 2021  
On this culture-filled El Paso scavenger hunt, explore the iconic buildings and great green spaces around downtown. *Let's Roam*, 111 W. Mills Ave. 833-202-7626; [letsroam.com/scavenger\\_hunt](http://letsroam.com/scavenger_hunt)

### GULF COAST

#### ANGLETON Austin Town

Feb. 22  
At this living history reenactment, learn about the lives of pioneers

who settled colonial Texas from 1821 to 1832 through character interpreters, demonstrations, sutlers, militia drill units, and period games. *Brazoria County Fairgrounds*, 901 S. Downing Road. 979-864-1208; [bchm.org](http://bchm.org)

#### BEAUMONT Symphony of Southeast Texas: The Romantic Spirit of Music

Feb. 15  
Celebrate the season of love at this concert featuring compositions by Brahms, Fauré, and Hanson. With guest artists Dalton Woody and Angela Pickering. *Julie Rogers Theatre*, 765 Pearl St. 409-892-2257; [sost.org](http://sost.org)

#### BEAUMONT Mardi Gras Southeast Texas

Feb. 20-23  
Enjoy a family-friendly Mardi Gras celebration with parades, concerts, carnival rides, street entertainment, and a kids' zone. *Downtown Beaumont*, 700 Crockett St. 409-721-8717; [mardigrassetx.com](http://mardigrassetx.com)

#### BROWNSVILLE Sombbrero Festival

Feb. 27-29  
First held in 1986 to enhance the spirit of Charro Days, this festival is now the largest event in Cameron County and benefits multiple nonprofit organizations and causes throughout the community. *Washington Park*, 700 E. Madison St. 956-550-9682; [sombbrerofestival.com](http://sombbrerofestival.com)

#### GALVESTON The Snowy Day and Other Stories

Feb. 6  
Ezra Jack Keats' *The Snowy Day* celebrates the magic and boundless possibilities of the first snowfall. Follow Peter and his friends as they romp and play in this imaginative musical play about the joys and challenges of growing up. Using innovative shadow puppetry, Keats' treasured characters come to life in this adaptation of Keats' stories, including *The Snowy Day*. *The Grand 1894 Opera House*, 2020 Postoffice St. 800-821-1894; [thegrand.com](http://thegrand.com)



## GALVESTON

### Galveston Symphony Orchestra

Feb. 9  
This very special classical masterworks concert program includes Paganini's "Violin Concerto No. 1" featuring Galveston Symphony Orchestra conductor Trond Saeverud on violin, and Howard Hanson's Symphony No. 2, "Romantic." *The Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St. 800-821-1894; thegrand.com*

## GALVESTON

### Mardi Gras Galveston

Feb. 14-25  
Celebrate Texas' largest Mardi Gras festival in downtown Galveston. On weekends and Fat Tuesday, the event has dozens of parades, musical performances, and plenty of beads. *Various locations. mardigrasgalveston.com*

## HOUSTON

### The Fantasticks

Through March 15  
This long-running musical has been refreshed for the new century and is the perfect valentine to the theater and the eternal power of love. *Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Parkway. 713-527-0123; stagestheatre.com*

## HOUSTON

### Water by the Spoonful

Feb. 7-23  
An Iraq War veteran and former addict finds solace in an online chat room as he struggles to reconnect with his mother—herself a former heroin addict. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, *Water by the Spoonful* is an uplifting and heartfelt meditation on broken lives, forgiveness, and the strength to carry on. *Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Parkway. 713-527-0123; stagestheatre.com*

## HOUSTON

### Romance Brasileiro

Feb. 11  
In February, the Terra Nostra Ensemble heads to Brazil, highlighting lush works for strings and piano by Henrique Oswald and Oscar Fernandez. This program also celebrates Terra Nostra's residency at Houston Baptist

University with a set of Fernandez's songs for string quartet and voice, performed with HBU faculty David Kirkwood. *Houston Baptist University, Morris Cultural Arts Center, Belin Chapel, 7502 Fondren Road. 601-307-4783; terranostraensemble.com*

## HOUSTON

### Camp David

Feb. 14-March 15  
Pulitzer Prize-winning Texas writer Lawrence Wright goes behind the scenes of the historic meeting with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and President Jimmy Carter in this dramatic stage adaptation of the Camp David Accords. *Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. 713-220-5700; alleytheatre.org*

## HOUSTON

### The Sleeping Beauty

Feb. 27-March 8  
The Houston Ballet celebrates its 50th season with one of former artistic director Ben Stevenson's signature productions set to Tchaikovsky's beautiful score. *Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Ave. 713-227-2787; houstonballet.org*

## HOUSTON

### Vienna Piano Trio in Concert

Feb. 27  
The Vienna Piano Trio returns to the stage with its newest member, the legendary cellist Clemens Hagen. These musicians bring their passion and skills to a richly diverse program that includes Ravel's piano trio. *Rice University-Alice Pratt Brown Hall, Stude Concert Hall, 6100 Main St. 713-348-5400; chambermusicouston.org*

## KLEIN

### Piano Battle

Feb. 9  
The brainchild of internationally accomplished pianists Andreas Kern and Paul Cibis, the Piano Battle sees the duo take turns performing pieces by composers such as Chopin, Liszt, and Debussy. *Klein High School, 16715 Stuebner Airline. 281-440-4850; cypresscreekface.org*

## LAKE JACKSON

### Texas Tenors in Concert

Feb. 22

The Texas Tenors are the third-highest-selling artist in the history of *America's Got Talent!* Since appearing on the show in 2009, the trio has released four studio albums and multiple singles, and made two PBS specials. *The Clarion, 500 College Drive. 979-230-3658; brazosport.edu/clarion*

## PORT ARTHUR

### Rotary Taste of Gumbo

Feb. 9  
The region's best gumbo cooks serve up samples in a friendly competition that draws the community. *Rober A. "Bob" Bowers Civic Center, 3401 Cultural Center Drive. 409-985-7822*

## ROCKPORT

### Bountiful Bowl

Feb. 8  
Potters from around the world sell their works at this pottery fair that benefits the Aransas County Council on Aging Meals on Wheels Program. *Rockport-Fulton High School, 1801 Omohundro St. 361-729-5352; aransascounty.org/councilaging*

## ROCKPORT

### Clay Expo

Feb. 8-9  
A showcase for ceramicists, the expo offers a gallery art walk, solo exhibits, pottery demonstrations, and an opening reception on Saturday. *Various locations, Downtown Rockport. 361-729-5519; rockportartcenter.com*

## ROCKPORT

### Lamardi Gras

Feb. 8-9  
This festival features themed food, casinos and other entertainment, and a parade on Lamar Peninsula. Proceeds benefit the Lamar Volunteer Fire Department. *Lamar Volunteer Fire Department, 302 Bois D'arc. 361-205-7037; lamarvfd.com*

## SOUTH PADRE ISLAND

### South Padre Island Chili Expo

Feb. 8  
SPICE is an annual fundraising event organized by the volunteers of Walk for Women, a nonprofit

that supports people battling breast cancer. The chili cookoff is for anyone who loves a good pot of chili, a big batch of beans, great music, and helping a worthy cause. *Louie's Backyard, 2305 Laguna Blvd. 956-761-3000; sopadre.com*

