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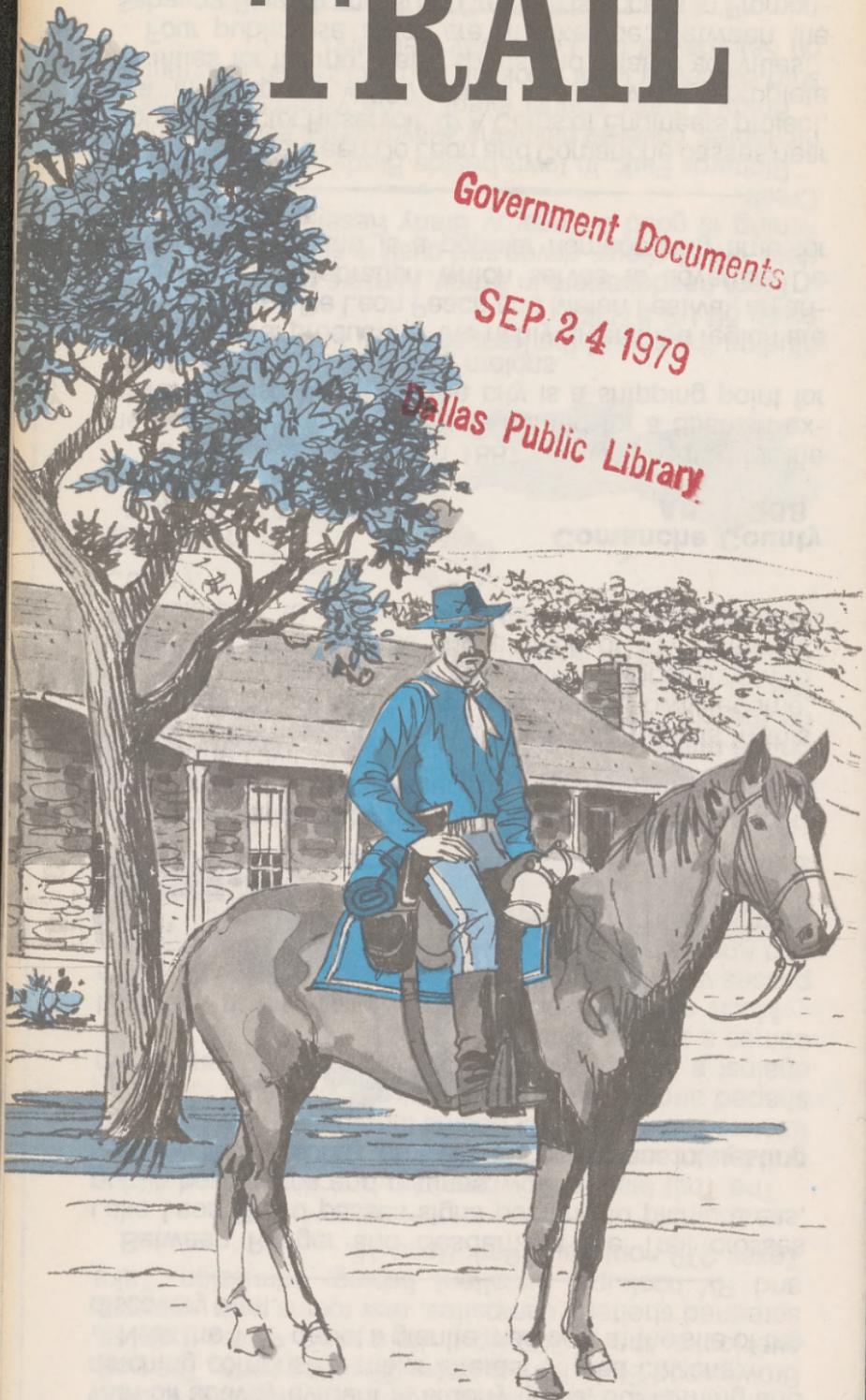
Ride the Texas

FORTS TRAIL

Government Documents

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State Department of Highways
and Public Transportation

6799

MINERAL WELLS
Pop. 13,764

Palo Pinto County
Alt. 925

A well driller in the 1880s discovered mineral waters which made the town famous. Medicinal qualities were credited to the water, and the area became a popular health spa. Several resort hotels cater to vacationers, conventioners and retired persons. Minerals extracted from the water were marketed as Crazy Water Crystals, and the original Crazy Well is marked by a plaque at 109 S. Oak Ave. A present source of the famed water is at 209 N.W. Sixth St.

Two nearby lakes offer fine fishing and water sports. Lake Mineral Wells State Park **16** is currently under preliminary development and is usually open for day use only, but provides access to the lake. Lake Palo Pinto **17** about 19 miles southwest via U.S. 180 and F.M. 4 south, has a number of lakeside facilities.

Details about other area attractions may be obtained at the local chamber of commerce, 608 N. Oak Ave.

Between Mineral Wells and Palo Pinto the Trail threads among beautiful vistas between steep wooded hills. The Brazos River Valley **9** offers some fine landscape views.

Palo Pinto is the seat of the same-named county, both of which derive from the Spanish name of a local creek. Palo Pinto (painted stick) is also the name of a type of colorful building stone found in the area. West of Palo Pinto are outcroppings of the building stone which occurs in layers a few inches thick. It is easily quarried and shaped for construction purposes.

Northwest are the Palo Pinto Mountains. **18** Individual peaks include Crawford Mountain, Antelope Mountain, and near Metcalf Gap, Sugarloaf Mountain. Between Metcalf Gap and Strawn the pyramid-like bare hills **19** to the east are tailing heaps of coal mines from the early 1900s. Just north of Strawn an historical marker **20** tells of Bethel Strawn, pioneer landowner for whom the town is named.

On U.S. 80/I.H. 20 the Trail climbs easily over the ridge of the Palo Pinto Mountains **18** and enters Ranger.

RANGER
Pop. 3,195

Eastland County
Alt. 1,429

When oil boom towns are recalled, Ranger is always among the first. It was a quiet rural community established near a Texas Ranger camp in the 1870s. In October 1917 a gusher blew in and touched off perhaps the greatest boom in history. World War I demand for oil was at an all-time high. During the earlier boom at Spindletop, oil was as low as 10 cents a barrel. At Ranger the price was more than \$4 a barrel. The lure of instant riches was irresistible, and the town erupted with every kind of frenzied activity.

