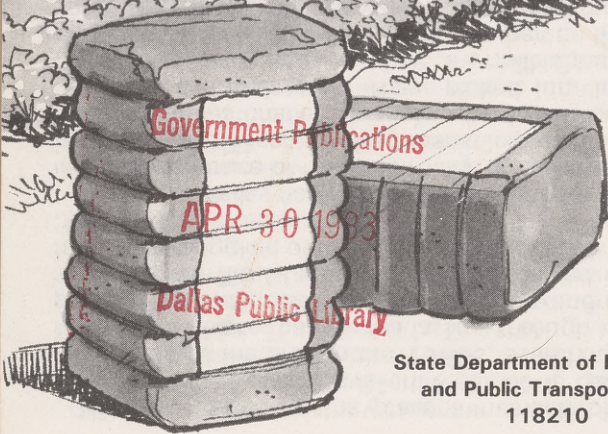
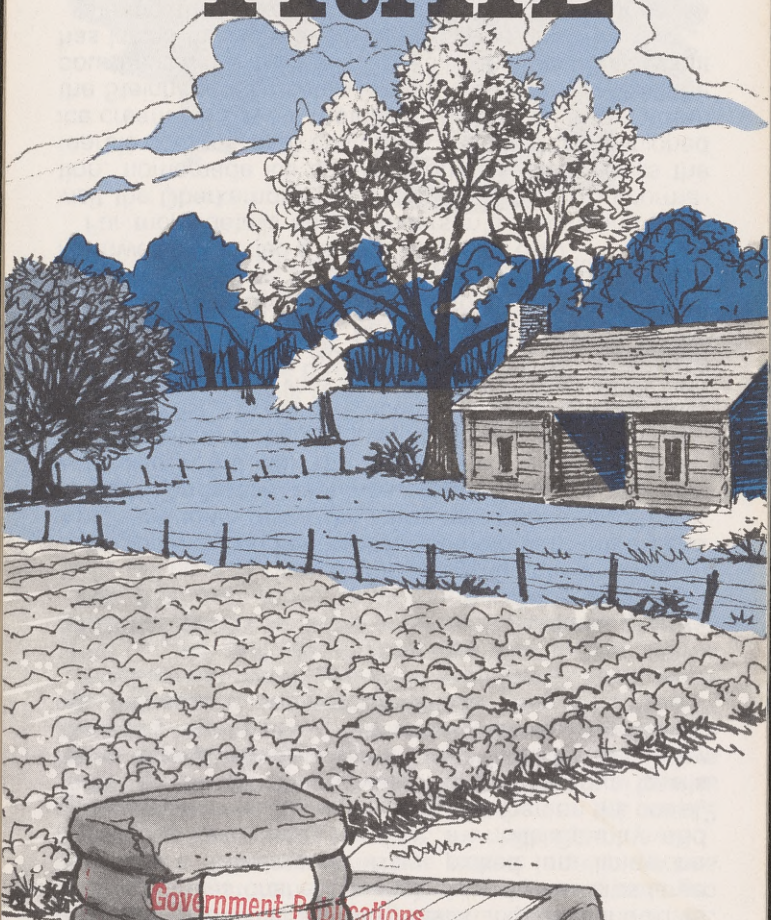


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Ride the Texas

# BRAZOS TRAIL



State Department of Highways  
and Public Transportation  
118210

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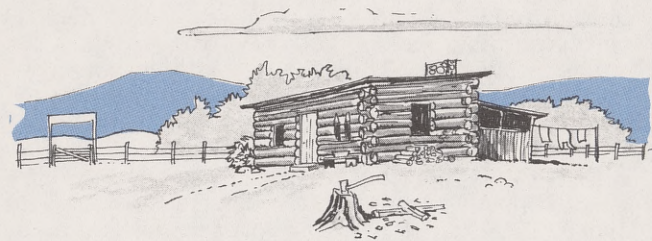
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### TEXAS BRAZOS TRAIL

The Texas Brazos Trail moves through beauty and history, revealing sylvan panoramas and a gracious way of life.

The Trail crosses two major geologic faults, and each has contributed to the diversity of landscapes, crops, and even social aspects. Fertile fields produce bountiful harvests — an agricultural treasure that attracted early settlers and plantation owners, and nurtured the growth of frontier and modern Texas.

The history of life along the Brazos Trail began long before the colonists of Stephen F. Austin and Sterling C. Robertson arrived. It dates from dim Indian legends and includes the chronicles of ancient Spanish forts. It spans rude stockades erected by pioneers uneasily sharing the land with warring redmen, the flowering of a rich plantation economy, and the devastation of civil war.

The Brazos River was once called Brazos de Dios, the "Arms of God," a name probably given in thankfulness for the discovery of fresh water. From the source of its longest tributary, Double Mountain Fork, the Brazos flows 840 miles to enter the Gulf of Mexico near Freeport.

Wild flowers, wildlife and bird life will be Brazos Trail companions. In spring and much of summer, wild flowers spread spectacular blankets of color, but sharp eyes will be needed to note deer silently feeding in roadside meadows. Pause for a picnic lunch, and you're likely to hear the extravagant serenade of a mockingbird...at a nighttime campsite, perhaps the lonesome wail of a coyote.

For the Trail experience to be as rewarding as possible, a copy of the state's primary travel guide, *Texas! Live the Legend*, should be used along with the folder. Due to the folder's space limitations, descriptions are mainly devoted to the driving routes. Cities visited on the Trail are described in the travel guide, along with their attractions. The book, and an Official Highway Travel Map are available free from any Texas Tourist Bureau or by mail from the address at the end of this folder.

The Trail begins in Waco, pivotal city of the rich and historic Brazos River Valley, and proceeds in a clockwise direction. However, the Trail can be started at any point and driven in either direction by carefully consulting the descriptive copy and accompanying map. See map legend for information about special Trail signs and arrows.

**WACO**  
Pop. 101,261

**McLennan County**  
Alt. 427

Waco grew on a site first inhabited by the Waco Indians who in turn were driven out by Cherokees. Texas Rangers established temporary Fort Fisher here in 1837, and one of the Rangers, George Erath, later surveyed the townsite, which was incorporated in 1856. The area's thriving plantation economy was virtually extinguished by the Civil War, but rapid recovery came from Waco's location on the Chisholm Trail, aided by construction of the (then) world's longest single-span suspension bridge, and by a railroad. The historic suspension bridge is still in use a few blocks south of the Trail route.



Review Waco's attractions in *Texas! Live the Legend*, and visit the Waco Chamber of Commerce, 101 S. University Parks Dr., for details about the marked Historic Tour and current tourist activities.