## STAFFORD

### Greater Houston Train Show

Feb. 15  
This annual event attracts rail fans from across Texas and Louisiana. The show features 20,000 square feet of operating layouts, instructive classes, model and photo contests, train videos, and vendors from across the Southwest. *Stafford Centre, 10505 Cash Road. 713-376-0684; sanjacmodeltrains.org*

## SURFSIDE BEACH

### Surfside Beach Marathon

Feb. 22  
The only marathon and half marathon in the country that are run entirely on a beach. The event starts as the sun rises over the water and follows the public beach to San Luis Pass. *Stahlman Park, 2211 Bluewater Hwy. surfsidebeachmarathon.com*

## VICTORIA

### Woodworking Show

Jan. 31-March 22  
Local artists and craftsmen display their handmade wood creations. *The Nave Museum, 306 W. Commercial St. 361-575-8228; navemuseum.com*

## VICTORIA

### Victoria Livestock Show

Feb. 27-March 2  
The annual livestock show features a barbecue cookoff, carnival, karaoke competition, livestock judging and auction, and a parade. *Victoria Community Center, 2905 E. North St. victorialivestockshow.com*

## HILL COUNTRY

## AUSTIN

### Gabriel García Márquez: The Making of a Global Writer

Feb. 1-July 19  
The Ransom Center digs into its collection for *The Making of a Global Writer*, an exhibition

## FREE EVENTS GUIDE

For a free subscription to the quarterly Texas Highways Events Calendar, go to [texashighways.com/events/subscription](http://texashighways.com/events/subscription)



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featuring items from the Nobel Prize-winning novelist's archives, including never-before-seen documents and correspondence with his friends and family. *Harry Ransom Center*, 300 W. 21st St. 512-471-8944; [hrc.utexas.edu](http://hrc.utexas.edu)

**AUSTIN**

**This Light of Ours: Activist Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement**

Feb. 15-May 31

This exhibition explores the visual story of the struggle against segregation, race-based disenfranchisement, and Jim Crow laws in the 1960s. *Bullock Museum*, 1800 Congress Ave. 512-936-8746; [thestoryoftexas.com](http://thestoryoftexas.com)

**AUSTIN**

**Austin Marathon**

Feb. 16

The annual marathon, half marathon, and 5K attract more than 20,000 participants from around the world and finishes at the Texas State Capitol. *Various locations*. [youraustinmarathon.com](http://youraustinmarathon.com)

**BOERNE**

**Second Saturday Bluegrass Jam**

Feb. 8

Every second Saturday of the month, bring your instrument and play along, or just come and enjoy talented bluegrass musicians jamming at the AgriCultural. *The AgriCultural*, 102 City Park Road. 210-445-1080; [visitboerne.org](http://visitboerne.org)

**BOERNE**

**Boerne Spring Antiques Show**

Feb. 22-23

Collectors from all over the state can find real antiques—no reproductions or imports—to add to their collections or decorate their homes. *Kendall County Fairgrounds*, 1307 River Road. 830-329-2870; [visitboerne.org](http://visitboerne.org)

**FREDERICKSBURG**

**Wine Lovers Celebration**

Feb. 7-23

Get tickets online to receive full complimentary tastings and wine discounts at dozens of participating Hill Country wineries on this self-guided tour. *Various locations*. [texaswinetrail.com](http://texaswinetrail.com)

**FREDERICKSBURG**

**Luckenbach Hug-In and Valentine Ball**

Feb. 14-15

Get back to the basics of love during this annual camping event with plenty of boot scootin' in the historic Luckenbach Texas Dance Hall. *Luckenbach Texas Dance Hall*,

412 Luckenbach Town Loop. 830-997-3224; [luckenbachtexas.com](http://luckenbachtexas.com)

**KERRVILLE**

**Renaissance Festival**

Jan. 24-26; Feb. 1-2

Open rain, shine, or cold. Travel back in time to the Middle Ages and experience a day of adventure, music, and romance. Play games of skill, eat, shop in the marketplace featuring more than 40 artisans, and enjoy headlining entertainers and musical acts on seven stages. *River Star Arts and Event Park*, 4000 Riverside Drive. 214-632-5766; [kerrvillerenfest.com](http://kerrvillerenfest.com)

**LAMPASAS**

**Wild West Casino Night**

Feb. 15

The evening includes a steak dinner, gambling chips, and a chance to win a travel voucher to a destination of your choice. *Lampasas County Show Barn*, 283 SH 183 N. 512-556-5172; [lampasaschamber.org](http://lampasaschamber.org)

**KERRVILLE**

**Symphony of the Hills**

Feb. 27

The professional symphony orchestra performs concerts that blend classical and contemporary. This month's offering is Chopin and Friends: Romantic Genius. A wine and cheese reception precedes each concert. *Cailloux Theater*, 910 Main St. 830-792-7469; [symphonyofthehills.org](http://symphonyofthehills.org)

**LLANO**

**Creative Getaway Weekend**

Feb. 27-29

Partake in a stimulating weekend that offers instructions on how to unleash your inner creativity, plus a sunset kayak trip on Friday night. *Llano Chamber of Commerce*, 100 Train Station Drive. 325-247-5354; [llanochamber.org](http://llanochamber.org)

**NEW BRAUNFELS**

**Game Day 5K and Tailgate Party**

Feb. 2

Come in your favorite team jersey and burn some calories at this 5K and tailgate party. Earn a football trophy in your age group, enjoy music and food, then head to Mozie's to watch the game. A Kids 1K has been added this year. *Rockin' R River Rides*, 1405 Gruene Road. [athleteguild.com](http://athleteguild.com)

**NEW BRAUNFELS**

**Sweethearts Gospel Brunch with a Texas Twist**

Feb. 9

In the tradition of a New Orleans-style gospel brunch, this event

couples gospel music with a mouth-watering buffet catered by Gristmill River Restaurant and Bar. A complimentary champagne drink and a long stem rose for your sweetheart are included. *Gruene Hall*, 1281 Gruene Road. 830-629-5077; [gruenehall.com](http://gruenehall.com)

**NEW BRAUNFELS**

**Come and Taste It: Meet Texas' Best Winemakers**

Feb. 20

Sample Texas wines and craft brews at The Grapevine in Gruene Historic District. On the third Thursday of each month throughout the year (except January), a featured winemaker showcases three newly released wines, alongside a craft brew handpicked by The Grapevine staff. *The Grapevine*, 1612 Hunter Road. 830-606-0093; [grapevineingruene.com/cometaste.html](http://grapevineingruene.com/cometaste.html)

**SAN MARCOS**

**Valentine's Day Glass Class**

Feb. 14

Create your own glass lily or heart paperweight in a hands-on glass class for Valentine's Day. Enjoy champagne, chocolate-covered strawberries, and appetizers. *Wimberley Glassworks*, 6469 RR 12. 512-393-3316; [wgw.com](http://wgw.com)

**TAYLOR**

**Victorian Valentine Gala**

Feb. 6

Enjoy wine and hors d'oeuvres inside the historic home of former Texas governor Dan Moody. There are prizes for best Valentine's-themed outfit for males, females, and couples categories. *The Moody Museum*, 114 W. Ninth St. 512-352-6364; [moodymuseum.com](http://moodymuseum.com)