The population exploded from 1,000 to 30,000 in one year. Small farmers and landowners became millionaires. Four railroads raced to complete lines, and one saw receipts jump from \$94,000 to \$8,000,000 in two years.



TEXAS FORTS TRAIL

The frontier forts of Texas were spearheads of civilization into a primitive land. As settlers poured West—ever eager for new fields to break and sow and broader pastures to produce beef—lines of forts were established to secure and protect the far-flung frontier.

The passions of that era were often volatile—frontiersmen on one side, tough and self-reliant, accustomed to taking what they wanted; Indians on the other side, savage and resentful of intruders in a land they had once roamed at will. Often in between was the frontier soldier. His hardships were many and his dangers very real.

Usually it was the soldier who built the fort—felled trees and shaped crude timbers, quarried stone and heaved both into place with pure muscle.

Then when it was finished—by the time frayed tents gave way to rude barracks—he looked around to find the nucleus of a town. Farmers were plowing new ground; stores and saloons had sprung up. "Civilization" had arrived, and the frontier had moved. But the frontier's edge was still bloody, and the soldier moved with it.

More than 30 U.S. military forts were established in Texas, not to mention earlier forts of the Republic, private bastions erected by pioneer families, and a host of much older presidios (forts) from the Spanish colonial period. The Texas Forts Trail leads to eight of the famous frontier forts of West-Central Texas, and includes one of the ancient presidios.

The starting point is Abilene, major metropolitan area on the Trail. The route description is then presented in a clockwise direction. However, the Trail is designed so that it may be started at any point along the way and driven in either direction by carefully consulting the accompanying map and descriptive copy. See map legend for information about special Trail signs and arrows.

ABILENE Pop. 97,377

Taylor County Alt. 1,738

The city was established by cattlemen as a shipping point on the Texas and Pacific Railroad in 1881, and named after Abilene, Kansas, famous end-point of the old Chisholm Trail. It remains a principal livestock area and has added industry, diversified agriculture and oil development. Cultural aspects are influenced by two colleges and a university, a community theater, a philharmonic association and a fine arts museum.

Information about Abilene attractions may be obtained at the chamber of commerce, 341 Hickory St. Major attractions include Abilene State Park, about 18 miles southwest via F.M. 89 (later described on the last segment of the Trail), plus 11 spacious municipal parks.

Oscar Rose Park, S. 7th and Barrow, includes a Western theme playground, tennis center, Abilene Fine Arts Museum, community and children's theaters. Nelson Park, at the east edge of Abilene on Texas 36, features an excellent zoo with naturalistic habitat areas.

Adjacent to the zoo is Zoo World, an entertainment complex with amusement park, pool with sand beach, and dinner theater. Open summer months.

A popular recreational feature is Old Abilene Town, a re-created frontier complex rich in Old West flavor. Stroll plank sidewalks to an old stagecoach restaurant, the Last Chance Saloon, pioneer store replicas and historical exhibits. I.H. 20 at Loop 322. Admission.

A major annual event is the West Texas Fair, six days each September.

The first leg of the Forts Trail aims north, soon looping around a popular outdoor recreational feature, Lake Fort Phantom Hill. Crossing the dam, the Trail leads by an attractive roadside park overlooking the lake, with a free public boat ramp.

Just a few miles north are the ruins for which the lake was named, **Fort Phantom Hill**. The fort burned in 1854, and solitary chimneys are principal remainders. Only the stone commissary, guard house and powder magazine are intact. Privately owned, the ruins are open to the public with interpretive literature and signs. Never a thriving post, duty here was hard. Historians say many desertions were due to monotony and loneliness.

Leaving the fort site, the highway crosses gently rolling plains until near Albany the road loops down to the Cross Timbers region.

ALBANY Pop. 1,952

Shackelford County Alt. 1,429

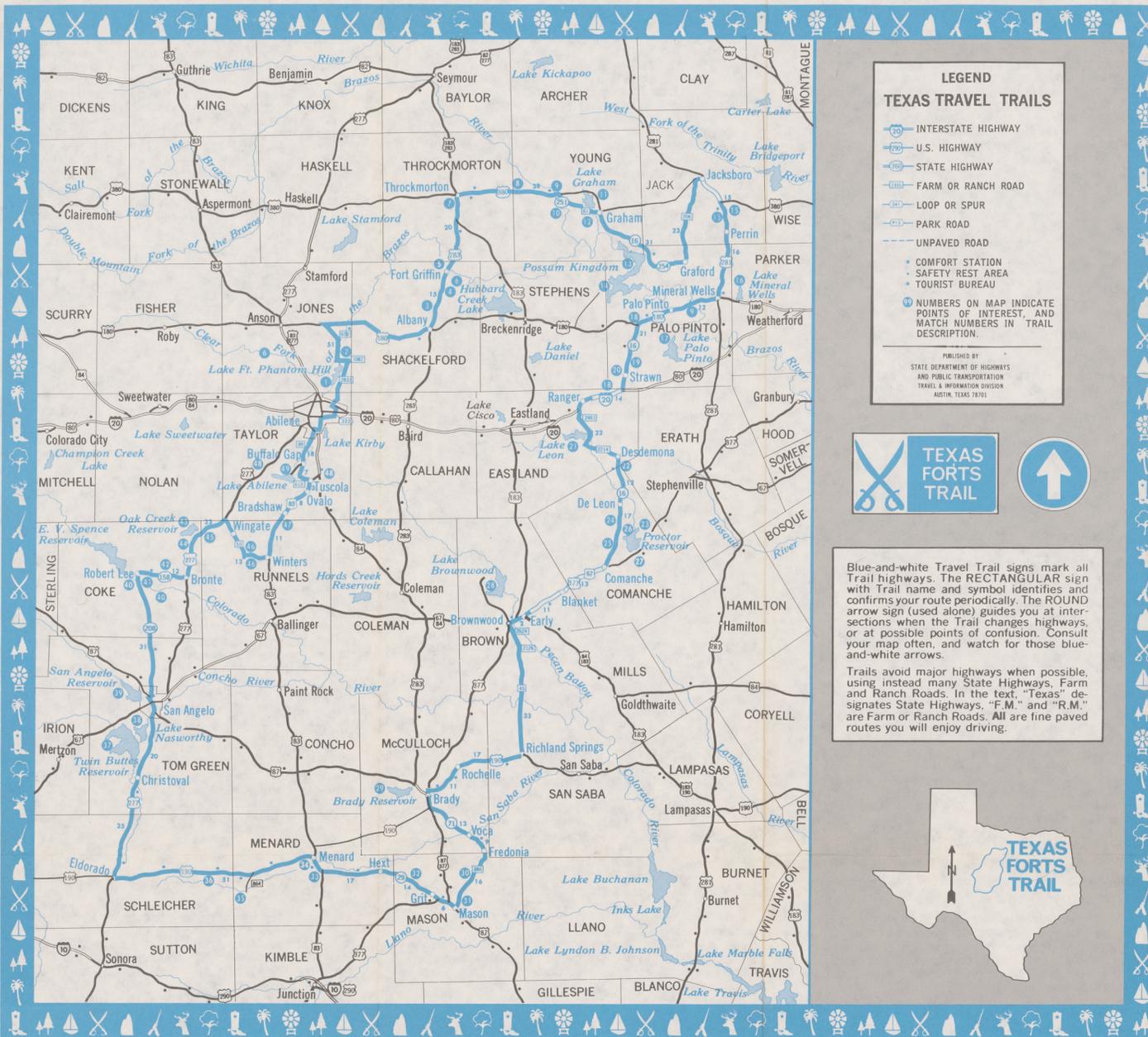
Designated in 1874, the county seat town became an early supply point on the Western Trail to Dodge City, Texas' first purebred Hereford cattle were imported by an early Albany rancher, and fine herds of Herefords are still found here.

