

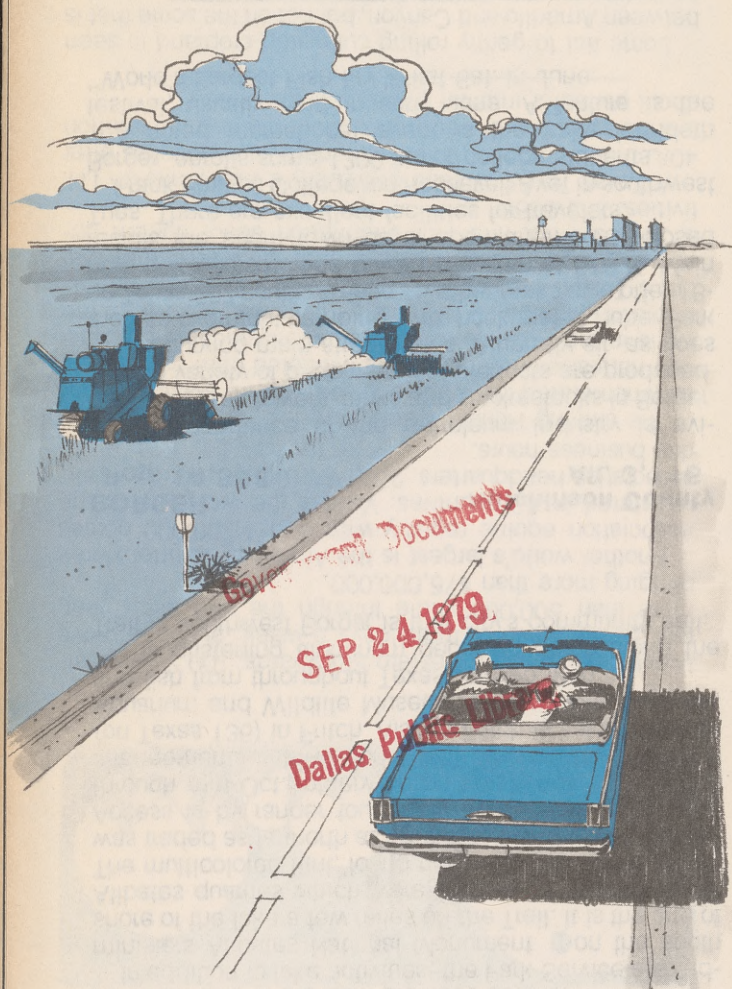
A1473,5

R43 3PLA

1979

Ride the Texas

# PLAINS TRAIL



Government Documents

SEP 24 1979

Dallas Public Library

State Department of Highways  
and Public Transportation  
6799

day, marking the resting places of those whose guns were a bit too slow.

When the railroad bypassed Tascosa the town declined rapidly, and in the early 20th Century it was deserted.

In 1939 a very successful home for homeless boys was established on the site by the late Cal Farley. The physical plant includes more than 30 buildings and some 1,000 acres of land on the headquarters spread. Current population is nearly 400 boys who operate the ranch, attend school and vocational training, and participate in a variety of sporting activities.

The original Old Tascosa courthouse is now the Julian Bivins Museum, with exhibits from its cowboy heyday, Indian artifacts and Boys Ranch items. Across the street in the headquarters building is a snack bar; on a wall is an interesting, detailed map of Old Tascosa. A famous cattle trail to Dodge City started here.

The Hartley County seat town of Channing, on a plain north of the rugged Canadian River valley, originated as headquarters of the famous XIT. Medallions are on the original headquarters building ① on Main Street; and on the "oldest Panhandle church north of the Canadian, built in 1898" — a block north and west of the courthouse.

Between Channing and Dumas the terrain alternates between rolling native pasture lands almost unchanged from the giant ranch era, and lush row crops.

## **DUMAS** **Pop. 10,333**

**Moore County**  
**Alt. 3,668**

At the northernmost point on the Trail, Dumas is a neat, clean city with good tourist accommodations. Founded in 1892, much of Dumas' growth came with a rich oil strike in 1926. Today it is in the center of an immense natural gas field, produces large quantities of helium, has 35 major industrial plants, and lies in the heart of the nation's greatest grain sorghum producing area. The Moore County Museum, 8th and Dumas Ave., offers a nostalgic look at Panhandle life; closed Mon.

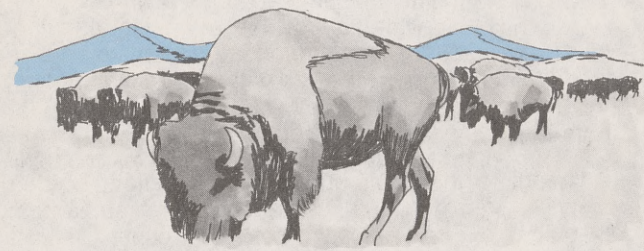
Nine city parks have a variety of facilities — Texoma Park, U.S. 87 west, offers free overnight camping with free electric hookups. The chamber of commerce, 6th and Porter, has details on Dumas events and attractions, including nearby Lake Meredith and industrial tours.

---

The Trail highway between Dumas and Stinnett runs generally east and west, but the Canadian River begins to draw closer, changing the surface of the plain from flat cropland to rolling pasture. Watch for an historical marker ⑫ by the highway at the route of the famous old Tascosa-Dodge City Trail.

In Stinnett, across from the Hutchinson County Courthouse, an historical medallion is on the Isaac McCormick Pioneer Cottage. ⑬

South of Stinnett the Trail highway plunges into the rolling Canadian River brakes toward huge new Lake



### TEXAS PLAINS TRAIL

The Texas Plains Trail spans a vast area of the High Plains region of Texas. The tableland is called the Llano Estacado, an ancient Spanish term generally interpreted to mean "staked plains." Much of the Trail slices through what residents call the "Golden Spread," a reference to this immensely rich agricultural, mineral and industrial region. Geographically this is the southernmost extension of the Great Plains of the United States.

Once the entire plains were grasslands. Not a fence, not a single tree or shrub grew on the tablelands—only grass, as trackless as the sea. A branch of the Great Comanche War Trail swept across the expanse, and herds of buffalo wandered at will. Man wiped out the buffalo and overstocked the range with cattle. Grazed too closely by cattle confined within fences, the immensely valuable tall native grasses were destroyed, leaving only the less desirable short species.

Travelers on the High Plains can be sure of one rule: the land will be nearly table-flat except where it has been disturbed by erosive influences. And therein lies some of the greatest geographical drama of the plains, because erosion has carved spectacular canyon landscapes.

The starting point is the city of Lubbock, 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 it may be driven in either direction by carefully consulting the accompanying map and descriptive copy. See map legend for information about special Trail signs and arrows.