**TAYLOR**

**City-Wide Vintage Sale**

Feb. 22-23

Austin's vintage market since 1977 comes to Taylor, with vintage, antique, and repurposed items only. *Williamson County Expo Center*, 5350 Bill Pickett Trail. 512-441-2828; [citywidevintagesale.com](http://citywidevintagesale.com)

**UVALDE**

**Four Square Friday**

Feb. 14

Enjoy late-night shopping, food, live music, and art. *Historic Downtown Uvalde*, North Getty Street. 830-278-4115; [visituvalde.com](http://visituvalde.com)

**WIMBERLEY**

**Storytelling Fest**

Feb. 22

Listen as storytellers share their experiences from the hilarious to

heartwarming. *The Opera House at Pioneer Town*, 333 Wayside Drive. 512-847-2201; [wimberleyarts.org](http://wimberleyarts.org)

**PANHANDLE PLAINS**

**ABILENE**

**Ice Breaker**

Feb. 14-15

Come and watch the best in the west in drag racing. *Abilene Speedway*, 6825 US 80 W. 325-692-8800; [abilenevisitors.com/ice-breaker](http://abilenevisitors.com/ice-breaker)

**ABILENE**

**West Texas Sports and Fitness Expo**

Feb. 14-15

The focus of the 15th annual event is to connect community, families, and people of all ages with local businesses, organizations, sports leagues, and companies pertaining to sports, fitness, and health industries. *Convention Center*, 1100 N. Sixth St. 325-692-2972; [abilenevisitors.com](http://abilenevisitors.com)

**ABILENE**

**Texas Farm, Ranch, and Wildlife Expo**

Feb. 18-19

This one-of-a-kind agribusiness event serves as an opportunity for vendors to interact directly with a combination of farm, ranch, and/or wildlife managers and rural consumers in the Big Country. *Taylor County Expo Center*, 1700 SH 36. 325-677-7241; [abilenevisitors.com](http://abilenevisitors.com)

**ABILENE**

**Abilene Christian University Sing Song**

Feb. 21-22

Over 1,200 ACU students take the stage to compete for best overall show while performing a cappella with original lyrics set to a medley of popular songs. *Abilene Christian University*, 1600 Campus Court. 325-674-4864; [abilenevisitors.com/sing-song-2020](http://abilenevisitors.com/sing-song-2020)

**ABILENE**

**Jerry Herman: The Broadway Legacy Concert**

Feb. 22

The legendary composer and lyricist of *Hello, Dolly*, *Mame*; and other Broadway classics shares his great musical legacy with a new generation of music lovers with the Abilene Philharmonic. *Convention Center*, 1100 N. Sixth St. 325-677-6710; [abilenevisitors.com](http://abilenevisitors.com)



## BIG SPRING

### Big Spring Symphony Concert Feb. 8

The Big Spring Symphony's third concert for the season showcases soprano Nicole Keeling and guest conductor Maestro John Giordano. *Big Spring Municipal Auditorium, 310 E. Third St. 432-816-5196; bigspringsymphony.com*

## LUBBOCK

### Pancake Festival Feb. 22

For the 68th year, the Lubbock Lions Club hosts the largest pancake festival in the world. The event still holds the world record for the most pancakes served in an eight-hour period by a nonprofit organization, with more than 66,000 pancakes made. *Lubbock Memorial Civic Center, 1501 Mac Davis Lane. 806-763-4789; visitlubbock.org*

## LUBBOCK

### Lubbock Symphony Masterworks Series: Ravishing Rachmaninoff Feb. 28-29

Created for cellist Amit Peled's first performance tour of the United States, Rachmaninoff's "Symphony No. 3" heavily features Russian influences. Known for his captivating energy onstage, Peled also brings patrons the chance to enjoy one of the most-played cello concertos around the world, Dvořák's "Cello Concerto," Op. 104, B minor. *Lubbock Memorial Civic Center, 1501 Mac Davis Lane. 806-762-1688; visitlubbock.org*

## SAN ANGELO

### Family Day Lunar New Year Feb. 8

Enjoy free art activities for children and their families. *San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, 1 Love St. 325-653-3333; samfa.org*

## SAN ANGELO

### Play It Again Feb. 16

Come hear the music of Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller, Count Basie, and other big band composers. The concert is performed by the West Texas Jazz Orchestra, a group made up of area high school and junior high band directors; Angelo State University music professors; and other musicians. *San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, 1 Love St. 325-653-3333; samfa.org*

## SAN ANGELO

### Downtown and Cultural District Stroll Feb. 20

Every third Thursday of the month, the San Angelo Museum of Fine

Arts is open and free to the public. *San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, 1 Love St. 325-653-3333; samfa.org*

## SAN ANGELO

### Buffalo Soldier Heritage Day Feb. 23

Celebrate the famed black troops of the Western frontier with a historical talk, displays, and living history demonstrations. *Fort Concho National Historic Landmark, 630 S. Oakes St. 325-481-2730; fortconcho.com*

## SWEETWATER

### Applause Series: Lift Every Voice Feb. 1

Enjoy music with guest artist Leon Turner on the bass. *Sweetwater Municipal Auditorium, 400 Locust St. 325-518-9407; sweetwatertexas.org*

## WICHITA FALLS

### Teen Scholarship Fundraiser Square Dance Feb. 29

Grab a partner and enjoy a night of square dancing for a good cause. Lessons are offered for anyone who may be interested. *Square Dance Land, 812 Travis St. 940-733-2782; squaredancetx.com*

## PINEY WOODS

## HENDERSON

### Our Town

Feb. 21-March 1

Written by Thornton Wilder, this play follows the Webb and Gibbs families as their children fall in love, marry, and eventually, in one of the best scenes in American theater, pass away. *Henderson Civic Theatre, 122 E. Main St. 903-657-2968; hendersoncivictheatre.org*

## HENDERSON

### Mardi Gras Gumbo Cookoff Feb. 22

Presented by the Henderson Main Street advisory board, this event includes all-you-can-eat gumbo, a zydeco band from Louisiana, and a beer and wine garden. *Historic Downtown District, 100 E. Main St. 903-392-8232; hendersontx.us*

## JEFFERSON

### Mardi Gras Upriver Celebration Feb. 21-23

Mardi Gras Upriver is one of the most festive events in Jefferson. The celebration lasts an entire weekend and features parades, bands, food, vendors, a carnival, frosty beverages, and, of course, beads. *Downtown Jefferson. mardigrasupriver.com*

## KILGORE

### Date Movie for Valentine's Day Feb. 14

The Reel East Texas Film Festival hosts a free Valentine's Day date with a romantic movie and champagne at the historic Texan Theater. *Texan Theater, 201 S. Kilgore St. 903-988-4117; facebook.com/reel easttexas*

## LUFKIN

### The Choir of Man Feb. 8

The runaway hit of numerous international music festivals and known across the globe as "the ultimate feel-good show," *The Choir of Man* offers up to 90 minutes of indisputable joy. The concert is set in a working pub (free beer, anyone?) and combines hair-raising harmonies, high-energy dance, and live percussion with foot-stomping choreography. *Temple Theater, 3500 S. First St. 936-633-5454; angelinaarts.org*

## MARSHALL

### One Night in Memphis Feb. 15

The No. 1 tribute to Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, and Jerry Lee Lewis, *One Night in Memphis* relives that one special night when rock 'n' roll got together at Sun Records and jammed. *Memorial City Hall Performance Center, 110 E. Houston. 903-934-7992; memorialcityhall.com*