The renowned Fort Griffin Fandangle re-creates the pioneer era in an elaborate outdoor musical pageant on the last two weekends in June. Staged by Albany townspeople, the shows have been presented for more than 30 years. Reservations are recommended.

Sixteen buildings around the many-copuled courthouse comprise a National Historic District. Remodeling of the old jail as an art and cultural center is underway.

The old MK&T Railroad depot at Central and Main Sts. serves as a small railroad museum, chamber of commerce office, community center and exhibit area for local handicrafts. Open weekdays.

Webb Park, at the terminus of Railroad Street, features picnic tables, swimming pool, and the restored Ledbetter picket house, a dog-run cabin built of slim upright poles (pickets) in 1872 by W. H. Ledbetter, first county judge. For admission inquire at adjacent water plant.



LEGEND
TEXAS TRAVEL TRAILS

- INTERSTATE HIGHWAY
- U.S. HIGHWAY
- STATE HIGHWAY
- FARM OR RANCH ROAD
- LOOP OR SPUR
- PARK ROAD
- UNPAVED ROAD
- COMFORT STATION
- SAFETY REST AREA
- TOURIST BUREAU

NUMBERS ON MAP INDICATE POINTS OF INTEREST, AND MATCH NUMBERS IN TRAIL DESCRIPTION.

PUBLISHED BY
STATE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS
AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
TRAVEL & INFORMATION DIVISION
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701

TEXAS FORTS TRAIL

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.



Across the street is the reconstructed jail from Fort Griffin town which grew around the military post, soon to be visited on the Trail. The tiny one-room jail is built of large stone blocks with walls two feet thick. Fortreslike windows are only four or five inches wide—but are barred nevertheless!

The Albany News, established 1883, maintains one of the state's most valuable files of frontier history.

North of Albany the Forts Trail spans gently rolling pastures past occasional oil activity. Frequent small pump jacks indicate rather shallow well depths.

The site of **Fort Griffin** spreading on both sides of the Trail highway, is a state park. Work is continuing on restoration and an interpretive program. A model of the original fort at park headquarters helps the visitor orient himself and better understand the historical significance of the site. Historical markers and plaques provide additional details.

The fort was established on the Clear Fork of the Brazos River in 1867 by Col. Samuel D. Sturgis and four companies of the 6th Cavalry. (Cavalry units were not officially designated as "Troops" until 1880.) The fort once had quarters for six companies of cavalry and a band, officers quarters, storehouses, stables, adjutant's office, hospital and guardhouse.

Cavalry patrols from the fort regularly scouted the countryside. Duties included escort of government mail and surveying parties, protection for cattle drovers, and not infrequent clashes with hostile Indians. Although troopers could not always prevent Indian attacks on isolated homesteads, their swift pursuit and punishment of the raiders established a significant aura of protection.

There are utility-equipped campgrounds and picnic sites in a wooded area across the highway from park headquarters and the main fort area. River fishing is available. Admission.

The state's herd of Texas Longhorn cattle is maintained here. The big, tough, rangy creatures sparked the Texas cattle boom following the Civil War. Returning Confederate veterans found a shattered plantation economy, but vast herds of Longhorns roaming wild. The nation was hungry for beef, and Longhorns were perfectly suited to

frontier range conditions. They could stand up to any natural enemy and thrive on native grass and brush. They required no shelter and could be trailed a thousand miles while gaining weight on the way!

But the characteristics which made the Longhorn famous also spelled his decline. The range became tamer as railroads pushed lines throughout the state, and the nation's taste for beef demanded more tender meat. Longhorns offered primitive stamina no longer needed in fenced pastures. They were long of leg for months of trailing, but the trails were closed. They were heavy with bone and horn—a costly waste at the packers.



And they almost disappeared. Once on the point of extinction, herds like this one at Fort Griffin now perpetuate the proud tradition of the Longhorn. Probably no other animal breed in history had such a great effect on the economy, culture and course of events affecting so many people as did the Texas Longhorn.

On the flat north of the fort's hilltop there were once rutted streets busy with teamsters' wagons. Thriving stores and boisterous saloons lined board sidewalks. Buffalo hunters shipped more than 200,000 hides from the town; trail herd cowboys slaked their thirst at its Bee Hive Saloon.

Disputes were settled in the swift and violent tradition of the frontier. Over a dozen years there were 34 public killings. Little remains of nearby Fort Griffin town. When the post was abandoned, the town likewise disappeared.

