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EDITOR'S
NOTE



Writer George Getschow (far right) and his family visit Lipscomb in the Panhandle.

The Simple Life

In the hinterland of the Texas Panhandle, the tiny town of Lipscomb has managed to hold on to a way of life that has largely disappeared across the country. Contributing writer George Getschow, who visited four times over the last year to capture life in Lipscomb—population 44—for our annual Small Towns Issue, says he felt like he was on the wild frontier of Texas. “The people who live there have learned to endure,” the Dallas-based writer says. “They get along with each other because they have to—they’re survivalists. But they also go out of their way to make sure everyone’s OK. They define what it means to be a good neighbor.”

When someone heads out to buy groceries, Getschow relates, they buy for three or four weeks and often plan the trip with their neighbors. With no ATM or grocery store—the nearest Walmart is 75 miles away—they barter among themselves for needed items. During the pandemic, one resident walked through the town in the mornings, knocking on doors to check on her neighbors.

In a town of so few, each person is vital, and everyone has a role to play. But it’s not merely about surviving. Town

poet laureate Pam Haines writes poems for her fellow residents when they are going through hard times and when there’s something to celebrate. She also turned an abandoned room in the former schoolhouse into a public library, where anyone can check out books on the honor system. Since everyone knows and looks out for each other, kids often roam free and spend their days fishing at a nearby creek, building rafts, and generally enjoying the sort of liberty that eludes many of us in our overcommitted and overscheduled lives.

“The hallmark of my trips there was seeing the freedom of how they live,” Getschow says. “Kids are allowed to be kids; adults are allowed to be quirky and weird. Nobody says, ‘You can’t paint your house pink.’ People just accept one another, and that’s an act of freedom.”

Emily Roberts Stone

EMILY ROBERTS STONE
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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AUGUST

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Small Towns to Visit Now

Bastrop, Port Isabel, and Eden
lead our annual list of 10 small towns
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Fifty years ago, Larry McMurtry's
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Hollywood to North Texas.

By Michael J. Mooney

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This Happy Place

Lipscomb is a utopia for the 44
people who call the tiny
Panhandle town home.

By George Getschow
Photographs by Kenny Braun



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Behind the Story



Near the end of their reporting trip for “Beyond the Tail” (Page 66), writer Laurel Miller and photographer Eric W. Pohl expressed their disappointment over not capturing a photograph of a wild alligator for Miller’s story. That’s when Lee Wullenwaber, who co-owns Rodair Bar & Grill in Port Arthur, exclaimed, “Well shoot—we can get ya a gator in five minutes!” Within a literal five minutes, according to Miller, Wullenwaber and his friend called saying they’d caught a gator, though it escaped before Pohl could get a good shot of it. “It really showed that level of hospitality that both Southerners and Cajuns are known for,” says Miller, an Austin-based food writer who hadn’t enjoyed cooked gator until reporting this story. “Eric and I had both had alligator before, but we’d both had bad experiences,” she says. “Eating this fresh, wild meat cooked perfectly—it was *really* good.”

Featured Contributors



Melanie Grizzel

The Austin-based photographer enjoys capturing small-town life, like she did in “Bringing Back Brownwood” (Page 30). “Being able to spend a couple of days to immerse myself with the culture and the people and getting to know what they think makes their town so special is both an honor and a treat,” Grizzel says. “In the case of Brownwood, it’s the people. Brownwood’s town slogan is ‘Feels Like Home,’ and it really does.” Her work has appeared in *The New York Times* and *People* magazine.



Sergio Troncoso

Troncoso wrote “Dust to Dust” (Page 14) about returning home to Ysleta post-pandemic and reuniting with his mother. “The people give meaning to the land,” Troncoso says, “but to capture that meaning we need to patiently hear all of their stories. That’s why I always return to Ysleta on the eastside of El Paso—to listen.” Troncoso teaches at the “ale Writers’ Workshop and is president of the Texas Institute of Letters. Most recently he edited *Nepantla Familias: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature on Families in Between Worlds*, and his adventure novel *Nobody’s Pilgrims* (Cinco Puntos Press) will be published in 2022.

Photo: Eric W. Pohl (top)

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(\$39.95 foreign).

For letters to the editor, write to letters

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BLACK PUMAS

A musician with dreadlocks is performing on stage, wearing a dark jacket and pants. He is in the foreground, looking towards the camera. Behind him, another musician is playing a keyboard. The stage is lit with blue and purple lights. In the foreground, a large barrel is visible, which is the 'Don't mess with Texas' logo. The barrel is white with a red bottom and has the text 'Don't mess with Texas' written on it. The background shows a stage with various musical equipment, including a keyboard and amplifiers. The overall atmosphere is that of a live music performance.

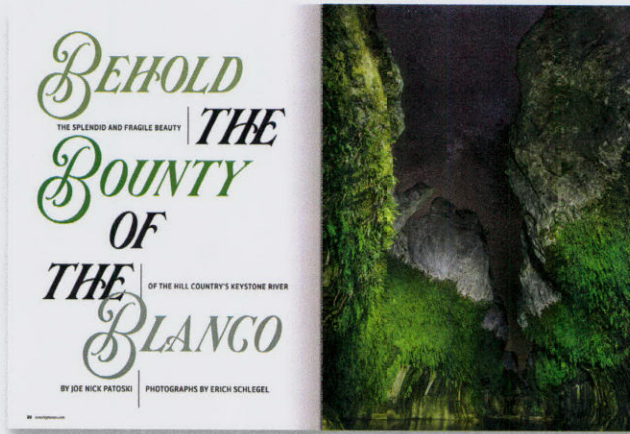
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Photo by Renee Dominguez

MERGE



Erich Schlegel's photograph of the Blanco River's Narrows is simply stunning. We're out-of-staters planning on moving to Texas soon, and your magazine has caused us to look forward to it all the more.
 Wilma Dyer, Canon City, Colorado

50 Years at Jacob's Well

I went there in the mid-'70s and scuba dived with some friends ["Bottoms Up," July]. We just parked and walked through the field to get there. No people or fences.

Mark Tooley, Denison

I remember diving this well in the late '70s. Beautiful memory.

@deshotelsharon

On the Blanco

The author left me wanting to further explore this Texas gem ["Behold the Bounty of the Blanco," July]. I particularly appreciated the section about wastewater impacts on this and other Hill Country streams.

@rking4drivers

Let the River Run

Great spread of the Blanco ["Behold the Bounty of the Blanco," July]. I grew up in Sabine County, so my trotlining was on that very powerful river. After I left and went to UT, they tamed it with the Toledo Bend Dam. But my favorite river is the San Gabriel. From 1950 through at least 1963, I spent some of every summer on that river, about a mile west of the Circleville Store. Those are some of the fondest memories of my life.

Joe D. Milner, Austin

Big Pines, Big History

The article about Big Pines Lodge brought back memories from when the eating establishment had an outdoor bathroom and a grease-spattered kitchen ["Lake-side Lounge," July]. The Williamson family built indoor bathrooms and added unique gifts, hats, and novelty items. Mr. Williamson sold firearms and ammunition in the restaurant. Catfish, frog legs, and even great steaks were on the menu. Mrs. Williamson commanded the cash

register and knew all the area regulars who came to eat. Great history!

Jim Bates, Marshall

A Thousand Words

Thank you for your latest June and July publications. I have to admit that I always look at the pictures first in *Texas Highways*, and once again your great covers and photos have drawn me inside to explore the treasures of our state that you are offering up this summer. June's issue enticed us to return to Galveston, one of our longtime favorite towns, and July's celebration of the Blanco, Jacob's Well, and the Blue Hole brought back many happy memories. I, too, give a thumbs up to the personal stories that you have been running. Who wouldn't be interested in knowing more about "The Oyster Prince" [June] and Mariano Martinez's marvelous invention ["Frozen in Time," July]?

Vera Wiatt, Spicewood

Stranger Than Fiction

My compliments on "Crashed and Dashed on the Texas Coast" [June], the insightful

article by David Theis, and the comments of history professor Stephen Hardin. I am the author of a work of historical fiction titled *Thirteen Rivers, the Last Voyage of La Belle* based on factual events of the La Salle expedition. Also, thank you for your promotion of the Bob Bullock Museum in Austin, a treasure which should be on every Texan's bucket list.

Ruth Davis, Palestine

Vacay Heyday

The Galveston I remember stems from my childhood memories in the 1940s. Daddy would always rent a raft to take us little ones out on the waves. One summer our cabin, on stilts, was on the beach below the seawall. What a treat it was to just go down the stairs and be there on the beach! Our vacation week was never complete until we rode the ferry to Port Bolivar and back. I also remember the beautiful oleanders, and the cannons facing out to sea, and driving by the Hotel Galvez and the Bishop's Palace.

Ellen Rogers, Palm Bay, Florida

Painting the Town

Dave Shafer couldn't resist grabbing this photograph while shooting for "The Ghosts of Archer City" (Page 46) in the North Texas town, which is located 25 miles south of Wichita Falls. "On stories I'm shooting, I'm always looking for that unique angle or moment that is different and totally my vision," Shafer says. The image includes Archer City's sole traffic signal at State Highway 79 and Main Street. The mural at the forefront is the result of a 2019 community fundraising project that allowed participants to purchase a portion of the wall to paint. As people colored in their squares, the full artwork was slowly revealed.



Welcome to





Leakey

In the scenic Frio River valley, Mama Chole's serves up Tex-Mex and camaraderie

By Omar L. Gallaga



JIMMY AND ALMA
Albarado have run
Mama Chole's since they
opened the restaurant
in 1998, raising four kids
along the way.

The year was 1991. At the Purple Sage Dance Hall in Uvalde, Jimmy Albarado asked Alma Alaniz to dance. He'd noticed her on campus at Southwest Texas Junior College, where they were both students. Alma accepted the dance, but didn't say a word. "I came back to my buddy and said, 'Worst dance of my life—I'll never do that again,'" Jimmy recalls. "About three or four songs later, somebody taps me on the shoulder. It was Alma, saying, 'What, is that it?'" Jimmy and Alma have been together ever since, making their home in the western Hill Country town of Leakey. Historically rooted in ranching, Leakey is a regular stop for campers, tubers, and motorcyclists visiting the Frio River and nearby Garner State Park, as well as a home base for hunters. The Albarados meet many of these visitors as the proprietors of Mama Chole's, the Tex-Mex restaurant they opened in 1998 in the center of town. The cozy restaurant's family atmosphere extends to the rest of Leakey, where the Albarado name goes back five generations and where Jimmy and Alma have raised their four children. "I don't care who you are," Jimmy says of his hometown, "you're never an outsider." And another thing, Alma adds, "It's pronounced 'Lay-key,' not 'Leeky.'"

Grandmama Chole

JA: "Mama Chole's is named after my grandmother. She had a restaurant in Antioch, California, and that would have gone back to the 1940s. So it was just kind of in my blood. We ultimately ended up with her recipes. One thing she said was, 'Be very sure you want to open a restaurant because it's a very jealous business. It wants all of your time and all of your money.' And that's true for sure."

The Refreshing Frio

AA: "Everybody likes to tube or kayak the river. People put out their tents and sit out there along the river. You can sit there in the water and enjoy it with the family. It's refreshing when it's so hot. Now hunting also brings in a lot of people. People rent out their ranches for hunters to come in. I really like the views. Everything here is really pretty."

Family Affair

AA: "My oldest daughter, Abby, she's been running Mama Chole's when she can. I told her, 'I guess you're the one who's going to end up with the restaurant because nobody else wants it.' My oldest son, Jimmy IV, worked here, but he totally did not like it. He is an electrician now, and he loves that."

Country School

AA: "My youngest daughter, Emma, graduated from Leakey High School this year in a class with only nine people. It's kind of like homeschooling—they all get their one-on-one attention. My daughter has a lot of friends, and they enjoy it. I really enjoyed

them being in a small town. It just scares me when they're about to drive here or out of town."

Paul's Pepper

JA: "We had an older customer named Paul; he's passed away since. He'd come in and order the 'Paul's Pepper.' That's the only thing he'd ever order. We tried putting it on the menu, and it was a hit. We lay out jalapeño peppers and put seasoned ground beef, queso, and grilled onions, then roast it. If you ever eat it, you'll order it again. A lot of people try to invent plates like that so they can be on the menu."

Off the Clock

AA: "Sometimes on Fridays we'll go to the Historic Leakey Inn. They have a back-porch bar. All the locals will hang out there. We just hang out with our friends and keep up with everybody."

Nowhere but Leakey

AA: "Here in Leakey, I've gotten to know a lot of people. It's just an easygoing town and everybody's friendly, a really close community. They're always worried about you, or they're happy that your kids graduated, or that I have a new grandbaby. They're all great people."

JA: "One thing I have to say about growing up in Leakey is everybody's somebody. It's a very welcoming town. Whenever I die, I want to be in Leakey." 🐾



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Dust to Dust

A mother's hope binds her family in the border town of Ysleta

By Sergio Troncoso



I took my first post-pandemic trip in May, aboard an airplane from New York City to Texas, to visit my 85-year-old mother, Bertha Troncoso, who lives in the same adobe house she and my father built in the mid-1960s. When my mother and father and their four children arrived in Ysleta, the small town was on the outskirts of east El Paso. Back then, Ysleta was a rural community with the Ysleta Mission as its anchor, established in 1682 by Spanish missionaries and a contingent of the Tigua tribe. The missionaries and tribe were fleeing the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and their ancestral home in the Isleta Pueblo, in what is now southern Albuquerque.

Ysleta with a “Y” is where I grew up, where I went to Ysleta High School, and where my heart always returns when I need to heal, when I want to hug my mother.

Ysleta is a first principle for understanding my soul—or as Aristotle would define it, a basic proposition that cannot be deducted from any other proposition. Ysleta is where I began, where I was formed. This community is at the edge of the edge of the United States, and I became an outsider and iconoclast in this country because of it. My mother belonged to the desolate landscape of Ysleta, yet she yearned to go beyond it. I admired her, yet when I left home, I knew I was traveling farther physically as well as philosophically than she ever could.

I have always loved philosophy for its wisdom beyond and maybe even against the present, and that’s also why I love Ysleta. The community seemed to exist in another time when I lived there as a child and young adult, very distinct and separate from the newer and slicker neighborhoods of El Paso. Ysleta had a different rhythm and sensibility than the big city that eventually swallowed it whole in the ‘60s. Our neighborhood is about half a mile from the Zaragoza International Bridge, which was then a shoulderless two-lane bridge over the Rio Grande and a canal on the Mexican side. As a child, whenever we drove across the bridge with my family to Waterfill, Mexico, to buy garapiñados, mazapanes, queso menonita, and pinole, that canal often stunk of untreated wastewater.

Now the Zaragoza Bridge is a behemoth: nine lanes, massive inspection facilities of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and aggressive 18-wheelers entering and exiting Mexico every hour. Americas Avenue—the farm road where we used to hike for miles and hunt for snakes inside rows of cotton—morphed into a megahighway. Loop 375 now encircles El Paso, and Ysleta, and is strewn with Walmarts, Walgreenses, Pep Boyses, terminals for trucking companies, Valero gas stations, Whataburgers, and the incessant “creative destruction,” as Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter put it, of modern-day Texas capitalism. Spotting a pedestrian on any sidewalk is about as frequent as seeing a rhinoceros next to your car as you wait on the hot asphalt for the light to change.

As your car travels underneath a massive overpass and turns onto the Loop 375 ramp, you might see a mosaic depicting the three missions of the Mission Trail, one of which is the Ysleta Mission. That's if the mosaic is not splattered with mud. In traffic, you have but a second to appreciate the reproduction of the landmark silvery cupola of the Ysleta Mission before the flow of cars pushes you forward. But if you stay on Socorro Road, which follows the river from west to southeast and avoids the highway, the real Ysleta Mission is first, the Socorro Mission follows three miles later, and finally the San Elizario Mission awaits after roughly six miles.

I have seen the changes to Ysleta whenever I return home, usually three or four times a year. But it has been over 15 months since my last visit to El Paso. Fully vaccinated, I arrive from the El Paso

airport by rental car expecting to see familiar Barraca, "Shack Town," as my side of the Ysleta neighborhood is called. The other side is Calavera, "Skeleton Town," for the cemetery next to the Ysleta Mission. Ysleta is a working-class suburb of roughly 55,000 people with modest, somewhat *rasquache* homes, many made of adobe, surrounded by irrigation canals that no longer water many cotton fields. An eerie silence and emptiness also hangs in the air: The Ysleta Independent School District shut down my grade school, South Loop, this year. "Ahora este es un barrio de puros viejitos," my mother says. *This is now a neighborhood of old people.*

Remarkably, as I arrive to visit my mother, the asphalt on her street has disappeared, and it's a dirt street again. I wonder if I'm in a time warp. Mounds of dirt block my turn onto San Lorenzo Avenue. Backhoes are digging into the

sand. I take another street that also leads to my mother's house. From one side of Barraca to the other, the entire length of the street is a construction site. A giant dump truck about four SUVs long receives thunderous loads of asphalt chunks and dirt from John Deere backhoes a few feet from my mother's driveway. Next to our house, on the dead-end street where I used to play softball, massive concrete pipes, their sections at least four feet in diameter, are stacked alongside mounds of rubble and gravel. On the sidewalk smack in front of my mother's house, a blue-and-white stand-alone billboard announces: "El Paso Water-Eastside System Improvements: San Lorenzo CMP Replacement and Sanitary Sewer Improvements. Budget: \$989,000. Scheduled Completion: Spring 2021."

I'm shocked at the destruction/construction. How does anyone take out their cars



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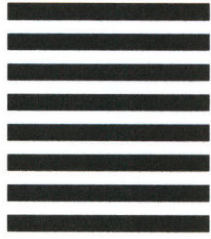
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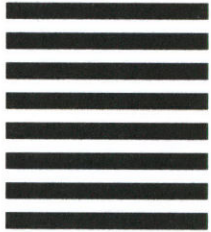
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I have always loved philosophy for its wisdom beyond and maybe even against the present, and that's also why I love Ysleta. The community seemed to exist in another time when I lived there as a child and young adult.

from their driveways? Are they trapped? Still, I think it's about time the city of El Paso invested in Ysleta and Barraca. I'd be surprised if the city has spent \$900 in this poor neighborhood in the past 50 years. My mother's small adobe house is surrounded by the upheaval.

The plaster over my parents' adobe house had been painted a yellowy white by my father years ago before he died. The bright orange wooden trim around the uneven roof is rotting at the corners. An image of the Virgen de Guadalupe, in a mosaic of Mexican tiles on the front wall, is stoic against the chaos and swirls of dust. My mother has wielded her fervent Catholicism to protect us against the evils of Ysleta and beyond.

The dirt street of San Lorenzo takes me way back. As children, my two brothers and I dug the deep trench to connect our sewer lines to the main line on the street. At the beginning of this neighborhood in the mid-'60s, everyone did this project with friends and family. Back then, that was progress. For years we'd had an outhouse in the backyard. My parents had fortified the septic field with abandoned railroad ties to keep the sand from crushing it after heavy rains. Digging the sewer-line trench meant we could have indoor toilets that flushed; we were also connecting our indoor plumbing to the newly installed water lines in Ysleta. No more driving to Abuelita's apartment in downtown El Paso to take a bath. No more carting gallons of water for drinking and cooking for a few days in Ysleta. I remember the trench



being a few feet higher than we were, and it could have collapsed and killed us all. My father, Rodolfo Troncoso, was about saving money and doing it yourself. And he was there with us every step of the way.

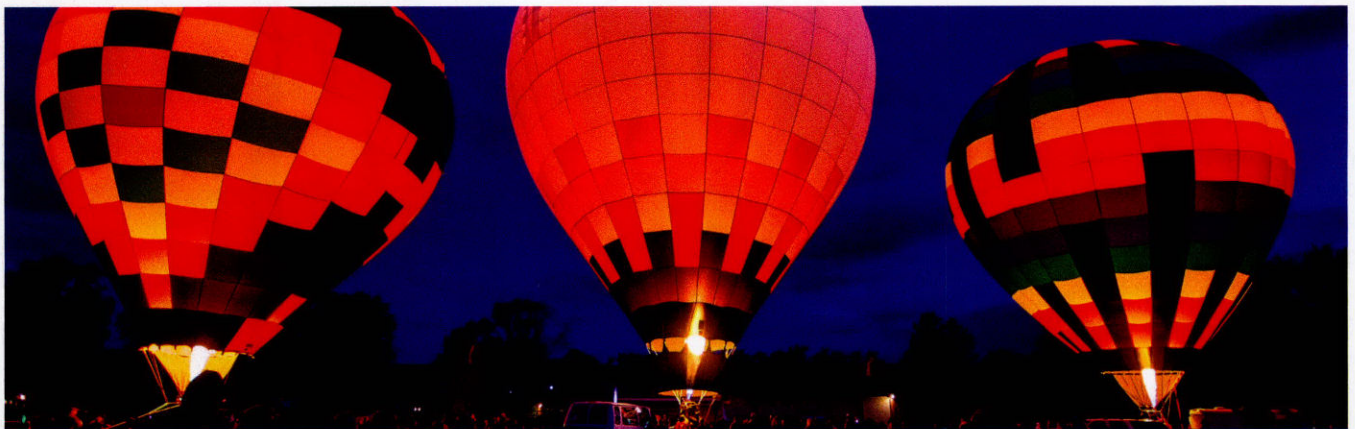
My sister was excluded from most of my father's demands for cheap labor, but the three boys were expected to work until we were beyond exhausted. We were ordered to work again the next day, and the next. Project after project. The Mexican work ethic became our way of life. I always thought of my father—and his trenches; roof repairs; plumbing jobs; plastering and painting of drywall; loading and unloading of truckloads of cinderblock, brick, and lumber; the demolition of it all to destroy the old before we replaced it with the new—when I read the Nietzsche quote in grad school years later. “That which doesn't kill me makes me stronger.” That was Ysleta.

My mother is the reason we were “Americans,” as many say to the U.S. Customs agents at the international bridges when returning from Juárez, Mexico. Today she has slowly, oh so slowly, opened the orange kitchen door and locked wrought-iron screen door. Bertha turns 86 at the end of May, the date uncertain. She told me Doña Dolores Rivero, my maternal grandmother, kept changing the date near or around the end of the month. In rural Satevó, Chihuahua, in the mid-1930s, exact records were not a priority.

Today my mother's head quivers whenever she talks, but her mind is still sharp, her memory still peerless even if it repeats a loop about this or that incident from her childhood or mine. Straight white hair touches her shoulders. Bent forward permanently, and diminutive in stature, she grips a four-pronged cane in one hand. She exhales and smiles when

she touches my face. I kiss her cool, moist forehead. “Es muy triste estar sola,” she says. “Pero siempre debemos de dar le gracias a Dios por la vida.” She is alone in her house in Ysleta, with her only solace the cross around her neck. Her radio blasts the pronouncements of a Catholic preacher from Juárez.