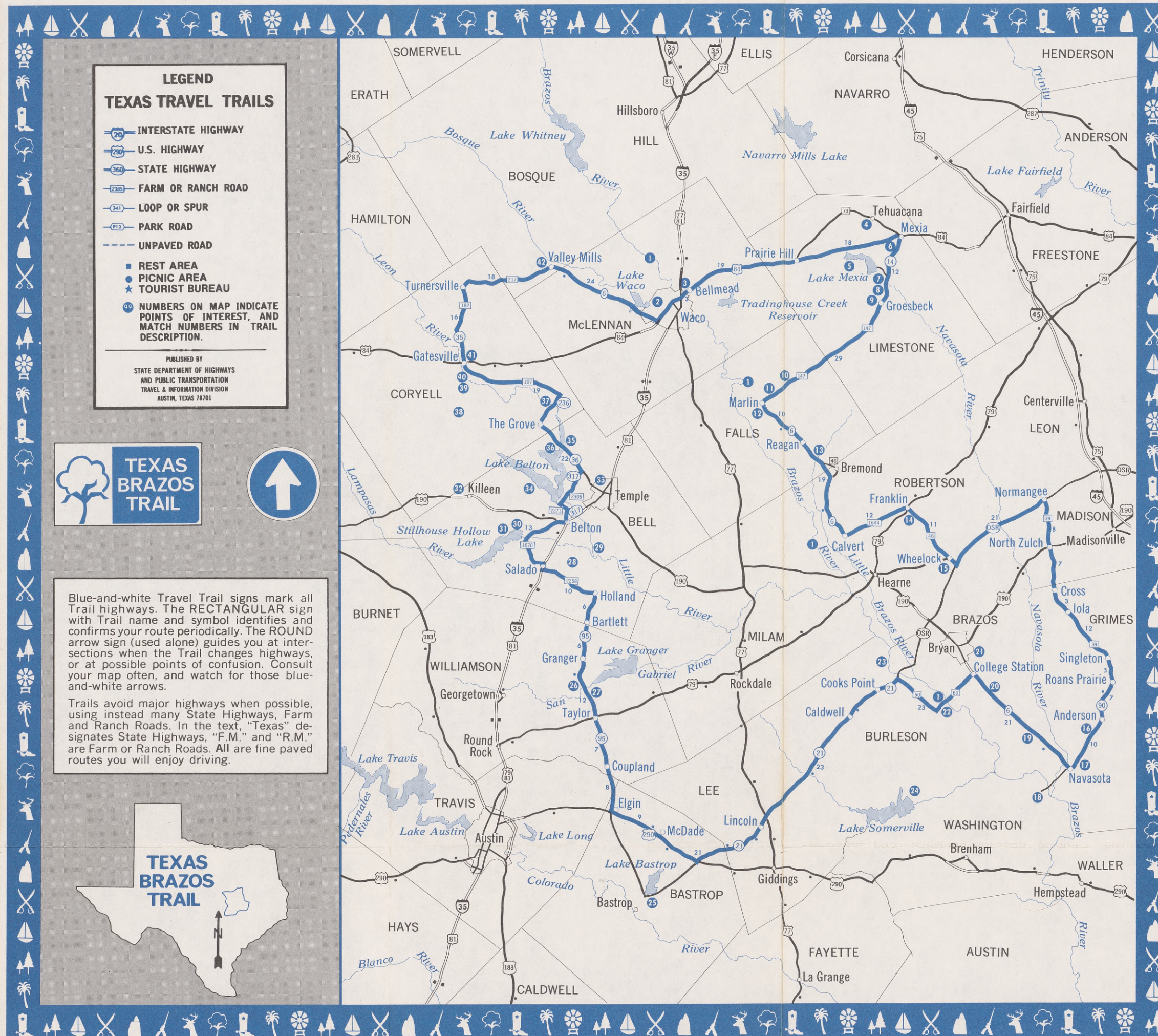
A prime attraction is the Homer Garrison Memorial Texas Ranger Museum (Fort Fisher) at I-35/Riverside Dr. It's a replica of the original fort and, along with the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame, commemorates Ranger history and heritage. It is also headquarters for the present Texas Ranger Company F. A tourist center in the museum has up-to-the minute information on area attractions, accommodations and dining opportunities.

In an adjacent city park are excellent picnic and camp areas, fishing piers, and dock for the dinner/excursion paddlewheeler *Brazos Queen*.

Lake Waco is a 7,260-acre recreation magnet with 60 miles of shoreline. Year-round fishing, boating and several parks host thousands of visitors. The west-facing white bluff on the lake, known as the White Rock escarpment, gives evidence of the underlying Austin Chalk formation. It will be referred to later on the Brazos Trail.

Most of Waco's water supply is from 2,000-foot wells in the Trinity Sands Aquifer. In early days, when the river was an undependable source of water, the wells produced artesian water at temperatures up to 120° F, and historic photos show them spewing steaming water. Waco was known as "The Geyser City" and the water's temperature was long considered a nuisance. Today it's being studied as a possible source of energy.

Waco is at the edge of the Balcones Fault — a major break in the earth's surface that runs from Del Rio



Blue-and-white Travel Trail signs mark all Trail highways. The RECTANGULAR sign with Trail name and symbol identifies and confirms your route periodically. The ROUND arrow sign (used alone) guides you at intersections when the Trail changes highways, or at possible points of confusion. Consult your map often, and watch for those blue-and-white arrows.

Trails avoid major highways when possible, using instead many State Highways, Farm and Ranch Roads. In the text, "Texas" designates State Highways, "F.M." and "R.M." are Farm or Ranch Roads. All are fine paved routes you will enjoy driving.



through San Antonio, Austin, and on up into Oklahoma. The eastern edge of the fault was the route of old cattle trails; today it's I-35. The Balcones Fault is, and has been, a climatic break, a bedrock break, a topographic break, a soils break, and a vegetation break. The demarcation had far-reaching social and economic effects; the cotton economy of the Old South came just this far, and ranching country started right here. It's said the fault marks the line where the West begins.

East of Waco the Trail passes through suburban Bellmead (where the population has grown from 800 in 1950 to more than 7,500 today) and to the north is James Connally Campus. The coeducational institute provides courses in vocational and technical skills.

The trail continues through the Blackland Prairies — rich, waxy soils underlain by soft marine chalks, formed in a shallow marine condition similar today's Bahama Banks. Any fossils found in highway cuts will be of marine origin.