Between Fort Griffin and Throckmorton the Trail spans low rolling terrain of native pasture, thick with mesquite and small oak trees. Some areas have been cleared of those woody intruders and produce much better stands of grass.

THROCKMORTON Pop. 1,143

Throckmorton County Alt. 1,441

The county seat town dates from 1879 when it was established as a trade center for surrounding ranches. It has continued to serve in its original capacity with the added boost of 27 oil fields in the county. Ranches here run large; one is a huge 96,000-acre spread.

Local fishermen enjoy Throckmorton Reservoir, a small lake less than two miles southwest of the town via county roads. A granite historical marker on the courthouse grounds details Confederate Camp Cooper, once located some 17 miles south.

Civil War years and reconstruction were blighted by defeat and bitterness, plus as Indian menace that had gained strength when the frontier had little protection. About 19 miles east of Throckmorton two markers recall bloody events of that period. Here at Elm Creek, Indians swooped down on a ranch complex in 1864, killed 12 persons and abducted six women and children. Another marker commemorates three youths killed by Indians in 1867.

The Trail crosses the Brazos River and soon follows a short portion of Texas 251 which will introduce the third fort on this route. The landscape reveals small peach orchards, berry farms, cotton and forage crops.

The site of **Fort Belknap** is now a county park. Several structures are restored, and historical markers present a wealth of details. A museum in the large two-story stone building that was the post commissary is open daily except Friday. Displays and exhibits include not only military items, but also Indian artifacts, ranch and trail items, and a collection of early barbed wire types. Eighteen-inch lengths of rare barbed wire command impressive prices among collectors.

Fort Belknap was established near the location of the present town of Newcastle on June 24, 1851. It was the northern anchor of a second line of forts extending from the Red River to the Rio Grande. The first line, some 80 miles to the east, had been overrun by settlers constantly pressing west.

Selected in the green flush of spring, the site proved inhospitable in later seasons. Two wells sunk to more than 60 feet encountered solid rock but produced no water. In November the post was moved to its present location near the Brazos River, but water was still a problem. The river water was said to be too salty to drink, and nearby springs provided only a few barrels a day.

Buildings included quarters for five companies of infantry, officers quarters, guardhouse, library, hospital, and forage houses. Married enlisted men built small huts for themselves.

Among the commands at Fort Belknap were companies of the 2nd Cavalry, the most elite unit which ever saw field duty. From its officers 17 generals served in the Civil War, 12 of them Confederate.

The fort became a hub of roads and trails including the famous Southern Overland Mail Route (Butterfield Stage). Fort Belknap was abandoned prior to the Civil War in 1859, and was reactivated for only a few months in 1867.

Back on the Trail the highway between Fort Belknap and Graham skirts Lakes Graham and Edleman and to the south are scenic wooded hills, the Belknap Mountains.

GRAHAM Pop. 7,678

Young County Alt. 1,045

Graham, founded in 1872, is a gateway to recreational areas on nearby lakes, streams, and wooded hills to the west.

At the west edge of Graham is Firemen's Memorial Park shaded by elm, oak and pecan trees. There are picnic tables, rest rooms, playgrounds and a fishing pond. Shawnee City Park is at the south edge of town.

The local chamber of commerce will provide details about area attractions and abundant historical sites.

Between Graham and Graford is a beautiful drive amid wooded hills and dramatic rock outcroppings. Watch for a roadside park at the foot of an impressive cliff by Rock Creek, which flows into Possum Kingdom Reservoir.

Before the reservoir was built some "practical" individuals said that the area in the picturesque Palo Pinto Mountains was good for nothing but possums. Today the huge 19,800-acre lake is one of the state's most delightful recreation spots. It winds amid scenic, steep-sloped hills and numbers scores of secluded coves. Lakeside resorts, camps and marinas dot the 310-mile shoreline. On the west shore is Possum Kingdom State Park reached via Park Road 33 from Caddo (off the Trail).

The Trail bends in the community of Graford which grew near a convenient ford on Big Keechi Creek, then spans vast ranchlands of Palo Pinto and Jack Counties between Graford and Jacksboro.

JACKSBORO Pop. 3,400

Jack County Alt. 1,974

Unlike most frontier fort towns, Jacksboro preceded **Fort Richardson** by a dozen years; the 1855 settlement was known as Lost Creek. Limestone buildings built in the 19th Century surround the courthouse square. The chamber of commerce, on a corner of the square, has details on the area and on events such as the rodeo in early June and the March rattlesnake hunt.

Indians threatened the post-Civil War frontier, and new posts were needed. Fort Richardson, activated in 1866 and abandoned shortly, was permanently established in 1867 to be finally abandoned in 1878. Now a State Historic Site administered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, original buildings include the native fieldstone hospital (which houses the museum displays), morgue, guardhouse, commissary, powder magazine, picket-type officers quarters and the bakery where an average of 600 loaves of bread were produced each day. Further restoration is underway.

Adjacent parkland facilities include utility-equipped



campsites, picnic areas, rest rooms and showers, nature hiking trails and fishing. Admission.

Col. Ranald S. Mackenzie, who later gained great fame as leader of Mackenzie's Raiders, commanded the 4th Cavalry here in 1878. Gen. William T. Sherman, who had belittled the Indian threat on the frontier, arrived at the fort on May 19 on an inspection tour. A few hours later a survivor stumbled into the fort and described the massacre of a wagon master and six teamsters . . . along the same road Sherman had traveled that day. Mackenzie was then ordered after the warriors led by Satank, Santana and Big Tree, but lost them in a downpour. The Indians returned to their reservation near Fort Sill where their boasting led to their arrest.

Satank was killed trying to escape but Santana and Big Tree were returned to Fort Richardson for trial. The chiefs were convicted of murder and sentenced to hang but a national outcry resulted in life terms instead. Later paroled, both violated the terms of their release. Santana was recaptured and sent to Huntsville prison where he killed himself. The elusive Big Tree stayed free, later helping to establish an Indian mission.

The Jacksboro trials firmly established the white man's law on the frontier—a turning point in Indian and government relations.

The Forts Trail south of Jacksboro slices through a small section of the huge Boonsville Conglomerate Oil Field. Heavy pump jacks nod on both sides of the highway. Here is prime ranching country—few trees and wide expanses of good grass on the rolling prairie.