**LUBBOCK**  
Pop. 165,936  
**Lubbock County**  
Alt. 3,241

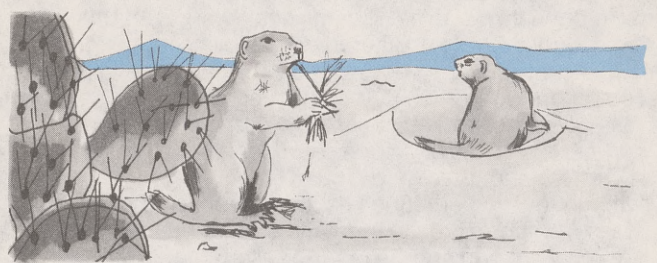
Viewing the broad, clean, metropolitan area of Lubbock, it is difficult to believe that the city was founded as the result of a squabble between two land companies, and that early years saw little growth and many troubles with prairie fires, sandstorms and droughts.

Lubbock today is one of Texas' major cities, a modern metropolis that has managed to retain neatness and order along with accelerating growth. A remarkable overall cleanliness is one of the first things visitors notice. Then the beauty of broad landscaped boulevards and modern businesses contribute their own pleasant effect.

For details on area attractions, visit the chamber of commerce at Texas and 9th St., next to the City Hall.

As one would expect, there are excellent accommodations and restaurants throughout Lubbock. Beautifully maintained parks are a Lubbock trademark; there are six golf courses, museums and libraries, a zoological garden, symphony orchestra, little theatre, amusement park and many other attractions.

Park Road 19 leads off the Trail route in northeast Lubbock into the state's most-visited park: Mackenzie State Park. Named for famed Gen. Ranald S. Mackenzie, the 500-acre park offers the entire spectrum of recreation and amusements, including the prime attraction—Prairie Dog Town. These plains dwellers once numbered in uncounted millions, but now are seldom found except in preserves such as this. Facilities at the park, which can also be entered from U.S. 87, include overnight camping areas.

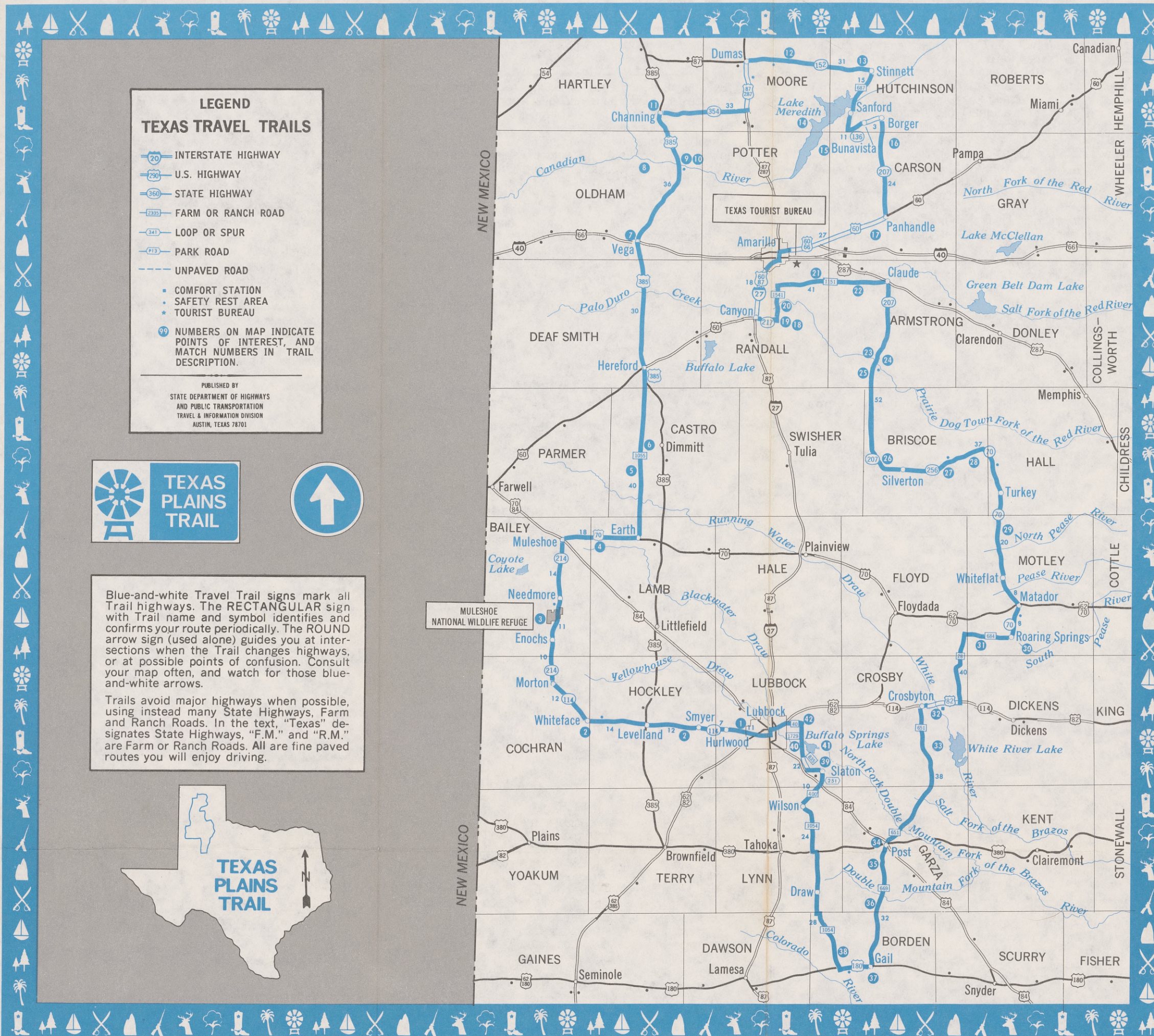


Texas Tech University, enrolling more than 22,000 students, is along the Trail route at the city's western edge. On campus is the magnificent Museum of Texas Tech complex, a multimillion-dollar development employing outstanding architectural treatments and focusing on the environment, history and culture of the Southwest. The complex also features the Ranching Heritage Center, an outdoor museum with authentic bunkhouses, barns, dugouts, windmills and typical ranch homes... all restored, furnished and equipped in the styles of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. It's a superb attraction complete with natural landscaping. Open Apr. through Dec.; afternoon guided tours daily except Mon.; tour fee.

A century of development of farm tools can be seen at the Lubbock County Museum on F.M. 1294 (off U.S. 84) a few miles north of Lubbock at Shallowater. Outdoor exhibits; open daily.

Lubbock rates recognition as "Chrysanthemum Capital of the U.S.A." Spectacular varieties of mums are nurtured citywide, especially at Municipal Garden and Arts Center, 45th and College Ave., and in massive beds and experimental plots on the Texas Tech campus. The Chrysanthemum Colorama is a two-week celebration at the peak of the blooming season in mid-October.

The Trail route west leaving Lubbock offers views of many fine homes and landscaped gardens. Texas 114 (19th St.) also passes Lubbock Christian College. The four-year coed college enrolls some 1,200 students.