Tawakoni and Cherokee tribes made this area a hazardous place for settlers in the 1830s. In the 1860s secession sentiment was strong in Limestone County, and federally-enforced Reconstruction after the Civil War was a difficult period.

The route between Prairie Hill and Mexia crosses the Navasota River, which is small here near its headwaters. Indians called the stream Nabasota. Spanish missionaries and explorers called it the San Cipriano, San Buenaventura, or, the Navasota — named by Pedro de Rivera in 1727.

Off the Trail a few miles northwest of Mexia, the silvery tower of now-closed Westminster College dominates the horizon. Within the village of Tehuacana (te-wack-ah-nah) the college was on one of the highest elevations between Dallas and Houston. Organized in 1852 as Tehuacana Academy, the school provided the basis for founding Trinity University there in 1869. In 1902 Trinity moved to Waxahachie, and 40 years later to San Antonio.

In 1797 Philip Nolan's trading expedition found peaceful Tehuacana Indians farming this area. The Tehuacanas, a Wichita tribe, were destroyed by the Cherokees in the 1830s.

About five miles west of Mexia, near Lake Mexia

note a change in vegetation. From prairie grasslands with occasional live oaks and mesquites, the Trail enters a post oak area. It's the only visible sign of the crossing of a major geologic time break — another fault zone. Cretaceous formations under the blacklands were laid down quietly during millions of years on a marine shelf; the tertiary formation on which the post oaks grow is also a marine deposit, but one formed millions of years later from river deposits of material washed down from the newly formed Rocky Mountains far to the west.

The fault is important to Mexia. When the land broke (probably caused by the increasing weight of sediments), it slipped like a giant landslide that served as a trapping mechanism for oil deposits.

Discovery of that oil in the 1920s brought wild and violent boom days. Markers at the southern Mexia limits tell of that rowdy era, and of the local Confederate Reunion Grounds.

**MEXIA**  
Pop. 7,094

**Limestone County**  
Alt. 534

Many area settlements date from around 1830, but Mexia (muh Hay uh) wasn't officially established until 1871. It was named for Mexican Gen. Jose Antonio Mexia who accompanied Stephen F. Austin into the territory on what is called Mexia's Texas Expedition.

Natural gas was discovered in 1912, but an oil gusher in 1921 ignited such a rowdy boom that martial law had to be declared the following year. The No. 1 Desenberg (3,059 ft.) blew 100 feet into the air and produced 18,000 barrels per day. In less than a week, population jumped from 4,000 to 40,000; new wells were brought in daily; 33,937,513 barrels of oil were produced in 1922, and annual production stayed above a million barrels as late as 1945.

The boom faded, as all do, leaving Mexia its pleasant tree-lined residential and business streets. The chamber of commerce, 315 N. Sherman, can provide up-to-date information on the city and county.

Lake Mexia west of town, is formed by the Navasota River and lesser streams, one of which is Baines Creek. George Washington Baines, great-

grandfather of the late Lyndon Baines Johnson, was a circuit-riding Baptist minister who preached at Old Springfield during the Civil War. The lake offers boating, swimming, skiing and year-round fishing.

The Confederate Reunion Grounds, a 77-acre park established in 1889 by CSA veterans, is southwest via FM 1633 at FM 2705. A large 1892 pavilion is still in use. Also on the scenic grounds are historic buildings, the only covered bridge on a public highway in Texas, Confederate cannon and modern campgrounds (fee for hookups).

From Mexia, the Brazos Trail leads south to Fort Parker State Park and nearby old Fort Parker both detailed in *Texas! Live the Legend*.

Park Road 28 into the park winds past the old cemetery of Springfield, once county seat and only town in the county. Tombstones tell stories of 19th Century life, and epitaphs dramatically emphasize the violence of the frontier — one stone grimly states, "Died in Texas by Mexican violence, Slain for GOLD October 1854."



South of the park entrance, a marker tells old Springfield's history. Less than a mile south of the Navasota River is Park Road 35 to Old Fort Parker. An historical marker at the fort entrance, and *Texas! Live the Legend*, tell the saga of Cynthia Ann Parker, history's most famous Indian captive. The fort restoration offers a close-hand look at a corner blockhouse, rifle ports, and cabins built into the stockade walls. The cabins are furnished in frontier style.

The Fort Parker Memorial Cemetery two miles north

of Groesbeck on FM 1245 (not shown on Trail map) is the final resting place of settlers who were massacred when Indians overran the community fort in 1836.

En route to Groesbeck the Trail tracks the Mexia Fault Zone, but crosses "string" prairies, long, narrow prairies suitable for farming. The vegetation reflects the varied geologic substrate, but it's all part of material shed from the distant Rockies.

**GROESBECK**  
Pop. 3,373

**Limestone County**  
Alt. 477

Founded in 1870 by the Houston and Texas Central Railroad, the original name, Groesbeck, was for a railroad director. As a railroad terminus, the city became county seat with the decline of old Springfield.

A museum at 210 W. Navasota features local history. Open afternoons Tuesday through Saturday.

**MARLIN**  
Pop. 7,099

**Limestone County**  
Alt. 383

The community was established prior to 1836 by a group of farmers brought to Texas from Alabama and Tennessee by colonizer Sterling C. Robertson. Its present name was adopted from the efforts of an early settler, John Marlin, who built a private fort nearby. A marker at Coleman and Railroad Sts. cites the accidental discovery of hot, mineralized artesian water in 1892, a disappointment for local citizens who had been seeking a source of pure, fresh water for household use. But in an era when such waters were credited with medicinal properties, Marlin soon became a popular spa, with thousands coming to "take the water." As with such spas the world over, modern medicine spelled their decline.

In a visionary move, a local hospital garnered a DOE grant in the 1970s, and now geothermal energy supplies some 80 percent of the hospital's needs, saving about 10.5 million cubic feet of natural gas per year. For information about Marlin and its geothermal resource, visit the chamber of commerce at 245 Coleman. And in a pavilion by the chamber, sample a taste of the Marlin mineral water.

The county is named for falls on the Brazos River — falls that no longer exist due to a change in the river course in the 1860s. A pleasant county park beside the river some three miles from town offers swimming, fishing, camping (fee for hookups), and historical markers. Access (off the Trail) via FM 712 southwest.

On the Trail five miles southeast of Marlin, other historical markers in a roadside picnic area tell of Gen. Thomas Harrison, frontier Indian fighter and CSA officer, and of Fort Milam at the disappeared village of Sarahville de Viesca.

