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Ride the Texas

PLAINS TRAIL



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The land through which the Trail travels to Dumas was once the huge LX Ranch, whose brand was **X**. It extended some 45 miles between the present cities of Dumas and Amarillo—20 miles wide with a thousand square miles of rangeland.

The first gas well in the giant Panhandle-Hugoton Field was drilled a few miles south of the Trail, near the Canadian River in 1918. The 2,600-foot discovery well produced about five million cubic feet of gas daily.

DUMAS
Pop. 12,194

Moore County
Alt. 3,668

Visitors are welcome in Dumas—a large sign at the city's south edge proclaims it, and a visit to the chamber of commerce, 6th and Port, confirms it. Nine city parks with a variety of facilities are offered, including Texoma Park (US 87 west) with free overnight camping and free electric hookups.

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 Lake Meredith. **14** 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. Get additional details about lake activities from NPS headquarters on Texas 136 at the sign, "Lake Meredith Recreation Headquarters."

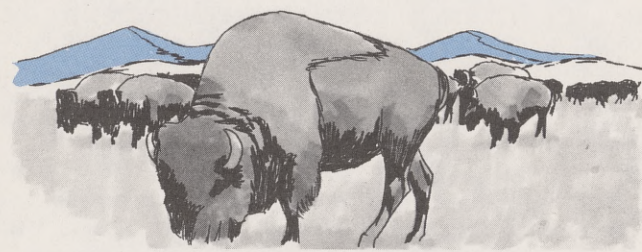
In addition to lake activities, the Park Service also administers Alibates National Monument **15** on the south shore of the lake a few miles off the Trail. It is the site of flint quarries that were worked for 12,000 years! The multicolored flint, found nowhere else in the world, was traded as far north as Minnesota, and to the Pacific. Access is by ranger tours only. Refer to the state travel guide (Fritch) for details, and about the excellent Lake Meredith Aquarium and Wildlife Museum here.

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

BORGER
Pop. 15,837

Hutchinson County
Alt. 3,116

The importance of petroleum is evidenced by towers, tanks and smokestacks in Borger, where a variety of



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.

Not far below the surface, plentiful irrigation water is one source of nature's bounty in this region. Other subterranean treasures are reservoirs of oil and natural gas. Trail drivers often will see evidence of both resources.

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.

Due to space limitations, this folder's descriptions are mainly devoted to interpretation of the driving routes. Before setting out, Trail drivers should obtain a free copy of the state's primary travel guide, the 176-page *Texas! Live the Legend*, which provides supplementary details about many of the cities and towns along the route. An Official Highway Travel Map will also be useful. Both may be obtained by mail from the departmental address at the end of this folder, or at any Texas Tourist Bureau.

For even more information about local accommodations, campgrounds and tourist activities, visit chamber of commerce and tourist offices listed in this folder.

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 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.

LUBBOCK
Pop. 173,979

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.

Lubbock was the home town of rock-and-roll star Buddy Holly, and a statue at the entrance to the Civic Center honors him; 8th and Ave. Q.

Lubbock Lake Archeological Site at Loop 389 and North Indiana is a National Historic Landmark. Tours there are Sat., 9 to 12 and by appointment. A wine-tasting tour is available at the Llano Estacado Winery on weekends; about 3 miles east of US 87 on FM 1585.

Quarter Horse races are held throughout the year at Lubbock Downs, just east of US 87 at 114th St. Feature event is the Pie in the Sky Futurity with a purse near \$100,000.