My mother's father died when she was three months old, and for many years my grandmother was a poor single mother who washed clothes on a rancho near Chihuahua. My mother's stepfather, Don José Rivero—the genial man who later married my widowed grandmother with five children—found a job and a green card with “El George,” a poultry farmer in Clint who valued Don José's work ethic. I loved my “grandfather,” who was easy-going for a man in Mexico, always funny and vulnerable. He was in many ways the opposite of the “macho” stereotype.



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If anyone was macho in my mother's family, it was my tough, strong-willed grandmother, who would hit Don José on his bald head with a broomstick if he didn't hand over his money from the farm (or later from his work as a gardener) immediately upon arriving home.

My mother was also shy and vulnerable in a way, very much like her stepfather. She didn't fight back against my temperamental and sometimes violent grandmother. Bertha was also so beautiful she was chosen among her teenage church group, Acción Católica, to represent them in a beauty pageant. As a 17-year-old in an old newspaper photo from an event at the Casino Juárez, my mother resembled a young Elizabeth Taylor. While her stepfather's forte was his humor, my mother's was her intelligence and beauty. In a patriarchal society dominated not just by men but by men who were unapologetically macho, they would not have thrived. "Yo iba tener más oportunidades en Estados Unidos," my mother says. "México era, y todavía es, muy machista." *I was going to have more opportunities in the United States. Mexico was, and still is, full of machismo.* At 19, my mother crossed the river with a green card and both her parents, and she didn't look back.

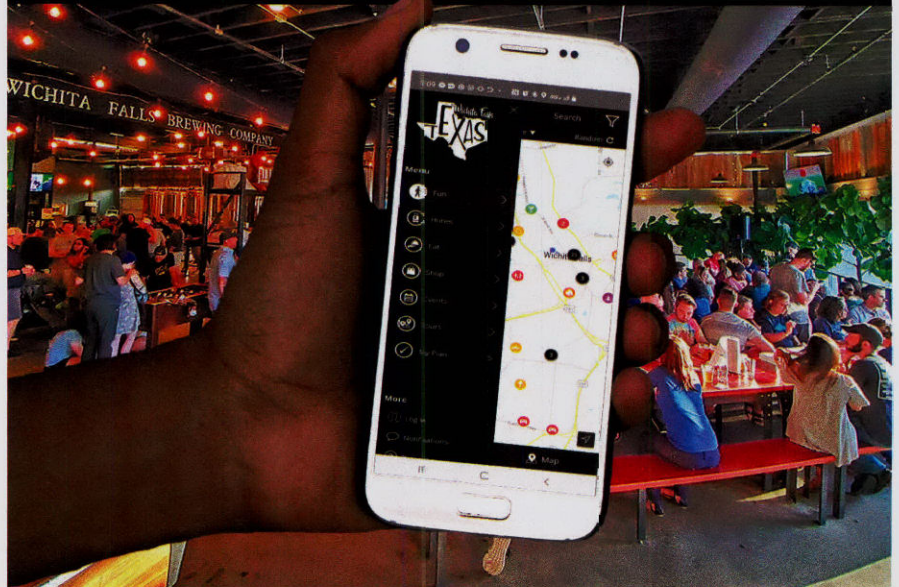
My father—my mother's boyfriend back then—knew he would lose her if he didn't follow her to the United States. Rodolfo had been posted at his first government job as an agronomist in Apatzingán, Michoacán. But my father hated his career and his father, Santiago Troncoso, who would only pay for agronomy school in Juárez. Also, Rodolfo had heard *chisme* from one of his sisters that his girlfriend—my mother—had been seen dancing at a *tardeada* in Juárez. My father rushed back to the border, where my mother offered to return the money they had been saving together and reminded him that they were not *comprometidos*. Bertha had indeed gone with a girlfriend to a Sunday afternoon dance at the Cine Capri's salon. Then and there my father abandoned his government job, officially proposed to

continued on Page 82



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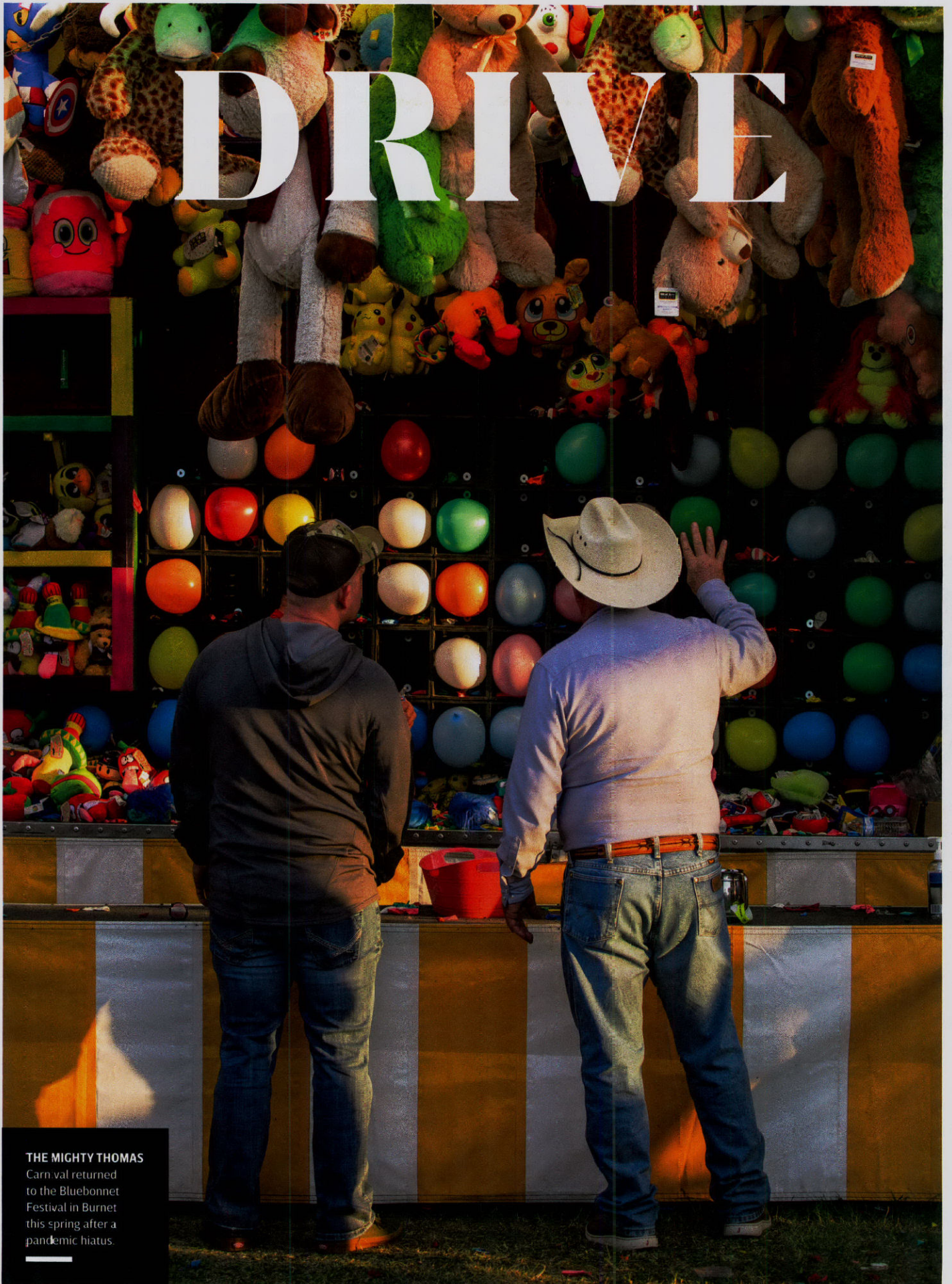
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DRIVE



THE MIGHTY THOMAS

Carnival returned to the Bluebonnet Festival in Burnet this spring after a pandemic hiatus.



RONNIE, RENAE,
and Barrett Feller
celebrate riding
Pharaoh's Fury.

Step Right Up

The Mighty Thomas Carnival returns post-pandemic to bring joy to small-town Texas

By Jason Stanford

For a moment, Barrett Feller might have been the happiest 3-year-old in Texas as he ran ahead of his dad, Ronnie, to catch up to his mom, Renae.

"Go on now," Ronnie prompted, "tell her what you did."

"I rode that!" Barrett announced, pointing behind him at Pharaoh's Fury, a colorful metal contraption festooned with lightbulbs. You'd recognize it instantly: a traditional carnival ride designed to induce centrifugal terror in amusement park fanatics. Willing participants get strapped into an open-air canister meant to resemble a royal Egyptian riverboat before the machine conspires with gravity to swing in semicircles both exciting and terrifying. Pharaoh's Fury had inspired a newfound sense of bravery in Barrett, who shined like the sun with pride.

"What are you going to do next?" his parents inquired.

"The Tornado!" Barrett shouted. It was the first carnival he had attended. This was April, when vaccine jabs were getting into arms and life was getting back to normal. The 38th Annual Bluebonnet Festival, an affair that draws 30,000 to the small Central Texas town of Burnet, was back on after being canceled in 2020. That meant the Mighty Thomas Carnival, a family-owned-and-operated traveling carnival based in Austin, could go back to work.

For the Fellers, the Bluebonnet Festival was a good excuse to get out of the house and eat powdered funnel cakes while listening to the 1st Cavalry Division Band perform a cover of the Grover Washington Jr. jam "Just the Two of Us." The point of a weekend festival like this is to check out the craft booths, buy a jar of salsa, and postpone the diet until Monday. After a year of elbow bumps, social distancing, and wearing masks to buy Cheerios, dang it, it was time for a corn dog—maybe two.

Festivalgoers paid no attention to the great and powerful Ozzes who were making all the fun happen behind the curtain because their eyes were rightfully drawn to the Tilt-A-Whirl and the Sugar Barn. The fourth-generation family who operates the Mighty Thomas Carnival pulled

the levers from an unassuming trailer serving as the weekend headquarters. The day before, they had sold their second-most ride admissions on a Friday at the Bluebonnet Festival since 2004.

In a pre-pandemic year, this was a regular stop on an annual migration that took the Mighty Thomas Carnival around Central Texas and the Rio Grande Valley before heading north into the Midwest and across into the Dakotas and Montana, then heading back through Utah, Arkansas, and Louisiana. By October, the show would return to Texas. The carnival always did a Christmas festival in Round Rock and Washington's Birthday Celebration in Laredo in February, but COVID-19 canceled both. After a year mostly in lockdown, it's scheduled to hit 36 locations in 2021, compared to roughly 50 in a normal year. The sight of kids rushing from ride to ride at the Bluebonnet

Festival was a sign the family business would survive.

"This feels normal," said John Hanschen, the family patriarch and a member of the Outdoor Amusement Business Hall of Fame. "People are ready to have a good time."

In March 2020, the carnival was set up in the Dell Diamond parking lot in Round Rock. "They hadn't shut anything down yet," said Katherine Petree, Hanschen's daughter, who handles general management and oversees the food concessions with her husband, Brandon Petree. All baseball activity in the stadium had been canceled, and still the carnival stayed in the shadow of an empty ballpark, hoping the show would go on. Finally, county health officials asked them to shut it down.

"We thought it would be over quickly," Hanschen said, "because the president said it was gonna be over quickly."

"I didn't think that," Petree admitted.

That summer, they took a smaller version of the carnival up north through the Dakotas and Montana, always staying just ahead of rising infection rates. As they went along, they devised the rules about social distancing on carnival rides and daily temperature checks for the workers based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance. The Glass House attraction got left behind, but the Ferris Wheel, a 19th-century invention perfect for a 21st-century plague, made the trip.

"We had to make decisions about a theory that hadn't existed before," explained Hanschen, who thought by the fall the South might be open again. But ultimately, they could not outrun the pandemic.

"The wave of COVID was cresting behind us," Petree said. "When we got done with Salt Lake City, it was a hard finish in that there was nothing, no other

“

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Festgoers flip out on carnival rides; Family patriarch John Hanschen oversees the midway.



event to go to. So, in September we just came home.”

Wartime rationing had only slowed the carnival in the '40s. Later, polio outbreaks forced the cancellation of some events, and once the carnival was barred from entering a state because of a livestock disease. Now a new disease was sending the Mighty Thomas Carnival home for a longer-than-expected off-season.

In 1928, Art B. Thomas, the son of German and Dutch immigrants, founded the Thomas Carnival in Lennox, South Dakota, with just two rides—a No. 5 Eli Bridge Ferris Wheel and a Parker Carousel. Back then, oddities and curios like monkey shows, acrobatics, and wrestling competed with the rides. Art expanded the business steadily through the Great Depression, and as tastes went away from side attractions to mechanical rides, his hustle and growth mindset paid off. By the time World War II hit, the carnival had 40 trucks and 160 employees; it added “Mighty” to its name in the '60s or '70s.

When Art’s nephew Bernard came home from the war, Art retired and

handed the carnival over to him, and Bernard continued to aggressively expand the business. In the early '70s, Bernard invented the Universal Ticket System, which created a uniform ticket for games and rides. And in '77 he moved the winter headquarters to Austin to take advantage of the South’s longer operating season. Bernard retired in '86 and handed the business over to his sons-in-law, Tom Atkins and Hanschen. Before the pandemic, the carnival offered 50 rides, 50 games, and 15 food concessions. A new generation was making its mark.

But then COVID-19 foiled everything. By the time they had shut it all down in autumn 2020, revenues had dropped 80% for the year and payroll was cut in half. Without the federal relief that came in April 2020 and January 2021, Hanschen

said, the dozen or so carnival companies of Texas would not have made it to 2021, when things began to open back up.

The family missed the busy days of working hard to make sure everyone had fun. They missed traveling from town to town and seeing the different parts of the country. But did people miss the carnival? The first 10 stops on the usual tour remained canceled this year. And even with vaccinations rising in March, they worried about the Bluebonnet Festival in April. Were people ready to get together in large groups again?

“It’s not really like a music concert where people buy tickets in advance,” Hanschen said. “You don’t know who’s going to show up.”

But there ended up being no cause for concern. Amid midway booths called

Fun and Games

Katherine Petree of the Mighty Thomas Carnival shares how to walk the midway and come out a winner.

What to ride:

"The Zipper, a classic carnival thrill ride since the '60s. You never know which way you will spin."

What to play:

"Shoot Out the Star. No permit needed to play."

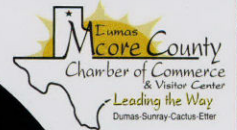
What to eat:

"Chocolate éclair funnel cake—Bavarian cream, whipped cream, chocolate drizzle. Or a candy apple with Tajín."

For more about the carnival, visit thomascarnival.com.

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2021 EVENTS

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August 20 - 21: Cowboy Classic Rodeo

August 21: Sunray Funday

September 11: Ears & Beers Festival

September 11: Texas Tumbleweed 100 Bike Ride

September 25: Museum Day

October 2 - 3: Lions Club Arts & Crafts Show

November 20: Candy Cane Lane

December 6: Sunray Lions Christmas Parade

Dizzy Dragons and Fun Zone, social orders that had been submerged under quarantine were quickly reasserted. Dads in novelty T-shirts wore determinedly amiable expressions. High school couples held hands. Packs of teenage girls walked in formation. There wasn't a victory-over-COVID celebratory vibe, just a reversion to the pleasant, amused norm of the carnival being back in town.

"You're gonna win no matter what!" called out carnival worker Tomekia Jones as stray middle schoolers wandered by Lucky Ducky, the game where you are theoretically able to throw small hoops onto plastic ducks floating in a small pool. A successful toss has never been witnessed or recorded in human history, but still, every toss, accurate or not, wins a prize. Yes, everyone's a winner, and Jones should know. She has, after all, been working this carnival for the last seven years.

"I love it to death," she said. "I'm gonna make sure the kids are happy." 🐼



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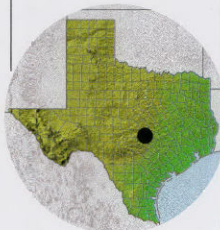


Time Flies

Cuckoo clocks keep on ticking in Fredericksburg

By Sallie Lewis

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Inside the Kuckuck's Nest in Fredericksburg, country tunes emanate from a small radio. But that's not the only music playing. There's also quiet *ticking* and sporadic *cuckoos* marking the passage of time.

Store owner Paula Kager sells authentic German products like lederhosen, dirndls, and beer steins. She also stocks genuine cuckoo clocks, timepieces believed to have originated in Germany's Black Forest, where the Brothers Grimm supposedly sought inspiration for fairy tales like "Sleeping Beauty" and "Hansel and Gretel." Kager grew up in Ludwigshafen in southwestern Germany and remembers spending time as a child at her grandparents' home. With great anticipation, she would sit by their clock, waiting for the cuckoo bird to arrive. "It seems like every house had one," Kager says. "We'd tell Opa, 'Make it move! Make it cuckoo!'"

After moving to Fredericksburg, a German enclave celebrating its 175th anniversary this year, Kager opened her business in 2015. She began importing and selling cuckoo clocks upon request. Kager's new and vintage pieces—from \$200 to \$1,800, with larger designs reaching upward of \$5,000—are mostly all handmade in the Black Forest. Cuckoo clocks are delicate devices, but one look at their mechanics reveals a solid network of gears, bellows, and heavy pine cone weights.

Traditional German cuckoo clocks typically have leaves, goats, and dogs carved into the wood. Kager's collection—made by notable manufacturers like Hekas—includes these and more. Some of her chalet clocks feature men drinking beer or chopping wood, while others show dancing maidens, accordion musicians, hand-painted edelweiss flowers, and Saint Bernard dogs. Each clock is slightly different, but tucked inside all but the least-expensive clocks is a cuckoo bird ready to spring forth and sing on the half-hour and hour.

"Cuckoo clocks have been in existence for hundreds of years," Kager says. "If you go to Germany, a cuckoo clock is a must to bring back." Until then, a visit to the Hill Country will do. **L**

Keep on Truckin'

Semitruck drivers relish the freedom of life on the road

By Lisa Bubert



My father, a livestock feed trucker for over 40 years, retires this summer. Throughout my life, I've joined him for the occasional trip, so I decided to get one more ride-along in the books. We set out at 3 a.m. on an early spring morning to load-in at a feed mill in the Central Texas town of Giddings, grab free coffee at a CEFCO truck stop (a perk of the trade enjoyed by truckers), and hit US 290 well before sunup. The citizens band radio, a relic of days long gone since the invention of the cell phone, still hangs in the cab, though Dad uses it sparingly and never just for fun. He regales me with stories of close calls with deer, complains about the back pain that will likely never go away, and tells me how his first trucking company laid off all the truckers with only three days' notice.

Despite the hardships, the trucking industry is running strong. More than 66,000 trucking companies operate in Texas alone, each truck maneuvered by humans despite reports of self-driving technology automating truckers out of existence. The stereotype of the sleep-deprived driver who nods off into a massive pile-up on the highway is largely exaggerated, too, according to Philip Harrison, the vice president of Harrison Truck Lines out of Bellville and a 50-year veteran of the industry. "Trucking is one of the cleanest professions out there," Harrison says. Truck drivers are subject to frequent drug testing and biennial physicals from the U.S. Department of Transportation, and regulations state that a driver may spend no more than 11 consecutive hours on the road.

My dad says the two best things about driving a truck for a living are that he can feel like he's his own boss when he's on the road, with no one looking over his shoulder. "That," he says, "and I get to see different country."

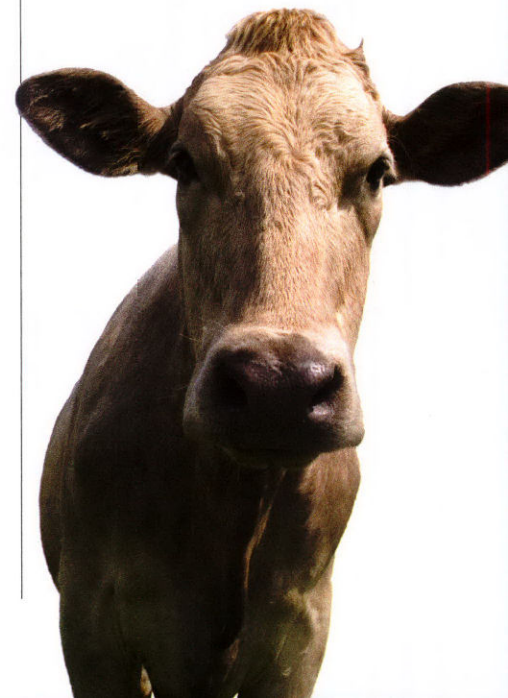
Road Rules

Tips for driving near semitrucks.

1. No texting and driving. It's the No. 1 cause of inconsiderate drivers, a trucker's ultimate pet peeve.

2. Steer clear of a truck's right-hand side and give truckers room. Truckers have to turn and change lanes too—don't be in their blind spot when they do.

3. Don't hurry up and wait. In traffic, it's tempting to hop in the gap a trucker leaves in front of them. But these trucks can't stop on a dime, and getting rear-ended by one is not pretty.



73

Percentage of goods originating in Texas delivered by truck

\$34,500

Average salary of a Texas trucker

185,000

Number of truck drivers employed in Texas



Trucker Glossary

Bambi — a deer, dead or alive

Chicken coop — the weigh station

Four-wheelers — civilian cars

Granny lane — the slower lane on a highway

Kojak with a Kodak — law enforcement using a radar gun

Meat wagon — ambulance

Road pizza — road kill

Smokey — police

Shaking the trees, raking the leaves — lead truck and following truck in a convoy

What's your 20? — Where are you?

Road Itinerary

No two days on the road are ever the same, and experiences vary by type of materials being transported. Below is a typical morning of a livestock feed hauler.

2:15 a.m.

Rise and shine. The loads need to be delivered early to accommodate customer needs.

3 a.m.

Pre-trip safety check. The tires look good, and we're ready to load up.

3:15 a.m.

Load-in. Today's load is bulk feed, which means it's loaded through a chute to the overhead bin. Once all bins are full and weighed, and the log book is updated, you're clear to leave.

4 a.m.

Fuel up. Before hitting the highway, pull in to a truck stop to put some diesel in the tank and coffee in your stomach.

5 a.m.

Delivery. Back in and line the auger straw over the feed silo to unload.

6 a.m.

Update the log book.

7 a.m.

Return to the mill. Do it all over again, however many times needed.