## PALESTINE

### Mardi Gras on Main Street Feb. 22

Mardi Gras on Main Street is a showcase for Palestine's local flavors, with festivities including free food demonstrations and samples while strolling down Main Street and enjoying the sounds of Cajun music. Then at 5:30 p.m., the Mardi Gras Parade begins. See beautiful floats and grab some beads, candy, and moon pies. *Historic Downtown Palestine, Main Street. visitpalestine.com*

## TYLER

### Stomp Feb. 6

The international percussion sensation has garnered awards and rave reviews. The eight-member troupe uses everything but conventional percussion instruments—matchboxes, wooden poles, brooms, garbage cans, Zippo lighters, and hubcaps—to fill the stage with magnificent rhythms. *UT Tyler Cowan Center, 3900 University Blvd. 903-566-7424; cowancenter.org*

## TYLER

### The Pointer Sisters in Concert Feb. 20

The Pointer Sisters rose from singing at their father's church to achieving worldwide fame, securing a place in pop music history. The group boasts countless Top 20 hits including "Slow Hand," "Jump (For My Love)," "I'm So Excited," and "Fire," plus three Grammys and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. *UT Tyler Cowan Center, 3900 University Blvd. 903-566-7424; cowancenter.org*

## TYLER

### "Cuentos" Performed by David Gonzales Feb. 27

This show paints a vivid picture of the people and the rich cultures of the Spanish-speaking world with colorful tales from the Caribbean, South America, and the Bronx. From the silly antics of the Puerto Rican anti-hero "Juan Bobo" to the mysterious dealings and powers of the Orishas in a suite of Afro-Cuban stories, these tales are filled with memorable characters, fantastic plots, and positive messages for children. *UT Tyler Cowan Center, 3900 University Blvd. 903-566-7424; cowancenter.org*

## TYLER

### Cirque Éloïze's Hotel Feb. 29

Cross the lobby doors and discover the grandiose and poetic universe of *Hotel, Cirque Éloïze's* newest creation that celebrates the group's 25th anniversary. Let acrobatics, theater, dance, and live music guide you through this intimate refuge, inspired by the elegance of the greatest hotels. *UT Tyler Cowan Center, 3900 University Blvd. 903-566-7424; cowancenter.org*

## PRAIRIES AND LAKES

## ARLINGTON

### PBR Global Cup USA Feb. 15-16

This event is the ultimate expression of national pride in professional bull riding, and the sport's most high-profile international competition. The five-nation competition features the world's best bull riders and bulls. It's a high-stakes tournament for the top athletes from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, and the United States, including an all-Native American team. Together they battle for national pride, repre-



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sending their respective nations. AT&T Stadium, 1 AT&T Way. 817-892-4000; [pbr.com](http://pbr.com)

**ARLINGTON**

**Monster Energy Supercross**  
Feb. 22

Experience the most competitive and highest-profile off-road motorcycle racing championship in the world at the Monster Energy Supercross. AT&T Stadium, 1 AT&T Way. 817-892-4000; [supercrosslive.com](http://supercrosslive.com)

**BONHAM**

**Rayburn and the Presidents**  
Feb. 15

This new Presidents Day event for families honors and explores legendary Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn's relationships with eight American presidents, from Woodrow Wilson to John F. Kennedy. *Sam Rayburn House State Historic Site*, 890 SH 56 W. 903-583-5558; [visitsamrayburnhouse.com](http://visitsamrayburnhouse.com)

**BRENHAM**

**Nature's Blessings Quilt Show**  
Feb. 21-22

See area quilters using their talents to benefit the community. There is a boutique, country store, vendors, quilts for sale, charity quilts, a raffle quilt, and door prizes. *Fireman's Training Center*, 1101 US 290. 979-551-0970; [friendshipquiltguild.weebly.com](http://friendshipquiltguild.weebly.com)

**CLEBURNE**

**Matilda the Musical**  
Jan. 31-Feb. 29

Plaza Theatre Company presents *Matilda the Musical*, a stage musical based on Roald Dahl's 1988 children's novel of the same name. *Plaza Theatre Company at Dudley Hall*, 305 S. Anglin St. 817-202-0600; [plaza-theatre.com](http://plaza-theatre.com)

**CLIFTON**

**Brenda Murphy Art Workshop**  
Feb. 8-9

Western artist Brenda Murphy is known for her authentic artwork inspired by real-life ranchers. A graduate of the fine arts program at the University of Texas at Arlington, she shares her award-winning expertise in drawing at this workshop. *Bosque Arts Center*, 215 S. College Hill Drive. 254-675-3728; [bosqueartscenter.org](http://bosqueartscenter.org)

**COLLEGE STATION**

**Steep Canyon Rangers in Concert**  
Feb. 4

Celebrated as one of the most versatile bands on the contemporary music scene, Steep Canyon Rangers has been performing for nearly

20 years and had appearances on *Late Night With Jimmy Fallon*, a hit tour with Steve Martin, and a sold-out visit to College Station in 2011. *Rudder Auditorium, Texas A&M*, 401 Joe Routh Blvd. 979-845-1234; [mscopas.org](http://mscopas.org)

**COLLEGE STATION**

**The Passion of Saint Thomas More**  
Feb. 6

Rather than a literal interpretation of history, *The Passion of Saint Thomas More* is a meditation on More's decision to be true to his convictions and his refusal to agree to Henry VIII's demands. The operatic oratorio has been performed across the United States and Europe to critical acclaim. Artistic director Garrett Fisher leads the Fisher Ensemble in this concert. *St. Thomas' Episcopal Church*, 906 George Bush Drive. 979-862-5766; [fisherensemble.org/garrett](http://fisherensemble.org/garrett)

**CORSICANA**

**Steven Curtis Chapman in Concert**  
Feb. 22-23

Multi-Grammy-winning Christian artist Steven Curtis Chapman performs for the first time in Corsicana at the historic, intimate Palace Theatre. *Palace Theatre*, 112 W. Sixth Ave. 903-874-7792; [corsicanapalace.com](http://corsicanapalace.com)

**DALLAS**

**Loving and Loving**  
Feb. 5-23

Inspired by the true love story between Richard and Mildred Loving, an interracial couple from Virginia who were arrested in 1958 for being married, this play examines the landmark Supreme Court case, *Loving v. Virginia*. Beginning in the present day and flashing back to the 1950s and '60s, this historical story is told from a 21st-century perspective and puts a human face on this famous court case and the ongoing legacy in multiracial America. *Bishop Arts Theatre Center*, 215 S. Tyler St. 214-948-0716; [bishopartstheatre.org/theatre-series](http://bishopartstheatre.org/theatre-series)

**DALLAS**

**Madame Bovary**  
Feb. 12-March 8

The tragic story of a woman who longed for a life she could never fully achieve comes alive through Adrienne Kennedy's innovative transformation for the stage, which tells Emma Bovary's story through the eyes of her daughter

and brings a fresh and exciting approach to this classic novel. *Undermain Theatre*, 3200 Main St. 214-747-5515; [undermain.org](http://undermain.org)