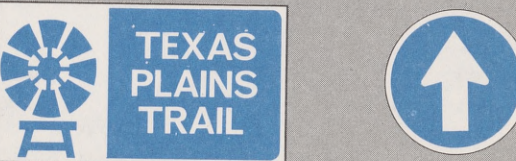
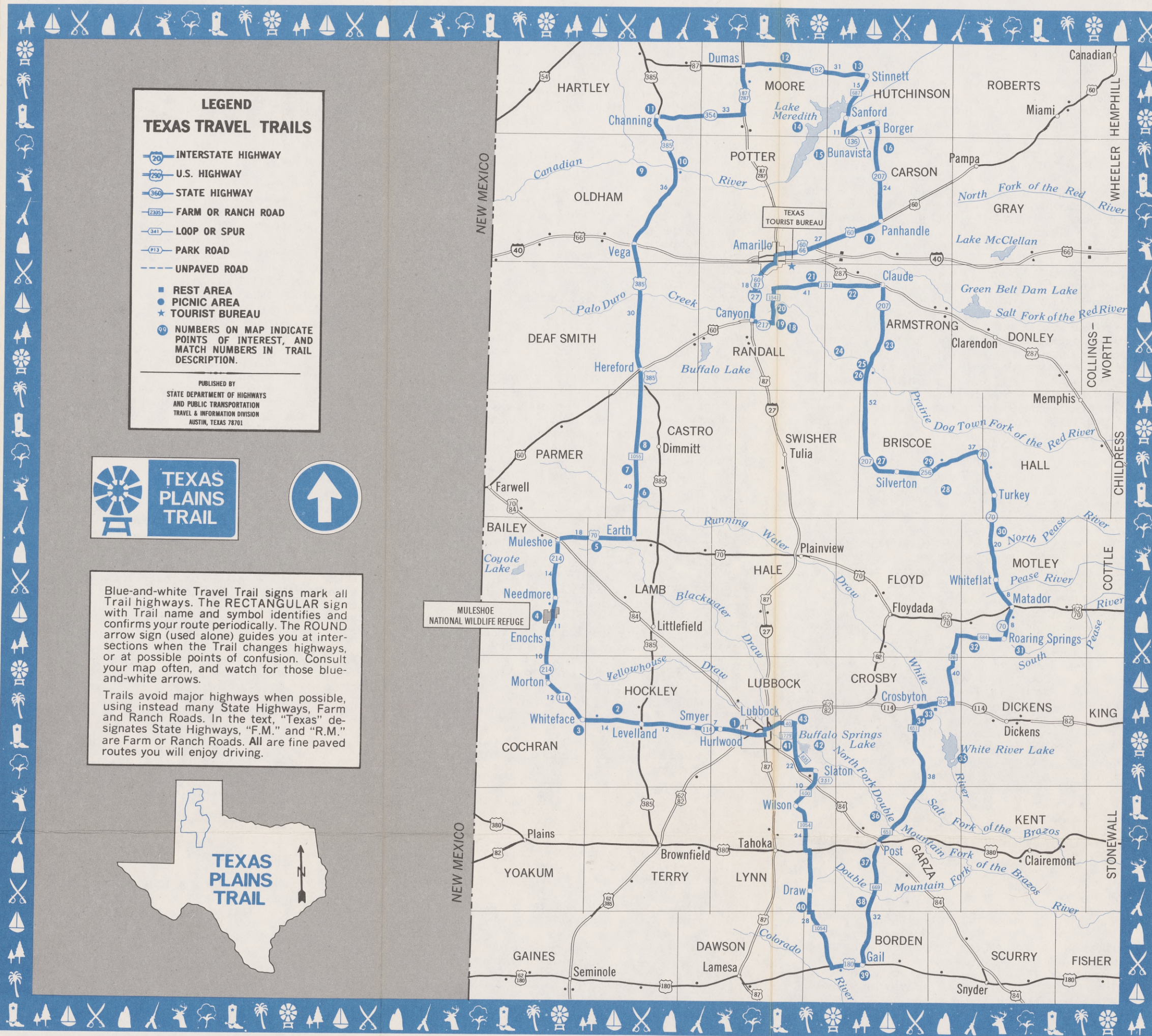
To begin your Trail experience right, don't miss the Museum of Texas Tech and the adjacent Ranching Heritage Center. They superbly interpret what's in store — Panhandle history on an epic scale, the region's dramatic geography and geology, and the state's foremost collection of pioneer ranch structures.

For full details on area attractions, visit the chamber of commerce at Texas and 9th St., next to City Hall, and consult *Texas! Live the Legend*.