**LEGEND**

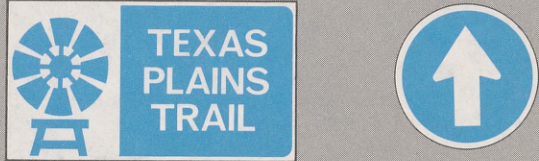
**TEXAS TRAVEL TRAILS**

- 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

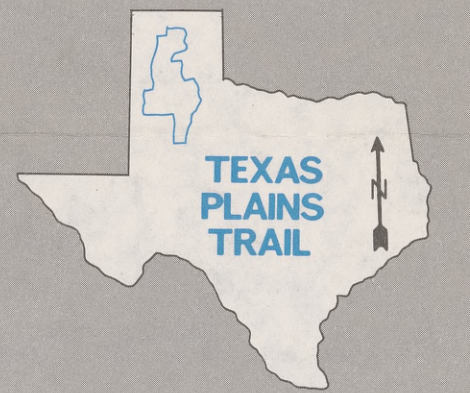
NUMBERS ON MAP INDICATE POINTS OF INTEREST, AND MATCH NUMBERS IN TRAIL DESCRIPTION.

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



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.

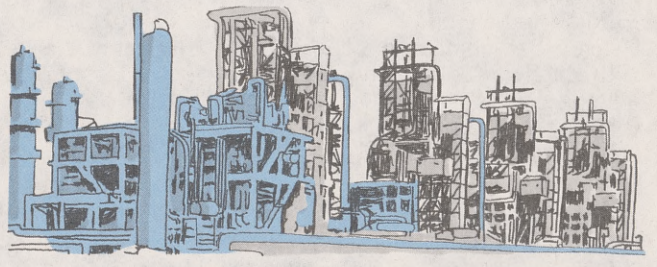
Trails avoid major highways when possible, using instead many State Highways, Farm and Ranch Roads. In the text, "Texas" designates State Highways, "F.M." and "R.M." are Farm or Ranch Roads. All are fine paved routes you will enjoy driving.



North of the Trail route is Reese Air Force Base. Adjacent to the highway is a recreational lake and golf course for the fighter training base's personnel.

**LEVELLAND**  
Pop. 12,013  
**Hockley County**  
Alt. 3,523

The produce of the plains is graphically evident in this small city's skyline. Travelers will see bewildering complexes of towers, silos, pipes, cranes and steel supporting structures. Here are processed products both from the surface and from beneath the plains. Across from the



Hockley County Courthouse is the South Plains Museum with interesting area exhibits; open afternoons 2-5 Tues. through Sun. The chamber of commerce, Avenue H at 11th, is adjacent to a small lake with picnic tables on the grassy banks.

South Plains College, a state coeducational junior college established in 1957, is south of Levelland on U.S. 385. Current enrollment exceeds 2,000.

Between Levelland and Morton the Trail slices through the huge Levelland and Slaughter Oil Fields for some 18 miles. As far as the eye can see are pump jacks drawing "black gold" from the gigantic reservoir far below.

The huge field continues through the town of Whiteface and for four miles northwest when the pump jacks disappear to leave the land wholly to agriculture.

**MORTON**  
Pop. 2,602  
**Cochran County**  
Alt. 3,758

You have reached the western edge of the Texas Plains Trail in Morton, and it is appropriate to note the altitude here compared with the eastern edge. Morton is typical, with an altitude of 3,758 feet. Crosbyton, about 90 miles to the east near the edge of the plain, measures 3,108 feet; more than 600 feet lower. So while the plain is flat, the entire structure is also tilted, like an immense table with two legs slightly longer than the others. The tilt continues gradually to the western termination of the Great Plains at the Rocky Mountains.

Morton is the county seat of Cochran County, and within 50 miles some three million beef cattle are raised annually, giving the city its slogan, "Beef Headquarters, USA." A swimming pool, playground, picnic facilities and rest rooms are in a park about a mile east on F.M. 1780.

Cochran County Museum, 206 S.W. 1st St., is in the town's first telephone office. Visits may be easily arranged through the postmaster or chamber of commerce at 106 S.W. 1st St.

The famed C. C. Slaughter Ranch headquarters, adobe buildings in a quadrangle behind a modern ranch house, are still in use. Drive south on Texas 214 two miles, west 7 mile on F.M. 1169.

A few miles north of the community of Enochs is an unusual feature of the plains. The highway crosses a depression stretching from southwest to northeast about six miles. The depression is a "sink" of indefinite origin, in which are three natural rainwater lakes. On these lakes each winter are huge numbers of migratory waterfowl, and here has been established the Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge.

Signs and an historical marker on the highway indicate the entrance. Visitors are welcome during daylight hours, and there is a designated area for camping. The greatest number of waterfowl are usually seen from late August to March. The nation's largest concentration of sandhill cranes winters here.

On the entrance road visitors will also see a small colony of prairie dogs with a parking area nearby.

**MULESHOE**  
Pop. 4,552  
**Bailey County**  
Alt. 3,889

In Muleshoe, named for a famous early cattle brand, a number of historical markers have been erected at significant sites. Perhaps the most unusual, and always a subject for a snapshot, is the town's famous monument to the mule. The life-sized statue is not dedicated to any one animal, but to mules in general and to the important part they played in opening the West.

When the idea for the monument was announced, donations were received from throughout the nation. In fact, a gift of 21 cents was sent by a mule driver from Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Russia. The mule memorial is immediately east of the downtown intersection of U.S. 70/84 and Texas 214.

In addition to row crops, vast native and improved pasture lands flank the Trail highways east of Muleshoe. You are driving through a small portion of what was the world's largest ranch, the three-million-acre XIT. The ranch was formed from public lands which were exchanged by the State of Texas for construction of the State Capitol in 1885. In the course of time the XIT has been divided and sold to "smaller" operators who control "only" 100,000 acres or so.

The alert traveler will note with some surprise what appear to be sizable forest areas. Upon driving close it is obvious that these are man-made forests, with trees in precise rows.

In the town of Earth, named in honor of the rich soils on which it stands, the Texas Plains Trail intersects another highway and turns in a new direction.

A new element of high plains agriculture appears between Earth and Hereford. In addition to already familiar crops travelers will see vegetables, castor beans and sugar beets. Castor bean production (the nation's largest) is centered in Lamb County. Sugar beets are produced in Deaf Smith County around Hereford.

A large cattle feed lot is adjacent to the highway just north of the Texas 86 intersection. Feed lot operations are among the fastest growing enterprises of the High Plains.

When range livestock near market age and weight, the animals are transferred to a commercial feed lot for a 90- to 120-day concentrated feeding program. According to orders from major meat packers, the lots feed certain groups of animals a specific formula; animals are "finished off" to meet the precise grade and weight requirements of the packer. The rather pungent smell near feed lots is an inevitable result of the concentration of large numbers of animals.

**HEREFORD**  
Pop. 14,632  
**Deaf Smith County**  
Alt. 3,806

Named for early herds of Hereford cattle established in the area, the small, clean city is the seat of Deaf Smith County. Due to natural fluorides and iodides in the municipal water supply, Hereford is often called the "Town Without a Toothache."

Massive grain elevators attest to only one aspect of rich agricultural interests. The county produces more than 450 million pounds of grain sorghum and over three million bushels of wheat each year. Vegetable crops include potatoes, carrots, lettuce and onions which are shipped to markets coast to coast. Cattle feed lots accommodate more than half a million head per year, and livestock sales annually top \$120 million. Holly Sugar Corporation's huge plant, established in 1963, refines sugar beets grown in a four-county area.