Bringing Back Brownwood

A downtown resurgence reinvigorates a World War II-era military town

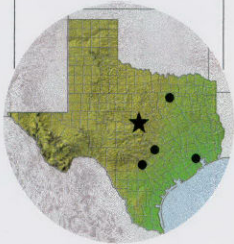
By Paul Brown

Austin
2.5 hours

San Antonio
3 hours

Dallas
3 hours

Houston
5 hours



On a typical Saturday evening in the early 1940s, the sidewalks along Center Avenue in the heart of downtown Brownwood filled with folks walking to one of the half-dozen movie theaters to watch films like *Casablanca* and *Paris After Dark*. Many of the moviegoers were Army trainees at nearby Camp Bowie. The end of World War II brought much of Brownwood's activity to a halt as the population of almost 80,000 began its precipitous drop; today the population is around 18,600. And while the town may not return to its 1940s population levels, many new businesses are bringing vibrancy to Brownwood's downtown streets once again.



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Friday

3 P.M.
Secluded Digs

Just 15 minutes north of downtown, the Star of Texas Bed & Breakfast is fit for romance with two quaint cottages among the oaks. The B&B has become a destination not just for couples seeking a charming escape, but also for those who want to elope. Co-owner Don Morelock happens to be a chaplain.

4 P.M.
A Toast to Country Life

The Spirit of Texas Winery features a tasting room built from a repurposed barn, animal pen, and woodshed. Owners Brian and Moira McCue moved from the Austin area in 2016 to open a winery. "We found our place," Moira says about discovering the property. If the weather is nice, you can take your glass of wine outside to play some patio games, including checkers and giant Jenga.

6 P.M.
Slow Down for The Turtle

The Turtle Restaurant began serving its fine cuisine in 2004, well before the more recent downtown improvements. Co-owner Mary Stanley describes herself as the restaurant's "wine buyer, pasta maker, gelato artisan, and chocolatier." Popular menu items include smoked trout croquettes, Argentine beef empanadas, and a thick-cut rib-eye. The restaurant is also known for its impressive yet approachable wine list.

7 P.M.
The Stage Is Set

Established in the 1920s, Lyric Theatre, with its restored red-cushion seats and proscenium-arch stage, is a step back in time. Catch a production of *The Jungle Book* Aug. 6-8. If you prefer your art al fresco, stroll the streets to follow the city's Mural Trail, which features 18 stops for posing and posting. One standout mural is "Run Wild" by Calina Mishay Johnson in downtown's Pat Coursey Park.

Saturday

10 A.M.
Honoring Veterans

If you explore the city's southside, you'll find the old roads and concrete foundations of Camp Bowie's barracks. The Central Texas Veterans Memorial serves as a formal recognition of the old training base, while also honoring the area's veterans who lost their lives in various military campaigns. There's a half-mile trail around this park and playground, and along the path are restored military tanks and vehicles, as well as an old Huey helicopter used during the Vietnam War. In September, the community plans to celebrate Camp Bowie's 80th anniversary with public events and activities.

NOON
Order Up

The next landmark won't be hard to find. The giant cutout sign of a cowboy donning an



OPENING PAGE: Morelock Lane leads to the Star of Texas Bed & Breakfast. **CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Mural in Pat Coursey Park; field of flowers on Morelock Lane; brothers Leo (left) and Paul Underwood, owners of Underwood's Cafeteria; Spirit of Texas Winery; Teddy's Brewhaus; Lyric Theatre



apron and holding a dinner bell marks Underwood's Cafeteria, open since 1946. Three generations of the Underwood family have worked there, serving everything from barbecue beef-steak to Mama Underwood's famous fried chicken. The rolls and cobbler (apple, cherry, or peach) are a must; someone will stop by your table to add whipped cream on request.

2 P.M.
Trains of Yesteryear

Next to the old Brownwood Santa Fe Train Depot is the Lehnis Railroad Museum. Named after the late Martin and Frances Lehnis, their massive collection of model and full-scale trains is on display. Outside the entrance, a real Santa Fe caboose and a circa 1929 Pullman Superintendent's car are open for walk-through. Step inside the main exhibit hall to view model trains running on tracks. Behind the building, a small train operates every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., weather permitting, and all ages are welcome to climb aboard.

8 P.M.
Downtown Brews

Three formerly boarded-up downtown businesses have transformed into thriving hangouts. Teddy's Brewhaus on Fisk Avenue is a microbrewery with a full-service kitchen. Owner Jeff Tucker and brewer Wes Kearney named the place after Teddy Roosevelt because the property was developed in 1888, during the era Roosevelt explored the West. "Teddy's love of Texas

allowed me to see him as an icon for this venture," Tucker says. The 18,000-square-foot building is filled with Roosevelt photos and memorabilia. A couple of blocks over, Pioneer Tap House serves draft beer from Texas breweries and features area bands on most Saturday nights, while CJ's Cigar Lounge offers a selection of fine cigars and cocktails.

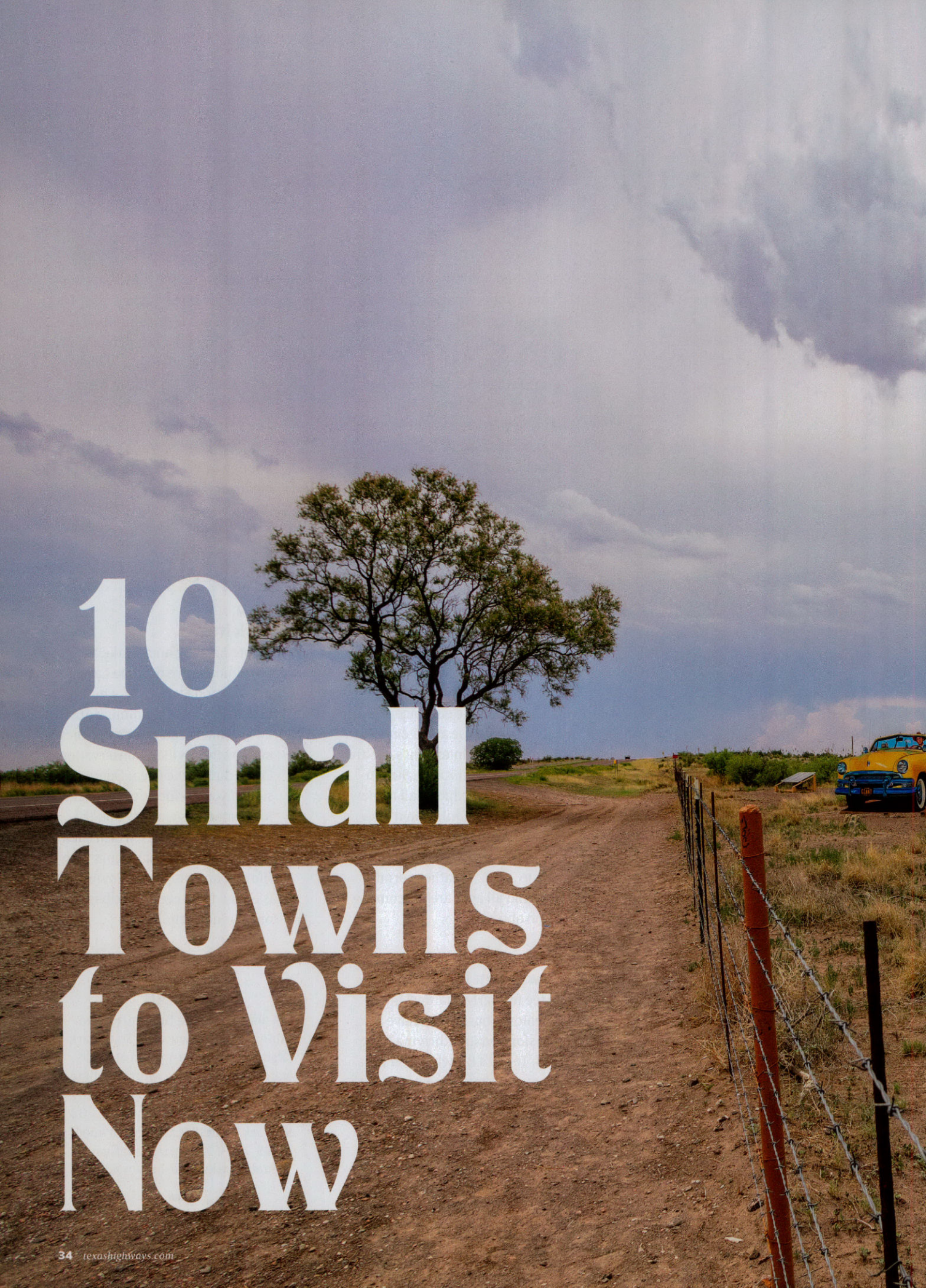
Sunday

10 A.M.
Park It

Before heading home, take a 20-minute drive north to Lake Brownwood State Park, where a fishing dock and swimming area await. Hikers can rest on benches built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression. If you decide to come back for another visit, reserve one of the CCC-built cabins, which each include a kitchen, bathroom with shower, and fireplace. Brownwood is bound to be even more bustling on your next trip. **L**

CAMP OUT

In addition to the fully furnished cabins, Lake Brownwood State Park also has full hook-up and electric/water-only RV spots, which include picnic tables, fire rings, and nearby restroom and shower facilities. 200 SH Park Road 15, Lake Brownwood. 325-784-5223; tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lake-brownwood



10 Small Towns to Visit Now

As you approach Valentine from Marfa, you'll find a tribute to the movie *Giant* on US 90, featuring large cutouts of stars Rock Hudson, James Dean, and Elizabeth Taylor.



From old favorites to new offerings, these towns feature hidden gems worthy of a trip

Our annual list of buzzworthy small towns—defined here as towns with populations under 20,000—includes a burgeoning bedroom community, an underrated coastal treasure, and a Hill Country artists’ haven. With recommendations for where to stay and what to eat in each of the 10 standouts, all that separates you from your next getaway is a full tank of gas.



Bastrop

POP. 9,242



**Naseem's
Downtown Lofts**
Starts at \$189/night.
[airbnb.com/
rooms/29133919](https://airbnb.com/rooms/29133919)



**Store House
Market and Eatery**
813 Main St.
512-412-6114;
[storehousebastrop
.com](https://storehousebastrop.com)

Ten years ago, Bastrop was a town of 7,000 best known for its forest of loblolly pines that offered a refuge for nature lovers. While the Lost Pines still attract outdoor enthusiasts, the hamlet just east of Austin has more recently become a retreat for artists, writers, and farmers—and those fleeing the city in search of a more affordable life.

Between 2010 and '19, Bastrop's population grew 25%. Tech executives and Hollywood actors are certainly part of that growth (*Shazam* star Zachary Levi is building a film production studio just outside of town), but it's the lower-profile residents who are facilitating the biggest revitalization efforts.

Last year—thanks to \$2 million from the local Main Street Rehabilitation Project—the city widened the thoroughfare's sidewalks and repaved the street, and shopowners restored the wrought iron balconies and brick storefronts. The face-lift added extra sheen to downtown's new businesses, like

the cozy Painted Porch bookshop, owned by nonfiction author Ryan Holiday, and its next-door neighbor, Astro Record Store.

An afternoon of shopping requires sustenance. Nearby, Store House Market and Eatery serves gin cocktails and seasonal farm-fresh items like crispy sweet potato croquettes in a renovated former bordello. The restaurant's owners, Sonya Cote and David Barrow, also own nearby Eden East Farm, not only guaranteeing fresh produce for Store House but also providing a quality farmers market open on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

If you'd rather play farmer yourself, Barton Hills Farm, 8 miles from downtown, offers seasonal events, from pick-your-own flowers and strawberries in the spring to a harvest festival in the fall, complete with a corn maze and petting zoo.

All these simple yet carefully tended pleasures make it easy to find yourself again among the Lost Pines. —Clayton Maxwell



Gun Barrel City

POP. 6,084

When you look at a map of Gun Barrel City, the eastern boundary looks like a long gun barrel, which is how the town got its unconventional name and accompanying motto: “We shoot straight with you.” But if you’re expecting to find a town befitting a spaghetti Western, it’s best to look elsewhere.

“Everybody wants to assume we have an old lawless history,” Mayor David Skains says. Instead, the town’s highlight is Cedar Creek Lake, the fourth largest lake in Texas. With about 320 miles of shoreline, visitors can enjoy swimming in the coves and fishing for largemouth bass, flathead catfish, and crappie.

The ideal way to enjoy a relaxing getaway here is to rent a lake house or cabin, which you can find on vacation rental sites like Airbnb and Vrbo. Don’t forget to pack groceries and floaties. After a long day on the water, you’ll realize the only outlaws here live on your cabin’s TV screen. —*Roberto José Andrade Franco*



Lake House Retreat

Mabank.
Starts at \$350/
night. [airbnb.com/
rooms/15301159](https://www.airbnb.com/rooms/15301159)



W456 Upscale American Restaurant

456 S. Gun
Barrel Lane.
903-887-4456;
[wfourfiftysix.com](https://www.wfourfiftysix.com)

OPPOSITE PAGE,
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
Painted Porch bookshop;
server opens door to Store
House Market and Eatery;
group waits for a table at
Store House. **THIS PAGE:**
Cedar Creek Lake.




Roma

POP. 11,490



La Borde House
Starts at \$30/night.
601 E. Main St., Rio Grande City.
labordehucuse.com



El Mexicano
2695 E. Grant St.
956-849-4275

If you feel like you're standing on a movie set amid the sandstone dwellings of Roma's historic plaza, that's because you are. In the 1952 film *Viva Zapata!*, Marlon Brando swaggers among the balconied buildings that once housed Roma's founding families, many of whose descendants still live in town. Just walking its dusty streets transports you to another era in the life of the history-rich border town.

A plaque-guided walking tour of the plaza details Roma's integral role in settling South Texas. Roma was the last trading port for 19th-century steamboats that traveled the Rio Grande. The church steeple that presides over the square was built by Father Keralum, a French Catholic missionary priest and architect who rode horseback throughout the Rio Grande

Valley in the mid-1800s.

JC Ramirez, a Western-wear shop that opened in 1848 near the plaza, links past and present Roma. Owners Noel and Cecilia Benavides, descendants of the families who settled this area in the 1700s, serve as amiable unofficial town historians. Shoppers can pick up some new Wranglers, catch up on local news, and hear a tale of the town's past.

The nearby Roma Bluffs World Birding Center, an observatory overlooking the Rio Grande, offers an expansive view of the river and the Mexican town of Miguel Alemán across the border. With more than 500 winged species flying along this clear and wide stretch of river, a plaque confirms: "You are standing in one of the greatest birding spots in North America." —CM



Canton

POP. 3,805

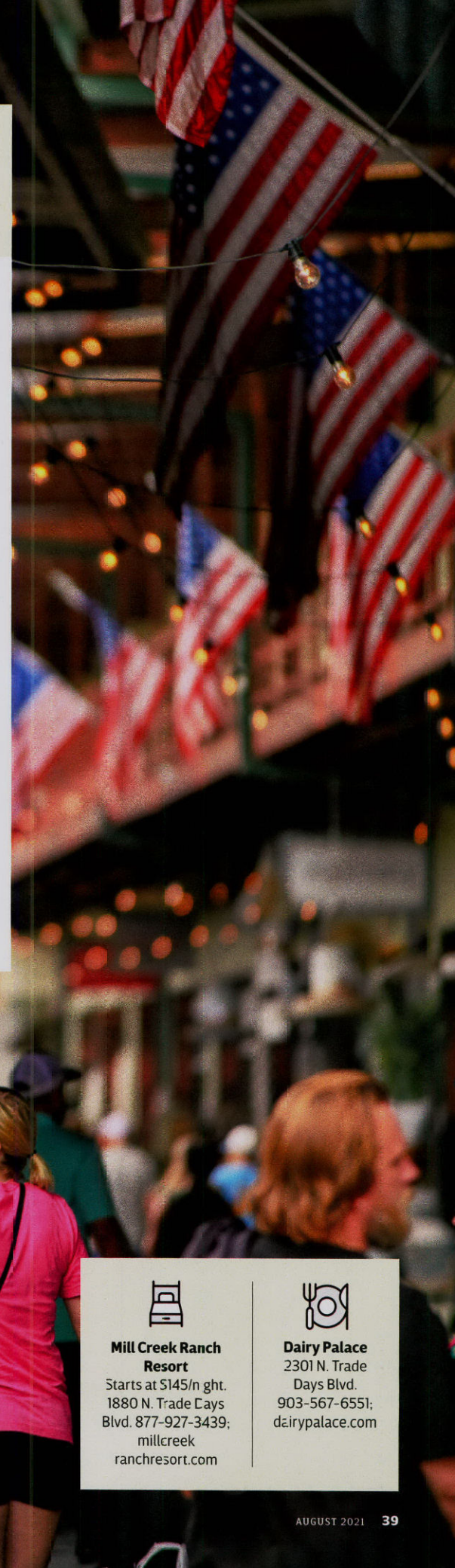
The red and yellow sign proclaiming “World Famous Hamburg-ers” illuminates a stretch of Interstate 20 in Canton, acting as a siren song for famished travelers. It isn’t a McDonald’s; it’s Dairy Palace, a 24-hour local institution that’s been in operation since 1984. And while it may not count “billions served” or boast international loca-tions, the diner does have a fandom that spans the globe.

“Our burgers are eaten by everybody,” manager Terry Hipp explains. “We pretty much have missionaries who go all over the world.” Customers eagerly send in photos of themselves posing with Dairy Palace bumper stickers in locales like Guatemala, Canada, and Iraq. Who wouldn’t be a fan of a restaurant that offers an elk burger, a stack of pancakes, *and* a chalupa?

Canton, located an hour east of Dallas, isn’t just world famous for its burgers: First Monday, one of the world’s largest public flea markets, covers 400 acres. Anything from furniture to crafts to edible goods can be purchased there. Other attractions include the historic Main Street and the country fair and rodeo in late March and early April.

Strike up a conversation with a local—at a flea market booth or over sweet tea at Dairy Palace—and ask about the origins of the county’s nickname: The Free State of Van Zandt. Some say it dates to 1861, when hundreds of residents protested the state’s secession. They argued that if Texas could leave the union, then Van Zandt County could leave Texas. —RJAF

OPPOSITE PAGE,
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
LEFT: Noel and Cecilia Benavides own JC Ramirez in Roma; Roma Bluffs World Birding Center; mural memorializes priests who rode their horses to visit missions bordering the Lower Rio Grande; Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church’s steeple peeks out among the palms; the historic plaza. **THIS PAGE:** First Monday Flea Market in Canton.



Mill Creek Ranch Resort

Starts at \$145/n ght.
1880 N. Trade Cays Blvd. 877-927-3439;
millcreek
ranchresort.com



Dairy Palace

2301 N. Trade Days Blvd.
903-567-6551;
dairypalace.com



Valentine

POP. 67



Love Shaks

Starts at \$35/night.
[airbnb.com/
rooms/12106256](https://airbnb.com/rooms/12106256)



The Water Stop

1300 W.
San Antonio
St., Marfa.
432-386-8164

Within the tourist triad of Big Bend, Marfa, and Fort Davis, Valentine's always been a bit lost somewhere to the west. It's primarily known as the location of the Prada Marfa art installation and a place to get a romantic letter postmarked on Feb. 14.

But the town's profile is rising. Valentine's vacant houses, commercial buildings, and handful of adobe structures are primed for revitalization. "Abandoned properties are seeing new life, being improved, spruced up, and lived in," City Council member Laurel Keenan-Coniglio says.

Clara Bensen, a writer who moved to the area in 2018, purchased two buildings

and plans to turn them into Valentine Bar and Hiway Café. While there are no official opening dates yet, the signs of life have the region buzzing.

Currently, Valentine's in Valentine—an annual party on Feb. 14 with live music, drinks, and food trucks held at the Valentine Mercantile—is still the town's tourist lifeblood. Some locals prefer that visitors stick to their hip neighbor, Marfa, which offers lodging, restaurants, and many artistic diversions.

"[Valentine] is still completely renegade, and folks generally seem to want to keep it that way," Bensen says. —Joe Nick Patoski



THIS PAGE: Stay in Love Shaks' vintage campers in Valentine.
OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: raspberry chipotle and peppered turkey sandwich from On the Square Bakery and Deli; Cindy Gonzalez of The Burrito Lady restaurant; Austin band Pike & Sutton at Green Apple Art Center in Eden; mural by Calina Mishay Johnson; Zane Blackwell of Blackwell Custom Knives.



Eden

POP. 1,899



Peach Tree Guest Haus

Starts at \$119/night.
325-456-2216;
edentexas.com/
peach-tree-guest-
haus



On the Square Bakery and Deli

208 Jackson St.
325-763-8073;
facebook.com/
onthesquarebakery
anddeli

This biblically named town is heaven for music fans. Each year, 10 or so touring musicians stop at the Green Apple Art Center to play intimate shows.

Nine years ago, rancher Craig Pfluger repurposed the old mohair processing factory and two contiguous buildings to create a “listening room” with indoor and outdoor stages. The all-volunteer nonprofit space gives those who visit—including Texas musicians like Charley Crockett and Joe Ely—a taste of the bucolic life the West Central Texas town is known for. After a show earlier this year, Austin guitarist Jackie Venson was introduced to the kid goats on Pfluger’s ranch. “You can’t experience Eden without some livestock and wildlife,” Pfluger says.

Agriculture has historically been Eden’s main industry, but the town also caters to meat-lovers: Local shop Venison World specializes in wild game. Residents’ enthusiasm for their one-of-a-kind concert experience proves no matter where you live, what your profession is, or what your diet consists of, live music is part of the fabric of life in Texas. —JNP



Photos: Christ Chavez (left); Melarie Grizzel (above)



Port Isabel

POP. 6,292



Queen Isabel Inn

Starts at \$125/night.
300 S. Garcia St.
956-943-1468;
queenisabelinn.com



Joe's Oyster Bar and Gulf Seafood Market

207 E. Maxan St.
956-943-4501;
gulfseafoodmarket.com

Every year, hundreds of thousands of beachgoers headed to South Padre zip through Port Isabel, the last mainland town before crossing the causeway onto the island. They don't know what they're missing.

The town is an authentic port with a shrimp fleet, fishing adventures, and a rich, colorful history. Its heart, the lighthouse overlooking the Lower Laguna Madre and the channel to the Gulf of Mexico, is a Texas icon.

Across from the lighthouse, Port Isabel's main strip includes the South Padre

Island Dolphin Research & Sea Life Nature Center, which features hands-on exhibits and dolphin tours. Around the corner, you'll find the Queen Isabella State Fishing Pier; a docked pirate ship; and charters for fishing and dolphin and osprey watching.