The Trail route leaving Lubbock offers views of many fine homes and landscaped gardens, passes Lubbock Christian College and Reese Air Force Base. Adjacent to the highway is a recreational lake and golf course for the fighter-training base's personnel. The large two-bladed windmills along the air base entrance road, similar to others in the area, generate electric power primarily for pumping irrigation water.

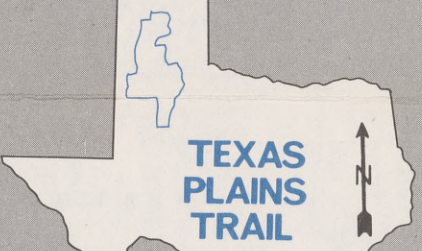
Trail travelers will observe irrigation at nearly every hand. Several methods are used to water the fertile fields—ditches, long rows of pipe, and wheeled sprinkler systems. One advanced sprinkler type is mounted on comparatively small rubber-tired wheels; it slowly rotates in huge circles, with special configurations that permit watering the field corners. Note that some methods employ sprays directed straight down, some throw rotating arcs like huge lawn sprinklers, and others aim lateral jets slightly above the horizontal.

The plains' intensive agriculture is utterly dependent on such irrigation, for rainfall is only 17 to 18 inches per year. Without irrigation, row-crop agriculture couldn't be sustained; the plains would revert to natural grasslands.



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.

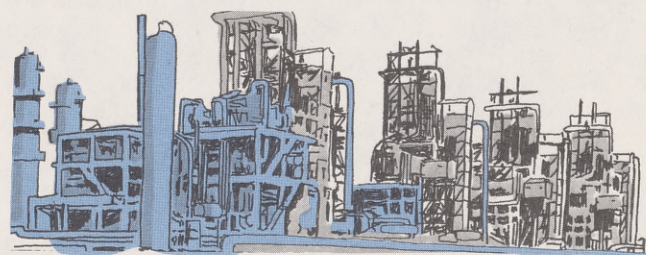
Trails avoid major highways when possible, using instead many State Highways, Farm and Ranch Roads. In the text, "Texas" designates State Highways, "F.M." and "R.M." are Farm or Ranch Roads. All are fine paved routes you will enjoy driving.



LEVELLAND
Pop. 13,809

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. Hockley County produced its billionth barrel of oil in 1982.



The chamber of commerce, Avenue H and 11th, is adjacent to a small lake with picnic tables on grassy banks.

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 pumpjacks 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 pumpjacks disappear to leave the land wholly to agriculture.

A sign at Whiteface pointing out Girlstown, USA, identifies a facility for homeless girls. The huge feed lot off the highway to the north handles 40,000 cattle annually... easy to believe when viewing the enormous concentration of animals there.

MORTON
Pop. 2,674

Cochran County
Alt. 3,758

You have reached the western edge of the Texas Plains Trail in Morton, and it's 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 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 FM 1780.

Information on area sites, such as the C.C. Slaughter Ranch house, are available at the chamber of commerce at 106 S. First.

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 is 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, with a parking area nearby, visitors will also see a small colony of prairie dogs.



MULESHOE
Pop. 4,842

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 isn't 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 in the Soviet Union. The mule memorial is immediately east of the downtown intersection of US 70/84 and Texas 214.

In addition to row crops, vast native and improved pasturelands 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 that 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.

En route to Earth, named to honor the area's rich soils, the Trail passes an historical marker that identifies the site of the first irrigation well in this land where irrigation is now commonplace. That hand-dug well served rancher Ewing Halsell for his crops, cattle and household.

New elements of high plains agriculture appear 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.

Although Panhandle historical events reach into the dim past, actual settlement in some locales is comparatively recent. An historical marker at the FM 145 intersection tells of J.W. Carter, first permanent settler who came in 1884 and established the 7-Up Ranch.

A large cattle feed lot is adjacent to the highway just north of the Texas 86 intersection. Feed lot operations are major enterprises on the High Plains. When range livestock near market age and weight, the animals are transferred to a commercial feed lot for a 90-day 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 odor near feed lots is an inevitable result of the concentration of large numbers of animals.