The Deaf Smith County Historical Museum displays an excellent collection from the pioneer era. Open Tues. through Sat., and Sun. afternoons at 400 Sampson St.

The National Cowgirl Hall of Fame pays tribute to all women who contributed so much to the development of the West and traces careers of prominent individuals. Open Mon. through Sat., temporarily in the county library.



Travelers will find pleasant accommodations and restaurants in Hereford, plus parks offering swimming, golf, picnicking, tennis and playgrounds. The county chamber of commerce, 701 N. Main, provides information about local tours and points of interest.

Between Hereford and Vega the traveler is once more immersed in an agricultural area of immense proportions. Hybrid seed stock is of great importance to farmers on the plains, and name brands are widely advertised. Occasionally beside an especially good field the name of the hybrid seed that produced the crop will be displayed.

The value of good hybrids is easily recognized in maize fields. Grain heads are large, compact, of almost identical size, and are supported on sturdy stalks that grow nearly the same height. The uniform features make for easy mechanical harvesting.

Sites of historical interest are marked in the town of Vega, the seat of Oldham County.

Ranching produces some 70 per cent of the county's agricultural income, but a cultivated "row crop" is one of the most unusual sights in Vega. Only a few blocks west of the courthouse is the amazing facility of Sunrize brand tomatoes—five acres of plants growing under glass inside buildings! Visitors are welcome to the greenhouses where temperature and humidity are controlled year round. Two crops are grown annually. Vines make about 12 pounds each from the spring planting and 8 pounds from the fall planting. Yields approach 100,000 pounds of tomatoes per acre per year.

Between Vega and Channing travelers will unexpectedly see ahead a long line of "higher" ground—an illusion; there is only the surface of the plain, and lower ground.

That skyline ahead is actually the plain, but between the traveler and that far rim is the huge eroded wedge of the Canadian River valley. From edge to edge, distance across the valley is almost 25 miles.

Gazing at the wide, flat riverbed it is difficult to imagine that this stream carved such a gigantic furrow.

From its color, it could be called the "red" river, because that is the color of banks, sand and water at low ebb. There is, however, an unusual feature entirely invisible to the eye: a full, flowing stream lies almost 50 feet below the surface sands.

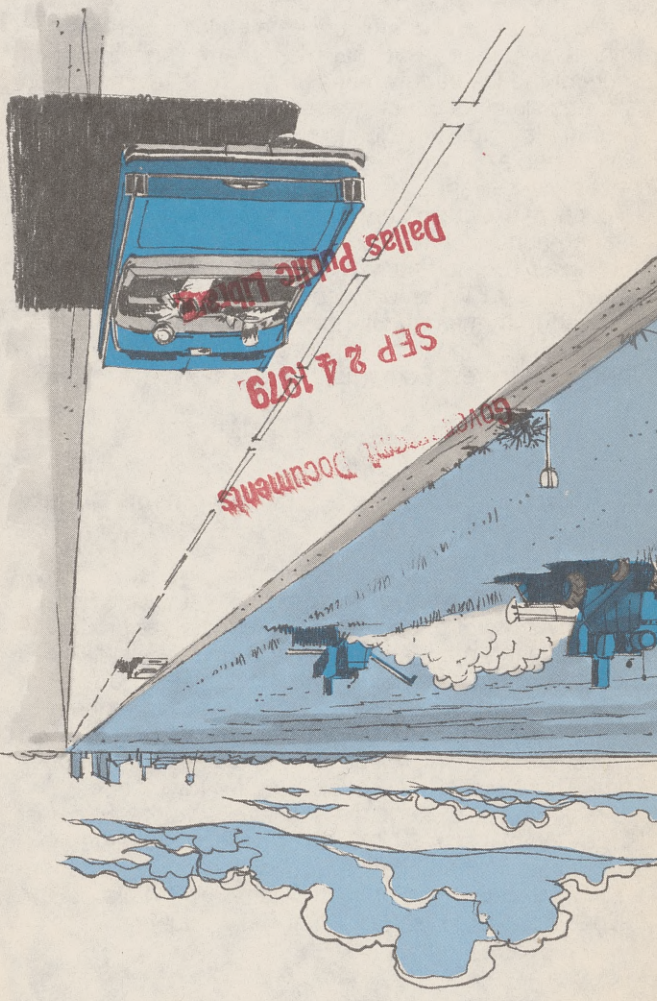
North of the river is a comfortable roadside park in a grove of cottonwood trees. Historical markers provide details of Old Tascosa and the LS Ranch.



Nearby is the site of Old Tascosa itself, now the location of world-famous Cal Farley's Boys Ranch. Entrance to Boys Ranch is marked on the highway, and travelers may wish to take a short trip to the renowned facility. Visitors are welcome.

Settled in the 1870s, Tascosa was once the "Cowboy Capital of the Plains." As a shipping and supply point it served several huge Texas ranches, including the XIT and LIT spreads. The famous and infamous—from Kit Carson to Billy the Kid—once strode the wooden sidewalks, and disputes were settled in the swift, violent tradition of the six-gun. The original Boot Hill Cemetery is maintained to

State Department of Highways  
and Public Transportation  
979 6



# PLAINS TRAIL

Ride the Texas

day, marking the resting places of those whose guns were a bit too slow.

When the railroad bypassed Tascosa the town declined rapidly, and in the early 20th Century it was deserted.

In 1939 a very successful home for homeless boys was established on the site by the late Cal Farley. The physical plant includes more than 30 buildings and some 1,000 acres of land on the headquarters spread. Current population is nearly 400 boys who operate the ranch, attend school and vocational training, and participate in a variety of sporting activities.

The original Old Tascosa courthouse is now the Julian Bivins Museum, with exhibits from its cowboy heyday, Indian artifacts and Boys Ranch items. Across the street in the headquarters building is a snack bar; on a wall is an interesting, detailed map of Old Tascosa. A famous cattle trail to Dodge City started here.

The Hartley County seat town of Channing, on a plain north of the rugged Canadian River valley, originated as headquarters of the famous XIT. Medallions are on the original headquarters building on Main Street; and on the "oldest Panhandle church north of the Canadian, built in 1898"—a block north and west of the courthouse.

Between Channing and Dumas the terrain alternates between rolling native pasture lands almost unchanged from the giant ranch era, and lush row crops.

**DUMAS**  
Pop. 10,333  
**Moore County**  
Alt. 3,668

At the northernmost point on the Trail, Dumas is a neat, clean city with good tourist accommodations. Founded in 1892, much of Dumas' growth came with a rich oil strike in 1926. Today it is in the center of an immense natural gas field, produces large quantities of helium, has 35 major industrial plants, and lies in the heart of the nation's greatest grain sorghum producing area. The Moore County Museum, 8th and Dumas Ave., offers a nostalgic look at Panhandle life; closed Mon.

Nine city parks have a variety of facilities—Texoma Park, U.S. 87 west, offers free overnight camping with free electric hookups. The chamber of commerce, 6th and Porter, has details on Dumas events and attractions, including nearby Lake Meredith and industrial tours.