**ELGIN**  
**Hatitude**  
Feb. 1

Celebrate Black History Month with a program about the unique contributions of African Americans in Elgin. *Elgin Public Library*, 404 N. Main St. [elgintx.com](http://elgintx.com)

**ELGIN**  
**Sip, Shop & Stroll**  
Feb. 13

Sip a little wine and shop as you stroll through the stores in Historic Downtown Elgin. Find diverse merchandise, eclectic decor, artwork by local artists, and live music in many of the venues. *Historic Downtown Elgin*. [elgintx.com](http://elgintx.com)

**ENNIS**

**Forever**  
Feb. 7-23  
War is hell. Patience has its virtue. But love is forever. Set in 1941, this comedy-drama was written and directed by artistic director Bill Rhoten and is the sequel to *My First Date*. *Theatre Rocks!*, 505 NW Main St. 972-878-5126; [theatrerocks.com](http://theatrerocks.com)

**FORT WORTH**  
**Saddle Up: Texas Ranching Tradition**  
Through Feb. 16

Jump in the saddle and experience real Texas ranchers who meet modern challenges while preserving their traditions. Through photographs and video, see hard-working cowboys and cowgirls ride, rope, and rodeo the same way their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents did before them. Just like their forebearers, today's family ranchers wrangle livestock, battle weather, and study markets to stay on the rugged landscape they love. *Cattle Raisers Museum*, 1600 Gendy St. 817-332-8551; [cattleraisersmuseum.org](http://cattleraisersmuseum.org)

**FORT WORTH**  
**Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo**  
Jan. 17-Feb. 8

A fun-filled extravaganza rich in Western tradition, the legendary Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo, held at the new Dickies Arena, is the place to be. Enjoy exciting rodeo action, livestock, horse shows, and a number of other experiences including interactive, kid-friendly activities, 4 acres of shopping, the

Moo-seum Experience presented by Central Market, the All Western Parade, live music, carnival games, and great food. *Dickies Arena*, 1911 Montgomery St. 817-877-2599; [fwssr.com](http://fwssr.com)

**FORT WORTH**  
**Cowtown Marathon**  
Feb. 28-March 1

This is currently the second largest multi-event race in Texas, with distances for everyone, including a kids 5K and adults 5K, 10K, half marathon, marathon, all-new marathon relay, and the ultra marathon. Runners and walkers of all athletic abilities are welcome. *Will Rogers Memorial Center*, 3401 W. Lancaster Ave. 817-207-0224; [cowtownmarathon.org](http://cowtownmarathon.org)

**FRISCO**  
**WOGA Classic**  
Jan. 31-Feb. 2

World Olympic Gymnastics Academy hosts top teams from the United States and around the world at this annual competition. *Ford Center at The Star*, 9 Cowboy Way. 972-712-9642; [woga.net](http://woga.net)

**GLEN ROSE**  
**Sweetheart Safari Dinner and Tour**  
Feb. 8 and 15

Impress your sweetheart with a romantic dinner and evening wildlife tour. After an open-air vehicle tour, return to camp and head into the glass-walled pavilion for a candlelight dinner including tea, coffee, and dessert. The pavilion overlooks one of the primary watering holes in the main pasture. *Fossil Rim Wildlife Center*, 3022 CR 2010. 254-897-2960; [fossilrim.org](http://fossilrim.org)

**GLEN ROSE**  
**Beautiful Biomes**  
Feb. 10

Fossil Rim loves to celebrate the beautiful variety of biodiversity found on the planet. There are four essential "flavors" of biodiversity, called biomes: deserts, forests, grasslands, and the aquatic biome. Join in to explore the features and species of each and, as always, end by enjoying a full guided tour. *Fossil Rim Wildlife Center*, 1789 CR 2009. 254-897-2960; [fossilrim.org](http://fossilrim.org)

**GLEN ROSE**  
**Amazing Africa!**  
Feb. 25

Explore the geography and wildlife of Africa, peek in on the cultures, and consider the conservation issues of the homeland to most of the exotic species. Discover key



players and the dynamic balance of the savanna ecosystem. *Fossil Rim Wildlife Center*, 1789 CR 2009. 254-897-2960; fossilrim.org

## GRANBURY

### The Producers

Feb. 21-March 22

The names Bialystock and Bloom should strike terror and hysteria in anyone familiar with Mel Brooks' classic cult comedy film, which was adapted into a Tony Award-winning Broadway musical. *The Producers* set the standard for modern, outrageous, in-your-face theatrical humor. *Granbury Opera House*, 133 E. Pearl St. 817-579-0952; granburysymphony.com

## GRAND PRAIRIE

### Trolls Live!

Feb. 7-9

Get ready for a hair-raising adventure when *Trolls* characters come to life. *The Theatre at Grand Prairie*, 1001 Performance Place. 972-854-5050; theatregp.com

## IRVING

### Irving Symphony Orchestra: "Rachmaninoff...With a Twist!"

Feb. 22

The Irving Symphony Orchestra brings to the stage one of the most versatile young ballet companies in the DFW metroplex and one of Europe's most notable pianists. From waltzes to movie music and concluding with one of the most famous piano concertos ever, this concert will thrill you. *Irving Arts Center*, 3333 N. MacArthur Blvd. 972-252-2787; irvingsymphony.com

## LA GRANGE

### Remember the Classics

Feb. 1

Enjoy dinner and a movie at the historic Casino Hall. Elvis comes alive on the big screen while you enjoy a casino setting. *Historic Casino Hall*, 254 N. Jefferson St. 979-968-3017; visitlagrangetx.com

## LA GRANGE

### Radney Foster in Concert

Feb. 7-8

A songwriter with eight No. 1 hits and author of *For You To See The Stars*, a book of short stories that accompanies his album of the same name, Foster plays two shows at one of the nation's finest listening rooms. These shows include readings along with music. *The Bugle Boy*, 1051 N. Jefferson St. 979-968-9944; thebugleboy.org

## LA GRANGE

### Gina Chavez in Concert

Feb. 15

Bilingual folk-pop artist and 10-time Austin Music Awards winner, Gina Chavez tours internationally as a cultural ambassador with the U.S. State Department. With limited seating in this converted WWII Army barrack, there is not a bad seat in the house. *The Bugle Boy*, 1051 N. Jefferson St. 979-968-9944; thebugleboy.org

## LA GRANGE

### La Grange Uncorked

Feb. 15

Try wines from more than 15 different wineries and plenty of tasty treats. *Fayette County Courthouse Square*, 151 N. Washington St. 979-968-3017; lagrangeuncorked.com

## MCKINNEY

### Krewe of Barkus Mardi Gras Dog Parade

Feb. 23

All dogs and dog lovers are invited to historic downtown McKinney for a dog parade, costume contest, and dog vendor expo. Expect more than 200 dogs and their humans dressed in costumes based on this year's theme, A Barkus Salute to Popular Music: Puppies Go Pop Star. *Downtown McKinney*, 111 N. Tennessee St. 972-547-2660; mckinneytexas.org

## MESQUITE

### Be Mine at the Park

Feb. 8

Love is in the air at Opal Lawrence Historical Park. Come out for True Love Tours of the 1890s Lawrence home and family barn, snap a memorable photo with a vintage-styled vignette backdrop, and pose with your loved one(s) at Candid Cameos. Lastly, the month of love would not be complete without sweet treats, chocolates, and sparkling beverages. *Opal Lawrence Historical Park*, 701 E. Kearney St. 972-216-6468; visitmesquitetx.com