The town's location at the southern end of the Laguna Madre near the entrance to the Gulf of Mexico further distinguishes it from other coastal cities. "It's the water, man," says Port Isabel native and fishing guide Fulgencio Buitureira. "You're in paradise here." —JNP



Prairie View

POP. 6,678

Like many small college towns, Prairie View is sleepy. Residents go to neighboring towns to buy groceries, lodge guests, or use a bank. But it's slowly waking up with roadway improvements, planned historical markers at Wyatt Chapel and Hope African Methodist Episcopal, and a history museum in the works at the historically Black college Prairie View A&M University.

Frank Jackson, who served as the city's mayor for 14 years and is now the assistant vice chancellor for state relations at PVAMU, welcomes the changes. "We're like other historically Black college towns in the South like Grambling [in Louisiana] and Tuskegee [in Alabama]," he says. "There's a lot here. We just haven't told our story. Here's where Texas' second oldest university sprang out of a plantation."

The town, 50 miles northwest of Houston, is home to another impressive superlative: one of the largest cricket sport complexes in the United States, the Prairie View Cricket Center. You can also find crickets—and bees and butterflies—enjoying the expansive John Fairey Gardens, just 8 miles away in Hempstead. The education and conservation garden features 3,000 plants from Texas, Asia, and Mexico.

Be sure to stop by the nursery to pick up a plant—some of which are propagated from the garden's collections—to take a piece of this growing region home with you. —JNP



The Boho Cottage
Waller. Starts
at \$100/night.
[airbnb.com/
rooms/47495833](https://airbnb.com/rooms/47495833)



Hedgehog Grill
40100 US 290
Business, Waller.
936-372-5777.
hedgehoggrill.com

**OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCK-
WISE FROM TOP LEFT:**
Port Isabel Lighthouse;
Joe Castillo, owner of
Joe's Oyster Bar and Gulf
Seafood Market; Fulgencio
Bui-Luira. **THIS PAGE:**
The creek at John Fairey
Gardens.

THIS PAGE: Trey Hellingner is a craftsman at the Fenoglio Boot Company, one of Nocona's famous leathercraft businesses.

OPPOSITE PAGE,

CLOCKWISE FROM

TOP: Castroville Visitors Center is representative of the town's Alsatian architecture; sunflowers in the fields of Castroville; Magnolia Filling Station; Castroville resident Tex Ledyard shops for cowhide rugs.



Nocona

POP. 2,960



Red River Station Inn

Starts at \$95/night.
219 Clay St.
940-825-3107;
redriverstationinn.com



Fenoglo's BBQ

510 W. US 82.
940-825-3843;
fenoglobbq.com

There's a stretch of Nocona that makes you feel like you're in 1960s Detroit. The exterior of the Horton Classic Car Museum features painted midcentury-style signage, while rows of candy-color classic cars line the interior. You might forget for a minute that you're actually in 2021, just 8 miles from the Oklahoma border.

The private collection of Nocona natives Pete and Barbara Horton includes about 120 cars, the oldest a 1931 red convertible Packard Phaeton with a pearl-color interior. Any hot-rod lover or aesthete can spend hours checking out the vehicles, buffed to such a shine you can see your reflection on them.

The museum harkens to the industrial history of the Red River-adjacent town. It's known for producing a wide range of leather products, including cowboy boots, whips, saddles, and baseball gloves.

The Old Boot Factory has become a shopping destination, but you can still see local craftsmanship at work at the last baseball glove factory in the country. Less than a five-minute drive from the car museum, the Nokona American Ballgloves factory offers tours Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The tour covers the company's crigin story, how its gloves have evolved over the decades, and the meticulous work that goes into them. —R/JAF



Castroville

POP. 3,009



The Hillside Boutique Hotel
Starts at \$234/night.
1651 US 90 W.
830-538-3200;
hillside-texas.com



Luigi's
1403 Angelo St.
830-444-0462;
facebook.com/
luigicastroville

With red poppies blooming in spring, European-style cottages, and more historical markers than stop signs, this quaint town is just as mellow and picturesque as the slow-moving Medina River that flows through it.

Castroville—named for founder Henri Castro, who settled the town in 1844 after immigrating from the Alsatian region of France—is just 25 miles from San Antonio.

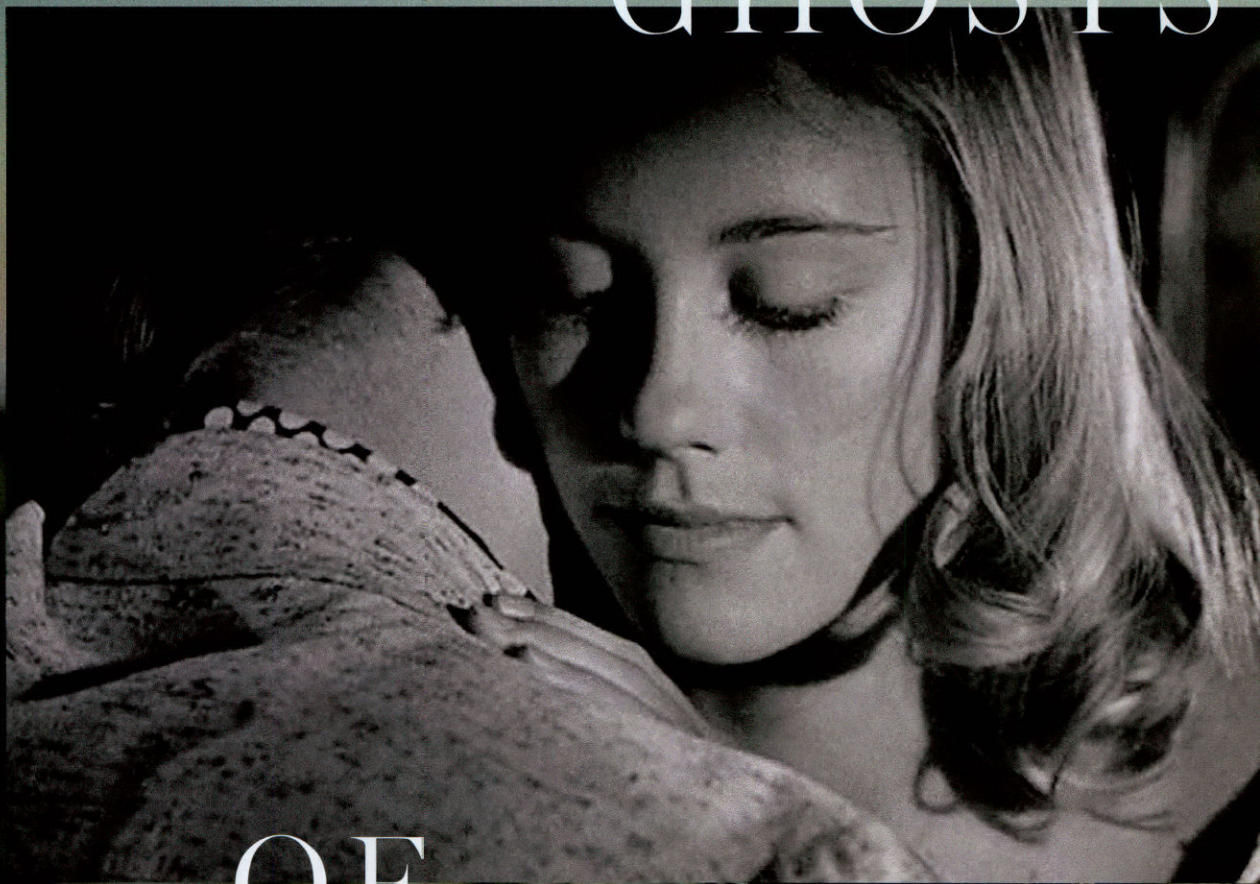
The Old World charms are best experienced with a walking tour through the Alsatian dwellings of the historic district—paper guides are available at the Landmark Inn, a small museum where the staff is well-versed in local lore. Pit stops at the Magnolia Filling Station and its nearby cousin restaurant, Paris Street Po'Boys, fuel the walk with good coffee and authentic Louisiana po'boys, respectively.

The freshly renovated Hillside Boutique Hotel, west of town, is a designer getaway with a spa and top-notch restaurant. It's an ideal locale for admiring the Medina River Valley that surrounds Castroville, particularly while lounging by the luxurious pool.

New additions bring a fresh, more upscale flair to the town, but Castroville is still all about its European roots, which you can experience this October at the Alsatian Festival. —CM

THE

GHOSTS



OF

BY MICHAEL J. MOONEY | PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVE SHAFER

Fifty years ago, *The Last Picture Show* changed the way the world saw small-town Texas and, in turn, the way the small town saw itself



ARCHER

CITY

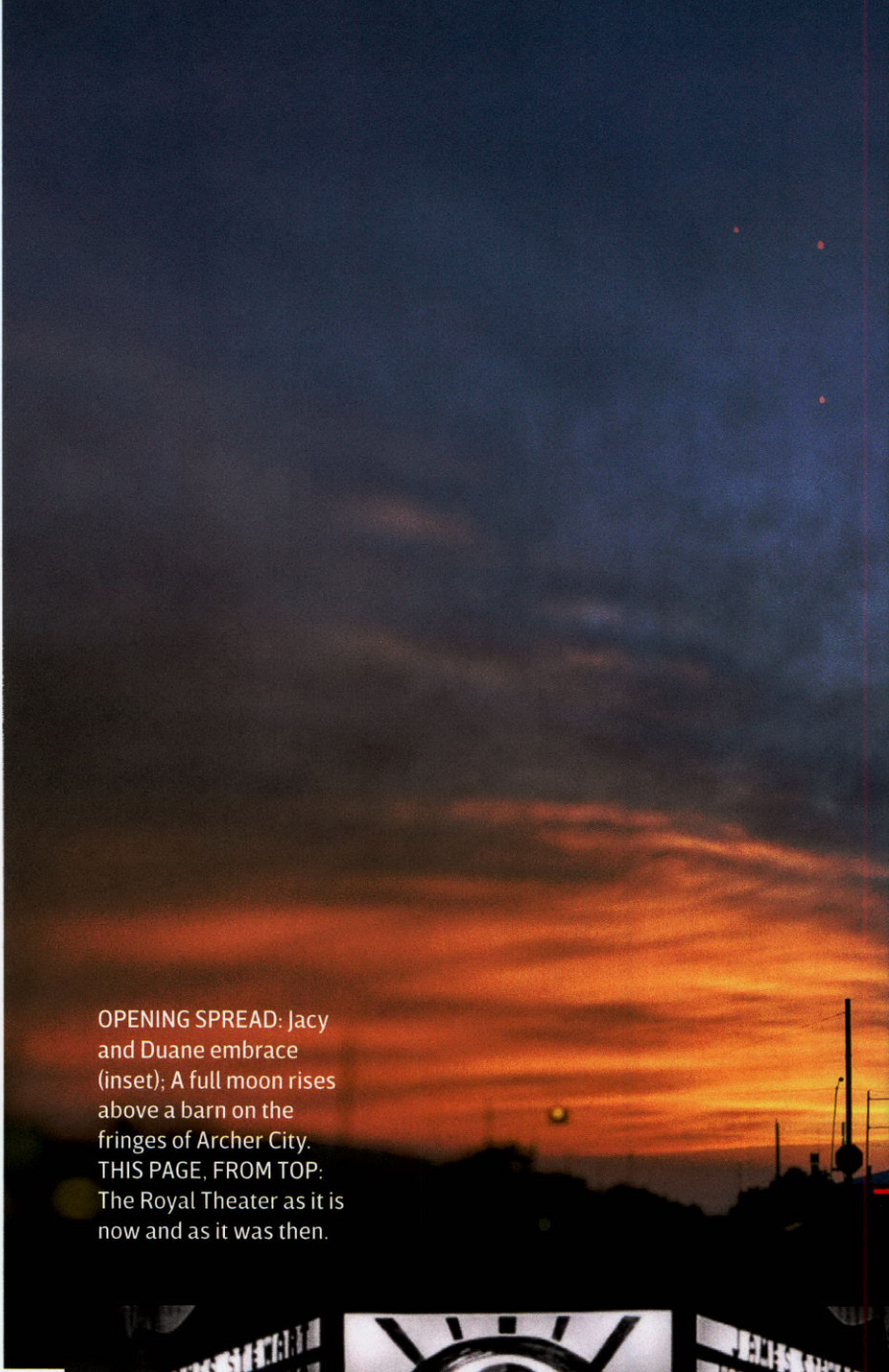
S

Staring at the front of the Royal Theater, I feel as though I'm looking backward through time. Taking in the cerulean marquee, the painted red fringe around the box office, the vertical ROYAL sign jutting into the afternoon sky—it's easy to imagine why the denizens of Archer County flocked here for decades. The theater was a dark, cool respite from the blazing sun, a still escape from the whipping winds of the North Central Plains, a glimpse of entertainment from the outside world.

The theater—or what's left of it anyway—peers out from the northeast corner of the town square. Without the storied theater, this could be any small town in Texas. Weathered barns and rusted oil pumps dot the landscape. Anchoring the town is the imposing three-story Romanesque Revival county courthouse, with stone archways and provincial peaks. There's also a small café (Murn's), a blink-and-you'll-miss-it police station, a few antiques stores, and a single four-way stoplight swaying in the breeze like an apparition.

This isn't just any small town in Texas, though. Archer City is *the* Texas small town. It's the setting of both the novel and film versions of *The Last Picture Show*, a coming-of-age story rendered in black and white that earned eight Academy Award nominations, including Best Writing (Adapted Screenplay), Best Directing, and Best Picture. In Larry McMurtry's book, published in 1966, the town is called Thalia. In the movie, directed by Peter Bogdanovich and released in 1971, it's called Anarene—a name taken from an abandoned town 8 miles away. But rest assured, both places are Archer City: the looming courthouse, the blinking stoplight, and the Royal Theater, where so many of the most dramatic moments of *The Last Picture Show* take place.

The novel, which McMurtry called a "spiteful" book intended to "lance some of the poisons of small-town life," received critical acclaim when it was published. But it was Bogdanovich's film that truly introduced the entire world, in utterly unromanticized fashion, to the intense, sweeping sagas of everyday life in Archer City. *The Last*



OPENING SPREAD: Jacy and Duane embrace (inset); A full moon rises above a barn on the fringes of Archer City. THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: The Royal Theater as it is now and as it was then.





Anarene, Texas, 1951.
Nothing much has changed...

COLUMBIA PICTURES Presents A BBS PRODUCTION

THE LAST PICTURE SHOW

A Film By
PETER BOGDANOVICH



Starring
TIMOTHY BOTTOMS/JEFF BRIDGES/ELLEN BURSTYN/BEN JOHNSON/CLORIS LEACHMAN
Directed by
PETER BOGDANOVICH
Screenplay by
LARRY MCMURTRY
Produced by
LARRY MCMURTRY
Based on the novel by
CYBILL SHEPHERD as Jacy / PETER BOGDANOVICH/LARRY MCMURTRY
Executive Producer
LARRY MCMURTRY
Produced by
PETER BOGDANOVICH LARRY MCMURTRY BERT SCHNEIDER/STEPHEN J. FRIEDMAN
Original Soundtrack Album on MGM Records

Picture Show turned this particular and peculiar town into art.

Both the novel and movie contain language that was considered lewd at the time. McMurtry's own mother, Hazel, once said that after reading the first 100 pages she hid the book in the closet and called her son that night. "Larry, honey," she said to him, he revealed in his 2002 travel memoir *Paradise*, "is this what we're sending you to Rice for? Those awful words!"

The film, with its nudity and frank depiction of teenage sexuality—including Cybill Shepherd's first and only topless scene—absolutely scandalized upright, moral Americans all over the country. Nowhere more so than in Archer City, where it was regarded at the time as a "dirty" movie.

Now, 50 years after the film's release, the town's past dalliances with Hollywood are somehow simultaneously scuttled and omnipresent. There's no billboard at the city

limit announcing the place's cultural significance, no notation on the water tower. But there are echoes of the art formed here, about this place, along every street, around every corner. Some might even feel the spirit of McMurtry, who passed away in Archer City earlier this year.

Over the last five decades, Peter Bogdanovich, a New Yorker who operated in Los Angeles, has told the story of the movie's origin many times. He'd seen the novel in a store, liked the title, saw what it was about, and immediately put the book back down. Then actor Sal Mineo, who'd starred alongside James Dean and Natalie Wood in *Rebel Without a Cause*, gave Bogdanovich a copy of the novel, saying he thought it would make a good film. Bogdanovich still didn't read it, but gave it to his wife, production designer Polly Platt, and asked her to read it. When she inspired him to finally read it himself, he was intrigued by the challenge of conveying small-town life in Texas and eventually co-wrote the screenplay with McMurtry. Bogdanovich, Platt, and McMurtry took a long road trip scouting locations in Texas, but ultimately



FROM LEFT:
Sonny, Duane,
and Jacy come of
age in Anarene;
Oil storage tanks
reside on the
outskirts of
Archer City.

the director realized he wanted to shoot the movie in McMurtry's hometown.

Set in the early 1950s, the story follows three teenagers—the co-captains of the football team and the so-called prettiest girl in school—through their senior year of high school, as they each struggle to make sense of adult concepts like love and sex and the fragility of human life. Sonny Crawford is the sensitive, thoughtful boy from a broken home. Duane Jackson is Sonny's lovelorn best friend who escapes first into the oil fields and then the Korean War. Jacy Farrow is the coquettish rich girl who yearns wholeheartedly for something beyond the confines of her surroundings. *The Last Picture Show* also famously includes an ensemble of carefully rendered adults trying to cope with their own expired dreams and broken lives.

McMurtry repeated over the years that the characters he created weren't based on any real-life individuals, but the people of Archer City always suspected otherwise. A man named Bobby Stubbs, who was photographed with McMurtry in their high school yearbook, believed he was the inspiration for Sonny. Stubbs had a troubled home life and worked nights like Sonny, and he drove the same kind of pickup truck. He was also once hit in the eye by the boyfriend of a girl he liked. "It kinda pretty closely followed me," Stubbs used to say.

A woman named Ceil Cleveland Footlick was often asked if she was the inspiration for Jacy. She was "very good friends" (her words) with Stubbs and had been voted "Most Beautiful Girl" in her class. For years she brushed off the question, but in 1997 she published a memoir with the title *Whatever Happened to Jacy Farrow?*

Because of the book's reputation, getting actors to audition was a challenge. Randy Quaid was cast as Lester, an awkward, sleazy suitor of Jacy's. He'd only read the parts of the script that involved his character, which mostly centered on Lester taking Jacy to a naked swimming party. "I just thought it was going to be like this B-movie, teenage, soft-porn movie," Quaid would later say. "Something you'd see at the drive-in."

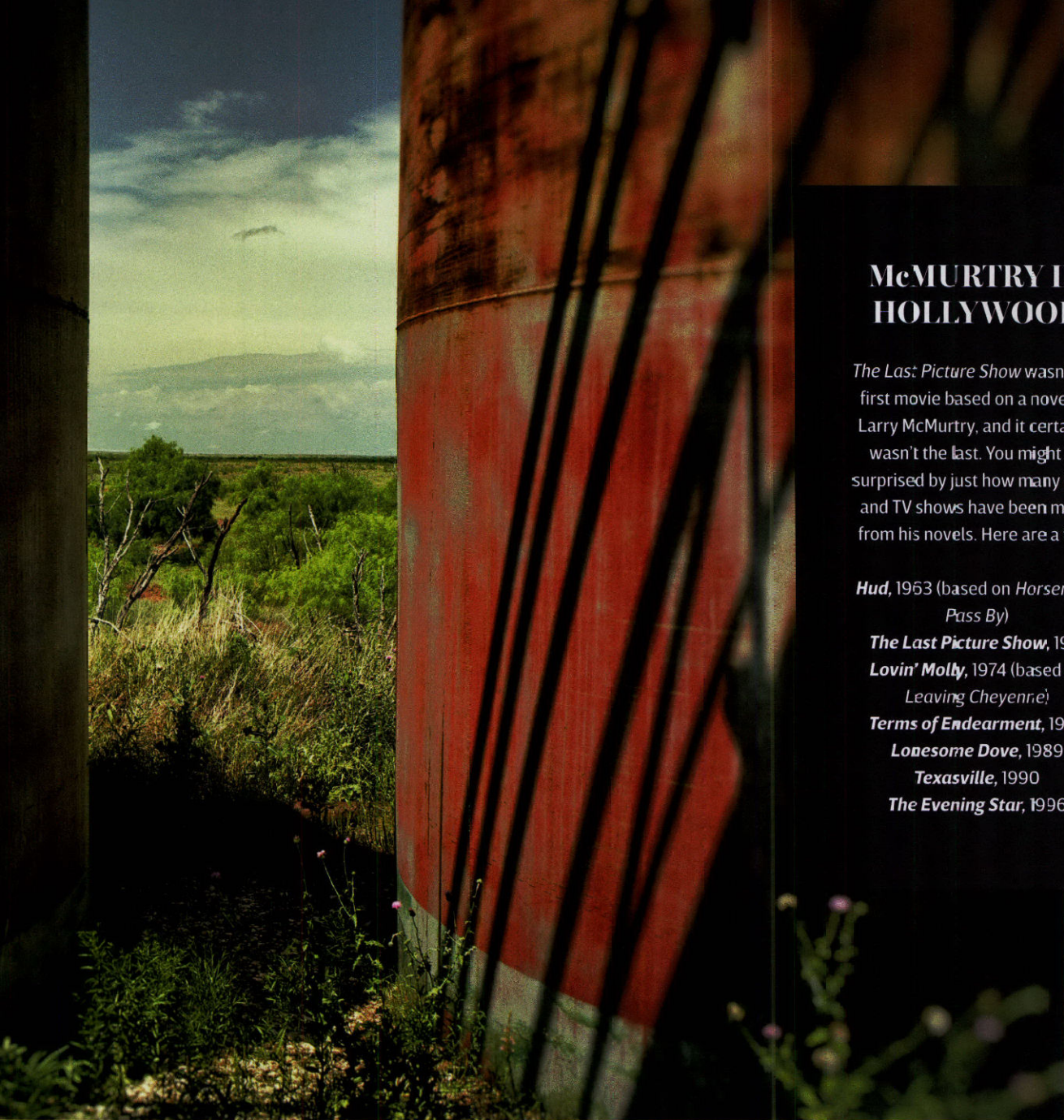
None of the young stars had much experience in film.

THIS WAS EVERYTHING THE LOCALS HAD FEARED: ALL THE IMMORAL LURIDNESS OF HOLLYWOOD, RIGHT HERE IN A PART OF TEXAS NOT SO COMFORTABLE WITH UNWHOLESOMENESS THAT DIDN'T STAY BEHIND CLOSED DOORS.

Timothy Bottoms, who'd only been in one movie before, was cast to play Sonny. Jeff Bridges, cast as Duane, had been a professional actor nearly all his life, but at 21 years old, this would be his first major film role. And Bogdanovich cast Shepherd as Jacy after seeing her face on the cover of *Glamour* magazine.