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Northwest are the Palo Pinto Mountains. Individual peaks include Crawford Mountain, Antelope Mountain, and near Metcalf Gap, Sugarloaf Mountain. Between Metcalf Gap and Strawn the pyramid-like bare hills to the east are tailing heaps of coal mines from the early 1900s. Just north of Strawn an historical marker tells of Bethel Strawn, pioneer landowner for whom the town is named.

On U.S. 80/I.H. 20 the Trail climbs easily over the ridge of the Palo Pinto Mountains and enters Ranger.

RANGER Pop. 3,195

Eastland County Alt. 1,429

When oil boom towns are recalled, Ranger is always among the first. It was a quiet rural community established near a Texas Ranger camp in the 1870s. In October 1917 a gusher blew in and touched off perhaps the greatest boom in history. World War I demand for oil was at an all-time high. During the earlier boom at Spindletop, oil was as low as 10 cents a barrel. At Ranger the price was more than \$4 a barrel. The lure of instant riches was irresistible, and the town erupted with every kind of frenzied activity.

The population exploded from 1,000 to 30,000 in one year. Small farmers and landowners became millionaires. Four railroads raced to complete lines, and one saw receipts jump from \$94,000 to \$8,000,000 in two years.

In Ranger today there is no evidence of that bigger-than-life era. The population has stabilized at about 3,000 with oil activity evident in orderly fields, but farming and ranching comprise a major interest of area citizens.

Near the T&P depot a granite marker is at the site of the discovery well.

Between Ranger and Desdemona the Trail crosses Lake Leon and passes signs pointing to picnic areas, public boat ramps and marinas.

Immediately south of Desdemona is an interesting



historical marker by the roadside about Fort Blair, a private family fort established on this dangerous frontier before the Civil War.

Crop-wise travelers will note fields of peanuts in this area of sandy soil particularly suited to the lowly legume. Comanche County leads the state's production with more than 55,000 acres and a value of \$17.2 million. Peanuts add \$9 million to the farm income of Eastland County.

DE LEON
Pop. 2,160

Comanche County
Alt. 1,268

De Leon was founded in 1881 and was named for the nearby Leon River which was named for a Spanish explorer, Alonso de Leon. The city is a shipping point for peanuts, fruits, pecans and melons.

Agricultural products of the richly diversified region are featured at the De Leon Peach and Melon Festival, an annual August celebration which serves to advertise De Leon products, and is a popular homecoming time for former residents.

The Trail between De Leon and Comanche passes near popular Proctor Reservoir. A Corps of Engineers project, the lake covers 4,600 acres and provides complete facilities for fishing, water sports and related activities.

Four public-use areas are at lakeside. Between the Sabanna River and Rush Creek is access to Promontory Park, one of those recreational areas. Another, Copperas Creek Park (also reservoir headquarters), is accessible off the Trail via F.M. 2861.

COMANCHE
Pop. 3,888

Comanche County
Alt. 1,358

For early settlers Comanche's name was all too appropriate. Established in 1858, the area suffered severe Indian raids for 15 years. Today the town is the primary trade center for diversified agriculture, including cattle, sheep, goats, poultry, fruits, berries, nuts and grains.



The chamber of commerce has details on area attractions, lakes and campsites and list of more than 30 historical markers in the county. An historical museum, west on Moorman Rd., has extensive collection of pioneer artifacts.

On the courthouse square stands the locally famous Fleming Oak, now the focal point of a small, neatly landscaped Bicentennial park with historical markers, columns from an 1890 courthouse, and a time capsule. According to legend, when the city first began clearing a grove of oaks to pave the square, an ancient settler armed with a rifle prevented the cutting of this particular tree. He said that as a youth he had taken refuge behind the tree when fleeing from a band of hostile Indians. The city spared the tree. With decorations, it's also the city's living Christmas tree.

An excellent four-lane highway speeds Trail travelers between Comanche and Brownwood. Most of the broad landscape is devoted to hay and pasturelands.

BROWNWOOD
Pop. 20,201

Brown County
Alt. 1,342

Established in 1856, Brownwood has enjoyed several stimulants to its growth. In the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, Brownwood was the hub of the state's cotton production and processing. Oil added its impetus in the 1920s, and today the city counts diversified agriculture and industry among its advantages.

Stop at the Brownwood Chamber of Commerce, 521 E. Baker St., for details and literature.

Historical markers at several locations include the old jail built in 1902, a stone Gothic structure complete with castle-like tower and ramparts. There are markers on the courthouse grounds and at St. John's Episcopal Church, a Tudor Gothic structure dating from 1892.

Howard Payne University, a Southern Baptist coeducational institution near downtown, enrolls more than 1,500 students. The unique Douglas MacArthur Academy of Freedom is administered as an associate entity of the university. The academy offers a four-year series of courses for careers in government and diplomatic service. The academy is Brownwood's foremost visitor attraction because of its unique study settings. There are re-created rooms from an English castle, an Egyptian tomb, and the famed Independence Hall in Philadelphia, plus an indoor mural looming three stories high.

Brownwood's eight city parks cover almost 300 acres and include beautiful Floral Park near the southern edge

of the city, and Riverside Park at the northeast edge on Pecan Bayou.

From Brownwood another side trip is available to Lake Brownwood State Park, about 20 miles north. The park overlooks the 7,300-acre lake and offers cabins, screened shelters, campsites, rest rooms with showers, and RV hookups. Excellent fishing; admission. Take Texas 279 north, and Park Road 15.

The Trail leaves Brownwood over rolling pasturelands and by occasional pecan orchards. Fall travelers may see tractors with long metal booms terminating in a crescent-shaped arm—a pecan-tree shaker. The boom is placed against a branch, vibrating power is applied, and down comes a shower of nuts!

Much of San Saba County, through which the Trail passes via Richland Springs, is devoted to sheep, cattle and Angora goat ranching. It is also a popular hunting area teeming with white-tailed deer.

BRADY
Pop. 5,740

McCulloch County
Alt. 1,670

The town, near the geographical center of Texas, was on the military road between Forts Mason and Griffin and on the old Dodge Cattle Trail. Historical markers are on the courthouse grounds, and the chamber of commerce has details about area attractions and historical points including the site of the Ranger Camp San Saba, 11 miles south off US 87/377.