## MESQUITE

### Mesquite Symphony Orchestra

Feb. 8

The volunteer symphony orchestra, in its 32nd season, presents its February concert, "Requiem." *Mesquite Arts Center*, 1527 N. Galloway Ave. 972-216-6444; mesquitesymphony.org

## MESQUITE

### Guess Who's Coming To Dinner

Feb. 14-March 1

Join Mesquite Arts Theatre as the company presents the classic play about an interracial couple and the reaction of their families to their

engagement. Performances take place in the Black Box Theatre. *Mesquite Arts Center*, 1527 N. Galloway Ave. 972-216-6444; visitmesquitetx.com

## NOCONA

### Mardi Gras Nocona Style

Feb. 20-23

Visit downtown Nocona for three days of family- and dog-friendly fun. Enjoy food, parades, music, crawfish, gumbo, and vendors. *Mardi Gras Headquarters*, 213 Clay St. 940-825-3526; nocona.org

## PLANO

### 9 to 5 the Musical

Feb. 21-March 1

With music and lyrics by Dolly Parton and book by Patricia Resnick, this musical is based on the hit 1980 movie about three female coworkers pushed to their limits. The trio concocts a plan to get even with the sexist, egotistical, lying, hypocritical bigot they call their boss. Set in the late 1970s, this hilarious story of friendship and revenge in the Rolodex era is outrageously funny and thought-provoking and even a little romantic. *Willow Bend Center of the Arts*, 6121 W. Park Blvd. 972-422-2575; ntparep.org

## RICHARDSON

### Mandy Harvey with UT-Dallas Choirs in Concert

Feb. 8

A vocal music education major at Colorado State University, Mandy Harvey lost her residual hearing at age 18. After pursuing other career options, including education, she returned to music, and in 2017, she placed fourth in *America's Got Talent*. *Eisemann Center*, 2351 Performance Drive. 972-744-4650; eisemanncenter.com

## RICHARDSON

### Renée Taylor: My Life on a Diet

Feb. 14-16

The Oscar-nominated and Emmy Award-winning writer and actor takes the stage in the North Texas premiere of her autobiographical solo show. Co-written and originally directed by Taylor's late husband, Joseph Bologna, the show is a look back on a lifetime of memorable roles in Hollywood and on Broadway, as well as a number of fad diets. *Charles W. Eisemann Center for Performing Arts*, 2351 Performance Drive. 972-744-4650; eisemanncenter.com

## RICHARDSON

### Jeffrey Siegel's Keyboard Conversations: Mistresses and Masterpieces

Feb. 17

This informative program focuses on the composers Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Mendelssohn, and Bartok. *Eisemann Center*, 2351 Performance Drive. 972-744-4650; eisemanncenter.com

## RICHARDSON

### Ballets with a Twist: Cocktail Hour The Show

Feb. 28

From a blonde bombshell sursperpy to a legendary warrior, a Hawaiian island beauty to a rockabilly rebel, dancing drinks from around the globe take the stage in *Cocktail Hour: The Show* by Ballets with a Twist. This dazzling production from New York City brings the mai tai to dance. *Eisemann Center*, 2351 Performance Drive. 972-744-4650; eisemanncenter.com

## SEGUIN

### Third Thursday

Feb. 20

Head to downtown Seguin for an evening of shopping and store specials. Each month features a different theme and shops stay open until 8 p.m. *Various locations*, 201 S. Austin St. 830-401-5000

## SHERMAN

### Main Street Mardi Gras

Feb. 22

Shops and restaurants in downtown Sherman are open for the town's annual Main Street Mardi Gras celebration. Themed foods, drinks, and live music are featured throughout the historic neighborhood. *Downtown Sherman*, 100 W. Houston St. 903-892-7230; shermantx.org

## SHERMAN

### Sherman Symphony Orchestra Knoxville: Summer of 1915

Feb. 29

This concert may be at the very end of winter but the songs bring a taste of summer. Fun, light, bouncy, and full of joy, Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* will have you whistling on your way home. *Kidd-Key Auditorium*, 400 N. Elm St. 903-267-3227; shermansymphony.com

## TEMPLE

### Geek Out Day

Feb. 1

Want to show off your geeky side? Come out to Temple Railroad and Heritage Museum for this family day. Visitors are encour-



aged to dress up as their favorite superhero, cartoon, or video game character. *Temple Railroad and Heritage Museum*, 315 W. Ave. B. 254-298-5172; [templerrhm.org](http://templerrhm.org)

**WACO**

**MidTex Farm, Ranch, and Garden Show**

Feb. 1  
Visitors have the opportunity to view top exhibits of the newest farm and ranch equipment, technologies, seed, chemicals, and agriculture-related services, plus gardening demonstrations. *Extraco Events Center*, 4601 Bosque Blvd. 254-776-1660; [wacochamber.com/mid-tex-farm-ranch-garden-show](http://wacochamber.com/mid-tex-farm-ranch-garden-show)

**SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS**

**EDINBURG**

**Fiesta Edinburg and Parade**

Feb. 20-23  
Edinburg Chamber's largest annual celebration is not only a big party. It also honors an important moment in the city's history. City leaders founded the event more than 40 years ago to commemorate Edinburg as the county seat. Major attractions—such as the Heart of America Carnival, regional food, arts and crafts, and top-notch entertainment—draw big crowds to this annual community festival in South Texas. *Edinburg Municipal Park*, 714 S. Raul Longoria Road. 956-383-4974; [edinburg.com](http://edinburg.com)

**LAREDO**

**Laredo Birding Festival**

Feb. 5-8  
Laredo is located at a crossroads of the migratory paths of eastern, western, and neotropical birds. This festival highlights more than 200 of these species. It also provides birders a look at the beautiful scenery along the Rio Grande, access to historic South Texas ranches of the area, and field trips led by professional guides. *La Posada Hotel*, 1000 Zaragoza St. 956-718-1063; [laredobirdingfestival.org](http://laredobirdingfestival.org)

**SAN ANTONIO**

**Stampede 5K Run/Walk**

Feb. 1  
An event for the whole family, the Stampede 5K Run/Walk ends at historic La Villita. Participants and visitors can enjoy live music and food before the Western Heritage Parade gets underway. *La Villita Historic Arts Village*, 418 Villita St. 210-225-5851; [sarodeo.com](http://sarodeo.com)

**SAN ANTONIO**

**Western Heritage Parade and Cattle Drive**

Feb. 1  
Step back in time and celebrate Texas at this kickoff to the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo. The parade route runs through the streets of downtown San Antonio and features participants who represent the heritage of the Lone Star State and the Old West, including the Fort Hood 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Sam Houston Caisson, Texas Heritage Riders, and a herd of Texas Longhorns. *Downtown San Antonio*. 210-225-5851; [sarodeo.com](http://sarodeo.com)

**SAN ANTONIO**

**San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo**

Feb. 6-23  
Established in 1949, the annual San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo has grown to be one of the largest events in the city, with 2 million visitors a year. Along with the annual carnival and selection of food and beverages, there's concert entertainment from Keith Urban, Brad Paisley, and many others. *AT&T Center Grounds*, 3201 E. Houston St. 210-225-5851; [sarodeo.com](http://sarodeo.com)