HEREFORD
Pop. 15,853

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," and the city hospitably invites visitors to "stop for a drink of water." Don't miss the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame, east of US 385 (the Trail route) at Avenue B, then two blocks north.

Watch for a small park next to the local depot on US 60. It offers a pleasant pause, a view of a pioneer windmill, and an antique one-man railroad handcar.

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 that are shipped coast to coast. Cattle feed lots accommodate more than half a million head per year, and livestock sales annually are about \$200 million. Holly Sugar Corporation's huge plant, established in 1963, refines sugar from beets grown in a four-county area.



Travelers will find pleasant accommodations and restaurants in Hereford, plus parks offering swimming, golf, picnicking, tennis and playgrounds. Visit the county chamber of commerce, 701 N. Main, for details.

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.

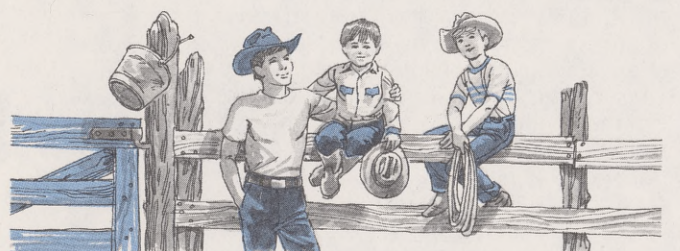
Sites of historical interest are marked in Vega, seat of Oldham County. Ranching provides 80 percent of the county's \$37 million annual income.

Between Vega and Channing, travelers will note substantial oil activity and, unexpectedly, see ahead a long line of "higher" ground—an illusion; there's only the surface of the plain and lower ground. That skyline 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, it's almost 25 miles wide.

Gazing at the wide, flat riverbed it's 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 about Old Tascosa and the LS Ranch.

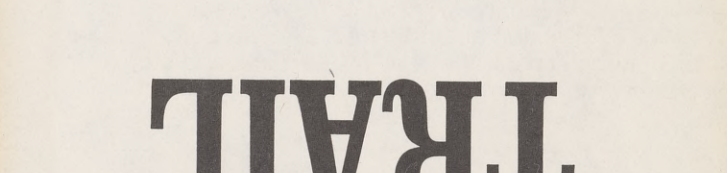
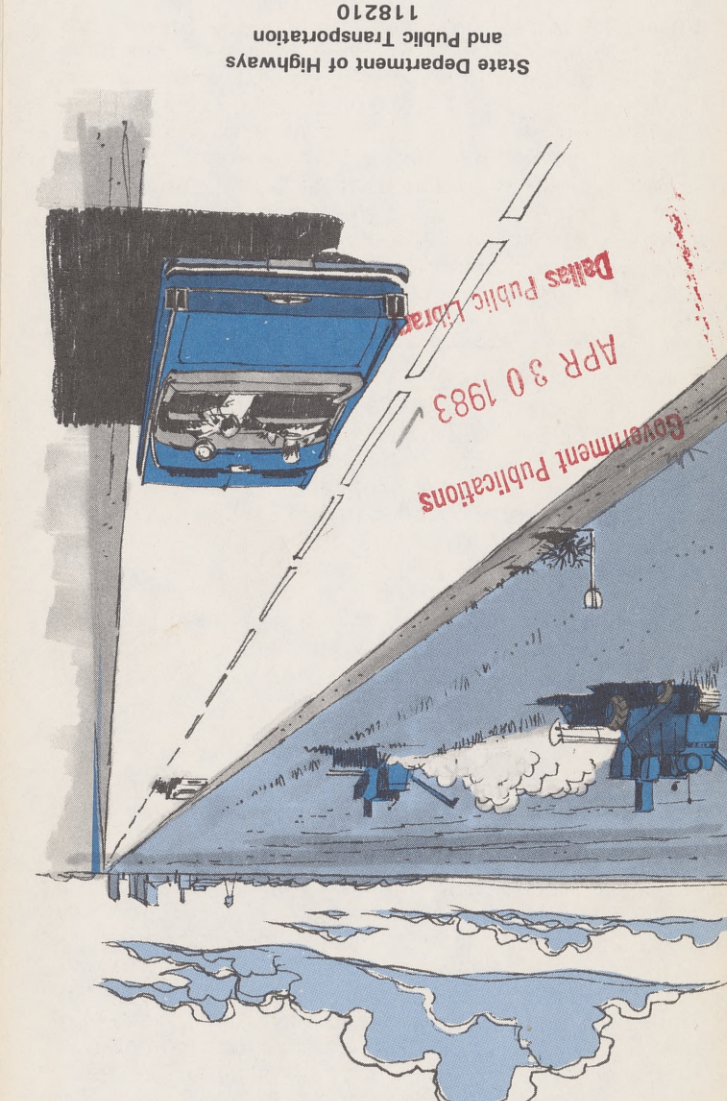