Most of the adults in the movie were played by established Hollywood actors, including Cloris Leachman, Ellen Burstyn, and Eileen Brennan. For the role of Sam the Lion, the wisdom-dispensing owner of the town's pool hall, Bogdanovich cast Ben Johnson, the champion-rodeo-cowboy-turned-stuntman-turned-Western-movie-icon. At first Johnson turned down the part on account of the foul language, but Bogdanovich called in a favor from his director friend John Ford, who convinced Johnson to do it.

Almost as soon as filming started, real life began imitating the art being created. While making a movie about illicit sex and barely veiled scandal, the set was awash in illicit sex and barely veiled scandal. The actors spent a lot of time drinking and smoking together in their hotel rooms 30 minutes north



McMURTRY IN HOLLYWOOD

The Last Picture Show wasn't the first movie based on a novel by Larry McMurtry, and it certainly wasn't the last. You might be surprised by just how many films and TV shows have been made from his novels. Here are a few:

Hud, 1963 (based on *Horseman, Pass By*)

The Last Picture Show, 1971

Lovin' Molly, 1974 (based on *Leaving Cheyenne*)

Terms of Endearment, 1983

Lonesome Dove, 1989

Texasville, 1990

The Evening Star, 1996

in Wichita Falls, and that led to drama. Bottoms fell in love with Shepherd. Bogdanovich started an affair with Shepherd, dissolving his own marriage while his wife, Platt, continued to work on the movie. (Most mornings Platt styled Shepherd's hair.) "It was quite a soap opera," Burstyn said in the documentary *Picture This: The Times of Peter Bogdanovich in Archer City, Texas*.

This was everything the locals had feared: all the immoral luridness of Hollywood, right here in a part of Texas not so comfortable with unwholesomeness that didn't stay behind closed doors.

Outside of Archer City, it was a different story. The movie received great reviews from coast to coast. Johnson won the Oscar for Actor in a Supporting Role and Leachman won for Actress in a Supporting Role. The film is still beloved today and maintains a spot in the coveted National Film Registry.

But at the time of its release, most of the locals disapproved. Strongly. The *Los Angeles Times* ran a story about it with the headline "Movie Riles Town It Depicts." McMurtry, who was involved in Bogdanovich's vision, eventually got so annoyed by the vicious gossip in town that he sent a letter to the editor

of the Archer City newspaper, challenging anyone in town to a public debate.

His offer went unrequited.

Archer City's population is 1,848, only a couple hundred larger than it was when McMurtry grew up there in the '30s and '40s. The town is the seat of Archer County, created in 1858 by the Texas State Legislature and named after Branch Tanner Archer, former secretary of war of the Republic of Texas. Ranching and oil have long been the predominant industries—by late 1926, there were more than 400 oil wells within 13 miles of Archer City—but many people are increasingly attracted to the town for its proximity to prime hunting.

Many of the locations where *The Last Picture Show* was filmed are gone now. Where Sam's dusty pool hall once stood, with its door flapping in the wind, there's nothing but

FROM LEFT: City Hall is around the corner from Archer City's lone stoplight; A scene from the movie offers a view of the town.



an empty dirt lot. The Rig-Wam Drive Inn, the burger joint where Jacy dangled french fries over Duane's head as if he was a trained seal, is just a plot of asphalt and patchy grass. The West-Tex Theater in the neighboring town of Olney, used for the interior movie theater scenes, was torn down in the mid-'80s. Today it's a small, quiet park with a gazebo.

Some places are still here, but different. The restaurant where Brennan's character worked turned into Booked Up No. 4, one of four bookstores McMurtry set up around the town square before shuttering all but one in 2012. The high school has some of the same old features, though it's been updated and decorated with a handful of granite statues

marking state titles the school has won through the years.

Much of the town looks and acts remarkably like it did when *The Last Picture Show* was made. Boys about the age of Duane and Sonny still speed through town in pickup trucks. Men the age of Sam the Lion still stop them to talk about football. The dance hall at the American Legion, where Jacy and Duane twirled around the room and Sonny ran into his estranged father, looks like it could host the same event today. On a recent evening, four or five locals were perched on barstools, sipping cold beers, listening to songs on the jukebox. They got rid of the old Wurlitzer years ago, but the updated digital version there now still plays all the Hank Williams Sr. songs from the movie.

In time, feelings in Archer City softened a bit. Mostly, the people here don't talk much about the movie, or about McMurtry, the town's most famous



son. You can spend all morning at Murn's Café and all night at the American Legion, the only bar in town, and never hear *The Last Picture Show* mentioned once. It's not the source of tension it once was.

The public change of heart was most apparent in 1989, nearly 20 years after *The Last Picture Show* was filmed, when Bogdanovich returned to Archer City to shoot the sequel, *Texasville*, based on a book of the same name by McMurtry. This time the townspeople lined up to participate as extras. People came from miles away to sell concessions or to take photos or just get a glimpse of the nearly \$20 million production.

"The bad taste that the movie left for some folks, that's gone now," then-high school principal Nat Lunn told the *Austin American-Statesman* at the time. "Especially with money being short in town, they're ready for another dose of Hollywood"

By the late 1980s, the three leads in the first film—Bottoms, Bridges, and Shepherd—had all become stars. While the entire budget for the first movie was around \$1.3 million, Shepherd alone was paid \$1.5 million to reprise her role. Bridges was reportedly paid \$1.75 million. Bottoms, who'd complained publicly about Bogdanovich and said he didn't like any of his co-stars, would only agree to return if he was given an additional \$100,000 to fund the *Picture This* documentary.

In the two decades since the first movie, Bogdanovich's career had scared and crashed. He and Shepherd had broken up; he went on to have multiple relationships, and she had two divorces. Bottoms was also divorced and remarried, but on the set he confessed the crush he'd had on Shepherd. Platt returned, too, and brought the 21-year-old daughter she and Bogdanovich shared. It became a grand, twisted Hollywood reunion, right there on the streets of Archer City.

Drawn by the potential spectacle of what was by then some sort of love-octagon, media outlets from across the country sent reporters to town. There were long feature stories in both *Entertainment Weekly* and the *Los Angeles Times*. By all accounts, though, the entire production served as a therapeutic experience, healing the wounds of the past. At one press conference, the often-sullen Bottoms hugged Bogdanovich. Behind-the-scenes footage caught Shepherd hugging Bottoms. Residents of Archer County took photos of themselves on the set.

But when the movie was released, it tanked. It received middling reviews, earned back only a fraction of its budget, and even today it's not easy to find on any of the major streaming services.

A lot of people associated with *The Last Picture Show* are dead now. Stubbs, who claimed to be the basis for Sonny, died in 1992. Johnson in 1996. Sam Bottoms, the real-life younger brother of Timothy Bottoms who played the mute boy Billy, died in 2008. Platt, the producer and production designer who somehow never pulled Shepherd's hair, died in 2011. Then Brennan in 2013.

In January of this year, Footlick, the woman who wrote about being the real Jacy Farrow, died in North Carolina. Leachman died almost two weeks later. And on March 25, McMurtry, the writer who created all this beautiful trouble, died at the age of 84.

A few days after his death, nobody answered the doorbell at his house in Archer City, a majestic, three-story mansion just down the road from the high school. Looking through the front window, everything seemed to me to be just the way he left it, from the table made from a giant dinosaur fossil to the towering shelves of books in every room. McMurtry bought this place, the biggest home in town, after he won the Pulitzer Prize for *Lonesome Dove*. He'd wake up early in the morning, type for an hour and a half or so at his long oak table, then go to the bookstore to price antiquarian volumes. Most of the locals would leave him alone.

On the house's front porch, a single rocking chair was situated to look out over the front yard into the surrounding neighborhood. Someone sitting there could see the comings and goings of a lot of people. As the early-evening wind moved through, the chair began to rock ever so gently.


These days, I sense the people of Archer City think differently of *The Last Picture Show*. It's a part of the town's story, just like the cattle industry and state titles. The movie is even mentioned on the town's website, though it's certainly not prominent.

There's also a tiny park just off the square with a fiberglass horse covered in brands from local ranches and a display that chronicles a bit of the town's history. The welded metal wall has separate panels for the town's founding, the first successful oil well drilled here, and the giant fire that swept through in 1925. There's also a panel explaining how the town was the filming location for *The Last Picture Show* and *Texasville*. Bogdanovich's last name is misspelled.

A couple hundred feet away is the Royal Theater. Most of the building is a burned-out hull, popular for weddings, photo shoots, and occasional performances. The front of the building has been restored, though. It looks just like it did in the movie, the image that begins and ends the film. It's haunting and beautiful, weathered and damaged—but still here, still standing, still looking at that single blinking light swaying in the wind. 🐎

A gravel road stretches from the bottom center towards the horizon, flanked by green fields and a line of trees. The sky is filled with large, dramatic clouds, with a bright light source breaking through near the horizon, creating a soft glow. The text "THIS HAPPY PLACE" is written in a white, hand-drawn, cursive font across the sky and road.

THIS
HAPPY
PLACE

A young boy stands on a rocky outcrop, looking off to the side. He is wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat, a blue and white plaid long-sleeved shirt, a brown belt with a large silver buckle, blue jeans, and brown boots. The background is a vast, green, hilly landscape under a dramatic, cloudy sky at sunset or sunrise. The colors in the sky range from deep purple and blue to warm orange and yellow. In the distance, a few vehicles are visible on a road.

In tiny Lipscomb,

pop. 44, the locals treasure

their rugged Panhandle Camelot

*By George Getschow
Photographs by Kenny Braun*

Ben Bussard is a happy kid.

Age 11, he bursts out the door, BB gun in tow, and scrambles down the hill to Wolf Creek below the family's log cabin. He and his best buddies will spend all day swimming, fishing, and floating down the current on their log raft. At night, instead of heading home, they will camp out next to a fire, swapping stories about their wild adventures.

In tiny Lipscomb, a flyspeck village cradling a verdant creek valley in the far northeast corner of the Panhandle, "I can go anywhere I want for miles and miles and miles," beams the boy, who sports dusty blue jeans and a wide-brimmed Stetson over cropped blond hair. Ben's been to Dallas and a few other big Texas cities, but he doesn't care for them one bit. "There's not much to do there," he says glumly. "You can't just go outside for a walk or go exploring by yourself. An adult has to be with you."

Ben's parents smile as they listen to their young buckaroo describe his escapades along Wolf Creek and beyond. "We're glad Ben can grow up here," says his mother, Tanja Bussard, speaking of a town that at first glance looks like an abandoned frontier outpost on the edge of civilization.

Lipscomb, pop. 44, is the county seat of one of the most sparsely settled regions of Texas. It lacks everything urbanites would consider essential: reliable cell phone service and electricity, gas stations, grocery stores, movie theaters, and sit-down restaurants. The closest Walmart is 75 miles away. A carryout restaurant operates only for a few hours a day, and the Bussards open their private Alamo Saloon to serve buffalo chili and brisket to neighboring ranchers who help them during spring roundups.

"There isn't much left here in town," says Tanja, originally from Germany, who stumbled into Lipscomb 18 years ago while photographing Western cowboys and ranchers for her university dissertation. She met Lance Bussard, a third-generation cowman, hunter, and trapper, at his saloon,



OPENING SPREAD: Ben Bussard on the High Plains of Lipscomb County. **THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Ben; a sign in a town square gazebo; Ben and his parents, Lance and Tanja Bussard, at their Lipscomb home.



jawing about his exploits on the High Plains of the Panhandle. She was so smitten she decided to stay. They tied the knot inside the Alamo Saloon.

"You get here and you think you're at the end of the world," Tanja says. "But you're actually at the beginning."

Tanja's riddle rattled around in my head for days as I wandered the dusty streets of Lipscomb trying to figure out what she meant. A friend first told me about this isolated village more than a year ago when I was lining up a camping trip to Palo Duro Canyon. She described it as a quiet place. Intrigued, I decided to route my trip through Lipscomb and discovered it was, indeed, eerily quiet. But it also was noticeably different than other small Texas towns—still primitive, unpretentious, and devoid of the ubiquitous trappings of modern society. Over the coming months, Lipscomb would turn my expectations upside down.

On one corner of Lipscomb's

town square stands the once-famous summer outdoor platform where fiddlers and dancers from around the state whirled before the owners grew too old and tired to keep it up. Now only squirrels and chipmunks sashay around the structure. On another corner of the square sits the hunched, sagging Six Shooter Draw. Once a local hotspot, it's now a storage barn. Next door squats J.W. Beeson's time-scarred saddle shop. Locals say the shop is seldom open these days.

On the other side of the square, across from the courthouse, a weathered wood board proclaims "Lipscomb Town Square." Instead of the customary cannon or statue of a local hero, the square is adorned with a rusted jalopy, a herd of metal horses, plastic geese and baby dolls, a birdbath, and a gazebo. Inside the gazebo I was surprised to encounter a gracious greeting scrawled across a handmade sign: "To All Who Come To This Happy Place, Welcome."

This Happy Place? I scratched my head. Are Lipscombites cuckoo? All around me is desolation and ruin. For heaven's sake, how could anyone be happy in a place like this?

Suddenly, I'm interrupted from my musings by a rafter of well over 100 turkeys strutting across the square, heading toward the home of one of the villagers, who at this moment

Ben's been to Dallas and a few other big Texas cities, but he doesn't care for them one bit. "There's not much to do there," he says glumly. "You can't just go outside for a walk or go exploring by yourself. An adult has to be with you."



FROM LEFT: The Bussards' Alamo Saloon; Gay Cunningham's stargazing platform; residents cruising Lipscomb's quiet streets; Pam Haines in the public library she built in the town's old schoolhouse.

is wearing pajamas and a long wool sweater. She holds a bucket of cracked corn in her hand, tenderly cooing to the turkeys in her own gobbledygook. The woman, Virginia Scott, performs a happy dance with the turkeys as they peck at the corn. "Good morning, my darlings," she warbles.

Virginia's display makes me wonder: Is there more to "This Happy Place" than a few decrepit buildings, a deserted town square, and a well-treated flock of wild turkeys?

At first, the people of Lipscomb treated me like one of the odious porcupines they shoo back to the surrounding prairie. Soon after I arrived, word went out there was a writer from Dallas poking around, asking strange questions about how they could be so happy living in such a desolate place. Many stonewalled me. A knock on a door was met with silence. Calls weren't returned. Then, one sizzling summer afternoon, Kellie Kjos, the owner of Kellie's Grill, let me into her kitchen. I thought I had finally prevailed.

"If I offered you a million dollars, would you move to

Dallas, Houston, or any other big city?"

"No amount of money would get me out of Lipscomb," she replies.

I was flummoxed. Later, I had a chance to grill Kellie's husband, Bernie Kjos, while taking orders at the restaurant. After 15 minutes of interrogation, he swiveled on his chair and faced me. "Man, you just don't get it, do you?" he says. "But you never will because you're not from here."

Over the next year,

I returned in the spring, summer, fall, and winter in search of the secret to Lipscomb's happiness. Once the villagers realized I wasn't going away, they revealed what they say outsiders don't see: a Camelot, unconstrained by the norms and expectations of modern-day society. Instead, the villagers govern themselves. There's no mayor. No city council. No chamber of commerce. No Rotary Club. Locals are free from all the ordinances, housing codes, regulations, and restrictions imposed on city dwellers. With so much latitude, the people of Lipscomb feel uninhibited about displaying their quirky tastes and fanciful creations on any street corner.

Virginia is free to plant a flock of giant, wooden replicas of "her" wild turkeys on her front lawn or keep a bunch of goats in a pen next to her backyard. Another resident,

"You get here and you think you're at the end of the world. But you're actually at the beginning."



Gay Cunningham, is free to construct a stargazing platform to fulfill her fascination with finding unknown celestial spheres. Pam Haines, regarded as the town's poet laureate, is free to prance around town atop her Arabian gelding and keep a metal bear sculpture in her yard. The villagers delight in identifying homes not by their addresses, but by their radiant colors and peculiar characteristics. There's The Blue House, The Pink House, The Yellow House, The Cactus House, The Square House, and the once stately Pigeon House, now occupied by pigeons.

Unlike residents in some small towns, Lipscombites don't worry about the latest amenities they don't have. Instead, they rely on a barter economy in which, for example, one resident without a working water well mows his neighbor's lawn in exchange for water from his neighbor's hose. The same lawn mower builds wheelchair ramps, mends fences, and installs electrical outlets for other neighbors in exchange for garden vegetables, snickerdoodles, and bierocks—a

German hamburger and cabbage roll that's a village favorite.

Lipscombites also rely on the natural resources all around them. Lance Bussard, for example, ranches cattle on an expanse of rich prairieland spread across Wolf Creek valley. His daughter, Cheri Bussard Huntress, harvests bushels of wild plums across the valley to produce jelly for sale at farmers markets and on Facebook. And she sells the pelts of coyotes, bobcats, and other varmints she's trapped.

Stopping at the side of a dusty backroad to set a coyote trap, Cheri says she worked for a bank in Wellington for about six months but couldn't cope with the office lifestyle. Today, she revels in her workspace of the untamed prairie. "I feel free" she says, just like others in town who live off the land by planting huge vegetable gardens; raising hens for eggs, bees for honey, goats for cheese; and other homespun enterprises.

"It's easy to live more freely here because we don't have to bend to what other people do," explains Jan Luna, who along with her partner, Debby Opdyke, has renovated many



Exploring the northeast corner of the Texas Panhandle

In 1887, little Lipscomb and equally tiny Higgins were locked in a tug of war over the proposed route of the Panhandle and Santa Fe Railroad. Higgins won the railroad, but Lipscomb got the county seat. Today, Higgins' railroad is abandoned, and the commerce that once brought prosperity to Lipscomb is gone. But for travelers searching for hidden treasures, Lipscomb County is a gold mine. Here are some worthy destinations to explore:

The 1916 Lipscomb County Courthouse, a fine example of the Classical Revival style, attracts a steady stream of architecture buffs. The Texas Historical Commission plans to complete a restoration of the building this September. co.lipscomb.tx.us

The Wolf Creek Heritage Museum in Lipscomb preserves local history and displays the work of local artists. wolfcreekheritagemuseum.org

Darrouzett, 17 miles north of Lipscomb, hosts Main Street Christmas on the first Saturday of December. The event features parades, animated light shows, ornament-making, and savory local cuisine. [facebook.com/DZTTX](https://www.facebook.com/DZTTX)

Booker Grocery Cafe & Catering in Booker, a 30-mile drive northwest of Lipscomb, serves local meat on par with big-city steakhouses. The store also ships steaks. [facebook.com/bookergrocerycafe](https://www.facebook.com/bookergrocerycafe)

Follett, a 22-mile drive northeast of Lipscomb, is known as the "Gateway to the Golden Spread" for its role in the heyday of Southern Plains wheat farming. Visit **Nana's Cafe** for mouth-watering cheeseburgers. nanascafetx.com



FROM LEFT: The Lipscomb County Courthouse; bison on the Bussards' ranch; a Native American brass dragonfly relic found in Lipscomb.

ramshackle buildings in town for a pittance of what it would cost in a big city. If she were renovating a historic hotel in Dallas, Jan says, she would be expected to turn it into a showplace for well-to-do travelers. But in Lipscomb, tourists are about as welcome as turkey hunters.

"We don't exactly cater to tourists around here," Jan says, explaining that many villagers fear outsiders might turn Lipscomb into a bustling tourist trap. "Occasionally, we have people drive in, look around, and say, 'You know, with a little development, this place could really be something,' Jan says. "And I tell them, 'It already is something. You just can't see it.'"

This explains why, after spending the last three years restoring a dilapidated, one-story hotel across from the courthouse, Jan isn't planning to open it to tourists. She's made sure of that by not posting a sign identifying The Old Hotel. She plans to rent it exclusively for local family reunions, and to deer hunters she or other locals know.



*"For Lipscomb is a place of dreams,
Not unlike Camelot, it seems—
A place that shelters from the din
And nurtures those who live within"*

As always, Pam Haines

is burning the midnight oil, penning endless odes to her idyllic town and her "dearest" villagers. In one poem, which she shares with me in hopes I will "get" what makes Lipscomb, Lipscomb, she writes:

*For Lipscomb is a place of dreams,
Not unlike Camelot, it seems—
A place that shelters from the din
And nurtures those who live within*

When she isn't crafting poems, Pam's dreaming up new projects to make the village "pretty," as she puts it. In recent years, Pam turned an empty room in Lipscomb's former schoolhouse into a public library. She also transformed rooms inside Lipscomb's old country church into a dreamscape, where baby monkeys, elephants, owls, and cherubs hover over an antique crib. Both are popular with the community. Pam's dreamscape extends to a whimsical children's classroom lacking one thing she and the other villagers wish Lipscomb had more of—a actual children. The dozen children in town attend school 30 miles away in Canadian.

Pam made sure to place a dragonfly pillow inside the classroom. "A dragonfly is a symbol of transformation, growth, and protection," she says.

Before the first European settlers arrived, the Comanche, Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes thought of Wolf Creek valley as their utopia, too. Bison, antelope, deer, and turkey provided ample food, shelter, and clothing. But in tribal culture, the dragonfly was an important spirit animal—protecting people from all dangers, including the violent windstorms that frequently sweep across the Southern Plains. They painted the powerful dragonfly on their tepees and scalp shirts, and even made them into brass hairpieces.

Even so, the Southern Plains Indians were quickly subdued by the overwhelming firepower of the U.S. Army and the decimation of the bison by American hunters. In recent years, some Lipscomb residents have uncovered relics—arrowheads, spears, shell casings, brass bells—along Wolf Creek from the so-called Red River War of 1874-75. A collection of Lance Bussard's Native American relics are on display at Lipscomb's Wolf Creek Heritage Museum.

Another resident, Stephen Thorne, made the remarkable discovery of a brass dragonfly figure. He found the relic, its dark patina tarnished by age and dirt, a few years ago while metal detecting a few hundred yards north of the courthouse. "I was awestruck," he says, realizing the object he was holding in his hand may have been an all-powerful totem to the Native American who made it, and who could have died in battle clutching it in his hand.

During my last trip

to Lipscomb, in early February, the Bussards drive down a dusty backroad to feed their bison grazing along Sand Creek, a small tributary of Wolf Creek. Lance lights up as the herd rumbles out of a bramble toward the hay bale on the back of his truck. "They're so beautiful," he says. The beasts remind him of his family's deep ties to the wild Texas frontier, and to the Southern Plains Indians who erected tepees and hunted bison along the same stretch of Wolf Creek below the family homestead. Whenever they're not herding cattle or showing pigs at local livestock shows, Lance and Ben relish hunting for arrowheads along Wolf Creek.