**SAN ANTONIO**

**Texas Trail Roundup**

Feb. 21-23  
Put on your walking shoes and get ready to explore San Antonio on foot. This three-day event offers a choice of walking tours in some of the city's greatest historic locations, including La Villita, the Alamo, the River Walk, and the Spanish Missions. *Various locations*. [texastrailroundup.org/2020-walks/](http://texastrailroundup.org/2020-walks/)

**SAN ANTONIO**

**Commemoration of the Battle of the Alamo**

Feb. 23-March 6  
Join Texas history enthusiasts at this event that honors the anniversary of the 1836 Battle of the Alamo with 13 days of special events and programming. *The Alamo*, 300 Alamo Plaza. 210-225-1391; [thealamo.org/visit/events/commemoration/](http://thealamo.org/visit/events/commemoration/)

**WESLACO**

**Alfresco Weslaco**

Feb. 20  
Along with music, art, and a classic car show, downtown businesses stay open late alongside more than 60 vendors lining the street. *Downtown Historic Weslaco*, South Texas Boulevard. 956-969-0838; [facebook.com/alfrescoweslaco](http://facebook.com/alfrescoweslaco)

THE DAYTRIPPER'S TOP 5



Crockett

*A place for historic sips and trips*

BY CHET GARNER

Few Texas heroes are as revered as Davy Crockett, the coonskin-cap-wearing, rifle-swinging, fiddle-playing frontiersman from Tennessee who built his legend in the Lone Star State. The East Texas town of Crockett bears his name and tells some amazing stories about him. Throw in a little music and a whole lot of nature, and you've got a day trip that's sure to quench your thirst for adventure.

**David Crockett Spring**

No trip to Crockett is complete without a stop at the town's namesake spring. Davy stopped here on his way to the Alamo and took the most famous sip of water in Texas history. A mural and marker commemorate the occasion. I'm pretty sure the municipal water fountain wasn't there in the 1830s. Nonetheless, visitors can retrace Davy's steps and quench their own super-size thirst.

**The Moosehead Cafe**

Crockett is the seat of a county bearing the name of another hero, Sam Houston. On the Houston County Courthouse square, you'll find a restaurant with enough food to feed an entire herd of moose. (Or is it meese?) Sit at the old diner counter and order up the daily lunch special, which ranges from fried chicken to smothered hamburger steak. The Reuben sandwich comes with a zesty house-made secret sauce.

**Davy Crockett National Forest**

Just a short drive east, you'll find the same pines that once shaded Davy. This national forest spans 160,000 acres of pristine East Texas landscape. Start at the Ratcliff Lake Recreation Area, where you can swim or hike on the 20-mile Four C Trail. If you prefer a different mode of transportation through the woods, check out the Piney Creek Horse Trail or the Neches-Davy Crockett Paddling Trail.

**Mission Tejas State Park**

This beautiful park offers a great opportunity to enjoy both the natural and human histories of Texas. You'll find plenty of trails but also a reconstruction of Mission San Francisco de los Tejas, the first Spanish mission in Texas, built in the 1690s. It doesn't take much imagination to envision the woods bustling with Spanish monks as they sought to stake their claim to Texas before the French. The mission was abandoned in 1693, and in 1731 it was relocated to San Antonio, where it became Mission Espada.

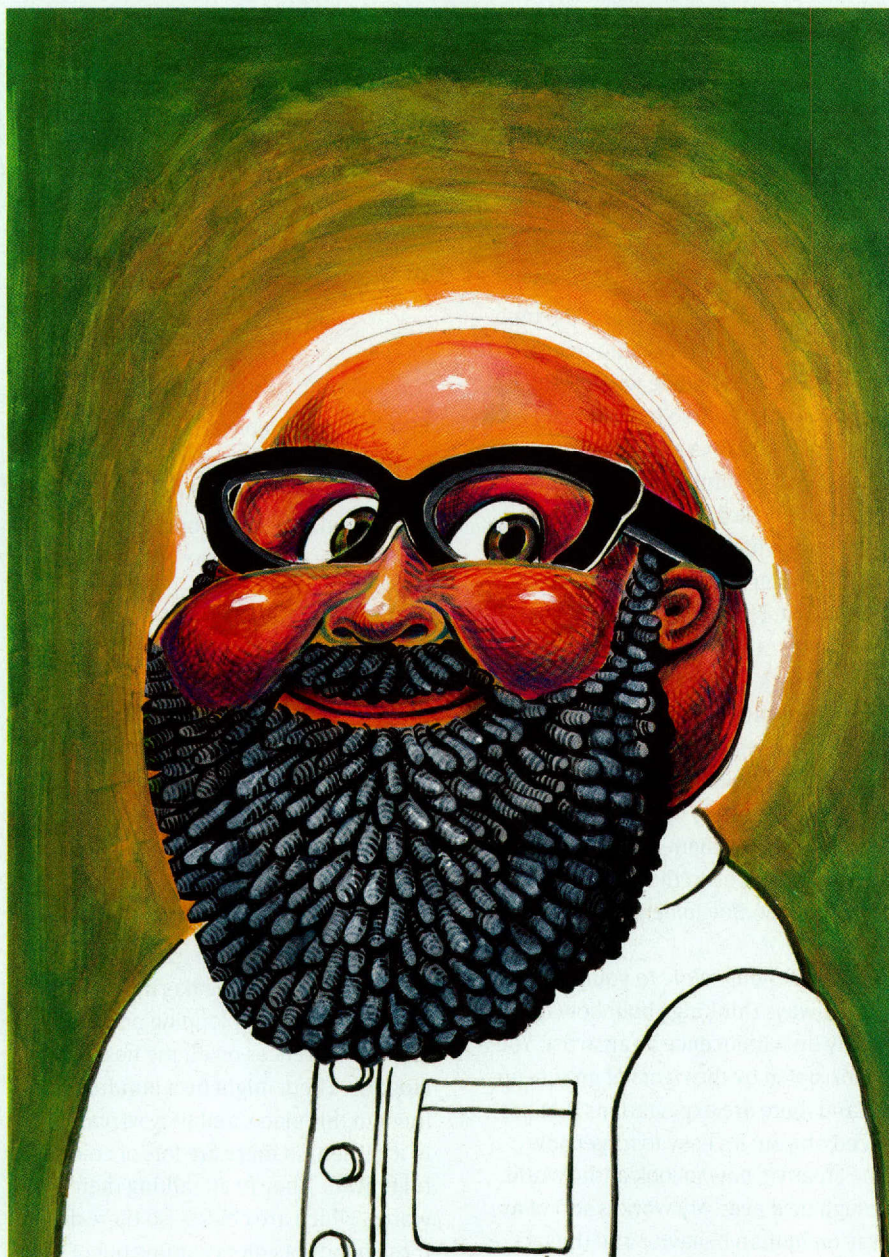
**Camp Street Cafe & Store**

Dive into Crockett's musical side along the famous South Third Street, where artists like Lightnin' Hopkins and Blind Lemon Jefferson once played for tips. During the 1930s through '60s, many famous blues musicians passed through Crockett on the "chitlin' circuit." Join the locals for an evening of live music and community at this BYOB listening room that really isn't a "café" at all. If you're lucky, you might even get to hear owner Pipp Gillette do some pickin' on the banjo and jangling of his rib bones.