Beyond the Little Brazos River just off the Trail is Bremond, the largest Polish settlement in Texas. Trying to re-establish the plantation system of agriculture after the Civil War, large landowners imported Italian and Polish workers as indentured servants to replace slave labor. It didn't work. The frugal, hard-working immigrants soon saved enough to pay off their indenture commitments and began buying land themselves. The huge plantations disappeared, becoming small, self-sufficient farms owned by the very people who had been imported to sustain the outmoded plantation concept. Names in the Bremond Cemetery reflect the area's European heritage. A marker tells of the Polish immigration at the graves of Joseph and Catherine Bartula, first Polish settlers in Robertson County.

On the Trail southwest of Bremond is the community of Hammond. Near here was Fort Welch, scene of a Comanche massacre. North of Hammond, Wooten Wells grew around a mineral well dug in 1879. The once prosperous town had three hotels, several businesses serving tourists, and a mule-drawn railway. Several destructive fires and the discovery of what was reputed to be better mineral water at Marlin resulted in the decline of Wooten Wells, and it faded from sight.

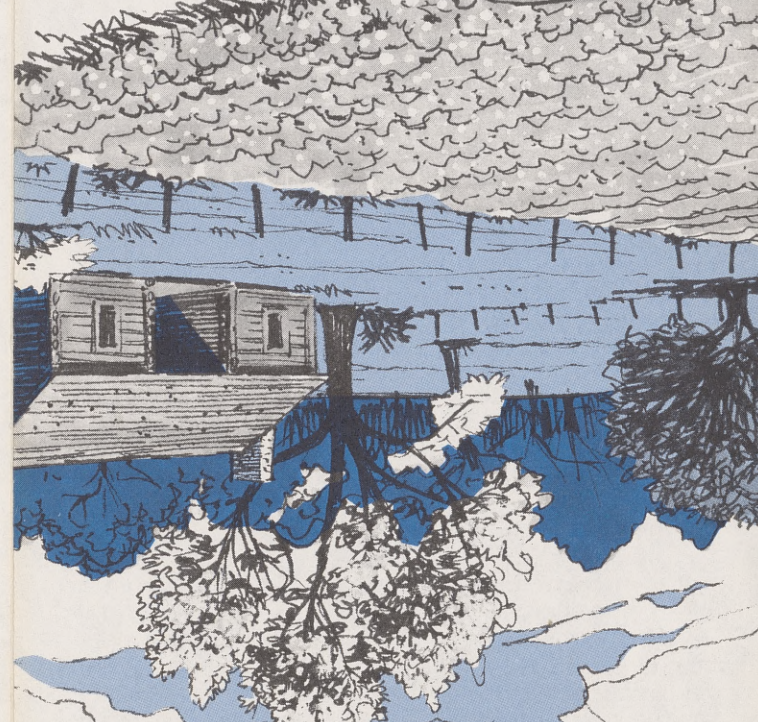
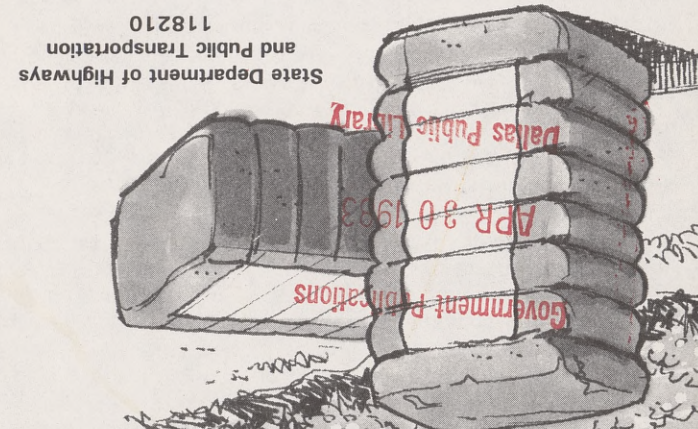
**CALVERT**  
Pop. 1,732

**Robertson County**  
Alt. 335

Named for a descendant of Lord Baltimore, Robert Calvert who donated the townsite in 1863, the town prospered as a trade center for cotton plantations. In 1871 the largest cotton gin in the world was here, and in about 1874 Chinese workers were imported to work in cotton production. Cotton is still a major area crop.

Huge homes, some magnificently restored, are delights. The 1880 Gothic Revival Hammond House at Elm and Hammond is said to have been originally designed as a courthouse. After years as a residence, it's being restored as a museum. Cobb's Market, 517 Main, now an antique shop, has fixtures that date from its latest remodeling — 1878. Fine wood scrollwork adds beauty to the Church of the Epiphany at Gregg and Elm. The First Presbyterian Church, Beech at Barton, was built before the Civil War at old Sterling on Robert Calvert's land. Except for the leaded-glass windows, all building material came from the plantation. The church was moved to Calvert in 1868 and remodeled in 1877.

Virginia Field Park, a block north of the Trail, features a gazebo amid shady grounds and a nearby playground.



# TRAIL BRAZOS

1982 Ride the Texas  
H 1473.5  
R4336P

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History intrudes on the present in much of Grimes County. Rene Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, may have reached the area in the 1680s, searching for the Mississippi River. The Coushatta Trail through here was part of the Contraband Trace from Alexandria, Louisiana, to the Rio Grande. The trace received its name from the smuggling of goods from French Louisiana into Spanish Texas.

About two miles north of Anderson, look for a change in the appearance of roadside rocks. It's still sandstone, but made up of limestone fragments. In prehistoric times this region was drained by major river systems as large as today's Mississippi. They picked up limestone fragments from what is now the Hill Country and deposited them in this region that was then on the coast, some 11 or 12 million years ago. Cretaceous fossils found here posed an enigma for early geologists. They shouldn't have been in this tertiary (newer) formation, but their source was later identified.

**ANDERSON**  
Pop. 320  
**Grimes County**  
Alt. 368

Originally called Fanthorp for the Fanthorp Inn around which the town grew; the name was changed to honor Kenneth Anderson, last vice president of the Republic who died at the inn. The historic inn's guests included Sam Houston, Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant and Jefferson Davis. It is being restored as a State Historic Site.

Stage and freight lines from Houston to Springfield, and from Nacogdoches to Austin crossed here; the population reached 3,000 in 1885, but the city lost its strategic importance when bypassed by railroads. A Confederate munitions plant was here, and sulphur springs seven miles northwest supported a spa as early as 1850.

For more details about Anderson's fascinating past, visit the Oberkampf Drug Store. In addition to information, homemade ice cream is often served across the marble counter, or to customers seated at old-fashioned ice cream tables with matching chairs. You'll hear about the Steinhagen log cabin (on the Trail highway) and the courthouse. It's the third on the site and the original vault has lasted through the years and two fires.