The Trail highway between Dumas and Stinnett runs generally east and west, but the Canadian River begins to draw closer, changing the surface of the plain from flat cropland to rolling pasture. Watch for an historical marker on the highway at the route of the famous old Tascosa-Dodge City Trail.

In Stinnett, across from the Hutchinson County Courthouse, an historical medallion is on the Isaac McCormick Pioneer Cottage.

South of Stinnett the Trail highway plunges into the rolling Canadian River brakes toward huge new Lake

Meredith. Crossing the dam, the beautiful blue lake stretches far beyond sight to the southwest. To the northeast is the scenic canyon of the Canadian River, red-bluffed and rock-studded. Marinas and recreation areas are operated by the National Park Service whose office at the south end of the dam provides details.

In addition to lake activities, the Park Service also administers Alibates National Monument on the south shore of the lake a few miles off the Trail. It is the site of Alibates quarries which were worked for 12,000 years! The multicolored flint, found nowhere else in the world, was traded as far north as Minnesota, and to the Pacific. Access is by ranger tours only, twice daily from June through mid-Oct.; otherwise on weekends by advance arrangements with National Park Service headquarters (on Texas 136) in Fritch. Also in Fritch is Lake Meredith Aquarium and Wildlife Museum with wildlife dioramas and fish from throughout Texas. Closed Mon.

The glistening aluminum geodesic dome along the Trail in southwest Borger is that city's community hall.

**BORGER**  
Pop. 14,503

**Hutchinson County**  
Alt. 3,116

The importance of the petroleum industry is evidenced by the towers, tanks and smokestacks in Borger. A wide variety of petrochemical products are produced.

The curving main street lends a friendly air, as does the free overnight camping (with hookups) at Huber Park on Texas 207 south. Among 15 other parks, two offer 18-hole golf courses. The county museum at 618 N. Main recalls the boom town days; open afternoons, closed Tues. There are excellent facilities for travelers.

Frank Phillips College, on Roosevelt Ave. in southwest Borger, enrolls some 1300 junior college students.

A noted recreational event is the Lake Meredith festival, usually held in early June. A feature is the "World's Largest Fish Fry," first Sat. in June.

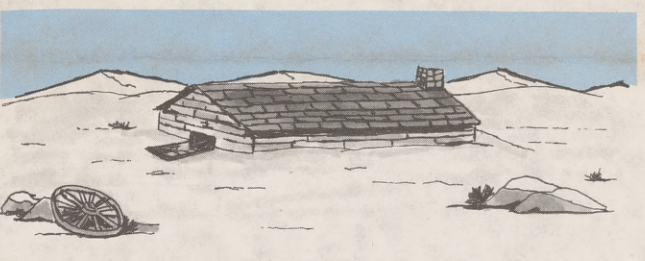
South of Borger historical markers tell of the 1921 discovery well, first in the Panhandle. It was drilled on the Dixon Creek Ranch, better known as the 6666 Ranch.

About five miles farther south another marker cites the Dixon Creek Ranch, founded in 1882 by an English cattle company. In 1903 the ranch became part of vast, widely spread holdings of rancher S. Burk Burnett, whose famous 6666 brand is still prominent in Texas. Legend says a poker hand of four sixes won Burnett's first lands. (The main 6666 Ranch headquarters is near Guthrie, Texas.)

**PANHANDLE**  
Pop. 2,298

**Carson County**  
Alt. 3,451

One of the oldest towns on the High Plains, Panhandle was established in 1887 at what was then the terminus of the Santa Fe Railroad.



Although now in a thoroughly modern building, Panhandle's First National Bank bears an historical medallion citing the institution as the oldest bank on the High Plains, in continuous operation since 1888. The *Panhandle Herald* is the oldest newspaper in the area; in 1887 it was printed in a tent. More than a dozen other historical markers are in and around this plains town.

An excellent museum is by the Trail highway at the north edge of Panhandle. Housed in the "square house," a small white building with a cupola, the Carson County Historical Museum vividly interprets the lusty frontier era of the Texas High Plains. Exhibits include photographs, records, tools and wildlife, plus authentic farm and ranch buildings, an antique railroad caboose, and a half-dugout dwelling, typical of pioneer homesteads.

About five miles southwest of Panhandle, set behind a protective fence at the south edge of the highway, is the stump of a small bois d'arc tree. Of all the thousands of trees you have seen planted as windbreaks, plus other thousands that line the streets of cities and towns, this was the first.

When Thomas Cree staked out a section of land here in 1888, not a single tree or shrub existed on thousands of square miles of plains. From lowlands beyond the cap rock he hauled a young sapling of bois d'arc, planted it, nurtured it, and watched it grow, ever so slowly.

Cree is long gone, but his tree remained until accidentally killed by an agricultural chemical in 1969. Natural seedlings from the original tree are growing today. A state historical marker and a medallion from the National Men's Garden Clubs of America mark the site.

**AMARILLO**  
Pop. 141,484

**Randall and Potter Counties**  
Alt. 3,676

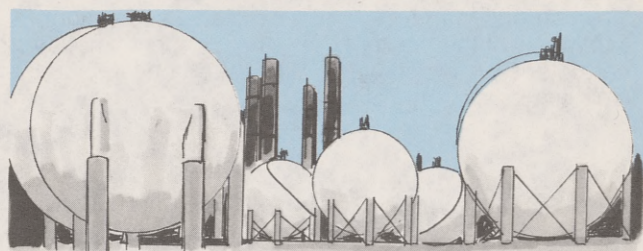
Commercial, cultural and recreational center for the Texas High Plains, Amarillo is also hub of a vast agricultural and industrial region. First settlement was in 1887, a buffalo hide tent camp for railroad construction workers. Today Amarillo offers excellent hotels, motels and restaurants, a spacious convention and civic center, symphony orchestra, little theatre, and is home of Amarillo College enrolling more than 4,000 students.

Largest of 52 municipal parks is Thompson Park featuring Storyland Children's Zoo and Wonderland amusement rides.

The new Amarillo Art Center complex designed by Edward Stone (Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C.) is devoted to fine arts, music and drama; 2200 Van Buren St.

on the campus of Amarillo College. Lavish floral displays edge lawns, walkways and picnic areas in the 51-acre Garden Center adjacent to the Amarillo Medical Center on the city's west side.

Many visitors are fascinated by the world's largest



livestock auction at Western Stockyards, 100 S. Manhattan St. Held two or three days a week, auctions move more than 500,000 cattle through the ring each year, bringing more than \$75,000,000.

Another world's largest is the American Quarter Horse Association equine registry with over 1,200,000 horses registered in 53 countries. Visitors are welcome at the association headquarters, 2736 W. 10th St., during week-day business hours.

The striking Helium Monument, I.H. 40 at Nelson St., commemorates the world's largest known source of that rare natural element which is extracted from natural gas wells in the Amarillo area. Besides historical and scientific exhibits relating to helium, this is also the site of the city's Tourist Information Center which provides details about all area attractions and events. Or, visitors may dial a 24-hour "hot line" for information about current activities: 373-6686.

A Texas Tourist Bureau at the city's east limits on I.H. 40/U.S. 287 is open daily. Trained travel counselors offer a wide selection of free maps, literature and information about points of interest throughout the state.