I'm astonished by the Bussards' extensive collection of arrowheads, spear points, and other native relics kept in glass cases inside their log cabin, and their pestles and mortars baking in the sun on the front porch. For Ben to be able to walk out of his cabin and find such historic treasures in his backyard "would be any boy's dream come true," I blurt out. Tanja tells me Ben cherishes his primitive prairieland and his free-roaming way of life as much as Lance.

But for how long?

Sitting on their sprawling front porch, Tanja casually mentions to Ben that someday he'll probably have his own family and may want to live somewhere else. "Oh Mom," Ben exclaims. "I'll never live away from here. Never!" 🐾

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PLATES



THE TALL HAT
shape of Gnome
Cones allows
for extra frozen
goodness.



OWNERS Bret Hawkins (left) and Alex Sparks stand next to "Big Papa" at their downtown Denton location.

Garden gnomes of all shapes, sizes, and dispositions line the grounds of an outdoor food court in Argyle and dangle from the ceiling of a shop in Denton. Some smile mischievously while others hold their gardening tools at the ready, but all serve the purpose of welcoming patrons to Gnome Cones.

Lifelong best friends Bret Hawkins and Alex Sparks founded Gnome Cones in 2017, when they began churning out their all-natural snow cones from a stand in the Fort Worth suburb of Argyle. The pair now owns two locations and a traveling van. Because the shop uses fresh fruit juice rather than artificial sweeteners in its syrups and no artificial dyes, Hawkins proposes the mythical woodland creatures would approve of Gnome Cones' methods.

"Gnomes are from the forest or the garden," he says. "If a gnome made a snow cone, it would probably be with real fruit."

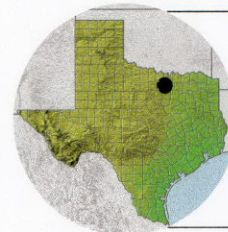
The Goblinberry cone, with hints of blackberry, cranberry, raspberry, and lemon, presents no overpowering sweetness or sticky residue usually associated with snow cones. Each cup is in the shape of a pointy gnome hat, nearly doubling the amount of snow that normally fits into a cup. Customers can add sour spray, fresh cream, coconut cream, or ice cream to any of the 11 flavors, which include Troll's Blood (cherry, strawberry, and coconut), Sweaty Yeti (coconut and vanilla), and blood orange.

The owners' affinity for gnomes stems from a running prank Sparks had with his college roommates in which they hid gnomes throughout their Biola University

Gnome-Man's Land

This snow cone shop serves up all-natural flavors in North Texas

By Julia Jones



GNOME CONES
205 N. Elm St.,
Denton.
940-320-7772.
421 SH 377, Argyle.
940-299-2663.
gnomecones.co

campus. Sparks told Hawkins about his mischievous acts, and they agreed that it would make for a fun branding idea. So Hawkins designed the cups and some merchandise while he was enrolled in the University of North Texas graphic design program, and the gimmick won the attention of a local investor who gave them enough money to purchase a stand. The Argyle location opened in 2017, and locals flocked to the walk-up counter far more quickly than the friends had anticipated.

"It was kind of weird because it had been a joke for so long in my life," Sparks says. "It's a product that I just

made up, and now thousands of people have eaten them."

The downtown Denton storefront opened in 2019. While snow cone shops don't normally operate out of a brick-and-mortar building, the demand was so large in the college town that Gnome Cones needed the extra space for production. With the larger space came an ice cream menu and alcoholic Gnaughty Gnomes infused with a wine-based liqueur. Because it has indoor seating, the Denton location operates through the winter, selling hot chocolate and wassail, while the Argyle stand only operates March through October.

When the pandemic closures began in March 2020, during the beginning of snow cone season, Sparks and Hawkins worried they would have to close perma-

nently. Just days later, they pivoted and launched a website where customers can order ice pops for delivery.

Being quick on their feet and willing to experiment also led them to purchase and remodel a van, turning it into the "Gnome-Mobile." Completed in September, the van can be booked for events and can occasionally be seen driving through Denton selling ice pops.

The ice pops, or "Gnomesicles," come in many of the same flavors as the cones, like wild cherry and pifa colada. Some of the more extravagant ice pop options include peaches and cream and cheesecake, which comes with bits of graham cracker crust. All are served on a stick that reads, "There's No Place Like Gnome!"

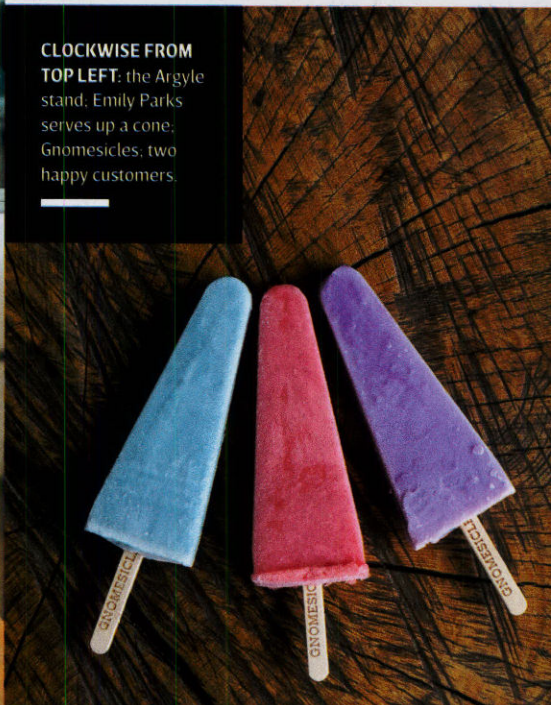
Gnome puns—stemming from late nights of brainstorming with friends—abound in the merch section of the store, too, with stickers reading "Gnome Run" and tank tops saying "Gnomaste." Hawkins believes it takes a special kind of community to embrace the shop's eccentricity.

"It's a creative town," he says of Denton. "It's a place that appreciates something weird like Gnome Cones." **L**

"If a gnome made a snow cone, it would probably be with real fruit."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: the Argyle stand; Emily Parks serves up a cone; Gnomesicles; two happy customers.





JEREMIE ESTILLETTE, a certified alligator rescue professional, poses with his wife, Kim, and daughter, Kallie, in Vidor.

Holly Hearn is making wild alligator tikka masala in the kitchen of her father's rural home near Beaumont. Her pug, Guts, snuffles the floor, hoping a wayward scrap will fall in his path. Hearn adds sour cream to her curry base as the fragrant mixture of onion, garlic, spices, and tomato paste simmers. "Tikka masala is supposed to be made with yogurt, but I find sour cream adds more fat and richness, which balances the lean meat," she says.

Alligator—both wild and farmed—is an intrinsic part of the culture and economy in this part of Southeast Texas, which is known as the Golden Triangle and includes the cities of Beaumont, Orange, and Port Arthur.

Alligator was historically a vital source of protein for local Native American tribes and Cajun settlers. The demand for luxury shoes, handbags, and belts made from alligator skin led to the establishment of alligator farms in the 1950s. The farms provided a consistent supply of high-quality skins and also created a market for commercial meat. Alligator can be found on menus at restaurants like Rodair Bar & Grill in Port Arthur. But locals like Hearn still enjoy hunting and eating wild alligator meat.

Hearn's family has lived in Beaumont for generations. She began hunting when she was 9—primarily feral hogs, deer, and birds—and much of her childhood was spent in the kitchen, where her extended family prepared elaborate feasts.

"Sustainability and conservation were instilled in me when I was very young," Hearn says. "It was important to my dad that we have reverence for the life that was being taken and for the environment. To me, being involved in every aspect of hunting, including processing, cooking, and utilizing as much of the animal as I can, is a form of respect. I enjoy hunting, but I also enjoy eating."

Shortly after graduating from Lamar

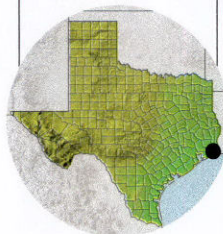
Beyond the Tail

Alligators have long been a part of Southeast Texas' culinary culture

By Laurel Miller

RODAIR BAR & GRILL
6701 Jade Ave.,
Port Arthur.
409-548-4242;
facebook.com/
rodairbarandgrill

GAME GIRL GOURMET
gamegirlgourmet.com



“To me, being involved in every aspect of hunting, including processing, cooking, and utilizing as much of the animal as I can, is a form of respect.”

University in 2020, Hearn launched Game Girl Gourmet, which offers her services as a private chef and cooking instructor with an emphasis on wild game.

On this spring day, Hearn is preparing dinner for her friends Jeremie and Kim Estillette, who have provided fresh alligator tail meat. Jeremie is a state-certified nuisance alligator hunter and owner of Whatever It Takes Gator Rescue in Vidor. As a contractor for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, he catches and relocates alligators that have ventured into territory heavily populated by humans, like swimming pools, retention ponds, and campgrounds.

The Golden Triangle is prime habitat for the American alligator, which is native to eastern parts of Texas and other Southern states. Once on the brink of extinction, the protected species has been able to thrive again in Texas thanks to conservation initiatives, including two highly regulated hunting seasons.

While Jeremie enjoys seasonal hunting to control the population, he dreads having to put down the fewer than 1% of nuisance alligators that can't, for logistical or behavioral reasons, be released back into the wild or placed in a sanctuary. “My job is about not killing alligators,” he says. “But when I have no other option, there’s not much that goes to waste, and it’s enough to keep my family and friends fed.”

Thus, the dinner party at Hearn’s. The tikka masala is what she calls a “tastes like chicken” recipe. “It’s what everyone

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Alligator tikka masala. Beaumont chef Holly Hearn, the Rodair Bar & Grill in Port Arthur serves alligator on its menu.



Back From the Brink

The worldwide demand for luxury animal-skin goods that began in the late 19th century led to the near extinction of the American alligator. In 1973, the species was officially protected by the Texas Endangered Species Act. Federal and state initiatives have enabled a successful comeback of the wild population in the U.S., and hunting was again legalized in Texas in the late 1980s. "Alligator farms are a critical part of the sustainable-use model that keeps the native population in place," says Jonathan Warner, TPWD's Alligator Program Leader. "Almost all farms get their eggs from the wild. They're harvested by commercial collectors who pay landowners for access. Like hunting, which must be done by permit on private land, it's an economic incentive that motivates owners to manage and protect alligator habitat."

Warner, TPWD's Alligator Program Leader. "Almost all farms get their eggs from the wild. They're harvested by commercial collectors who pay landowners for access. Like hunting, which must be done by permit on private land, it's an economic incentive that motivates owners to manage and protect alligator habitat."



says about alligator, so I applied that to recipes that call for chicken."

Jeremie thinks alligator tastes like a combination of pork and shrimp. "People say that gator that's not farm-raised tastes 'wild,'" he says. "I don't know what that means. I grew up eating wild." While some farmed alligators do eat a "wild" diet of frogs, snakes, fish,

crustaceans, birds, and small mammals, most are fed a commercial diet largely comprised of fish, bone, and blood meal, which, depending on who you ask, may result in milder meat. The tail, backstrap, and jaw meat of alligator are white and tender; the darker legs are almost beefy in flavor. The meat needs to be tenderized before cooking, either in a marinade

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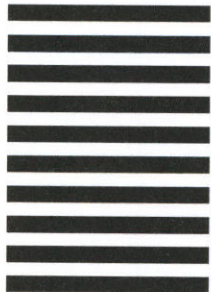
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“I think of alligator as a delicacy, because when I was a kid, we didn’t go to a restaurant to eat it—you went out and caught them yourself.”

or with a mallet; its lean composition also means it’s easy to overcook.

German and Italian families have perfected their own cultural recipes using alligator as the source of protein. Lee Wullenwaber, co-owner of Rodair Bar & Grill, grew up nearby with his Italian grandmother combining Cajun flavors with food from her own upbringing. “I was very fond of her blackened gator pasta,” he says. “If you cook it right, it’s flaky, like fish. It just falls apart in your mouth.”

In February, Wullenwaber, his wife, Misti Wullenwaber, and their four business partners purchased the restaurant formerly known as Rodair Roadhouse. The group decided to keep the original menu, which is famous for its Cajun classics, including alligator étouffée and gator fried with cornmeal crust. While Wullenwaber acknowledges the meat is a novelty for tourists, he thinks locals of a certain age see it differently.

“I think of alligator as a delicacy because when I was a kid, we didn’t go to a restaurant to eat it—you went out and caught them yourself,” he says.

There’s a certain joy in procuring your own food, as Hearn and Jeremie know. After dinner, the two compare alligator cooking techniques and discuss their love of hunting and conservation. “It’s the honorable way to do things,” Hearn says. “If more people had conversations about how hunting protects wildlife and the environment, there would be a lot less opposition to it.”



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VIVA

When Aquamaids Reigned

The magical days of Aquarena Springs in San Marcos

By Pam LeBlanc

AQUAMAIDS stayed underwater during their performances by taking breaths through an air tube.

Spring Lake has attracted humans for millennia, its plentiful fresh water providing relief for indigenous Clovis people, Spanish explorers, and Texas cattle drovers. But most people wouldn't know about the San Marcos natural treasure if not for a more recent chapter in the lake's history, when mermaids, clowns, and a swimming pig named Ralph frolicked there.

Spring Lake transformed during the heyday of Aquarena Springs, an amusement park that operated there from 1950 to 1996. The park's underwater theater has since been removed, along with the fiberglass volcano that served as a dressing room for performers, the tic-tac-toe-playing chicken, the soaring gondola, and other vestiges of what once was one of the biggest commercial tourist attractions in Texas.

"All of our friends in San Marcos worked at Aquarena Springs," said Mary McBeth, 70, who wore a ruffled blue leotard in her role as an Aquamaid in the 1960s. "We made \$3-something per show, and when people called us 'mermaids,' we always corrected them."

Experts peg this spot, where the San Marcos Springs form the headwaters of the San Marcos River, as one of the oldest continually inhabited sites in North America. Artifacts excavated in the 1970s and '80s indicate humans have lived here for more than 12,000 years. Spring Lake's current steward, Texas State University's The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, explores this history as part of its conservation and research mission.

Perhaps the most colorful chapter of the lake's story began in 1924, when embalmer A.B. Rogers, who ran a furniture and coffin store in downtown San Marcos, bought land along the San Marcos River and opened a small hotel a few years later. In 1946 he added glass-bottom boats so guests could spy on turtles, spotted gar, and undulating aquatic grasses.

In 1950, A.B.'s son, Paul Rogers, took over operations. He dredged a portion of the lake to install a 125-seat submarine



AQUARENA
San Marcos, Texas



AQUARENA
SPRINGS
SAN MARCOS, TEXAS

CROWDS visited Aquarena Springs for attractions including glass-bottom boats, Ralph the Swimming Pig, a gondola, and an observation tower.

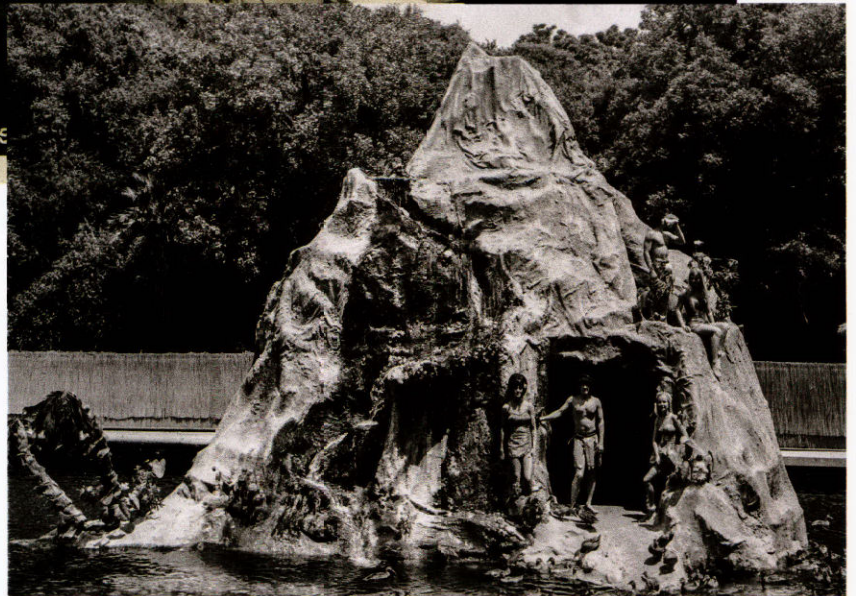


AQUARENA
SPRINGS



A SPRING LAKE boat tour in the 1950s or '60s; Aquarena Springs' old volcano stage set.

Glass Bottom Boat at Aquarena - S



theater for a new park modeled after Weeki Wachee Springs in Florida, where women dressed as mermaids performed in crystal-clear water. After guests filed into Rogers' theater, the structure would submerge into the water, giving them a glimpse of a swimming clown named Glurpo and Aquamaids who stayed underwater by taking sips of air from a long rubber hose.

Shirley Rogers, Paul Rogers' daughter, was one of the first to perform in the show in the 1950s. "I had seen the mermaids in Weeki Wachee Springs when I was in my early teens," Shirley recalled. "I said, 'I'm going to do that one day.'"

She spent a summer as an Aquamaid, twirling amid the metal lily pads that served as underwater picnic tables during the show. "Once you conquered the breathing and being able to control your position in the water, it was easy," she said. "But you really had to practice. If you took in too much air you'd rise to the top; if you didn't take enough, you'd sink to the bottom."

Occasionally, marine life disrupted the performance. "I had a dark mole on my back, and once as we were performing, one of those little perch came up and bit me and it started bleeding," Shirley said. Suddently swarmed with curious fish, she tried to nonchalantly shoo them away with her air hose.

A gondola named The Swiss Sky Ride began carrying people across the lake in 1963; a second, 300-seat underwater theater opened in 1972; and the Sky Spiral, a rotating observation tower on a 220-foot spire, debuted in 1979. Visitors could drop a coin into a contraption at the arcade and watch a live chicken play tic-tac-toe, or take in a Wild West shootout at Texana Village, where 24 alligators were also housed. (A flood in 1970 washed them out of their enclosure

and down the river; they were recaptured—along with an extra gator.)

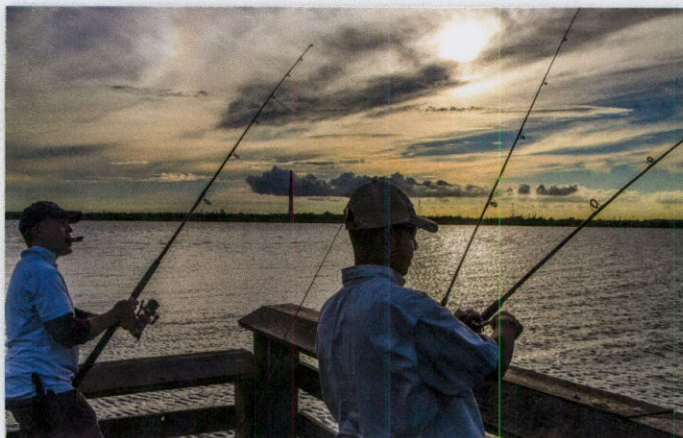
Wooed by the waters—and, perhaps, the Aquamaids—visitors flocked to Aquarena Springs, making it the top commercial tourist draw in Texas in the 1950s and '60s, according to the Meadows Center. *Life* magazine ran a story about an underwater wedding held there in 1954. The underwater theater inspired a feature story in *Popular Mechanics* in 1952. And in 1967, high-profile TV journalist Charles Kuralt included Ralph the Swimming Pig in his *On the Road* program.

The underwater shows were always the biggest attraction. Each performance featured an appearance by Glurpo and the Aquamaids, who nibbled celery sticks and drank from pop bottles filled with fruit punch because carbonation caused problems underwater.

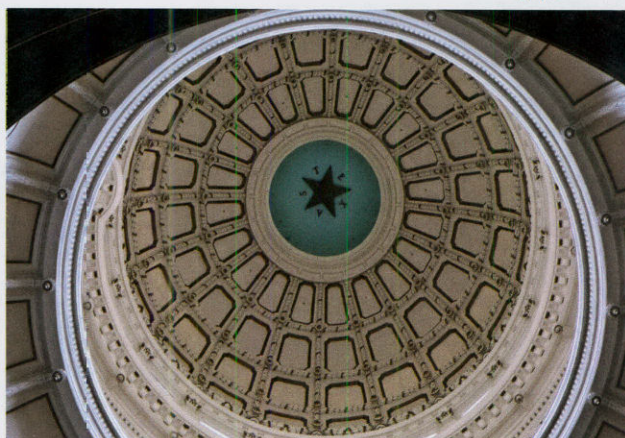
Visitors flocked to Aquarena Springs, making it the top commercial tourist draw in Texas in the 1950s and '60s.

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| | | 64 West Texas Co-op |
| | | 65 Wichita Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau |



The Oasis of Spring Lake

Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) purchased Aquarena Springs in 1994, launching a new era for Spring Lake dedicated to aquatic resource management.

The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment has trained about 2,000 volunteers over the years to measure water quality around the state. “We help communities protect their watersheds and do extensive research on the environmental aspects of water,” said Andy Sansom, the center’s former director, who now works part-time at the center and as a geography professor. “We’re also becoming

a major facility in Texas for the study of climate change.”

When it opened, the center, with help from a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department contribution, donated 40,000 acre-feet of water (1 acre-foot equals the amount needed to cover an acre a foot deep, or about 326,000 gallons) from San Marcos Springs in perpetuity for environmental purposes. “That means that water will flow uninterrupted into San Antonio Bay to nourish the estuary,” Sansom explained.

The university opens Spring Lake Park to visitors daily for hiking along a boardwalk and trails. A.B. Rogers’ historic hotel now houses offices for the center’s 71 employees, as well as an exhibit that highlights

the eight endangered or threatened species—including the fountain darter and Texas wild rice—that live in the springs.

About 120,000 people, mostly schoolchildren, visit the center each year. Five of the original glass-bottom boats have been renovated and are still used for tours. And each June, paddlers line up in Spring Lake for the start of the 260-mile Texas Water Safari canoe race.

“It’s absolutely beautiful,” Sansom said. “There are very few places where you can see water this sensationally clear.”

The Meadows Center is at 201 San Marcos Springs Drive in San Marcos. meadowscenter.txstate.edu

During her first performance as an Aquamaid, Beverly Posey Morrison got nervous. “I kept swallowing air and got a huge air bubble in my belly,” said Morrison, who’s now 73. She burped up her drink, and a purple cloud formed around her, prompting her boss to write up the infraction. (Aquamaids also got in trouble if any part of their body breached the surface.)

But the Aquamaids loved the job. Between shows, they’d sunbathe on a deck behind the underwater theater. “Boats would go by, and you’d wave and feel like a celebrity,” McBeth said. To this day, the city of San Marcos has a special affinity for mermaids, hosting an annual Mermaid Capital of Texas Festival and exhibiting mermaid-themed artwork around town.