During the Texas Trek each April visitors are welcomed to historic homes and buildings by men and women dressed in costumes of the elegant past.

The Trail continues through land touched by the early, troubled times of the colony, republic and state.

About two miles southwest of Anderson is the actual cabin of Tapley Holland, disguised by siding added in later years. Son of one of Stephen F. Austin's colonists, he fought and died at the Alamo. Legend says that Travis told the besieged defenders the odds they faced, then drew a line. He asked all who would stay to step across — Tapley Holland crossed the line ahead of the other heroes!

About a mile east of the Navasota limits is the site of Camp Inn a stagecoach stop in early days.

**NAVASOTA**  
Pop. 5,971  
**Grimes County**  
Alt. 215

In the median of the Trail highway, near the business district, is a statue of La Salle. Historians believe the French explorer was murdered by his own men near here.

The chamber of commerce, 117 S. LaSalle (Texas BR 6), has information and directions to many attractions that include Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park, seven miles southwest on Texas 105; Schumacher Oil Mill, oldest cottonseed oil mill anywhere, and a marker with the history of La Bahia Trail.

Navasota's history is one of triumph over disasters. A fire during the Civil War partially destroyed the city, and two years later a yellow fever epidemic cut its population in half.

The Trail crosses the Navasota River just north of the city and soon is traversing the Millican Oil Field. The name is from the near-ghost town of Millican that prospered during the Civil War as a railroad terminus. It declined after the tracks were extended north, and a deadly fever struck in 1867.

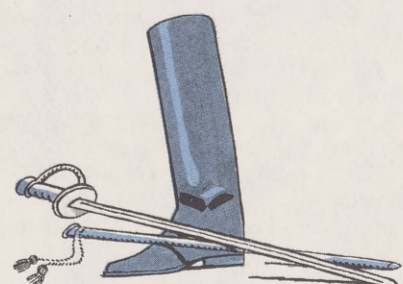
The oil here is being produced from the Austin Chalk formation — the same formation that was on the surface near Waco. Here, it's about 7,000 feet under ground.

Texas World Speedway is just east of Texas 6 eight miles south of the Texas 30 intersection. The 26,000-seat grandstand provides visibility of the entire two-mile super-speedway, and most of the three-mile Grand Prix road course.

**COLLEGE STATION**  
Pop. 37,272  
**Brazos County**  
Alt. 308

College Station is widely known as Texas A&M University headquarters. Although the Trail exits the metropolitan area on Texas 60 by the university, plan to include other attractions of Bryan-College Station.

Information is available at the Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce's Information Center at 2615 Texas Ave. South (east side of Trail route, Texas BR 6).

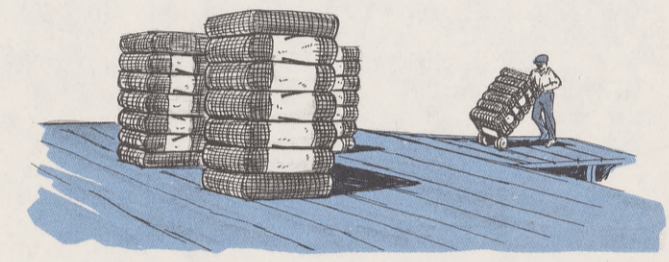


Texas A&M was created by a legislative act in 1871 and opened in 1876 with 40 students and six faculty members. The first A&M presidency was offered to Jefferson Davis. He declined but recommended his friend, Thomas Gathright, who took the post. Originally endowed with a federal grant of 180,000 acres of land scrip, which sold for \$156,000, the college was designated as part of the then nonexistent University of Texas. The state's first public higher-education institution has grown to an annual enrollment of around 35,000. Granted university status in 1963, the now coeducational school is famed for technical, scientific and agricultural studies and development.

Bryan, population 44,337, was connected to College Station by interurban railway, 1920-30. Settlers who arrived in the 1820s formally founded the city in 1855 and named it for the donor of the townsite. Several early educational centers included Villa Maria Ursuline Academy for girls, and Allen Academy. Now coeducational, Allen Academy is nationally known for academic, athletic and military standards. It was founded in 1886 in Madisonville and moved to Bryan in 1899.

Bryan succeeded Boonville as county seat in 1866. An historical marker about two miles east on FM 158 marks the site of the early village.

The large cotton gin near the Brazos River is a reminder that the traditional crop is still of economic importance in the Brazos Valley. And just west, the Trail passes Texas A&M Plantation where research includes development of showplace farms, new varieties of plants and grasses, and crossbreeding of cattle. Interested visitors often can be given tours.



About six miles north of A&M Plantation, just west of the Trail, is Mission San Salvador, built by Italians who settled here in 1894. A marker gives details.

Soon the Trail returns to the Old San Antonio Road (Texas 21). Just north of the intersection of FM 50/Texas 21, a marker tells of a ferry across the Brazos that operated from 1846. The Old San Antonio Road divided colonization in Burleson County: Austin's first colony settled south of the road; Sterling Robertson's to the north.

Cooks Point, named for the owner of the original plantation, is a Czech community, unusual because the original settlers were Protestants.

From Cooks Point to Caldwell, and for several miles beyond, Texas 21 follows a narrow ribbon of blackland prairie, about five miles wide and some 50 or 60 miles long. This route for the Old Spanish Trail was chosen by Spanish surveyors as it offered the least vegetational resistance. Look in either direction to see the wooded lands as they border this fertile string prairie.

FM 1362 north (not shown on Trail map) and county roads lead to what was to have been the seat of empire in Mexican Texas: Fort Tenoxtitlan, the original name for Mexico City. Restoration has been discussed, but a determined effort is now required to reach the site where Damn Creek flows into the Brazos. It was more difficult for a Mexican cavalry column in 1830, a force sent to stop Anglo settlers and induce Mexican families to settle. Read the story of Lt. Col. Ruiz and his method of dealing with the settlers in *Texas! Live the Legend* (under Caldwell).

**CALDWELL**  
Pop. 2,953  
**Burleson County**  
Alt. 406

Review the city's listing in the state travel guide, and visit the chamber of commerce, 119 Buck St. (on the square) for information about this pleasant city that was founded in 1840. Its growth was due largely to immigrants going west, and the city is still a resting place for wayfarers and a gateway to Lake Somerville.

The Burleson County Historical Museum, temporarily in the courthouse, has relics of pioneer days, plus exhibits about Fort Tenoxtitlan. Open Friday afternoons and by appointment.