From headquarters in Brady, hunters take white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, doves and quail in season. Year-round fishing is good on nearby Brady Reservoir and Brady Creek.

Richards Park, in town beside Brady Creek, offers picnic tables, covered pavilions, playgrounds and rest rooms. Brady's major annual event is the World's Championship Barbecue Goat Cook-off and McCulloch County Fair on Saturday of the Labor Day weekend.



The drive between Brady and Mason spans scenic ranch country, farmlands, mineral outcroppings and forested hills.

South of Fredonia, occasional bald domes of rock mark the Llano Uplift mineral region. The domes are pink granite, and though little shows, many are the tops of buried mountains thousands of feet in depth.

Watch for one of the prettiest pastoral landscapes on the Trail near Mason, a ranch scene that would delight an artist. Sleek Aberdeen Angus cattle graze in verdant pastures edged by beautiful, forested hills.

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MASON
Pop. 1,938

Mason County
Alt. 1,550

Mason grew in the protection of Fort Mason, established here in 1851. Historical markers on the courthouse square provide details about the fort and also about the nearby site of Confederate Camp Llano.

The county's history is detailed in a museum in the library at 300 Moody St. The building is an 1887 school built from stone removed from Fort Mason. Interest centers around the fort, Indians (whose flint points are still found), and a bloody deed known as the Mason County War. Following the lynching of five men charged with rus-



ling, retaliation erupted and a dozen more were murdered in less than a year. Hatreds were so savage that several victims were also scalped.

The magnificent Sequist Home, an elaborate, three-story Victorian mansion circa 1880, exhibits outstanding architecture and antique furnishings. Tours are regularly available, but the home is an elegant private residence, not a museum. 400 Broad St.; admission.

Rock and mineral collectors seek out Mason County for a prized type of topaz, the Texas state gem. Inquire locally for directions to the Sequist Ranch, where a modest charge is made for rock hunting and camping.

Besides historical markers and dim foundations, only a reconstructed officers quarters marks the site of Fort Mason on the crest of Post Hill about five blocks south of the courthouse. But the replica is authentic, built on original foundations with rock from the old ruins.

Fort Mason once had 23 buildings including barracks, stables, storehouses, a powder magazine, guardhouse and hospital. It was primarily a cavalry post.

It is impossible here to detail the fort's dramatic and colorful history. Space allows mention of only one action. It began in July 1857, when a patrol of 24 troopers rode out under the command of Lt. John Bell Hood in search of a reported Comanche war party.

The patrol was not supposed to be difficult: Three days out to scout the suspected war party, perhaps some action, and then back to the fort. After 12 days of blazing July weather, the persistent Hood finally located a fresh trail of 15 or 20 Indian horses headed south and took up pursuit. Food rations were exhausted and far-spaced water holes were often dry. Then after 16 days on the trail, tracks showed that the original band of Indians had been joined by another larger group.

Despite the apparent odds of at least 50 Indians to 25 cavalymen, Hood pressed on before the Indians could cross into Mexico. Finally a small group of Indians ap-

peared, waving a white flag. On the frontier the signal meant "friends."

Well in the lead, Hood warily approached the "friendly" group. When 20 paces away the Indians threw down the white flag, seized weapons and attacked as scores of hidden warriors rose from concealment around the troopers and fired a fusillade of arrows and rifle shots.

Hood, thoughtfully armed with a double-barreled shotgun, promptly dispatched his first two attackers with loads of buckshot, and then drew his two Navy Colt six-shooters. The troopers also relied on six-shooters after firing their single-shot carbines—then fought with sabers because there was no time to reload. The Indians set fire



to tinder-dry grass of the area, then scattered in all directions.

During the fray an arrow pierced Hood's left hand. He broke off the head, withdrew the shaft and wrapped a handkerchief around the wound while still mounted and still fighting.

It was later learned that nearly 100 Comanche and Lipan-Apache Indians were in the war party. They lost 19 killed including two minor chiefs, and twice as many wounded. Two troopers were killed and five wounded, including Hood.

After burying their dead they rode to Fort Clark where Hood filed his report, and then northeast to Fort Mason. The "routine" patrol spanned five weeks during which the troopers had ridden more than 500 miles.

The flamboyant Hood later received the most rapid series of promotions of any man during the Civil War, North or South, attaining the rank of full general in the Confederate Army in 1864.

Among the distinguished personnel who served at Fort Mason was a quiet, dignified lieutenant colonel named Robert E. Lee.

Fort Mason was Lee's last command in the U. S. Army. From here Lee was summoned to Washington where he was offered, and refused, command of the Federal army being prepared for the Civil War.

Only briefly activated after the Civil War, Fort Mason was finally abandoned in 1869.

Across native pasturelands between Mason and Menard, travelers will often note small ground-clump types of yucca usually *Yucca arkansana*. From the clump of green, spiky leaves the plant thrusts up a straight, thin stem in early summer, topped by a mass of beautiful white blossoms.

Just west of the U.S. 190/U.S. 83 intersection, an historical marker in a roadside park notes this pass between the hills: "Puerto de Baluarte" (Haven of the Strong Points), was an important landmark on old Spanish trails that crossed the region.

MENARD
Pop. 1,704

Menard County
Alt. 1,960

The town was established in 1858 near the ruins of an ancient Spanish fort, Real Presidio de San Saba, abandoned 90 years earlier. The presidio (fort) protected nearby Mission Santa Cruz de San Saba. The mission was overwhelmed by Indians in 1758, the occupants murdered and the buildings burned.

Sheep and wool production are important products in Menard, as are beef cattle and Angora goats. Legends of a lost silver mine still whet the interest of visitors and occasional prospectors.

A pink granite marker on the courthouse grounds gives details about Fort McKavett (12 miles west), soon available via a short side trip.

Menard City Park is beside the San Saba River adjacent to the Trail highway. Beautiful towering trees line the river and shade picnic tables there.

A short side trip to the ruins of Real Presidio de San Saba is accessible just west of Menard by a gravel county road. The presidio's history (100 years before the first Anglo-American settlement in the area) provides greater dimension to the problems faced by all newcomers into lands the Indians called their own. Spanish missionaries and soldiers met the same fierce hostility as did later American settlers and cavalymen.