Aquarena Springs welcomed more than 350,000 people a year at its peak. But as new amusement parks like Six Flags Fiesta Texas opened, the San Marcos park’s appeal waned. The days of paddling porkers and marvelous mermaids were numbered, and in 1994, Texas State University acquired the property. The last traces of the old amusement park, including the submarine theaters and the Sky Spiral, were carted away in 2012.

These days, the Meadows Center protects Spring Lake as a natural site with interpretive exhibits and walking trails in the adjacent hills. But two prominent relics of Aquarena Springs remain. A.B. Rogers’ 1920s hotel has been renovated to house the center’s offices. And the center offers tours on the park’s old glass-bottom boats, providing perspective on a pristine underwater world that’s plenty magical in its own right. 🐬

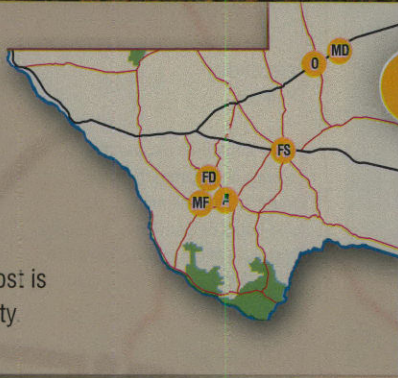
The Mermaid Capital of Texas Festival in San Marcos includes a fashion show, parade, street fair, and other events. Sept. 11–25. mermaidsocietysmtx.com.

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visitmidland.com

Aug 20 - The Gatlin Brothers, Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center

Sep 12 - Trio of Gardens



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Aug 14 - Main Street Dance

Oct 13-16 - Big Bend Open Road Race

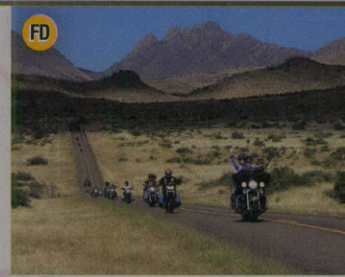


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Sep 18-19 - Cyclefest

Sep 25 - Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center Cook-Out and Auction



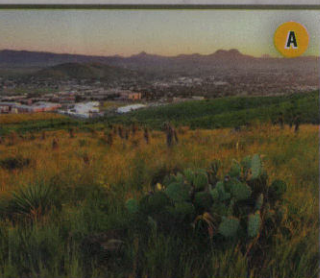
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visitalpinetx.com

Aug 13-14 - Big Bend Ranch Rodeo

Sep 18 - Trappings of Texas exhibit/sale @ Museum of the Big Bend



MF

MARFA—It defies easy explanation, yet any google search yields thousands of opinions. Marfa is tough to get tougher still to explain. But once you arrive, you get it.

visitmarfa.com

Sep 4-6 - 34th Annual Marfa Lights Festival



EVENTS



Fair Enough

Gillespie County hosts the oldest county fair in the state

As Fredericksburg celebrates its 175th anniversary, there is arguably no better time or place to celebrate the city than at the Gillespie County Fair. As the oldest county fair in Texas, dating to 1881, this annual August event is a summer-time tradition and a hallmark of the season. Over the years, droughts, wars, and pandemics have occasionally put the event on hold, but the fair has carried on despite it all.

The fair celebrates its 133rd anniversary Aug. 26–29. On Friday morning, a parade kicks off the weekend's festivities, including antique tractor pulls, livestock shows, agricultural exhibits, and live music. The Gillespie County Fair is also one of the last events to feature parimutuel horse racing. Aromas from the livestock barn mingle with the sweet smells of cotton candy and other classic fare including the pies, cakes, and cookies entered in the bake-off. For those who grew up attending the county fair, there's nothing more nostalgic.

"My interest started at a very young age," says Edward Stroehrer, president of the Gillespie County Fair & Festivals Association. "Seeing those carnival rides arrive was the best time of year." —Sallie Lewis

Gillespie County Fair
Aug. 26–29
Gillespie County Fairgrounds,
530 Fair Drive, Fredericksburg,
gillespiefair.com

BIG BEND COUNTRY

ALPINE

Viva Big Bend

Through Aug. 1

Featuring over 50 bands at more than 10 venues in Alpine, Marfa, Marathon, and Fort Davis, Viva Big Bend showcases the state's natural beauty, independent spirit, and musical culture. *Various locations.* vivabigbend.com

GULF COAST

FREEPORT

KidFest

Aug. 7

KidFest features a waterslide, a petting zoo, games, hot dogs, music, a rock-climbing wall, and hours of festivities. *Freeport Historical Museum, 311 E. Park Ave.* 979-233-0066; facebook.com/freeportkidfest

GALVESTON

The Texas Tenors in Concert

Aug. 14

The Texas Tenors present a concert celebrating music legends over two performances. Social distancing is implemented and masks are required. *The Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St.* 800-821-1894; thegrand.com

GALVESTON

AIA Sandcastle Competition

Aug. 21

Watch more than 80 teams of architects compete for the best sandcastle design on Saturday. Sandcastles remain on the beach for viewing on Sunday. *East Beach, 1923 Boddeker Road.* aiasandcastle.com

LAKE JACKSON

Apron Strings: Ties to the Past

Through Aug. 11

This museum exhibit features 51 vintage and contemporary ways that the apron has been viewed as a vehicle for expression with a rich and varied history that is still viable today. *Lake Jackson Historical Museum, 249 Circle Way.* 979-297-1570; ljhistory.org

LAKE JACKSON

Abner Jackson Plantation Site Tour

Aug. 7

Visit the historic archeological site of Major Abner Jackson, the namesake of the city of Lake Jackson. Once a sugar plantation, the site was destroyed by the same hurricane that devastated Galveston in 1900. Discover the sugar-making process of the 1840s and how convict labor replaced slave labor during the 1870s. *Abner Jackson Plantation Site, FM 2004 near SH 332.* 979-297-1570; ljhistory.org

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND

Texas International Fishing Tournament

Through Aug. 1

Surrounded by the Laguna Madre Bay and Gulf of Mexico, Port Isabel and South Padre Island host Texas' largest saltwater fishing tournament. Anglers young and old compete in one of three divisions: bay, tarpon, and offshore. *South Padre Island Convention Centre, 7355 Padre Blvd.* 956-761-3000; tift.org

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND

National Lifeguard Championships

Aug. 4–7

The United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) hosts the National Lifeguard Championships. Hundreds of competitors, coaches, and families compete in athletic competitions in the ocean and on sand. *Isla Grand Beach Resort, 500 Padre Blvd.* 956-761-3000; sopad्रे.com

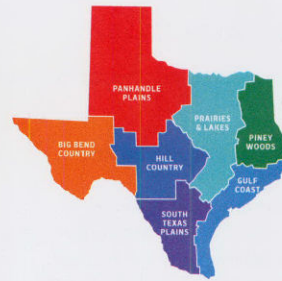
SOUTH PADRE ISLAND

Ladies Kingfish Tournament

Aug. 6–8

The 40th annual tournament is the first all-women tournament in Texas and is divided into bay and offshore divisions. Anglers fishing in the bay division vie for trophies in the categories of redfish, trout, and flounder, while anglers in the offshore division compete in the categories of kingfish, bonito, blackfin tuna, and dolphin. *South Padre Island Convention Centre, 7355 Padre Blvd.* 956-761-3000; sopad्रे.com

FREE EVENTS GUIDE For a free subscription to the quarterly *Texas Highways Events Calendar*, go to texashighways.com/eventssubscription



SOUTH PADRE ISLAND
Shallow Sport Owners Fishing Tournament

Aug. 13-15
More than 250 shallow sport boats race off at the sound of a blast from the island's oldest and biggest cannon. Anglers compete to nab the largest red drum, trout, and flounder. Afterward, head over to Louie's Backyard dock and enjoy live music, cold drinks, and fresh seafood. *South Padre Island Convention Centre, 7355 Padre Blvd. 956-761-3000; sopadre.com*

TOMBALL
Tomball Night

Aug. 6
For about 50 years, Tomball Night has been bringing folks together in downtown Tomball. The event draws around 10,000 visitors for live music, a nighttime parade, and fireworks. *Downtown Tomball, 100 Market St. 281-351-7222; tomballchamber.org*

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN
Mexico, the Border and Beyond: Selections from the Juan Antonio Sandoval Jr. Collection

Through Aug. 22
The Sandoval Collection comprises more than 1,500 artworks, many of them created by Mexican and Latinx artists. It includes prints, photographs, paintings, sculptures, and popular art from the El Paso region and Mexico. *Mexic-Arte Museum, 419 Congress Ave. 512-480-9373; mexic-artemuseum.org*

AUSTIN
Prism 34

Aug. 26-Sept. 6
Austin's oldest film festival and premiere LGBTQ film fest, aGLIFF announces PRISM 34. The 34th annual event emerges this year in a hybrid fashion, as a virtual festival along with a few in-person events. *Virtual and various locations. agliff.org/pride*

AUSTIN
Bat Fest

Aug. 28
See 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats emerge from under the Congress Avenue Bridge at dusk. Along with the main attraction, enjoy two stages with live music, more than 50 arts and crafts vendors, delicious food and drinks, fun children's activities, a bat costume contest, and other bat activities. *Congress Avenue Bridge, 100 S. Congress Ave. 512-441-9015; roadwayevents.com/event/bat-fest*

BANDERA
Cowboys On Main

Aug. 7, 14, 21, 28
Enjoy free cowboy fun in downtown Bandera. Activities in past years have included chuckwagon storytelling, saddle-broke long-horn rides, horse-drawn wagon tours of Bandera, and reenactment shows. *Bandera County Courthouse, 500 Main St. 830-796-3045; banderacowboycapital.com*

BANDERA
Market Day

Aug. 7
On the first Saturday of the month, arts and crafts vendors sell their wares and merchandise at this market along Main Street. *500 Main St. 830-796-3045; banderacowboycapital.com*

BANDERA
Frontier Times Jamboree

Aug. 22
Bring your lawn chair and enjoy an afternoon of live music with new hosts each month at this free outdoor music circle. *Frontier Times Museum, 510 13th St. 830-796-3864; frontiertimesmuseum.org*

FREDERICKSBURG
Hill Country Film Festival

Through Aug. 1
"The Best Little Film Festival in Texas" celebrates independent film with screenings of more than 90 movies (short and feature length); Q&As and filmmaker panel discussions; and opportunities for attendees to meet filmmakers. *Fredericksburg High School Auditorium, 1107 SH 16 S., and Hoffman*

Haus Great Hall, 608 E. Creek St. 866-224-7714; hillcountryff.com

FREDERICKSBURG
First Friday Art Walk

Aug. 6
Participating fine art galleries remain open until 8 p.m. so visitors can have time to partake in events and exhibits planned throughout the day and enjoy local refreshments. Just look for the galleries flying the Art Walk flag. *Various locations. facebook.com/first-friday-art-walk-fredericksburg-401466143219898*

FREDERICKSBURG
Texas Ranger Day History Symposium

Aug. 7
Honoring those who have served and those still commissioned, Texas Rangers Day is a two-part event that features educational programs with historians; reenactments by the Living History HQ Company Rangers that focus on the time period of 1823 to 1960; Ranger Camp set-ups; cannon firing; and memorabilia displays. *Texas Rangers Heritage Center at Fort Martin Scott, 1618 E. Main St. 830-990-1192; trhc.org*

FREDERICKSBURG
Always...Patsy Cline

Aug. 13-15, 20-22
Fredericksburg Theater Company presents this tribute to the legendary country singer who died tragically at age 30 in a plane crash in 1963. The show is based on a true story about Patsy Cline's friendship with a fan from Houston named Louise Seger, who befriended the star in a Texas honky-tonk in 1961 and continued a correspondence with Cline until her death. *Steve W. Shepherd Theater, 1668 SH 87 S. 888-669-7114; fredericksburgtheater.org*

FREDERICKSBURG
Live Parimutuel Horse Racing

Aug. 14-15, 28-29
Come out during the summer season for live horse racing at the Fairgrounds' Class 3 track. Pick your favorites for quarter horse and thoroughbred racing as well as special races, trials, and futurities.

Gillespie County Fairgrounds, 530 Fair Drive. gillespiefair.com

FREDERICKSBURG
Trade Days

Aug. 20-22
Shop from more than 400 vendors in seven barns and acres of antiques, collectibles, tools, crafts, shabby chic decorations, primitives home décor, ranch furniture, hunting accessories, candles, clothing, jewelry, and food. *Sunday Farms, 355 Sunday Farms Lane. 210-846-4094; fbgradedays.com*

FREDERICKSBURG
Concert in the Park

Aug. 29
Hosted by Pedernales Creative Arts Alliance, this month's free Sunday evening concert features vintage country music. Bring chairs, eats, and drinks. *Marktplatz, 100 block of W. Main Street. visitfredericksburgtx.com/events*

INGRAM
Nobody's Perfect

Aug. 20-21, 27-28; Sept. 3-4
In this romantic comedy by Simon Williams, Leonard Loftus is trying to get his books published, but Harriet keeps sending his manuscripts back because they are the work of a man. When Leonard finally sends a manuscript based on his experience as a single parent, and uses the female pseudonym Myrtle Banbury, Harriet is impressed. Leonard is forced to carry the pretense that "Myrtle" exists by dressing up as a woman and pretending he is his own fictitious aunt. *Hill County Arts Foundation, 120 Point Theatre Road. 830-367-5121; hcafc.com*

KERRVILLE
Business Expo

Aug. 6-7
Interact and network with businesses, organizations, and members of the Kerrville community. The event features over 100 booths, food trucks, and a kids' zone with bounce houses and activities. A Home and Garden Show offers tips for everything from building to home improvement. *Kerr County Hill Country Youth Event Center, 3785 SH 27. 830-896-1155; kerrvilletx.gov*

KERRVILLE

Murder on the Orient Express

Aug. 6-7, 13-15, 20-21

This fast-paced adaptation of Agatha Christie's most famous novel was crafted for the stage by another storytelling superstar, Tony Award-winning playwright Ken Ludwig. *Cailloux Theater*, 910 Main St. 830-896-9393; caillouxperformingarts.com

KERRVILLE

Symphony of the Hills in Concert

Aug. 26

Symphony of the Hills presents *Homecoming*, a concert featuring the return of former Symphony of the Hills violinist and soloist Nancy Zhou, an award-winning concert artist with an international career. Zhou performs Barber's Violin Concerto, and the music program also features William Grant Still's "Poem" for orchestra, followed by Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony," which was performed during the symphony's first season 20 years ago. *Cailloux Theater*, 910 Main St. 830-792-7469; symphonyofthehills.org

KERRVILLE

River Roadster Show

Aug. 28

Old and new hot rods are on display at this evening full of car fun, friends, and live music. *Louise Hays Park*, 202 Thompson Drive. 830-257-7300; kerrvilletx.gov

KERRVILLE

The Blackwood Singers in Concert

Aug. 28

Straight from their home at the Americana Theater in Branson, Missouri, the Blackwood Singers visit Kerrville to share the hand-clapping, high-energy gospel music their family has been singing for 86 years. *Cailloux Theater*, 910 Main St. 830-896-9393; caillouxperformingarts.com

LAKEHILLS

Last Saturday Market

Aug. 28

On the last Saturday of the month, find food, shopping, live music, and local entertainment at this market. *Lakehills Civic Center*, 11225 Park Road 37. 254-979-1073; lakehillssaturdaymarket.com

NEW BRAUNFELS

Hill Country Comicon

Aug. 14-15

The family-friendly comic convention features comic books, toys, cards, games, artwork, cosplay, apparel, guest creators,

and celebrities. Break out your capes, helmets, light sabers, and wands, and gather for a fun weekend in the Hill Country. The event promotes art, literacy, and imagination through comics and pop culture. *New Braunfels Civic/Convention Center*, 375 S. Castell Ave. 830-221-4011; hillcountrycomicon.com

SONORA

Outlaw Rodeo and Sutton County Days

Aug. 13-14

Soak in the summer weather with two full rodeo performances, a dance, parade, food booths, and arts and crafts from local artisans. *Sutton County Civic Center*, 1700 N. Crockett Ave. 325-387-2880; sonoratexas.org

STONEWALL

113th Birthday Celebration for President Lyndon B. Johnson

Aug. 27

The National Park Service hosts the annual wreath-laying ceremony at President Johnson's gravesite on the LBJ Ranch at 10 a.m. Throughout the day, LBJ State Park hosts old-time games at the Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm. Birthday cake is served at 1 p.m. at the Lyndon B. Johnson State Park & Historic Site's visitor center. *LBJ Ranch and National Historical Park*, 100 Ladybird Lane, Johnson City. 830-644-2252; nps.gov/lyjo

TAYLOR

Michelle's Hot Peeps 5K

Aug. 14

A chip-timed 5K and Kids' Dash, this run/walk benefits the Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation, which helps fund research for cholangiocarcinoma, a bile duct cancer that's the third leading cause of all cancer deaths. The race is also in honor of Michelle McDonald, who died at age 47 from the disease. *Murphy Park*, 1600 Veterans Drive. athleteguild.com/running/taylor-tx/2021-michelles-hot-peeps-beat-cc

PANHANDLE PLAINS

CANYON

Texas! Outdoor Musical

Through Aug. 14

The official play of Texas is packed full, with lively songs, good ol' Texas humor, and nightly fireworks. Set against the tapestry of history in Palo Duro Canyon State Park, the show's fictional characters bring to life the stories,

and triumphs of the settlers of the Texas Panhandle. A barbecue dinner precedes the show. *Pioneer Amphitheater*, Palo Duro Canyon State Park, 11450 State Park Highway Road 5. 806-655-2181; texas-show.com

GRAHAM

Cars and Stars Car Show

Aug. 7

The downtown square is filled with cars and trucks old and new, plus race cars and motorcycles. Other activities include the Rajun Cajun cornhole tournament, food, and music. *Downtown Graham*, 608 Elm St. 940-549-0401; grahamcarsandstars.org

LEVELLAND

S.P.O.T.C Dog Agility Trials

Aug. 7-8

See dogs in agility trial competitions. The South Plains Obedience Training Club of Lubbock is a non-profit organization that promotes the sport of training dogs and responsible dog ownership through donations to canine causes, public education projects, pet therapy, and year-round obedience training. *Mallet Event Center*, 2320 US 385 S. 806-894-4161; malleteventcenter.com

LEVELLAND

World Series Team Roping Qualifiers

Aug. 13-15

Watch team ropers compete for the championship in this team roping competition. *Mallet Event Center*, 2320 US 385 S. 806-894-4161; malleteventcenter.com

SAN ANGELO

The State of Sculpture: Texas Sculpture Group All-Member Exhibition

Through Sept. 12

Featuring works by some of the most celebrated contemporary sculptors in Texas, *The State of Sculpture* marks the 11th anniversary of the Texas Sculpture Group with artworks from its roster of nearly 100 artist-members statewide. From traditional to cutting-edge, small-scale to monumental, this all-member exhibition fills the galleries of the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts and offers insight into the range of material, aesthetic, and conceptual possibilities that define contemporary sculpture. *San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts*, 1 Love St. 325-653-3333; samfa.org

PINEY WOODS

PALESTINE

If That Ain't Country Music Show

Aug. 7

Hear a Branson-style country music show filled with family fun and country music from local acts. *Palestine High School Auditorium*, 1600 SH 256 Loop. 903-723-6291

TYLER

Texas Rose All-Breed Horse Show

Aug. 27-29

Breeds of a variety of colors and sizes compete to prove they are the best in their class. Breeds such as Andalusians, Friesians, Morgans, Gypsies, and Welshes are shown. Sunday also features Western dressage. Spectators are encouraged to come out and enjoy the show regardless of prior horse knowledge or experience. Admission is free and concessions are available. *Texas Rose Horse Park*, 14078 SH 110 N. 903-882-8696; texasrosehorsepark.com

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ARLINGTON

Chris Stapleton in Concert

Aug. 21

Singer-songwriter, guitarist, and record producer Chris Stapleton takes the stage for a country-rock show. Stapleton has co-written six No. 1 country songs and won five Grammy Awards, seven Academy of Country Music Awards, and 10 Country Music Association Awards. Stapleton is joined by special guests Willie Nelson and Family, Jamey Johnson, and Yola. *Globe Life Field*, 734 Stadium Drive. 817-533-1972; mlb.com/rangers/tickets/events/chris-stapleton

BELLVILLE

Fresh Farmers and Artisan Market

Aug. 7

More than 30 vendors bring fresh produce, grass-fed beef, Gulf shrimp, honey, eggs, herbs, plants, and flowers to be sold under the shade of the Jim Bishop Pavilion. Shoppers can find artisans selling handcrafted soap, jewelry, candles, and beard oils, and choose from a selection of jams, jellies, vinegars, oils, baked goods, dog treats, and concessions. *Jim Bishop Pavilion at Chesley Park*, 100 E. Palm St. 979-865-3407; discoverbellville.com

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BOWIE

Outdoor Expo

Aug. 21
Find all things outdoors at this expo, hosted by The Ranch 95.9 FM radio station. Gear for hunting, fishing, camping, boating, ATVs, and RVs are available for purchase, in addition to refreshments, food trucks, and entertainment. *Bowie Community Center, 413 Pelham St. 940-872-6246; 959theranch.com*

BRENHAM

Lee Greenwood in Concert

Aug. 28
Known for his song "God Bless the U.S.A.," Lee Greenwood is an award-winning performer with seven No. 1 hits and 38 singles that have been on the Billboard charts. He won a Grammy Award for Top Male Vocal Performance, and has 22 studio albums and seven compilation albums. *The Barnhill Center, 111 W. Main St. 979-337-7240; thebarnhillcenter.com/events*

DENTON

Soul Art Renewal

Through Aug. 14
This multi-gallery and multi-media celebration of art and artists comes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the arts community. The project's aim is to focus on healing, hope, and community resilience and renewal. *Patterson-Appleton Arts Center, 400 E. Hickory St. 940-382-2787; dentonarts.com/patterson-appleton-arts-center*

FORT WORTH

An-My Lê: On Contested Terrain

Through Aug. 8
Featuring photographs from a selection of the Vietnamese-American photographer's five major bodies of work, the nationally touring exhibition considers the artist's nearly 25-year career exploring the edges of war and recording landscapes of conflict in classically composed photographs. *Amon Carter Museum of American Art, 3501 Camp Bowie Blvd. 817-738-1933; cartermuseum.org*

LA GRANGE

Summer Wine Passport

Through Aug. 31
Hit the Texas Independence Wine Trail this summer for three full months of Texas wine tastings. Each winery has tastings at discounted rates, and souvenirs are included with ticket purchase. Nine wineries across La Grange, Fayetteville, Sealy, Weimar, Schulenburg, and Carmine make up the