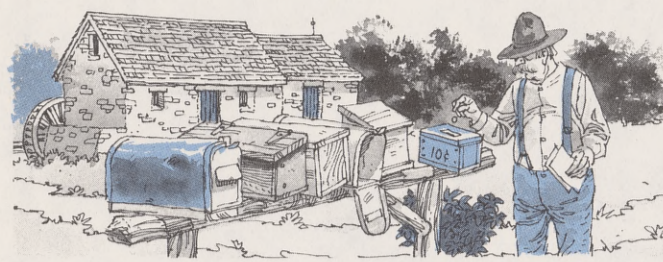
Excellent water recreation is available by a short side trip to Lake Somerville, 18 miles southeast of Caldwell. Facilities on the 85-mile shoreline include two units of Lake Somerville State Park. There are modern camping areas, fishing, boat ramps, swimming, dump stations and extensive hiking trails. The Birch Creek facility on the north shore is reached via Texas 36 south, FM 60 west and Park Road 57 south.

The Brazos Trail crosses East Yegua (Indian for "mare") Creek and enters Lee County.

Named for Robert E. Lee, the county has a diversified agricultural economy, but is probably best known as the center of Wendish settlement in the U.S. The Wends, who were German by nativity but spoke their own Slavic language, resisted Prussian attempts to strip them of their nationality and religion. In 1854 one group went to Australia, another to Texas. Virtually all of Lee County was settled by Wends, and although the language has nearly died out, the *Giddings Star* still has the nation's only newspaper fonts for printing the Wendish language.

Lee County's seat is Giddings (south of the Trail), and a museum is being developed in the old Dr. York home, three blocks south of US 290 and a block east, with artifacts of the Wends. Ask for directions in Giddings to Serbin, where the Wendish Heritage Society Museum is located.

Near Manheim the Trail leaves Lee County with its blackland prairies and re-enters the Mexia Fault Zone, identifiable by the reappearance of post-oak groves.



Old Dime Box was named from the practice of settlers there who placed dimes in a box at Joseph Browne's Mill to pay the postman for running errands for them in Giddings. After the turn of the century, the community moved about two miles south to be on the railroad. In 1944 President Franklin Roosevelt chose the town to start the March of Dimes campaign.

Middle Yegua Creek offers a pleasant valley along the approach to Lincoln, another Wendish settlement, that grew from the settlement of Evergreen. Outlaw Bill Longley, who went to school here, was hanged in Giddings in 1878. His grave and an historical marker are in a cemetery there. After his 32nd killing, his career ended near where it started, but Longley's crimes had reached from Cheyenne and Salt Lake City to St. Louis.

The Trail traveler is, by now, familiar with string prairies and post oak hills, and the phenomena are easily recognizable along this Trail segment. At Paige, a community settled by Germans about 1870, an excellent side trip is available on Texas 21 to Bastrop State Park about 12 miles south.

Read about the audacious activities of the man for whom Bastrop is named (see Bastrop) and about facilities at the 2,000-acre recreational park, in *Texas! Live the Legend*. The Bastrop area is becoming known for its lignite mines.

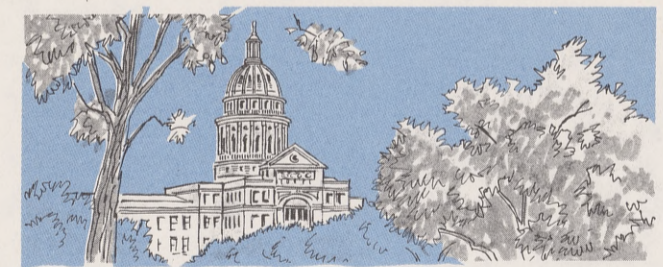
The village of McDade, north of the Trail on Loop 223, was an important freight center and stage stop. Life in this frontier town was violent, with robberies along lonely trails and dramatic scenes of shootings, hangings and vigilante actions. Outlaws terrorized citizens until vigilantes lynched several on Christmas Eve, 1883, an event that precipitated a shoot-out at the Rock Front Saloon the next day. The old saloon still stands on Main Street, and faded signs above store buildings tell bits of history.

Just west of McDade is Butler, a community known for brick production. Many of Austin's buff-colored buildings use bricks from Butler.

**ELGIN**  
Pop. 4,535  
**Bastrop County**  
Alt. 579

Elgin, first called Glasscock and then Hogeys (after a local fiddler's favorite song) marked July 1972 as its centennial. Known as the "Brick Capital of the Southwest" when hand-pressed bricks were made in the 1800s, Elgin is an agricultural center today. An historical marker on Loop 109 near the old depot gives details. Stop at the chamber of commerce at 15 N. Main for up-to-the-minute information. A city park at Elgin's north edge features a pioneer log cabin and offers a pleasant traveler's pause.

The Brazos Trail changes direction at Elgin, but the Trail traveler will be well rewarded by taking a short 25-mile side trip to the state capital, Austin.



**AUSTIN**  
Pop. 345,496  
**Travis County**  
Alt. 550

Review the capital city's attractions in the state travel guide, and start at the Capitol where history and beauty share the landscaped grounds. Full details about points of interest at the Capitol, in the city and throughout the state are available at a Visitor Center operated by the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation in the Capitol. It's open daily, staffed by courteous travel counselors who offer a wealth of travel material to enhance any Texas trip.

Excellent assistance is also given at the chamber of commerce next to the municipal auditorium on the south side of Town Lake.

From art museums to country/western music, and from historic mansions to the night-life scene on East Sixth St., you'll want to plan some time to explore the beautiful Texas capital city.

The view along the Brazos Trail as the route enters Williamson County is one of rolling fields, trees and pastures. The county is bisected by the Balcones Escarpment; rocky hills are west of I-35; the Trail is traversing the blackland prairies in the eastern part of the county.

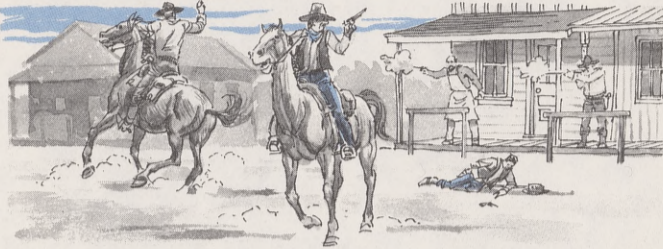
Williamson County was first explored in 1716 by the Spanish, and Robertson Colony settlers came in 1835. Indian trails crossed the region that saw conflict between warlike Comanche Indians and the more peaceful Tonkawas. The county was named for the lawyer-editor who fought at San Jacinto, Robert M. (Three-Legged

Willie) Williamson. The colorful nickname came from an artificial limb used to supplement a crippled leg.