**So whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path, I hope to see you on the road.**

*Chet Garner is the host of The Daytripper® travel show on PBS. To view the Crockett episode visit [thedaytripper.com](http://thedaytripper.com). Follow along on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @chetripper.*





# Torpedo Boy to the Rescue

Houston artist Trenton Doyle Hancock's childhood in northeast Texas kindled his creative fire

By Michael Hoinski

**T**he mixed-media artist Trenton Doyle Hancock stands inside his cluttered warehouse studio, in the Acres Homes neighborhood of Houston. He is flipping through drawings of the graphic novel he began creating a couple of years ago while living in Berlin. It's a customarily hot summer day, with no A/C, and beads of sweat form on his bespectacled face as he explains the storyline for Chapter 2: something totally outlandish and impossible to follow, yet deeply felt and mesmerizing to hear, about veganism as a form of religion.

The graphic novel is a deep-dive into *Torpedo Boy*, the Mounds, and other characters Hancock uses to play out morality tales in his artworks. In addition to drawing and painting, he's dipped into opera (*Cult of Color: Call to Color*, a collaboration with Ballet Austin) and created his own toy line, Moundverse Infants. Hancock, 45, was born in Oklahoma City, but when he was less than a week old, his single mom moved them to her northeast Texas hometown of Paris, where he grew up in an evangelical Baptist family. Hancock says his art is a reaction to this religious influence, an ongoing narrative he describes as exploring themes of good versus evil.

In 2019, Hancock was awarded the Texas Medal of Arts. His pieces have been exhibited around the world, and last year he had his biggest show ever, a Willy Wonkian installation at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. Hancock also has a piece at AT&T Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys. The site-specific mural, titled *From a Legend to a Choir* and measuring 110 feet long and four stories tall, is a pop art tableau densely packed with Hancock's characters awash in a rainbow of color. As its description explains, the work "evokes the biblical Garden of Eden and the psychedelic Summer of Love."



**Q: What was it like growing up in East Texas?**

**A:** I was a shy kid, but I found my confidence through art. From the time they gave me a pencil and paper, I was drawing. People always have called me an artist, even before I knew what that term meant. Art got me into a lot of trouble, but it got me out of a lot of trouble, too. Because once you do that party trick, people are like, oh my God, wow; I'm going to leave you alone. You're to be protected. We're not going to beat you up.

**Q: How would you characterize Paris?**

**A:** Most people know it because of the movie—*Paris, Texas*—but it's nothing like that movie. That movie is made through the eyes of a German, Wim Wenders, who had this romantic myth of the West in his sights. He came over looking for this barren place with Sergio Leone music, perhaps, in the background. Paris is actually very lush and green.

**Q: How is it socioeconomically?**

**A:** I went to a school that was half-white, half-black. Paris is separated by a train track, and the more affluent people are on one side, the factory workers and mechanics are on the other side. And we were on the mechanics' side of things. We were middle class. My stepdad never went to college but worked like six jobs. My mother did go to college. She was a teacher—taught for 40 years.

**Q: What did you do besides making art?**

**A:** It's a rural town so I was outside a lot. You're always looking for kids to play with—throw a ball or go adventuring in the woods, or do stuff like catch crawdads out of the holes in the ground or the muddy ditches. I was a very stereotypical kid with a stick going outside and using it as a sword. A lot of imagination there.

**Q: How do you describe your art?**

**A:** I've created a world that is very specific. It answers to itself, and it's a history that builds on itself. It's called The

Moundverse. For the uninitiated, I say, imagine *The Lord of the Rings* meets Dr. Seuss.

**Q: Are there any autobiographical elements?**

**A:** I'd say it's mostly autobiographical, with names changed to protect the innocent. It started with this character called Torpedo Boy that I made when I was 10 years old—just a schoolboy in Paris. Torpedo Boy is kind of a symbiote. His real name is Boo Earlinius. He's a spirit that doesn't really have a physical form. He has to attach himself to a mortal being. That character stuck with me up until now. At first, I thought he was the center of things, and now I realize it's this other character called The Mound—this innocent creature that's this mutant that lives in the forest. And Torpedo Boy, I figured out later on that he's the protector of these creatures—the Mounds—because they can't defend themselves, really. So, the powers that be in the heavens sent down Torpedo Boy to help out.

**Q: How does this relate to your life?**

**A:** I'm always thinking about how to protect my own innocence as an artist. You get corrupted by the rigors of grown-up life, and there are expectations that are placed on you. It's easy to forget how to be creative, how to look at the world through new eyes. My work is sort of an essay on human behavior and the fact that there's always potential for negative interaction and positive interaction, and there's this whole spectrum in between. If you break it down in psychological terms, it deals with trying to create an alternate space for all of those things to play out, so that I can look at it and learn from my own work.

**Q: How did religion inform you as you were growing up?**

**A:** In the mid-'80s, my folks had such a flair, specifically my mom and grandmother, with the Christian stuff, that they burned all of our toys, like made us

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Trenton Doyle Hancock is one of 25 artists featured at AT&T Stadium in Arlington with his mural *From a Legend to a Choir*. Hancock's work is also in the permanent collections of the Dallas Museum of Art; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. [trentondoylehancock.com](http://trentondoylehancock.com)

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march them to a burning barrel behind the house and dump all the He-Man toys in there. They thought there were demons inside the toys. For them, it's super real. All my cousins, they've started their own churches and ministries. In some ways, I was expected to go that direction. So, for me, what I do is going just as hard and just as fast and furious as they're doing, but I'm creating my own version of Jesus and the saints—and value in life.

**Q: What's happening in your piece at Cowboys stadium?**

**A:** You're looking at a bunch of baby Mounds. One might have a kitchen sink for a head, another one has a football player's head, and one has my head. I'm just going through plopping pop-culture references on all the heads of the Mounds. There might be a hundred of them in this piece, and they're planted in a garden, so there are lots of colorful flowers. They're all talking their first words, which are colors—so there are these bands of colors coming out of their mouths. It's a really energetic piece. I don't think it's a work that people expect to see going to a football stadium, to go get their hot dog. They're just like, whoa, what is that? People that normally wouldn't go to museums see the art in that collection, and that's what I've always wanted—the democracy of art. ■

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# VINTAGE

BY TRACES OF TEXAS



## On the Square

SAN AUGUSTINE, 1943

**F**rom 1935 to 1944, the Farm Security Administration dispatched photographers across the country to document American life in agricultural and suburban areas. The collection represents a photographic legacy unmatched in American history, capturing the plain-spoken rhythms of daily life with grace and intimacy. John Vachon snapped this shot in April 1943 of two men conversing on San Augustine's historic square. Roughly 10 miles from the Louisiana border, San Augustine is one of Texas' oldest communities, established as part of Mexico in 1832. Timber, farming, and county government have sustained the town over the decades. These men, unidentified in Vachon's notes, are sitting in front of the 1919 San Augustine County Jail, which was restored in 2017 as a law enforcement museum and Texana research library. To the right is the 1927 San Augustine County Courthouse, which was restored in 2010. 

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*Know of any fascinating vintage Texas photographs? Send copies or ideas to [tracesoftxphotos@gmail.com](mailto:tracesoftxphotos@gmail.com).*





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