Cal Farley's Boys Ranch established for troubled, confused or problem boys in 1939, now consists of about 10,600 acres, but the first home for the boys was the courthouse of Old Tascosa—now the Julian Bivins Museum. The late Cal Farley, a prominent Texas businessman and world welterweight wrestling champion in the 1920s, saw his long-held dream begin to come true with the gift of land by the late Julian Bivins. That dream has seen more than 2,500 boys guided into responsible young men. About 400 currently operate the ranch, attend school and vocational training. For more information, sign the visitors register at the ranch snack bar, and consult *Texas! Live the Legend*.

It should be noted that FM 1061 from here to Amarillo, while not part of the Trail, is exceptionally scenic.

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

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



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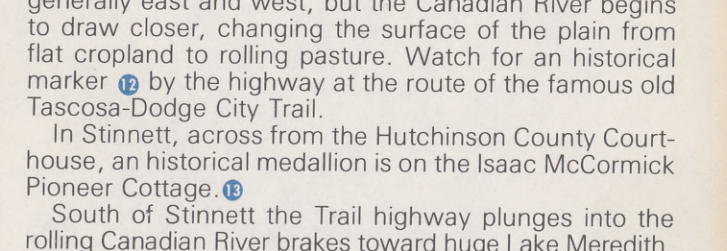
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BORGER
Pop. 15,837

Hutchinson County
Alt. 3,116

The importance of petroleum is evidenced by towers, tanks and smokestacks in Borger, where a variety of

petrochemicals are produced. Curving Main Street lends a friendly air, as does free overnight camping (with hookups) at Huber Park along Texas 207 south. Among the city's 15 other parks, two offer 18-hole golf courses.

1983 was the 66th birthday of Phillips Petroleum here, and the 100th anniversary of the Huber Company, large producer of carbon black and many other products. For information about area sights and recreational events, such as the "World's Largest Fish Fry" each June, visit the chamber of commerce at 613 N. Main, across from Hutchinson County Historical Museum.

South of Borger historical markers tell of the 1921 discovery oil well, first in the Panhandle. It was drilled on the Dixon Creek Ranch, better known as 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, but cattlemen say the brand was chosen because it is difficult to alter. (The main 6666 Ranch headquarters is near Guthrie, Texas.)

PANHANDLE
Pop. 2,226

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.

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 Square House 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-dug-out dwelling, typical of pioneer homesteads.

For information about historic sites and other area information, consult the state travel guide and stop at the chamber of commerce, adjacent to the museum.

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've seen planted as windbreaks, plus other thousands in 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 medalion from the National Men's Garden Clubs of America mark the site.

Visible to the north of the Trail is the Pantex atomic energy commission plant, just beyond the Texas Tech University research farm.

AMARILLO
Pop. 149,230

Randall & Potter Counties
Alt. 3,676

The city is the commercial, cultural and recreational center for the Texas High Plains. Named for Amarillo Creek near the first settlement in 1887, modern Amarillo is a city with excellent accommodations, symphonies and parks. Proud of its frontier heritage, the city is openly friendly, welcoming visitors with abundant events and "get acquainted" opportunities.