The Trail crosses Brushy Creek, first named by the Spanish explorer Domingo Ramon and his French-Canadian guide, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, as Arroyo de los Benditos Animas (Creek of the Blessed Souls). The first settlement in what is now Williamson County was Tumlinson Fort, a ranger headquarters near the headwaters of Brushy Creek.

Just south of Brushy Creek is Coupland, a village laid out in 1887 and populated predominantly by German and Czech settlers. An inn in a restored pharmacy offers barbecue dinners on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. Diners sit near the original marble counter, pharmacist's wooden cage, and bottles of patent medicine.

It was at Kenney's Fort, on the south side of Brushy Creek near the present railroad span, that the Archive War ended. The bloodless war was occasioned by an attempt to move the State archives from Austin to Washington-on-the-Brazos. Although the move was prompted by an invasion from Mexico, Austin citizens thought it was a plot to make Houston the permanent capital. Austin vigilantes captured the records and returned them to Austin, Jan. 1, 1843.



Include a side trip to Round Rock, west of Taylor at this point on the Brazos Trail. Outlaw Sam Bass met his end there when lawmen were alerted to a planned holdup. An enactment of that attempted bank robbery is part of the annual Frontier Day celebration in July. Visit the chamber of commerce at 212 E. Main for details on activities, historic structures, location of the round rock for which the city is named, and the grave of Sam Bass.

**TAYLOR**  
Pop. 10,619  
**Williamson County**  
Alt. 583

Taylor, established in 1876, has seen steady growth since the first cotton gin was built over a century ago. In the 1890s a mule-drawn streetcar provided in-town transportation. Stop at the chamber of commerce on the Trail at 1519 N. Main for details on historic buildings such as an 1860 ranch house, the Moody Museum in the Dan Moody home at 9th and Talbot, and the 1891 First Christian Church at 6th and Talbot where the medalion notes that the distinctive interior has been preserved although a bell tower was removed. Taylor is the birthplace of former Gov. Dan Moody.

Murphy Park, at the north edge of Taylor west of the Trail on Lake Drive, is attractively landscaped; lakes, swimming pool, playground, pavilion and picnic areas.

As the Trail moves north it passes through three communities with much in common. Granger, Holland and Bartlett were all settled by Czechs. Also, each of these towns uses well water that comes to the surface at temperatures of 100° to 110°.

About five miles north of Taylor on the San Gabriel River is the community of Circleville settled by D.H. McFadin in 1846. His restored home is less than a mile east on FM 1331 (not shown on Trail map). McFadin built a mill on the San Gabriel, a river the Spanish called San Francisco Xavier. Circleville, so named because of the plat of the original town, had a cotton carding factory during the Civil War.

Trail travelers will note the land between Taylor and Granger is exceptionally flat. This was the bottomland of an ancient, huge river, probably the ancestor of the San Gabriel. The river-deposited gravel, now under the soil, makes this area resistant to erosion.

At Granger, named either for Civil War veteran John Granger, or for the early Grange movement, a short side trip east on FM 571 (not shown on Trail map) leads to new Lake Granger. Read about it in *Texas! Live the Legend*.

Bartlett was once a terminal of the Bartlett-Florence Railroad. Four stations on the line were Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The First Presbyterian Church here has a marker with historical details.

Bell county settlers arrived in 1834-35 but soon had to abandon their homes because of two frontier upheavals. The first was during the Runaway Scrape, a term given the general retreat of Texas colonists from Mexican forces during the Texas Revolution. A second flight was required in 1836 when Indians raided Fort Parker to the east. Though the area was permanently settled thereafter, Indians raided until about 1859.

On the Trail about five miles west of Holland is a view of broad expanses to the west and north with the cities of Belton and Temple in the distance. North is the Little River valley where settlers of the Robertson Colony built their first cabins. Summer's Mill was operating on lively Salado Creek there as early as 1866, and farther north was Fort Little River (also called Fort Griffin and Fort Smith). The picket fort was established by George Erath and 20 Texas Rangers in November 1836. Abandoned as a military post by 1841, area settlers used it as a place of defense against Indians for many years.

The Brazos Trail near I-35 bends to enter Salado with the stone ruins of old Salado College on the east.

**SALADO**  
Pop. 1,043  
**Bell County**  
Alt. 695

Begin a Salado tour at the Central Texas Area Museum on Main St. where informative visits start with history from before the beginning of Anglo-American settle-

ment. The small admission fee returns a handsome fund of knowledge, valuable for all the Brazos Trail. A variety of literature is available on the several historic homes of the city, most containing authentic furnishings of the past century.



Across the street from the museum and chamber of commerce is Stagecoach Inn's dining room, part of a renowned inn and restaurant that served travelers along the old Military Road as early as 1852. The still-famous restaurant is part of a modern motel.

Pause in Pace Park, a shady picnic area a block east of Main St. The park is on Salado Creek, the first natural landmark in Texas honored by the State Historical Commission as a Recorded Texas Natural Landmark. The stream rises from springs — the northernmost springs of the huge Edwards Aquifer that surfaces here because of the Balcones Fault.

The Trail crosses the Balcones Fault to visit Stillhouse Hollow Lake on the Lampasas River and crosses the dam that impounds the 6,430-acre lake. The Corps of Engineers office at the dam offers information about facilities along the 58-mile shoreline.

West of the Trail on US 190 is Nolanville, and about two miles south (on FM 2410) is Comanche Gap remembered on an historical marker as site of Indians' escape route after the last Bell County raid. Dana Peak Park, with camping and recreational facilities on Stillhouse Hollow Lake, is just south of Comanche Gap.

Also west of the Trail on US 190 is Killen, home of Fort Hood. The huge armored force installation has museums of the 1st Cavalry Division and 2nd Armored Division. The main gate is a mile west of Killen on US 190.