Some flat to gently rolling cultivated cropland is seen between Amarillo and Canyon, but not on the scale that is typical along the Plains Trail. These are plains in the classic sense. They are by nature utterly flat. There are no hills or valleys. Changes in elevation are on a minor, gentle scale except for the often spectacular influence of erosion. Near Canyon rolling pasture lands take over, and it is this very rolling nature that is atypical of the High Plains.

**CANYON**  
Pop. 8,056

**Randall County**  
Alt. 3,566

This seat of Randall County originated as headquarters for the huge T Anchor Ranch in 1877-78 when Leigh Dyer, brother-in-law of the famous pioneer cattleman and trail blazer, Charles Goodnight, brought 400 cattle here to begin ranching operations. He soon sold his claim to a large ranching syndicate which built a gigantic spread. It is a matter of record that in 1885 the syndicate sold 225 sections of land (144,000 acres) to an English cattle company and still retained plenty of land for its own ranching purposes.

Dyer's original log cabin, hewn of tough, long-lasting juniper wood from Palo Duro Canyon, is still intact. Moved with a group of related ranch structures to the grounds of the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, it is restored and furnished in authentic pioneer detail.

The museum, on the campus of West Texas State University which flanks the Trail highway downtown, is one of the state's finest. Branding iron symbols adorn the main entrance facade. From art to artifacts, its collections are outstanding...a prime feature on the Texas Plains Trail!

Visit the chamber of commerce, 2010 4th Ave., for information about other area attractions.

West of Canyon are flat fields of cultivated row crops, often interrupted by rolling native pasture lands. Rolling areas indicate a watercourse somewhere that has, over eons of time, sliced through the tableland. Ever so gradually the flowing water bites deeper, the "banks" crumble, and erosion from the stream fans far out, creating a rolling landscape.

At the intersection of Texas 217/F.M. 1541, 16 miles east of Canyon, is an opportunity for a side trip that must be recommended above all others on the Plains Trail: Palo Duro Canyon State Park.

Even before that, there are three historical markers of interest adjacent to the intersection. One summarizes Randall County history, another notes the "Feast of the First Thanksgiving" in 1541. The other tells of Ciboleros — Mexican buffalo hunters of the 18th Century.

For that side trip to Palo Duro Canyon drive east on Texas 217 for eight miles. Watch the landscape carefully. The effects of erosion from the flat plains is very graphic. Then, with breathtaking suddenness, the tableland splits vertically and plunges in a riot of vivid colors to the floor of Palo Duro Canyon some thousand feet below.

Here amid Nature at her spectacular best is Texas' largest state park. Facilities include an interpretive center, vast camping and picnic areas among juniper and cottonwoods on the canyon floor, rest rooms and showers, souvenir shop, grocery, horseback riding, hiking trails and a miniature train. Admission.



Also in the park is Pioneer Amphitheatre, setting for the nationally acclaimed musical drama "TEXAS," whose huge cast produces the show from mid June through late August (nightly except Sunday). The entertainment on the outdoor stage, backed by towering cliffs, is on a rous-

ing, epic scale. Reservations are advisable at all times. An outdoor barbecue dinner, served chuckwagon style, is available before the show. Park and theatre admissions are separate, except after 6 p.m. when theatre patrons are admitted to the park free.

Back on the Trail travelers will shortly cross Palo Duro Creek and the small, scenic canyon it has carved, which is an upper arm of Palo Duro Canyon.

Along F.M. 1151 is another typical feature of the plains. On the tabletop surface, where streams are rare and the land has had no chance to develop normal watersheds, rainwater simply has no particular direction to flow. Over millions of years it has formed frequent shallow, usually circular depressions called playas. Seldom over a few feet deep, they become small lakes when it rains. During dry seasons the water disappears.

One of the larger playas on the Trail lies just north of this segment of highway. Its size varies according to local weather conditions.

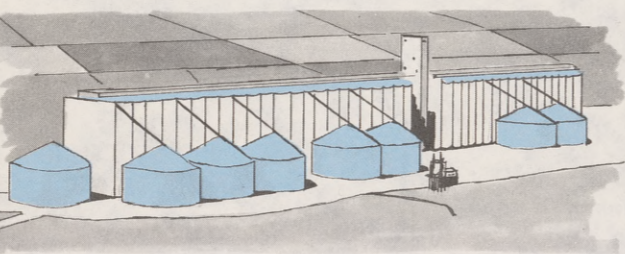
Continue through fine croplands where the immensity of the plains can be pictured. The lush crops here, as throughout most of the plains area, depend upon irrigation from deep wells. The structure of the plains, with few streams to carry off rainfall and many playas to hold it, produced an enormous underground water supply. Thousands of wells now pump that water for irrigation.

**CLAUDE**  
Pop. 1,041

**Armstrong County**  
Alt. 3,397

Claude, Armstrong County seat and main retail center, was established in 1887 as a stop on the Fort Worth and Denver City Railroad. The town, now a shipping point for area agricultural activities, played a role in the Panhandle's history. Markers tell of early sheriffs, the first masonry jail, and of pioneer newspapers whose lineage extends to the present *Claude News*.

For miles the agricultural expanse of Armstrong County spreads from horizon to horizon. Row crops alternate with vast expanses of improved pasture land. That is, the land has been planted to varieties of grass that are more productive than the native species.



**MATADOR**  
Pop. 1,070

**Motley County**  
Alt. 2,347

About 15 miles south of Claude, having become accustomed to the unbroken expanse of the landscape in all directions, the Trail driver sees an unusual sight ahead. It looks like a long, flat-topped area of higher ground. The "higher" ground is actually the flat plain, but the immediate terrain has begun to descend imperceptibly. This is a preliminary to a highway crossing of Palo Duro Canyon 12 miles below the state park area.

The highway that has been ruler-straight soon swings right, then left, and plunges quickly into scenic grandeur. From the rim entering this spectacular part of Palo Duro Canyon it is nine miles to the opposite edge.

Descend at a moderate speed, both for safety and to absorb the beauty that unfolds in a riot of colors. Shrubby juniper and mesquite trees appear among dramatically sculptured cliffs and buttes. Gray and white rocks accent brilliant colors of red and orange.

The white, marble-like rock often seen in horizontal layers is gypsum. Where found in large masses it is mined for production of wallboard. A beautiful, dense, fine-grain variety called alabaster is used for sculpture.

After miles of descent is the watercourse that has carved this immense slash in the plains, the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River. Though it can rage in a torrent following heavy rains, it is an insignificant stream usually, barely a trickle visible on a broad sand flat.

Almost at the south rim of the canyon watch for a roadside rest area on the east. This is a perfect opportunity to pause and soak up one of the most tremendous landscapes on the Trail. From this park, impressions of the canyon are of spectacular immensity; of colors: greens, reds, pinks, browns and oranges; and of stillness.

Out of the canyon proper, but still on the rolling pasture lands nearby, sharp-eyed travelers may spot a rare remaining colony of prairie dogs. Their mounds may be seen in the pasture on both sides of the highway, and some on the highway right-of-way itself.