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Texas Independence Wine Trail. *Wineries on the Texas Independence Wine Trail*. 210-413-8912; texasindependencewinetrail.com

MADISONVILLE
Gun and Hunting Show

Aug. 21-22
The 10th annual gun and hunting show, hosted by the Madisonville Noon Lion's Club, has vendors, exhibits, and free food. *Truman Kimbro Convention Center*, 111 W. Trinity St. 936-348-9333; madisonvilletexas.us

MCKINNEY
Prairie Adventure Day Camp

Through Aug. 5
This day camp is an opportunity for kids to take a break from technology and step back in time. Activities include donning pioneer-themed costumes and learn weaving, quilting, and soap carving. Pioneer games, baking, and Dutch-oven cooking are also included. *Chestnut Square Heritage Village*, 315 S. Chestnut St. 972-562-8790; chestnutsquare.org

MCKINNEY
Sips of Summer

Aug. 7
Stroll through the streets of historic downtown McKinney while tasting 20 distinctive beverages. Attendees receive a signature Sips of Summer taster and a map of the different stops. Beverage stations are set up inside the shops in downtown. All are invited and welcome to participate, and those ages 21 and up can enjoy beverages. *Downtown McKinney*, 111 N. Tennessee St. 972-547-2660; mckinneysipandstroll.com

MCKINNEY
Third Monday Trade Days

Aug. 13-15
This is the oldest and largest monthly trade days and flea market in North Texas. Shop from more than 450 vendors at the open-air market featuring gifts, home décor, clothing and accessories, garage sale items, antiques and collectibles, and specialty items along with many food concessions. Free admission. *Third Monday Trade Days*, 4550 W. University Drive. 972-562-5466; thirdmondaytradedays.com

MCKINNEY
Zip Line Day

Aug. 14, 21
Join in on an outdoor adventure at the Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary's ropes course. Guests climb

a 23-foot tree to the zip line platform, then proceed across a 487-foot zip line. Pre-registration is required. Suitable for all outdoor enthusiasts over the age of 10. *Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary*, 1 Nature Place. 972-562-5566; heardmuseum.org/ropescourse

MESQUITE
Opal Lawrence Historical Park Tours

Through Aug. 28
Presented by Historic Mesquite, Inc., tours of the S.D. Lawrence home, located in Opal Lawrence Historical Park, are every fourth Saturday of the month. Uniquely painted ceilings are a highlight of the tour, which includes family story time and old-fashioned games and is available by appointment. *Opal Lawrence Historical Park*, 711 E. Kearney St. 972-216-8132; historicmesquite.org

MESQUITE
Courtyard Concert Series

Aug. 5
Mesquite Arts Council hosts this annual summer music series featuring a different band on the first Thursday of each month inside the Mesquite Arts Center courtyard. Tables and chairs are placed outside for this free family-friendly shows. *Mesquite Arts Center Courtyard*, 1527 N. Galloway Ave. 972-216-8132; mesquiteartscenter.org

MESQUITE
Championship Rodeo

Aug. 7, 14, 21, 28
Dallas' largest professional rodeo event occurs every summer on Saturday nights. This world famous championship rodeo in Mesquite, the "Rodeo Capital of Texas," is located 15 minutes from downtown Dallas in the climate-controlled Mesquite Arena. Gates open at 6 p.m., with rodeo action beginning at 7:30 p.m. *Mesquite Arena*, 1818 Rodeo Drive. 972-285-8777; visitemesquitetx.com

MESQUITE
IMCA Sprints

Aug. 14, 21
Devil's Bowl Speedway hosts races, including the International Motor Contest Association's Sprints every Saturday this summer. *Devil's Bowl Speedway*, 1711 Lawson Road. 972-222-2421; devilsbowl.com

MESQUITE
Fort Worth Feline Fanciers
Aug. 24
Cat lovers head to the Mesquite Convention Center to put their best felines to the test. *Mesquite Convention Center*, 1700 Rodeo Drive. 972-204-4928; visitemesquitetx.com

MESQUITE
Racing Championship Finals
Aug. 28
Enjoy the racing season at the Southwest's most famous dirt track. With its half-mile, oval clay track, Devil's Bowl Speedway hosts the best in auto racing. *Devil's Bowl Speedway*, 1711 Lawson Road. 972-222-2421; devilsbowl.com

SCHULENBURG
Schulenburg Festival
Aug. 6-8
Held every year on the first weekend in August, the "National Party of Texas" features live music by country performers, a carnival, arts and crafts, barbecue and chili cookoffs, grand and kiddie parades, a bloody mary contest, a golf tournament, a fun run, and plenty of other festive events. *Various locations*. schulenburgfestival.org

TEMPLE
One Half the People: Advancing Equality for Women
Through Aug. 18
In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment, this exhibit explores the stories of women's struggles to achieve full citizenship. From the decades-long campaign for voting rights to expanding social and economic equality through legislation, attendees can see how those before us obtained the rights and privileges of citizenship promised to women today. *Temple Railroad and Heritage Museum*, 315 W. Ave. B. 254-298-5172; templeparks.com

TEMPLE
First Friday
Aug. 6
On the first Friday of every month, historic downtown Temple transforms into a giant party. Enjoy street music and performances, drinks, food, and after-hours shopping. *Downtown Temple*. 254-298-5378; downtowntemple.com

TEMPLE
Family Day: Dig It Day
Aug. 7
Attendees at this family-friendly event will learn how fossils are made, how ancient civilizations lived, and how digging in the dirt

can reveal the secrets of the past. The museum will give a presentation on what real archaeologists and paleontologists do. *Temple Railroad and Heritage Museum*, 315 W. Ave. B. 254-298-5172; templeparks.com

TEMPLE
Touch-a-Truck
Aug. 21
Who wouldn't love to climb aboard a fire truck or big rig? Touch-a-Truck provides a unique opportunity for children of all ages to explore and climb on vehicles of all types. *Reuben D. Talasek Bend of the River*, 7915 S. General Bruce Drive. 254-298-5690; templeparks.com

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

SAN ANTONIO
Selena Forever/Siempre Selena
Through Aug. 1
The McNay pays tribute to 1990s icon, singer, designer, and Texas legend Selena Quintanilla-Pérez with five photographs by award-winning San Antonio photographer John Dyer. Selena was the subject of Dyer's photo assignments for the cover of *Más Magazine* in 1992 and again for *Texas Monthly* in 1995, just months before she was tragically killed at age 23. *The McNay Art Museum*, 6000 N. New Braunfels Ave. 210-824-5368; mcnayart.org

SAN ANTONIO
Fiesta Noche del Rio
Through Aug. 7
The oldest outdoor dance performance of its kind in the United States, Fiesta Noche del Rio, Spanish for "Party Night on the River," is a musical variety show of authentic Mexican, Spanish, and Texas songs and dances performed by local professionals. Full of colorfully costumed dancers and rich sounds, this performance reflects the deep cultural roots of the city. The audience is seated on tiered grass seats across the river from the stage, located in La Villita, the Little Spanish Village of the city. *Arneson River Theatre in La Villita*, 418 Villita St. 210-226-4651; fiestanochesa.com or alamo-kiwanis.org/events/fiesta-noche-del-rio

SAN ANTONIO
Iliza Shlesinger
Aug. 13
This comedy show is part of her Back in Action tour. *Tobin Center for the Performing Arts*, 100 Auditorium Circle. 210-223-8624; tobincenter.org

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THE DAYTRIPPER'S TOP 5

Luckenbach

A charming country-music mainstay

BY CHET GARNER



If you're looking to simply kick back under an old oak tree while knocking back a cold one, then you need to join Waylon, Willie, and the boys in this Hill Country honky-tonk town 10 miles southeast of Fredericksburg. But if you're looking for an adventure, this region is bustling with things to do.

Luckenbach Dancehall

Founded by Germans in the 1840s, this small town had all but disappeared when storyteller and goat rancher Hondo Crouch, along with Kathy Morgan and Guich Kooch, bought it in 1971. With eccentric events like the Mud Dauber Festival, Crouch turned the town into an outpost of the "outlaw country" genre. Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings popularized the famous song "Luckenbach, Texas," and visitors from all over the world still come to buy a postcard postmarked with the Luckenbach stamp from the general store and two-step in the dance hall where Jerry Jeff Walker recorded his album *Viva Terlingua*. Grab a cold beer and a pulled pork sandwich and relax while musicians sit around in pickers' circles and play until the sun goes down.

Jenschke Orchards

To taste the sweetest side of the Hill Country, visit this orchard where you can pick a juicy peach right off the branch. The Jenschke family planted its first trees back in 1961 and now has over 30 varieties that ripen between May and September. Make a reservation to pick all you want and pay by the pound, or purchase boxes of peaches from the store. Whatever you do, save room for a cup of fresh soft-serve peach ice cream.

Wildseed Farms

The Hill Country is famous for its abun-

dance of wineries, but those looking for colors beyond white and red should head to this 200-acre wildflower farm. For over 35 years, the farm has been cultivating seeds and shipping them across the country. Walk on trails through rows of budding flowers and snap plenty of Instagram-worthy pictures. The gift shop is great for anyone with a green thumb, and there's a wine-tasting room on-site if you want to imbibe.

Old Tunnel State Park

Officially the smallest state park in Texas, the old tunnel is filled with approximately 3 million Mexican free-tailed bats. The park is built around an old railroad tunnel that once carried passengers and cargo between Fredericksburg and Comfort. It was abandoned in the 1940s, and sometime later a huge bat colony moved in. Between May and October, visitors can sit on the observation deck and watch the animals take to the sky at dusk.

Alamo Springs Café

This country café sits within walking distance from the state park and serves some of the biggest burgers in Texas. It was once also a general store, but when its burger made the cover of *Texas Monthly* in 2009, the store became solely a burger joint. Anything on the menu is great, but the signature "cover burger," with green chiles, avocado, and grilled onions on a jalapeño-cheese bun, tops the menu.

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 Luckenbach episode visit thedaytripper.com.
Follow along on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @chettripper.


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OPEN ROAD | continued from Page 19

my mother, and started making plans to acquire his green card and follow her to the United States. My father left Mexico because he loved my mother and feared losing her.

Rodolfo had also chafed against the practices in his government job as a *cebollero*, or onion-head, as they called the graduates of the Hermanos Escobar School of Agriculture. One friend had to buy a new truck for his boss if he wanted to ensure a government promotion. As my father would often tell me before he died of complications from diabetes, “*Allá no te pagan por tu trabajo. Son puras movidas. Over there they don’t pay for your work. It’s all trickery and corruption.*”

Rodolfo was soft in a way: a shy, smart man who only learned to love to dance because of my mother. He was macho with his children, but he tearfully revered his own mother, who had died when he was 10 years old. He constantly fought with Don Santiago and his new wife, Ofelia, the stepmother he despised. My father seemed stuck between his love for his homeland and his wish for it to be better. In the United States, he found an overly materialistic society that he often criticized for treating people like commodities. But he needed to leave Mexico to follow my mother, to get away from his father, and to fit better in a new place where corruption was not endemic. Like so many Mexicans before and after him, he wanted a new life.

My mother sits at the kitchen table next to a refrigerator covered with photos of her grandchildren. Nailed to one wall is a gigantic tapestry of the Last Supper, on top of which are tiny wooden facsimiles of the three missions of the Mission Trail. She has a familiar melancholy look: I know she feels she has not accomplished what she set out to do in this world. She tells me another story.

“Your father was very much a macho with me. In Ysleta, he allowed me to work, but only as an Avon lady. I wanted to work in a store. I had been a great

saleswoman in Juárez at a shoe store before we were married. I had saved more money than he did. He also fought with you when you were a child, but at least he bought you many books. Your father wanted to create progress in his life, buy properties, but he was also stuck in the Old World. I did everything for him and helped him build this house. I even carted the buckets of cement as he stood on a ladder to pour the cement ring on top of these adobe walls around us. I loved your father, but he also used me.”

She’s mostly right, I think, even though she leaves a few details out in this memory riff. She almost always defended my father on all things. They were a united front. When my father’s projects yielded extra income, she was happy to use it to buy herself a new car and to travel around the world with him in retirement.

No one in the family ever confronted my father to his face until I did. We whined. We complained. But no one said, “No! I’m not doing that.” Until that day. I remember his apoplectic rage and embarrassment in front of my brothers. That weekend I refused to work.

“I don’t know if you remember,” my mother recalls, “but one day Rudy and Oscar rushed into the kitchen from Sunday school at Mount Carmel with your father. The boys yelled, ‘Papá kicked Sergio out of the truck, and he ran away!’ Your father wanted you to work, and you refused him. You stood up to him. You wanted to study for school, and you refused to do another of his projects. I fought with your father. It was our most terrible fight. I told him, ‘If you don’t go after my son, if you don’t go get him. I will take all of my children and I will leave you. I don’t care. I can work, too, and make money. I’ll leave you.’ Your father called me some *groserías*. The worst words he has ever said to me. But he returned to the grounds of Mount Carmel. You were hiding inside the church.”

No one in the family ever confronted my father to his face until I did. We whined. We complained. But no one said, “No! I’m not doing that.” Until that day. I remember his apoplectic rage and embarrassment in front of my brothers. That weekend I refused to work. I was blessed as well as cursed with Doña Dolores’ willful character.

“I could only go to school to finish my GED until all of you were in high school,” she continues. “I lost so much time. I learned English, but I was always embarrassed by my accent. I also wanted to progress in Ysleta. But I took care of all of you and your father. *La gente pobre sufre mucho y muchas veces nadie sabe. Poor people suffer a lot and most times no one knows.* Now I am alone in my last days, surrounded by dust again.”

I think my mother has become more pessimistic with old age. One day,

perhaps, I will also be as old as my mother is, and my body will also be a constant source of pain. I don’t tell her that her and my father’s work ethic made me tough. I don’t tell her that working together as a family created a bond of hard-won love that I tried to recreate with my own family thousands of miles away. I don’t tell her that my mission is to be a voice for this community because Ysleta embodies a very old spirit in America too often forgotten by insiders who take their place for granted. I don’t tell her that her stories—and those of my father, Doña Dolores, and Don José—were always the beginning of anything that mattered to me.

Mom, I know how much you did for all of us. In dusty, often forgotten Ysleta, you were the one who gave us hope. **L**



High Plains Vintner

Kim McPherson propels the family trade of world-class Texas winemaking

By Anthony Head

After studying grape-growing and winemaking in California, Kim McPherson returned home to Lubbock in 1979 and began crushing grapes at his father's winery, Llano Estacado. McPherson had a head full of ideas about how to make better Texas wine, and when he began producing his own, he stuck to a simple, but novel, philosophy of "planting to the soil." He believed Texas vineyards should focus on growing lesser-known grapes suited to Texas soils and climate, rather than trying to imitate the wines of famous regions like California's Napa Valley or France's Bordeaux.

McPherson found an enthusiastic partner for his vision in his father, Clinton "Doc" McPherson, one of the founding fathers of modern Texas viticulture. Formerly a chemistry professor at Texas Tech University, Doc first planted grapevines in Lubbock County in the 1960s with his colleague Robert Reed, a horticulture professor. In 1976, after finding success in

"The High Plains is more optimal for grapevine production due to the climate. It's pretty down there in the Hill Country where a lot of new guys are setting up, but they still have to come up here to get their fruit."

a basement winery, Doc and Reed opened Llano Estacado, the second permitted winery in Texas since Prohibition and the second-oldest still operating.

While many think of the Hill Country when it comes to Texas wine, most of the state's grape-growing takes place in the High Plains. Kim works with growers around Lubbock to produce wines made from red-grape varieties like sangiovese, mourvèdre, and tempranillo; and white grapes like viognier and albariño. Not nearly as well-known as cabernet sauvignon and chardonnay, they're the kinds of grapes Kim has championed for decades to better distinguish Texas wines on the world stage.

Doc passed away in 2014, but Kim continues his father's work, not only at McPherson Cellars' winery and tasting room in Lubbock, but also in making Texas—the country's fifth-largest wine-producing state—more recognizable in the wine industry. "My dad wanted Texas wines to become a force, like California wines," he says.

TH: *Texans have long made wines from wild grapes and fruits. Why are your father and Reed considered pioneers?*

KM: My dad and Bob Reed are acknowledged as the founders of the Texas wine industry as a result of their work with *Vitis vinifera* [the most important winemaking grapevine species, which previously had little success in Texas]. But my dad made fruit wines as a college student in the dorms, from peaches or other fruit. He had a lot of repeat customers.

TH: *What is the story behind those grapevines your father first planted?*

KM: I believe they were left over from a campus research project during the 1950s. Bob and Doc took cuttings and planted them between 1962 and 1968 around Bob's patio and at what is now McPherson Cellars' estate vineyard—Sagmor, in southeast Lubbock. At first, they were merely seeing if the vines would grow in the High Plains, and they didn't actually know what kinds of grapes they had. Those vines yielded fruit up until 1975, when I helped to replant that vineyard.

TH: *Around 80% of Texas wines come from High Plains grapes. What makes that arid area of the Panhandle good for vineyards?*

KM: The High Plains is more optimal for grapevine production due to the climate, such as the humidity and the diurnal shift, the extreme changes in temperatures between the days and nights. We're more like one of the great wine areas of Spain called the Ribera del Duero. It's got the same altitude, and it's flat. Grenache, mourvèdre, and carignan do well in the Ribera, and they do really well here. It's pretty down there in the Hill Country where a lot of new guys are setting up—really beautiful. In the last 10 years, the quality of most Texas wines, wherever they're made, has gotten a lot better, [and] the use of varietals has gotten better. But they still have to come up here to get their fruit.

TH: *What's the biggest challenge to overcome as a High Plains winemaker?*

KM: Getting the grape growers to grow the right kind of fruit. It's just my opinion, but if we were making different wines than Washington and California—if we were doing more tempranillo and carignon and less cabernet sauvignon—then people would look at us differently.

TH: *What is the most important grape in Texas wine production today?*

KM: The grape that I hang my hat on is sangiovese [a red wine grape]. We were the very first growers in the state of Texas to plant sangiovese, in that Sagmor vineyard, in 1982. McPherson Cellars still produces Sagmor Sangiovese. Sangiovese makes beautiful wine. As a state, we're going to have to grow odd stuff, like sangiovese, grenache, carignan, cinsault, some syrah, and grow them well. It all comes down to quality. You can buy a Texas cabernet, but why would you when Napa and Sonoma are perfect for that?

TH: *What distinguishes Texas wines?*

KM: If we do it right, it's the grapes we use. If I were to go out of state on a sales call and bring a cabernet or merlot, I wouldn't get the time of day. But I show them mourvèdre—Texas mourvèdre—and people start looking at us differently.

TH: *What is the biggest challenge facing the Texas wine industry?*

KM: Fruit. We want more of these other varietals [suitable to Texas conditions], and that's starting to happen. Climate change definitely impacts us. The weather patterns have changed so much. Our springs are warm, but you know you're gonna get zapped with a late-spring frost or freeze. Plus, we're in a drought.

TH: *Did February's deep freeze affect the quality of this year's vineyards?*

KM: The snow didn't affect the vines, but we had a freeze in April that affected some growers. But if we can keep the hailstorms out until harvest, I think we'll be fine.

TH: *You've received two James Beard Award nominations for your winemaking. What do you take away from that?*

KM: It just goes to show you that Texas wineries can be of great quality and high standards and show up just like any other big name in the wine business.

TH: *What does the Panhandle offer for visitors interested in the wine scene?*

KM: Visitors can drive to each of the six wineries in and around Lubbock, or there are various wine bus tours. We opened the McPherson Cellars winery and tasting room in downtown Lubbock in 2008 in an old Coca-Cola bottling plant. We also opened the 4.0 Cellars tasting room [now called Texas Wine Collective] in Fredericksburg in 2012. For that, I went in with Pat Brennan of Brennan Vineyards in Comanche and Gene Estes of Lost Oak Winery in Burleson to create a presence for us wineries not located around Fredericksburg.

TH: *What do you think the future holds for Texas wines?*

KM: I will always strive to make better overall wines and expand knowledge about what grapes grow well here. Let's focus on those varietals. It's what I truly believe. I hope to continue to advocate for Texas wines, and I'd like to see more wineries come together in order to broaden the exposure of Texas wines outside our state. It's not about me. It's about what we do to have the tide raise all the boats up. 🍷

McPherson Cellars' Lubbock winery is set in a 1930s Coca-Cola bottling plant. Its Summer Patio Night series features live music on Thursday nights through September. mcpersoncellars.com. McPherson Cellars is also one of the featured wineries at the 30th annual Fredericksburg Food & Wine Fest. Oct. 21-23. fbgfoodandwinefest.com

Texas Highways (ISSN 0040-4349) is published monthly by the Texas Department of Transportation, 150 E. Riverside Drive, Austin, Texas 78704; phone 512-486-5858, fax 512-486-5879. The official travel magazine of Texas encourages travel within the state and tells the Texas story to readers around the world.

Periodicals Postage paid at Austin, Texas, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **Texas Highways** Circulation, P.O. Box 8559, Big Sandy, Texas 75755-8559.

VINTAGE

BY JAC DARSNEK, TRACES OF TEXAS



Fill 'er Up

SAN AUGUSTINE, 1939

Photographer Russell Lee took this picture of a Sinclair service station in San Augustine while on assignment to document American life for the U.S. Farm Security Administration, one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs. Sinclair stations are easily recognizable because Consolidated Oil Corp., which owned the brand, used the same architectural style across the country. The stations were comprised of an office, multiple bays for servicing cars, and a canopy, and they featured Mission-style decorative elements, including green tile and stucco siding. Sometimes repurposed, sometimes vacant, many of those Sinclair stations built in the 1930s still stand. This one on East Columbia Street is now a used car lot. Gas cost 19 cents per gallon in 1939, the equivalent of \$3.65 today when adjusted for inflation. Though so much has changed, what was true then remains true today: The night is dark, and Texas is vast. You'd better fill up. 🇺🇸

Know of any fascinating vintage Texas photographs? Send copies or ideas to tracesoftxphotos@gmail.com.

BEAUMONT

Top 10 must-see spots



Fire Museum of Southeast Texas
400 Walnut St, Beaumont, TX 77701



Photo & Mural Tour



Civic Center Mural
701 Main St, Beaumont, TX 77701



Enjoy your Beaucycle on a scenic ride around Beaumont's historic downtown. We've highlighted notable architecture, photo spots, where to shop, grab a bite, and cool off. Most of our major attractions are within 1.5 miles of each other so whether you have an hour or all day to explore, it's easy to see a lot with limited time.

Historical Gems



Crockett Street
200 Crockett St, Beaumont, TX 77701



Scavenger Hunt



Jefferson Theatre
345 Fannin St, Beaumont, TX 77701



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