**BELTON**  
Pop. 10,660  
**Bell County**  
Alt. 511

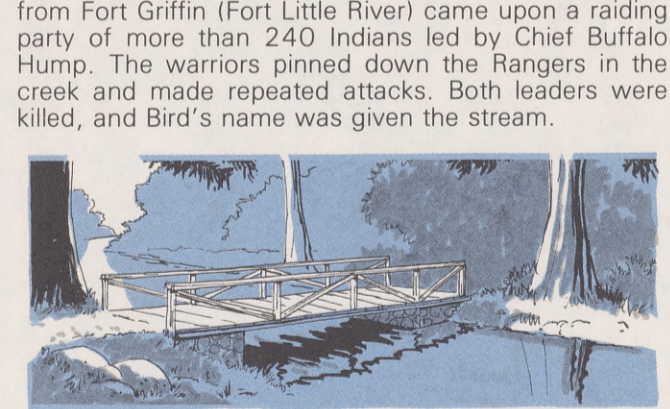
Information about the pleasant city of Belton is cheerfully given at the chamber of commerce at 106 S. East St. (off I-35 downtown, a block east of Main). Also review Belton's listing in *Texas! Live the Legend*.

Of interest is the historical marker at the site of the first courthouse, which cost \$199 and served from 1852 to 1859. The present courthouse, built in 1884, is the third and cost \$90,000. Bell County is named for Gov. Peter H. Bell, who signed the charter creating the county in 1850.

Belton's courthouse square is an excellent example of a Texas courthouse square. It's a feature that came from Tennessee, as did other cultural aspects of many areas in Texas. Unlike Spanish plazas that had no central building and whose sides were devoted to governmental, religious and residential structures, the Tennessee square contains governmental buildings inside, with business houses flanking the sides.

Temple is a few miles northeast on I-35. This largest city in Bell County began its greatest growth after the railroad arrived in 1880-81, although settlement started in 1851. Temple's name honors the railroad man who marked off the town lots.

One of the several bloody Indian fights in the area occurred along Bird's Creek in 1839. An historical marker on Texas 36 west of the I-35 overpass marks the approximate site where Capt. John Bird and 33 Rangers from Fort Griffin (Fort Little River) came upon a raiding party of more than 240 Indians led by Chief Buffalo Hump. The warriors pinned down the Rangers in the creek and made repeated attacks. Both leaders were killed, and Bird's name was given the stream.



Read about Temple in the state travel guide, and visit the chamber of commerce at 2 N. 5th St.

The Trail loops west to cross Belton Dam, and the lake headquarters near the dam offers information on Lake Belton. The lake's blue fingers stretch to the western hills, and the valley to the east drops sharply to present a scenic vista. At the north end of the dam is a scenic overlook with a view of the 12,300-acre lake. A recent surprise discovery in the lake is a species of fresh-water jellyfish. Called Bryozoans (lace animals) these normally marine organisms are about a half-inch in diameter and are completely harmless.

North of the Trail is the community of Whitehall, once a stopping place for herds of Longhorns on the Old Chisholm Trail. The Brazos Trail crosses the Leon River, a tributary of Lake Belton, and enters Coryell County. Leona Park is at the east side of the bridge, and White Flint Park areas are on the west. Both recreation areas have camping facilities and boat ramps.

The Trail turns northeast at The Grove (named for groves of live oaks), where a number of Wendish families settled in the 1870s.

Just beyond another crossing of the Leon River is Mother Neff State Park, first state park in Texas. It's described (under Moody) in *Texas! Live the Legend*.

Between the park and Gatesville the Trail leaves the Leon River valley and travels across a Cretaceous formation with limestone bluffs visible in near and far views.

Station Creek, crossed a few miles northwest of the Texas 236/FM 107 intersection, was the site of old Fort Station, established by Texas soldiers under George B. Erath in 1839. Usually the small waterfalls to the north flow sparkling fresh water.

To the south are Henson Mountain and North Fort Hood, the encampment buildings easily visible although several miles distant.

**GATESVILLE**  
Pop. 6,260  
**Coryell County**  
Alt. 795

Review the Gatesville entry in the state travel guide, and visit the chamber of commerce at 103 N. 7th (near the courthouse) for details on this friendly city.

Across from the stone courthouse, noted as an excellent example of 19th Century architecture, is the Buckhorn Museum. The interior resembles an early West barroom (no "redeye" served here, however) and families can view antlers, massive horns of Texas Longhorns, guns, old photos, barbed wire and other relics. Open daily except Sunday; free.

Raby Park, two blocks east of the courthouse and a block south displays the old jail built in 1855 — first public building in the county; also a picnic area, rest rooms and swimming pool.

South on the street east of the square are shady campsites at Faunt Le Roy's Crossing where the Leon River makes a horseshoe bend. Virginia-born Frederick Wiles Faunt Le Roy figured in Indian campaigns and in Mexican War service before settling in Gatesville about 1856 as the only resident attorney. Picnic tables and a playground are in the scenic area.

On the Trail north is the former Gatesville School for Boys, a state rehabilitation facility established in 1887. In 1975 it became a facility of the Texas Department of Corrections with both male and female units.

Rolling hills rise in the distance as croplands give way to ranching country, with ranch houses nestled against the base of the hills. A variety of cattle will be seen; mostly Hereford, Black Angus and the French Charolais. Some sheep and horses probably will also be seen.



Turnersville is small, picturesque and quiet — from the old church to the tranquil picnic spots along Middle Bosque Creek. It's said the creek was a stopping point for cattle herds on the Chisholm Trail. Atop the sharp stone creek bank an old mill once stood when the community was known as Buchanan Springs.

Small communities, like Mosheim, once were important rural centers with good schools and large churches. The tabernacle with its arbor for outdoor services is an example in Mosheim. As farms and ranches increased in size, and as better roads were built, the small communities dwindled.

A mile south of the FM 217/854 intersection is the Searsville Baptist Church. A granite marker announces that on Aug. 30, 1862, the church was organized under an affirmation that "the just shall live by faith."

Scenic hills surround the town of Valley Mills, named for a long-gone mill that operated on the Bosque River. The town was settled about 1854, and residents claim to have "the best water in Texas."

South of Valley Mills the countryside subtly changes and becomes less wooded. It's excellent pastureland. Signs will be seen pointing the way to parks on Lake Waco which provides a scenic entry into Waco.

Brazos Trail travelers who've completed the route can speak with authority about this rich slice of historic and present Texas. But a word of caution. The vastness of Texas dwarfs the area covered by the Brazos Trail, and there are other regions to be discovered before the whole can be measured. Against the rolling, rich prairies just traversed, compare thick forests stretching from horizon to horizon, mountain peaks reaching into clear, crisp air, great spans of shining rivers and lakes, mossing bayous and hundreds of miles of golden sand along the sea. That too is Texas, and there are other Trails, listed below, to guide travelers efficiently through every part. Such is the purpose of the Texas Trails...planned pleasure driving to make the most of every mile, introducing Texas in regional portions. When travel efficiency is in everyone's best interest, the Texas Trails are the way to go!

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