A tall television relay tower marks the second spectacle on this stretch of the Trail. Row crops again disappear, and with startling suddenness the road slips over the lip of another beautiful canyon. This smaller gorge is Tule Canyon carved by Tule Creek. More varieties of rock strata are visible here, and some magnificent sheer-faced, knife-edged buttes.

Nearby is the site of the last great Indian battle in Texas, where a stroke of strategy shattered the strength of the great plains warriors. Leading the 4th U.S. Cavalry in 1874, Col. Ranald Mackenzie discovered a large camp of Comanches. Descending the canyon walls, Mackenzie's troopers captured the camp and some 1,400 horses. Although the Indians fled to other parts of the canyon, the village was burned and most of the horses were destroyed. Afoot and without supplies or shelter, the once fierce warriors had no choice but to plod back to their reservations in Oklahoma.

**SILVERTON**  
Pop. 961

**Briscoe County**  
Alt. 3,261

Established as the county seat in 1892 when Briscoe County was organized, Silvertown is a commercial center for a large surrounding farming-ranching area.

A landmark is the old Briscoe County Jail, a two-story structure on the northeast corner of the courthouse

square. It was built of hand-hewn stone hauled from Tule Canyon by wagon in 1894. A small museum featuring early ranch, farm and home items is in the basement of the county courthouse. An inquiry at the courthouse is usually all that is needed for a leisurely visit.

Between Silvertown and Turkey the Texas Plains Trail undergoes some dramatic changes. Those flat areas of farming and ranching country appear so vast it seems they will continue forever. They don't.

About nine miles east of Silvertown a small canyon suddenly appears. Within moments the entire landscape ahead and to both sides is fragmented. This is the jagged edge of the High Plains, or as the local residents say, the edge of the cap rock.

On the north side of the highway is a spectacularly situated roadside park overlooking the scenic panorama.

Negotiating the colorful edge, the highway winds and spirals, offering a feast of exceptional views. Below the level of the plain only the jagged edge is visible, and it looks like mountain country.

While the Trail spans this brushy canyon country there is an opportunity for an unusual side trip.



The entrance to Burson Lakes is marked on the highway. The lakes offer swimming, camping and hunting facilities, several cabins, a bait shop-general store, and small cafe. Several small, deep, man-made lakes situated in a beautiful canyon provide excellent year-round fishing for bass and catfish. Quail and white-tailed deer are very plentiful and may be hunted during designated seasons.

Burson Lakes are about two miles from the highway via a bladed earth road. It is occasionally rough and quite steep during its last few hundred yards.

The Trail soon enters Turkey, named for flocks of wild turkey by settlers in early 1890s. A novel monument notes Western music star Bob Willis was reared here; a reunion on last Sat. in Apr. honors the man and his music.

Travelers will see cultivated row crops but although rainfall is somewhat more plentiful than on the High Plains, farming is perhaps more difficult. Fields must be smaller because of the rolling terrain, and water for irrigation is not uniformly accessible.

**MATADOR**  
Pop. 1,070

**Motley County**  
Alt. 2,347

Matador is the county seat of Motley County, and with its ranch heritage, is one of the most authentic "Western" town in Texas. The town's very existence, in fact, can be credited to cowboys of the Matador Ranch.

When the county was organized in 1891, there was not a single settlement in it — only headquarters and line camps of ranches like the 400,000-acre Matador, owned by a corporation headquartered in Scotland.

A townsite was designated, and the required 20 businesses were set up and operated for one day by the cowboys of the Matador Ranch, so that a patent could be granted by the General Land Office of Texas. Near the courthouse is the old jail, built in 1891.

Visits to the Matador Cattle Company ranch headquarters (built in 1916) can be arranged through Community Associates organization in Matador.

South on the Trail enroute to Roaring Springs is the pleasant Virginia Walton Roadside Park, across from the old ranch headquarters.

Roaring Springs was named for springs at the edge of the escarpment cut by the South Pease River. The springs, a favorite campground for Indians, have been the site of Motley-Dickens Counties reunions for 50 years.

West of Roaring Springs the highway traverses rolling, brushy native pasture land. The average motorist might never notice, but in easy stages this road is gradually ascending. Within a few miles the brushy terrain disappears, and here again are the High Plains via an ascent of the cap rock the easy way, with no dramatic cliffs to mark the edge.

Imagine the incredible quantity of produce from this immense acreage. Not even the numerous grain elevators can store it all. Railroad cars are called from throughout the nation to haul away the gigantic production during each harvest season.

On the U.S. 82 portion of the Trail the highway plunges into a broad canyon cut by the White River, Blanco Canyon. Watch for a roadside park on the east bank of the river. This park is one of the finest on the Texas highway system, and a pause is recommended. There are hosts of picnic tables, excellent views of rolling canyon features and mesas, plus intriguing hiking paths along the river bank. It's a perfect spot for kids to work off energy.

**CROSBYTON**  
Pop. 2,278

**Crosby County**  
Alt. 3,108

Crosby County was the site of first settlement on the Texas High Plains. A Bavarian-born rancher, Henry Clay Smith, who immigrated to the United States as a youth and enjoyed a varied career as a Great Lakes sailor, miner, cowboy, customs rider, and Confederate soldier, homesteaded in Blanco Canyon in 1876. A replica of his original rock house on U.S. 82 downtown contains the Crosby County Pioneer Memorial Museum, open May - Sept.; closed Mon.

The first farmers to locate on the High Plains were a small colony of Quakers who arrived in the fall of 1879.

South of Crosbyton huge fields of cotton, maize and forage crops, plus some unexpected fields of vegetables,

again span the limit of sight in all directions.

But within a few miles the Trail highway again slips over the edge, descending a long, rolling grade into brushy native grasslands. Soon is an opportunity for another side trip off the Trail which will be especially attractive to water sport enthusiasts.



The large White River Reservoir lies eight miles to the east. Visitors will find spacious camping areas, lakeside cabins and boat launching facilities, picnic and fishing supplies, and boat rentals.

Between White River Reservoir and Post, the Trail highway runs generally parallel with the edge of the cap rock some 15 miles away, yet is seldom visible. A few miles north of Post the massive feature again appears, blue on the horizon ahead.

**POST**  
Pop. 3,864

**Garza County**  
Alt. 2,590

Located at the very foot of the cap rock, Post is named for C. W. Post, the noted cereal manufacturer, who founded the town in 1907 to demonstrate his economic ideas. With land speculation prohibited and scientific farming encouraged, the town quickly prospered.

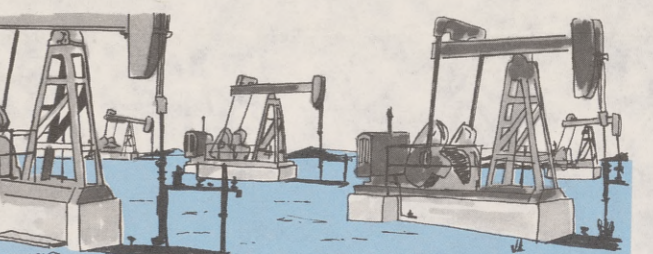
One of the founder's unsuccessful efforts was perhaps the most elaborate series of rainmaking experiments in the United States. Between 1910 and 1913 Post tried to stimulate greater rainfall by firing explosives into the atmosphere at carefully timed intervals. Rainfall records, however, do not indicate success.