In 1758 Presidio de San Saba numbered 400 persons including wives and children of the soldiers. That spring a strong force of Comanche and other Indians overran the nearby mission, killed many occupants and burned the buildings. A relief force from this presidio was so fiercely attacked, it was unable to prevent the disaster. In later years Indian depredations became so severe that supply columns and all outside activities came to a virtual standstill. The presidio was finally abandoned in 1769.

Seventeen miles west of Menard, take a side trip on F.M. 864 south to Fort McKavett. The short drive winds through rolling hills, woodlands, and farms often irrigated from the San Saba River.

Now administered by the state parks department, the



extensive ruins of Fort McKavett are being preserved and restored. The park headquarters is in an old barracks, and on display is a model of the fort as it was about 1880. At that time it was a busy military post with hundreds of men engaged in protection of the frontier.

Established in 1852, the military reservation covered 2,373 acres. The post continued to build and carry on frontier duties until abandoned in 1859.

Federal forces returned in 1868 under the command of Col. Ranald S. Mackenzie who made it his headquarters. New facilities were added until there were stone barracks for eight companies of men, plus stables, officers quarters, hospital, guardhouse, magazine, post office, storehouses and a headquarters building.

Water was plentiful, and excellent communications were maintained by a military telegraph connecting points as far north as Denison, more than 300 miles away.

Fort McKavett's usefulness ended after 1874 when the U.S. Army offensive against the Indians produced several major victories. One significant battle that marked a turning point was executed by Mackenzie in Palo Duro Canyon, 1874. His strategic stroke of overrunning a huge village, burning it and slaughtering nearly 1,400 horses was one of the last major Indian battles.

At Fort McKavett, the flag was lowered and the troops marched away for the last time on June 30, 1883.

Back on the Trail the landscape is of broad pastures tufted with small oak thickets. Goat fences on both sides of the highway indicate Schleicher County's large production of fine wool and mohair.

ELDORADO
Pop. 1,659

Schleicher County
Alt. 2,410

The seat of Schleicher County, Eldorado was established in 1895. In plateau country, the county is broken by hills and cut by the Devils, South Concho and



San Saba Rivers. The often rugged terrain is prime habitat for white-tailed deer which attract many hunters in fall and winter. Eighty percent of the county's agricultural income is from sheep, wool, goats, mohair and cattle. Eldorado Woolens, in town just off U.S. 277 south, is only mill in Southwest that weaves fabrics directly from local fine wool and mohair. Colorful, luxurious products are blankets, drapery and upholstery material, sportswear and robes.

Usually open Sun., Mon. and Wed. afternoons is Schleicher County Museum with early day mementos; on U.S. 190 just east of U.S. 277.

Watch for several historical markers between Eldorado and Cristoval. On the South Concho River, Cristoval Park offers swimming, fishing and canoeing in summer; fee. Open year round are campgrounds and the Cattleman's Hall of Fame and Museum.

North of Cristoval note where cedar and mesquite trees have been bulldozed or poisoned to eliminate competition for moisture needed by native grasses.

Near San Angelo, two prominent, similar-sized hills to the west have given the name to Twin Buttes Reservoir. Also nearby is Lake Nasworthy. Both offer extensive water sports opportunities.

Table-flat farmland reveals cotton and maize crops. Much of this land is irrigated from Twin Buttes Reservoir, and the main irrigation canal passes beneath the Trail highway at Loop 306.

SAN ANGELO
Pop. 68,751

Tom Green County
Alt. 1,847

The community which developed around Fort Concho has grown to be a leading West Texas city. In early years ranching was almost the exclusive interest. The city is the largest primary wool market in the United States and home of more than 75 diversified industries ranging from plastics to jet-powered aircraft.



The city's heritage is recalled with a river parade, historical pageant, and week of festivities in mid-June called Fiesta del Concho.

Stop at the San Angelo Board of City Development, 500 Rio Concho Dr., for literature and information.

Seven city parks offer golf, tennis courts, fishing, swimming and picnicking. At 2701 Johnson St., the General Telephone Exhibit Museum displays models of telephones from Alexander Graham Bell's "Gallows Frame Phone" (only five ever built) to present models.

Another major lake, San Angelo Reservoir lies north-west of town just off U.S. 87.

Goodfellow Air Force Base, a training facility for the U.S. Air Force Security Service, is at the southeast corner of San Angelo.

The extensive remains of Fort Concho are centered along Burgess St. and Avenues C and D. Several buildings are open to the public, but many others are privately owned. Stop first at Fort Concho Museum. The museum displays a diorama of the post as it was in the previous century, plus geological and wildlife displays, guns, pioneer relics and old vehicles.

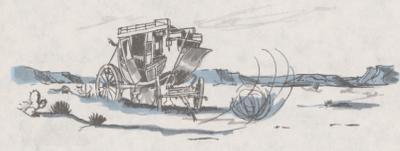
Most of the original fort buildings, of stone with pecan wood beams and rafters, were constructed by skilled German artisans from Fredericksburg.

The fort, established after the Civil War in 1867, replaced Fort Chadbourne some 50 miles north.

Being a central or pivot post on the frontier line, Fort Concho's chronicle of action included a diversity of duties. Troopers protected stagecoaches and emigrant trains, escorted the mail, explored and mapped new territory, and clashed frequently with raiding Indians.

Probably the most colorful story regards a foray led by a man whose name crops up frequently in regard to Texas frontier forts: Col. Ranald S. Mackenzie. In 1871 Mackenzie was ordered to mount a strong force of the 4th Cavalry and proceed to Fort Clark at Brackettville near the Mexican border. A band of Kickapoo and Lipan had been marauding in the area. Mackenzie's orders: "Take whatever action your own judgment deems fitting."

Seminole scouts employed by the army reported that



the raiders' headquarters lay 80 miles into Mexico. Mackenzie judged that "fitting action" would be a quick thrust to destroy the marauders at their home base, even though it meant invasion of a foreign country and flagrant violation of international treaties.

Leaving Fort Clark before dawn, Mackenzie's 400 cavalrymen splashed across the Rio Grande at daybreak and rode day-long through the parched country. When supply wagons could not keep up, the relentless colonel ordered troopers to stuff their blouses with cartridges and biscuits, and abandon the wagons.