One such is Amarillo's "Cowboy Morning" experience—an Old West breakfast on the open range from a chuck wagon—scrambled eggs, ranch sausage, brown gravy, sourdough biscuits and campfire coffee—plus a wagon ride and demonstrations of roping and branding



by genuine cowboys. "Cowboy Mornings" are scheduled at 8:30 Mon.-Sat. from June 1-Aug. 15. Make your reservations at the city visitor center, 1000 Polk St. The center also operates a 24-hour "hotline" for information about all kinds of visitor activities: 373-6686.

A Texas Tourist Bureau operated by the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation is at the city's east limits on I-40/US 287. Trained travel counselors offer a wide selection of free maps, literature (including the state travel guide, *Texas! Live the Legend!*), and expert help in charting routes; open daily.

Some flat to gently rolling cultivated fields are seen between Amarillo and Canyon, but not on the scale that's typical along many areas of the Plains Trail.

are plains in the classic sense...by nature utterly flat. There are no natural contours of hills and valleys except for occasional, often spectacular influences of erosion. Near Canyon some reflecting native pasturelands become apparent, which signal erosive factors that will soon provide one of the Trail's most outstanding visitor features.

CANYON
Pop. 10,724

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 that built a gigantic spread. 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 that flanks the Trail highway downtown, is one of the state's finest. Cattle brands adorn the main entrance facade. From art to artifacts, its collections are outstanding...a prime site on the Texas Plains Trail!

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

West of Canyon, flat, cultivated fields are often interrupted by rolling native pasturelands. Rolling areas indicate a nearby watercourse 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.

At the intersection of Texas 217/FM 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 historical markers adjacent to the intersection—markers that tell of Coronado's travels and of Los 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 colors to the floor of Palo Duro Canyon almost a 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 an outdoor stage, backed by towering cliffs, is on a rousing, epic scale. Reservations are advisable at all times. An outdoor barbecue dinner, served chuck-wagon 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 FM 1151 is another typical feature of the plains. On the tabletop surface, where streams are rare and the land hasn't developed normal watersheds, rainwater simply has no particular direction to flow. Over millions of years it formed frequent shallow, usually circular depressions called playas. Seldom more than a few feet deep, they become small lakes when it rains. During dry seasons the water disappears. More than 17,000 playas on the High Plains collect nearly 95% of rainwater runoff. 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 on irrigation from deep wells. The structure of the plains, with few streams to carry off rainfall and many playas to hold it, created an enormous underground water supply, but in recent years, the water table has dropped alarmingly.

CLAUDE
Pop. 1,112

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 products, 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 pastureland. That is, the land has been planted to varieties of grass that are more

productive than the native species.

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 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 usually an insignificant stream, barely a trickle visible on a broad sand flat.

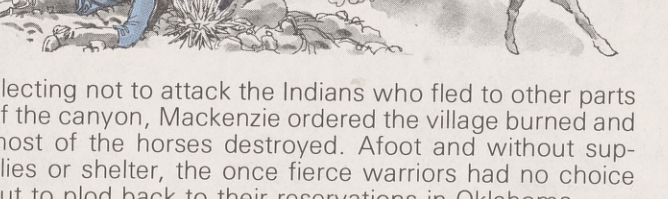
Along the Trail in the canyon is a marker telling of the S. P. Hamblen family. The remains of their dugout are visible just beyond the fence. A son, Will Hamblen, longed for good roads and built one into Palo Duro Canyon (north of the marker) that cut 120 miles off settlers' trips into the county seat, Claude.

Almost at the south rim of the canyon watch for a roadside picnic 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 pastureslands 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 as 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-facade, 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.



Electing not to attack the Indians who fled to other parts of the canyon, Mackenzie ordered the village burned and most of the horses destroyed. Afoot and without supplies or shelter, the once fierce warriors had no choice but to plod back to their reservations in Oklahoma.

To the right of the Trail route lies Lake Mackenzie, a relatively new lake impounding Tule Creek. Facilities at the lake include campsites with electrical hookups but no water or rest rooms. A scenic overlook just inside the entrance arches offers a memorable view, and a boat ramp is south of the dam. Fishing folk must pay a small fee.