There are many historical buildings and markers in and around Post. The historical society has designated a route as an aid to visitors. Information can be obtained at the chamber of commerce in the McCrary Building at East Main and North Avenue I.

Among many sites of interest is the City-County Park with swimming pool, small lake for fishing, picnic areas and playgrounds, at the city's edge on U.S. 84 south.

Postex Mill, a major facility of Burlington Industries, produces textile goods in a large plant that begins with raw baled cotton and ends with the finished product. Tours may be arranged at the chamber of commerce.

Post sits squarely on the large Garza Oil Field, and many indications of oil activity are prominent. One of the most unusual is a quintuple pump oil well — a single well from which five pump jacks draw oil from five levels. Between Avenues Q and R on 14th Street.



From Post a scenic drive on F.M. 669 ascends the cap rock, and immediately that remarkable pattern of immense row crop agriculture resumes. But here it will be short-lived, because this is a narrow "peninsula" of the plains. In store is a very graphic sightseeing treat.

Within a few miles the highway reaches the edge of the cap rock and starts down. To either side is the flat surface of the plains and the abrupt break-off as the plains end. Canyons etch steep gashes into the tableland, leaving long fingers thrusting into lower lands. Just as contrast helps illustrate a subject, it is here where the plains end that their magnitude can best be understood. On the entire Texas Plains Trail there exists no finer panorama of the structure of this remarkable geographic feature.

Here end the Great Plains of the United States. In immensity too great to comprehend, they sweep north more than 1,600 miles, spanning our entire nation and thrusting deep into Canada. It is the heartland of America that produces our nation's abundance of bread, meat and fiber. East to the Atlantic, or south more than 7,000 miles to the tip of South America, there is no other comparable feature.

Enjoy the colorful canyons and the grand scale of Nature's geometry as you descend. On the near west side of the highway note the almost perfect pyramid topped by a stone cap.

The erosion which shaped this area is on a time scale beyond real comprehension, as illustrated by an historical marker by the highway about 16 miles south of Post. The marker indicates the discovery site of an unusual type of flint point. Archeologists found several habit sites and fire pits of a people who lived here long before recorded history. Yet the land was the same because even a few inches of erosion would have destroyed evidence of their habitation.

This vast ranching country is also the habitat of a few remaining herds of pronghorns, locally called antelope. Fortunate Trail drivers may spot small groups of the beautiful, swift, tan and white animals in this region.

Approaching the town of Gail, a prominent landmark since earliest days is seen ahead. The slightly masked cone is Muchakoog Peak named by the Indians. Rising 2,862 feet, it served as both a point of reference for Indians and the zero mark for the first scientific surveys of this area. Although it looks like a mountain, it is not in the usual sense of the word. Protected by a weather resistant slab of rock at the top, this is simply a fragment of the plains. All the rest has weathered away.

**GAIL**  
Pop. 189

**Borden County**  
Alt. 2,530

The tiny community of Gail is the only town in Borden County, which is devoted almost exclusively to ranching. Established in 1891, the community has remained an isolated ranch supply point, without bank, theater, railroad, hotel, preacher, doctor, or lawyer.

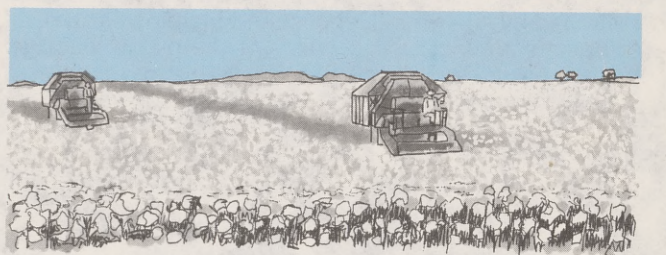
Both the county and town were named for Gail Borden, Jr., inventor of condensed milk, an early Texas resident.

Adjacent to the courthouse is the excellent Borden County Historical Museum, containing memorabilia from area pioneers. For admission, see the County Clerk in the courthouse. Historical markers are at the museum and the 1896 jail.

Although the Plains Trail has journeyed to the end of the High Plains, it is not our intention to leave them here. The Trail segment utilizing F.M. 1054 climbs a sloping valley between projecting arms of the plains. Note the native cedar, mesquite and oak trees in the canyons. They're the last native trees for a long while.

Transition is again swift. From brushy, short-grass native pasture, little changed since the earliest cowboys rode here, the land becomes an immense farm on reaching the surface of the plains. Here the hand of man is unmistakable: the land is trimmed and manicured down to the last inch.

Plowing may be seen almost any time of the year, but most is done in early spring. Perspective is deceiving; the farmer and his tractor may look like miniature toys, lost in the expanse of the land. There is often an atmospheric peculiarity that marks him from miles away. When plains winds are still, dust from the turning earth may move straight up — a tan column several hundred feet high — exclamation points marking a land to exclaim about.



The plains are also a land of dust devils. These are miniature whirlwinds that do no damage, but are fascinating to watch as they whirl in a tight spiral, creating columns of dust and leaves.

For those who would pause in Wilson, the town affords several historical markers recalling the early days.

In nearby Slaton, a museum at 155 N. Eighth St. displays mementos of the early years of the city. Open afternoons Tues. through Sat.

At the north edge of town a green-and-white complex of buildings and tanks marks another ever-present feature of the high plains, a chemical fertilizer facility.

The bumper crops of the plains depend in large measure upon massive applications of fertilizer, irrigation water and the bright sunshine of a generally cloudless growing season.

This segment of the Plains Trail crosses a small canyon carved by the North Fork of the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos River. Exposed fossil beds in the canyon are of particular interest to geologists, and many Indian habit sites have been located along it.

Just a short distance east the canyon has been dammed to form Buffalo Springs Lake. In a scenic setting, the lake offers overnight camping, fishing, boating and picnicking, as well as hiking and horseback trails.

Along the Trail highway east of Lubbock are examples of perhaps the most complete and profitable utilization of land that can be imagined. Rich fields produce bountiful crops of cotton, maize and corn, while pump jacks lift oil from deep beneath the same land.

The remaining section of the Texas Plains Trail leads straight into Lubbock where it began. Those who have completed the entire Trail can speak with authority about much of this Llano Estacado region of Texas. But one word of caution. Texas' dimensions dwarf even this large area, and there are other parts to discover before the whole can be measured. Against this immense tableland compare rugged mountains thrusting above a mile high; vast, green-canopied forests, moss-hung bayous and hundreds of miles of golden sand beside the sea. That too is Texas, and there are Trails to guide you 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 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!

- TEXAS BRAZOS TRAIL
- TEXAS FOREST TRAIL
- TEXAS FORTS TRAIL
- TEXAS HILL COUNTRY TRAIL
- TEXAS INDEPENDENCE TRAIL
- TEXAS LAKES TRAIL
- TEXAS MOUNTAIN TRAIL
- TEXAS PECOS TRAIL
- TEXAS TROPICAL TRAIL

STATE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS  
AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION  
Travel & Information Division  
Austin, Texas 78763