There was no rest even at nightfall, for the column kept moving. At dawn, after more than 24 hours in the saddle, scouts reported three Kickapoo and Lipan villages just ahead. In classic cavalry tradition the troopers formed two columns and galloped in an all-out charge.

Complete surprise was achieved, and soon all three villages were in flames. The Indians suffered heavy casualties and the Lipan chief, Castillitos, was captured.

Mackenzie did not pause. When destruction was complete, the column immediately turned north for an 80-mile race back to the United States. When the Rio Grande was re-crossed, the troopers had been constantly in the saddle more than 60 hours.

Only then did Mackenzie advise his officers that they had invaded Mexico only on his own initiative. Several were shocked and one captain demanded to know what would have happened if he had refused to go. Mackenzie replied levelly, "I would have had you shot."

When Mackenzie moved to other frontier posts, Col. B. H. Grierson took command at Fort Concho. Other battles were fought and other hardships were endured, but the might of the frontier soldier finally prevailed. New settlers arrived, and they with the earlier ones laid the foundations for a peaceful, civilized society. The bluecoat was no longer needed.

In a sentimental ceremony the colors were struck and a last column of troops and supplies clattered out of Fort Concho on Mar. 27, 1889, as the regimental band played "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

The Plains Trail north of San Angelo follows broad, flat cropland for miles until low hills squeeze in from both sides and traditional pasturelands resume.

In Coke County long, flat-topped mesas and buttes appear to the north—features of erosion on a gigantic scale. The flat surfaces of the mesas show where all the land once stood. Immense gaps in between reveal the appetite of the Colorado River.

A few blocks off the Trail in Robert Lee, a county park offers a pleasant pause at picnic tables shaded by graceful trees, with golf course and swimming pool nearby.

Between Robert Lee and Bronte, the Kickapoo Mountains are to the north. Among obvious shapes are Hayrick Mountain and Nipple Peak.

The town of Bronte, named for English novelist Charlotte Bronte, offers several historical markers and a pleasant county park. Lake Knierr County Park features tree-shaded picnic tables and fire pits, tennis courts, swimming pool and an adjacent golf course. Overnight camping is permitted.

Just north of the "Y" intersection of Texas 70/U.S. 277 is Oak Creek Reservoir. A side trip three miles north via Texas 70 offers access to small lakeside camps, fishing docks and boat ramps.

An historical marker on the Trail near that intersection marks the route of the famous Southern Overland Mail (Butterfield Stage).

Within two miles is another historical marker—a small pink granite slab to the south on a bank above the highway cut. The marker is dedicated to Fort Chadbourne,



and the well-maintained Fort Chadbourne cemetery is nearby.

Time and weather have taken their toll at the cemetery. Many of the oldest graves are unmarked, and many inscriptions on soft sandstone markers are illegible. Several still readable date back to the 1870s, and some poignant stories are told by the brief lines.

The ruins of nearby Fort Chadbourne are on private property and not accessible to the public.

Fort Chadbourne's history was relatively brief, though it served as an important contact and parley point with Indians for several years. Elements of the 8th Infantry

established the fort in 1852. Early picket structures were erected, but stone was eventually quarried for a number of substantial buildings.

The fort was established on Oak Creek, but the creek proved unreliable and water was a serious problem at Fort Chadbourne. Troops left the fort in 1859, and with the outbreak of the Civil War two years later, remaining property was surrendered to Confederate forces. Troops reoccupied the fort from 1865 to 1867, but the chronic water shortage forced abandonment and transfer to new Fort Concho in San Angelo.

On the F.M. 53 portion of the Trail rich farmlands appear after many miles of brushy pasture. The highway slices through two oil fields providing close views of many double pump jacks.

In the north part of Winters a small, pleasant park provides camping, picnicking, or just a restful pause. Winters Lake, east of town offers a fishing opportunity.

North of Winters the huge mesa to the northeast is called Moro Mountain. Its flat top is at an altitude of 2,350 feet.

Farther north the hills of the Callahan Divide break the horizon ahead. The massive chain of hills and buttes forms a natural barrier between the watersheds of the Colorado River to the south, and the Clear Fork of the Brazos River to the north.

West of Tuscola at a sharp turn off F.M. 613, a sign points to Abilene State Park. The road is somewhat narrow, and a better access is shortly available from the community of Buffalo Gap via F.M. 89.

Abilene State Park covers 500 scenic acres along Cedar Creek which has been impounded to form Lake Abilene. Visitors find camping areas and trailer stands, picnic facilities, screened shelters, rest rooms, showers, a swimming pool and hiking trails, plus excellent fishing.

A huge grove of some 4,000 native pecan trees shades the campgrounds which were popular with Indians long ago. Admission.

BUFFALO GAP
Pop. 398

Taylor County
Alt. 1,926

The community is at a natural gap in the Callahan Divide where well-worn buffalo trails were visible when the first settlers arrived. During the great cattle trails era, the Dodge or Western Trail passed through here and resulted in the founding of the community. Oliver Loving



and Charles Goodnight drove their herds through this pass, as did other early cattle barons.

Housed in the old Buffalo Gap courthouse and jail is the Ernie Wilson Museum, a collection of curiosities, antiques and artifacts casually displayed. Usually open only Sunday afternoons. Admission.

With its plentiful water and giant cottonwood trees, the gap was undoubtedly a welcome respite for the dusty trail drivers of those early days. Today's travelers will find several fine restaurants and art-souvenir-specialty shops.

North of Buffalo Gap the highway leaves the jumbled hills of the Callahan Divide and aims toward Abilene where the Trail began. Those who have traveled the entire route can speak with authority about much of this fascinating region of Texas, and especially the colorful history of the frontier forts. But one word of caution. The vastness of Texas dwarfs even this broad region, and the frontier forts were only a page in the volume of Texas history. There are other eras and other regions to discover before the whole can be measured. . . green forests sweeping to infinity, mile-high mountain ranges, a palm-edged tropical valley. That too is Texas, and there are Trails to guide you throughout every part. Such is the purpose of the Texas Trails. . . planned pleasure driving to make the most of every mile, introducing Texas in reasonable, regional portions. During America's third century when travel efficiency is in everyone's best interest, the Texas Trails are the way to go!

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