SILVERTON
Pop. 918

Briscoe County
Alt. 3,261

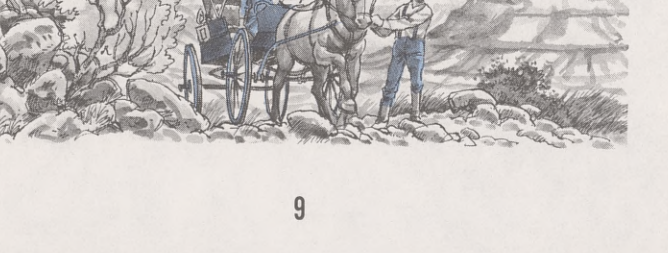
Established as the county seat in 1892 when Briscoe County was organized, Silverton is a commercial center for a large surrounding farming-ranching area.

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's needed for a leisurely visit.

Southeast of Silverton via Texas 86 (not shown on Trail map) is scenic Caprock Canyons State Park. Entrance to the park is from the community of Quitaque. See the state travel guide for additional information.

Between Silverton 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 Silverton a small canyon suddenly appears. Within moments the entire landscape is fragmented. This is the jagged edge of the High Plains or as the local residents say, the edge of the cap rock.

Consider early-day travelers who had to cross these landscapes before technology and heavy machinery created modern highways—wagons and buggies creak-



ing in circuitous miles to find passages that could be negotiated by animal power. An historical marker will be found in a spectacularly situated roadside picnic area on the north side of the highway. The marker honors pioneer rancher W. E. Schott, who laid out the first road through the canyons and up the cap rock to Silverton.

Negotiating the colorful edge, the Trail 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.

The view west from another picnic area along Texas 70 offers a vista with the cap rock in the far distance. The Trail drops down to cross the Little Red River and soon enters Turkey, named for flocks of wild turkeys found here in the 1890s. A novel monument notes that Western music star Bob Wills was reared here; a reunion on the last Sat. in April honors the man and his music.

Travelers will see cultivated row crops in this area, 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. 1,052

Motley County
Alt. 2,347

Matador is the seat of Motley County, and with its ranch heritage, is one of the most authentic "Western" towns 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 an old jail built in 1891.

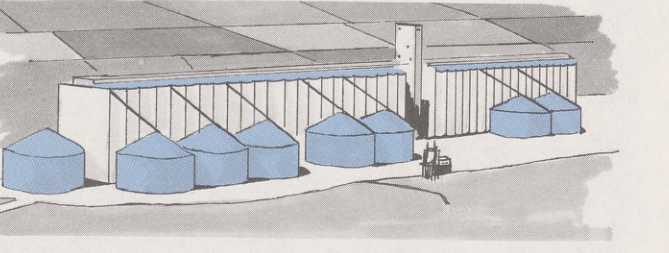
Visits to the Matador Cattle Company ranch headquarters (built in 1916) can be arranged through the Community Associates organization in Matador.

The cap rock is often visible to the west on the Trail route between Matador and Roaring Springs. The highway passes the pleasant Virginia Walton roadside picnic area, across from the old Matador Ranch headquarters. Roaring Springs was named for springs at the edge of the escarpment cut by the South Pease River. The springs, a favorite Indian campground, have been the site of Motley-Dickens Counties reunions for 50 years.

Although the railroad that brought a measure of importance to Roaring Springs is gone, the preserved depot at the end of the village's main street is a reminder, and an historical marker provides details.

West of Roaring Springs the highway traverses rolling, brushy native pastureland. The average motorist might never notice, but in easy stages this road is gradually ascending. Within a few miles the brushy terrain disappears, and Trail drivers are again on 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 gathered from throughout the nation to haul away the gigantic production during each harvest season.



On the US 82 portion of the Trail the highway plunges into a broad canyon cut by the White River, Blanco Canyon. Watch for a picnic area 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. 2,289

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 US 82 downtown contains the Crosby County Pioneer Memorial Museum; closed Mon.

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

South of Crosbyton are huge fields of cotton, maize, forage crops, some unexpected fields of vegetables—and a solar energy project. Visitors are welcome at



the site where the sun's rays are converted into electrical power. In the middle of a cotton patch stands a 19-foot tubular boiler suspended inside a glittering 65-foot bowl lined with mirrors.

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 that 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, lake-side cabins and boat launching facilities, picnic and fishing supplies, and boat rentals.

Between White River Reservoir and Post, the Trail highways 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.

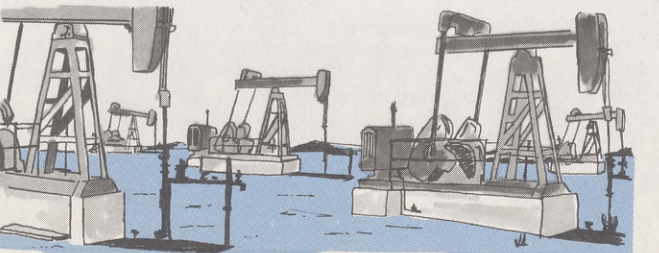
Approaching Post, the Trail crosses some upper branches of the Brazos river that bear an astonishing assortment of names—the Salt Fork, and the North Fork, of the Double Mountain Fork, of the Brazos River. Before tamed by dams and reservoirs, the Brazos had a treacherous reputation for periodic rampages across the breadth of Texas.

POST
Pop. 3,961

Garza County
Alt. 2,590

Situated 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. The width of Main Street west of the courthouse reflects one of his ideas about how city thoroughfares should be laid out.

For details about Post visitor sites, consult *Texas! Live the Legend!*, and stop at the chamber of commerce, a half block west of Main on Broadway (US 84). The local historical society has designated a sightseeing route along the town's broad streets.



"Oil is big in Garza County," according to a sign over a producing well just west of the courthouse. A graphic representation at the well explains how pump jacks operate and diagrams the strata from which the oil flows. Pump jacks will be seen at well heads throughout the city, often four or five clustered together, producing oil from different subterranean levels.

From Post a scenic drive on FM 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 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 beyond comprehension, they sweep north more than 1,600 miles, spanning our nation and thrusting deep into Canada. It is the heartland of America that produces our abundance of bread, meat and fiber. East to the Atlantic, or south more than 7,000 miles to the tip of South America, there's 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 that 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 habitat 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 mashed cone is Muchakoogo 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 isn't 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 eroded away.

GAIL
Pop. 189

Borden County
Alt. 2,530

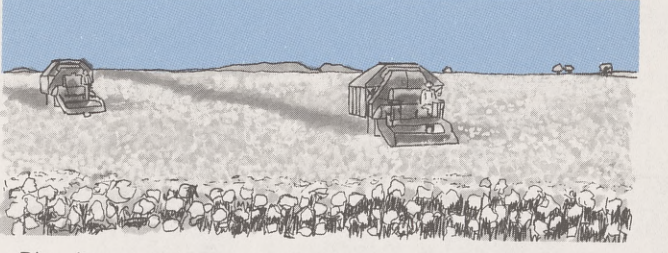
The tiny community of Gail is the only town in Borden County, which is devoted almost exclusively to ranching. Established in 1891, the community has remained an isolated ranch supply point, without bank, theater, railroad, hotel, preacher, doctor, or lawyer.

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 Great Plains, it is not our intention to leave them here. The Trail segment utilizing FM 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 upon 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 land's expanse. There's 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 proclaim about.

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

In Wilson at the FM 211/400 intersection is the old Mercantile Building, restored and filled with memorabilia. The city park a few blocks west of the intersection provides a spot for a pleasant pause.

Slaton, a city of 6,804, was established by the Santa Fe RR and is a division point on that line. The chamber of commerce at 200 W. Garza (on the square) can provide local details. An excellent museum, open weekday afternoons, is at 155 N. 8th, just north of Santa Fe Engine 1809.

This next 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 habitat 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 other Trails, listed below, 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 regional portions. When travel efficiency is in everyone's best interests, the Texas Trails are the way to go!

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TEXAS FOREST TRAIL
TEXAS FORTS TRAIL
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